



Mary Hare Policy: Early Years Foundation Stage

Policy Owner: Rachel Sheen

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Securing the future of deaf children and young people

Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. In our school, children join us in Reception at the beginning of the academic year in which they reach their fifth birthday, although children often join us at any point in the academic year.

The EYFS is an important starting point for all children in our school and is a crucial phase of their learning and development.

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2023) sets the standards for learning, development and care in the EYFS that the school must follow.

Aims

At Mary Hare Primary, we believe that:

‘Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.’ *Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, 2023.*

We aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum with an emphasis on language acquisition and developing spoken communication. We will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential. Each child is valued as an individual and learning and teaching is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates. We believe that children are born ready, able and eager to learn. They actively reach out to interact with other people, and with the world around them but we know that for our children, this is sometimes not an automatic process and that their development can be impacted upon by their deafness. We know that each child’s unique development pathway depends heavily on having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments.

Four guiding principles should shape practice in early years settings. These are:

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
 - children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
 - children learn and develop well in **enabling environments** with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
 - importance of **learning and development**. Children develop and learn at different rates.
- Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, 2023.*

At Mary Hare Primary, we enact these guiding principles in all that we do when working with children in the EYFS.

At Mary Hare Primary, we welcome and value every individual child who joins our school. We understand and respect that all children and their families have been on their own personal journey from diagnosis and that each child comes to school with different lived experiences. We recognise that children's listening, and language experiences vary dramatically and that, due to this, their communication and interaction skills are all unique to them and require different support. All of our children, regardless of their deafness, have needs, characteristics, talents and skills which make them individual. We treat every child as an individual on their own learning pathway and, due to our small classes taught by Teachers of the Deaf, provide experiences, teaching and opportunities which support their development and progress through equal access to the EYFS curriculum.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We help them do this by planning to meet the needs of all genders, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children from different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We strongly believe that early identification of special needs is crucial in enabling staff to support the development of each child and fully meet their needs. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage in an open, honest and sensitive manner and we will always seek their support and involvement.

Working in partnership

The school works closely with a multi-disciplinary team of specialists to provide additional information and advice to practitioners and parents and for arranging intervention and support where necessary. These include Speech and Language Therapists, Cochlear Implant Teams, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Educational Psychologists and National Deaf CAMHS, amongst others.

At Mary Hare Primary, we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families. We recognise that parents/carers are the child's first and most enduring educators. When parents/carers and practitioners work together in early years settings the results have a positive impact on the child's development. We feel a successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise and so we aim to provide a variety of opportunities to support this.

As some of our parents come into school on a less frequent basis we have devised a number of ways to ensure that information about a child's progress or next steps, or information relating to the EYFS is shared:

- Offering visits to all new starters so parents/carers and staff can share information about children and about our school.
- Using phone calls or emails to discuss weekly events or information about individual children.

- Sharing information about the curriculum through meetings, weekly assemblies, sending newsletters/leaflets home about topics, displays, informal discussions, parent consultation days, Seesaw (online platform).
- Providing opportunities for parents/carers to attend social events with children and staff e.g. coffee mornings, Christmas productions and class assemblies.
- Inviting parents/carers into the classroom to share expertise/interests and time to work with and help the children and staff in a variety of ways.
- Regularly meeting with parents/carers to share children's achievements and together discuss next steps for development.

Learning and development

At Mary Hare Primary, language underpins everything we do and teach. In EYFS, we build firm foundations for children through a **rich and diverse play-based curriculum**. We facilitate the learning of **language** and about the world, through all aspects of the day and enable children to become **confident communicators** and learners. Our curriculum is broad and balanced, allowing **flexibility** surrounding the interests of the children, and is centred around the **holistic needs** of our children. We embed our six school values which teach children to be: successful learners; responsible; respectful; safe; communicative and healthy into all areas of learning and ensure our children, who are deaf, learn in-line with their hearing peers. Children who are deaf often miss incidental learning opportunities, we embed this into our daily practice. The curriculum is designed to equip our children with world knowledge and key skills to thrive in a constantly changing and evolving hearing world. We aim to deliver an aspirational, ambitious curriculum, comparable to that received by hearing peers, which overcomes the challenges and impacts of deafness on language acquisition; learning skillset and achievement. We ensure wellbeing, self-image and resilience are embedded within the curriculum. Through learning surrounded by deaf peers, our children develop a sense of community and belonging, where they are not on the periphery and where they can develop strong self-esteem and confidence.

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. We aim to create an attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment which will encourage children to explore, investigate and learn through first-hand experience. We also aim to make it a place where children feel secure and confident and are challenged to develop their independence. Activities are planned for both the inside and outside environment. Children have the freedom to move between the indoor and outdoor classroom throughout the school day. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Our planning is informed by observations we have made of the children in order to understand and consider their current interests, experiences, development and learning needs.

Learning and development requirements

The seven areas of learning are incorporated into a rich and flexible curriculum with the intention to immerse children in learning which engages their curiosity, adapts to their interests and promotes language learning to allow children access to vocabulary which is incidentally learnt by hearing peers.

Children who are deaf need repetition of language to be able to say and use new vocabulary and therefore our curriculum will adapt to the varied language needs of our cohorts.

Our policy is to allow the children as much time and space as possible to learn through exploration, experimentation and risk taking in a safe and nurturing environment, whilst also offering enriching adult-led learning opportunities.

The three prime areas of learning are:

Communication and Language Development - we provide children with a rich linguistic environment and plenty of opportunity to learn and extend their spoken English and communication skills. Children develop their joint attention and listening skills by learning to look between the speaker and the activity. There is a heavy focus on role play and experiential learning, which allows children to use new vocabulary in meaningful situations. We work closely with the Speech and Language Therapists to support the children at all times during the school day. Deaf members of staff provide positive role models for all pupils. We also work in liaison with our Audiology Team to: support children's understanding of their deafness; their knowledge of their equipment and develop their self-advocacy skills.

Staff are trained in audiology; they are able to check Cochlear Implants, BAHAs, Hearing Aids and other assisted listening devices to make sure they are working, as well as to change batteries, tubes etc. The LING Assessment is carried out daily first thing every morning.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development - the Personal, Social and Emotional development of our children is central to everything we do at Mary Hare Primary, and the children are able to learn and grow in an engaging, nurturing and safe environment. Children learn to play cooperatively and take turns, forming positive relationships with adults and other children. They learn how to interact and communicate confidently, developing a positive image of themselves as a deaf person. Pupils are taught about deaf identity, understanding their emotions and how to self-regulate their behaviour using Zones of Regulation. Successes are celebrated daily, as well as during weekly assemblies. Children take part in daily sensory circuits to develop their balance and coordination skills as well as engaging them, so they are ready to learn when they enter the classroom.

Physical Development – opportunities to develop their fine and gross motor skills are offered daily as part of our provision. Large-scale movements are developed on the daily sensory circuits as well as provided for by the trim trail course we have in the playground. Children take part in a weekly dance lesson which is provided by an external specialist dance teacher. They develop arm and hand muscles through various daily activities and opportunities and they work on a good pencil grip by using tweezers, tongs, scissors and other one-handed tools. The children are encouraged to think about what is needed to stay healthy and safe, such as eating well and using scissors and other equipment carefully and are encouraged to become more independent in managing their personal hygiene.

We are working alongside another local school to enable our children to have the opportunity to take part in Forest School with hearing peers.

The four core areas of learning are:

Literacy - children join us at unique points in their listening journey and, as such, have variable levels of language and communication. As a school, we use ELS phonics to teach children to read. Some children in the EYFS may join us whilst waiting for, or having recently had, Cochlear Implant surgery. We work closely with Implant Teams, Parents and our Speech and Language Therapists (SALT) to support progress through the listening hierarchy (detection/discrimination/identification) with cochlear implants so that children are able to use them to access spoken language in the curriculum. We use a system called Visual Phonics by Hand to help the children learn about how and where letter sounds are produced. They practice phonics every day and have lots of opportunities to apply their skills in reading and writing activities.

Maths - Maths skills are developed in all areas of the room, from paying for items in a role play shop, to exploring capacity at the water tray. Developing a sound understanding of number to 10 is the basis of our maths curriculum, following Numbersense Maths and White Rose, through a range of discrete and incorporated, adult and child-led activities, including opportunities to:

- Subitise
- Count, and to hear counting, both forwards and backwards
- Count objects with 1:1 correspondence
- Match numerals to quantities
- Develop knowledge of number bonds for all numbers to 5 and some numbers to 10
- Order numbers and identify patterns
- Practise addition and subtraction, grouping and sharing
- Use a wide range of objects, equipment and resources to embed their understanding and to see that maths is everywhere.

Understanding the World - we offer regular curriculum focus on people and places, learning where we are in the world and finding out about elements of our history and culture. We have weekly Picture News sessions where we look at a current news story along with images, resources and questions to talk about. We also spend time exploring and appreciating different countries, languages, physical geography, climates, wildlife and cultures. Our explorations of culture in the UK and across the world include festivals, traditions, art, music, food, stories, histories and famous people. We spend time learning about festivals and special days celebrated and observed by different members of our community, how they might affect us personally and how important it is to respect the beliefs of others. We have regular science and nature focus, following the changing seasons, developing more in-depth understanding of the living things and natural objects that we find on the school grounds, exploring natural phenomena, causes and effects. We ensure there are opportunities to explore, mix and manipulate materials and objects, to set up experiments and to find out why things happen.

Expressive Arts and Design - we work to develop children's artistic and cultural awareness through daily access to a wide range of materials, tools and media, including 'junk modelling', collage, mark making, natural materials and deconstructed role play. We provide regular access to musical instruments and alternative means of making sounds to allow children to detect, discriminate and identify different sounds. We teach children about different ways to make art, offering challenges and engaging in collaborative artworks.

As part of our curriculum the children engage in Music Therapy twice a week. This encourages the development of listening skills, communication and social interaction. Sessions are structured and targeted to meet the individual needs of each pupil, and the flexibility in approach, enables child centred

goals to be addressed. Progress is closely monitored and in collaboration with the ToD and SALT to enable optimum outcomes.

Benefits include:

- Development of listening, language and literacy skills
- Development of working memory and auditory memory, critical in the process of learning
- Encouraging the use of voice and self-expression within both a structured and improvisational approach
- Developing self-confidence, awareness of others and the related aspects of playing together.

Speech and Language Therapy

Reception pupils will have direct support from the Speech and Language Therapy team. This provision is flexible to meet the needs of pupils e.g. intensive rehabilitation when required, alongside teaching staff in class, group therapy and individual therapy.

Specialist support will be available to develop all aspects of communication: listening, speech sounds, expressive language, receptive language and social communication.

The Speech Therapy team work closely with teaching staff to jointly set both long- and short-term goals/outcomes, as well as the Audiologist to ensure we are making maximal use of audiological equipment.

The Speech and Language therapists are experienced with this age group, as well as specialists in deafness. Developing language and communication is an essential life skill and through play, positive interaction and developing joint attention, we have a good foundation to build on.

Assessment and observation

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The main EYFS assessment method is through practitioners' high-quality interactions and observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult-focused activities and child-initiated play. High quality interactions take place daily. Practitioners make time to carry out planned interactions with individuals and groups of children regularly, where developing early communication and language skills is key. All practitioners are involved in high quality interactions with children and use these to support their developing knowledge of individual children. All observations made are shared and discussed within the EYFS team, including SALT, during Pupil Progress Meetings. Some observations are recorded in children's individual profiles on the online learning platform, Seesaw, which parents also have access to.

Within six weeks of starting school, children, for whom it is appropriate, in EYFS are guided through the Reception Baseline Assessment. Some children, due to their learning needs, are unable to access the RBA and therefore are disapplied. Children for whom BSL is a first language are supported by a member of staff who is fluent in BSL to ensure their learning needs are identified separate to their language and communication needs. This is conducted in line with guidance for completion of the RBA.

At the end of Reception, the children are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals that are outlined in the statutory framework and will indicate whether individual children are:

- Meeting expected levels of development or,
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

These assessments are moderated internally and, where possible, we are building connections to other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. This information is shared with parents/carers and will form part of their end of Reception report. It is also shared with the next Teacher of the Deaf in order to ensure a smooth transition.

Safeguarding and welfare requirements

These requirements of the Statutory Framework are fulfilled through the whole school's child protection, safeguarding and safer recruitment practice, health and safety protocols (including outings), behaviour policy, SEND policy, confidentiality policy, complaints policy and staff code of conduct.

The Teacher of the Deaf acts as the key worker to all the children, with the support of teaching assistants.

Mary Hare Primary recognises the importance of providing an ethos and environment within school that will help children to feel safe, secure and respected, encourage them to talk openly and enable them to feel confident that they will be listened to.

We also recognise that deaf children can be more vulnerable to abuse, as:

- they are likely to come into contact with a greater number of services than hearing children
- there can be negative social attitudes towards children with disabilities that can affect people's willingness to believe that abuse has taken place
- some deaf children will find it more difficult to communicate what they are feeling
- sometimes behaviour can be misinterpreted as being a consequence of a disability when in fact it is a sign of abuse.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS Teacher of the Deaf to follow the principles stated in this Policy, and to share these with practitioners involved with the EYFS.

There is a named Governor responsible for the EYFS/Primary school.

The Head of Primary, Assistant Head of Primary and other curriculum leads will carry out monitoring of the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

The Policy will be reviewed and ratified yearly by the Governing Body.