

Blue Class – EYFS class

How the EYFS is being delivered

There are seven areas of learning and development that we have to deliver. All the areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children’s curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, the *prime areas* are:

1. Communication and language
2. Physical development
3. Personal, social and emotional development.

1. Communication and language

The EYFS classroom has a strong emphasis on “Total Communication” with many strategies being used to encourage the children in our care to communicate with us. We will find the strategy that suits the child and work with them to develop this. Most of our ASC (Autistic Spectrum Conditions) children prefer visual forms of communication, using firstly “Objects of Reference” and then when they are ready PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System). All staff are trained in Makaton signing, and use this to strengthen concepts and ideas. We further use iPad communication apps, such as “Grid Player” and “Proloquo2go” if this is a method of communication that is preferred. We take specialist advice from our Speech and Language Therapist to help us decide the best way forward for your child. It may be a combination of all 3 approaches! We look for communication opportunities throughout the day to work on this vital skill, snack time being a key time when the children are often motivated to ask for food / drink. We may also deliberately make toys “not available” so a child has to initiate asking for it (using PECS / objects). We work with the parents to ensure that whatever is being introduced at school, can also be followed through at home. This joined up approach is vital in improving a child’s communication and language, making them confident communicators with the skills to express themselves.

Physical Development

The EYFS classroom is a big space, with an attached Veranda and forest with mud kitchen, which allows for opportunity for free movement and running around to let off steam. The importance of sensory integration in ensuring the children are well regulated and ready to learn is vital. We therefore attach great importance to bouncing on the trampet, swinging in the basket swing, bouncing up/down and over the therapy ball, crawling through the lycra tunnel and pushing out in the lycra body bags! All the children are “squashed” on a daily basis, using deep pressure hugs and squeezes to help with the process of sensory regulation. Also throughout the day, the children have regular playtimes in our outdoor play areas, which are grassed and provide wooden play equipment to balance on / climb over / hang from. Once a week the children have a dedicated PE lesson in our school hall with a specialist PE teacher. We also have on site, our own swimming pool which we can use to take the children swimming when they are ready for this. Fine motor skills are covered on a daily basis using things like gluing / cutting, threading of beads and blocks, picking up small items with tongs etc.

Personal, social and emotional development

This can be a huge area of learning for our children, and an area which we also attach great importance to. Many of the children entering the EYFS will need to spend a lot of time learning to do self-help skills such as using the toilet and washing hands. We would expect to work in partnership with parents when the time is right for toilet training. Each child will have a “personal care plan” developed in conjunction with parents, which will stipulate exactly what we do to help the children achieve independence in this area of their work. Dressing / undressing is practised for PE and swimming lessons. Children coming to our school often need a lot of help around managing their feelings and understanding / managing their behaviour. This again can take a lot of time and effort, and will require us working very closely with parents to ensure a joint and consistent approach. Each child will have a “personal behaviour plan”, that is personalised to them, and which lays out the strategies used to manage behaviour in different situations. Again, this is worked out with the parents so we all work together on implementing a consistent approach to behaviour. We also work on helping the children developing a positive sense of themselves and others, forming positive relationships and developing respect for others.

As a school, we must also support our EYFS children in 4 specific areas, through which the above 3 prime areas are to be strengthened and applied. The 4 specific areas are :

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive arts and design.

All of the 4 specific areas are worked on a daily basis, through a varied and stimulating curriculum that is individualised to the children in our care. A separate individualised timetable is made available to each parent at the start of school year.

- **Literacy** – we use a strategy called “attention autism” to help gain children’s attention and prepare them for the process of learning. Once we have gained their attention, we can start to introduce letters and sounds into our “bucket”. We have a book corner where children can gain access to a wide range of reading materials and further strengthen phonics / writing through the use of continuous provision which is available throughout the day.
- **Mathematics** – we use a strategy called “TEACCH”, which is a very visual / structured form of learning to introduce many of our early Maths concepts such as matching by colour / shape / number. As above, we also provide a rich and varied continuous provision each day which further strengthens the Maths concepts we are trying to learn.
- **Understanding the World** – This involves guiding the children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment. We are lucky to have in school a sensory room with bubble tube / light effects, and specialist ICT room with touch screen computer and interactive white board, as well as our own “Little Forest” with a mud kitchen, where we can explore and make sense of the world around us. We also practice “messy play” using different materials (including food) as we find many of our children are touch defensive, so need a lot of help to overcome their aversion to touch.

- **Expressive Arts and Design** – this involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

At the start of each half term, the teacher will send home a breakdown of the curriculum so parents can see what the “themes and topics” are for the term. This will have been worked out with all the other teachers in the Lower school, to provide for continuity of learning, and to make sure we provide your children with as rich and varied a curriculum as we possibly can which will prepare them for moving up into the Key Stage 1 class when they are ready.

For anyone wishing to find out more about the Oaklands Park School EYFS curriculum, please contact the class teacher, Hazel Fletcher on hfletcher@oaklandspark.devon.sch.uk or alternatively speak with the Head Teacher Bryan Webster on bwebster@oaklandspark.devon.scho.uk

How parents can become involved in their children’s learning

From September 2017, we will have an online learning journal, to keep a record of each child’s learning each day. This will allow for parents to see what their child has been doing each day, and also to become involved in the process of learning by leaving “comments” and making their own observations from play at home.

Every day the class teacher also writes in the “home school communication book” about what has been happening during at school. Things like what has been eaten, drunk, how many times a child has needed the toilet etc, behaviour, and significant events are covered. The parents are invited to reciprocate by writing back to the class teacher to inform them about the child’s time at home. This is very informative and provides the class teacher with useful insights into the child’s mood / behaviour.

For our new EYFS parents, it is also vital that we learn to support each other, and to that end everyone will be invited in for regular coffee / cake mornings to share ideas and become involved in their child’s learning. More details on this in September.

Food and Drink provided

Snack time - We endeavour to provide “healthy” snacks where ever possible, whilst recognising that many of our ASC pupils have very particular foods that they will / will not eat! Snack is provided free of charge each day. We have a choice of fresh fruit (usually bananas, apples, and oranges) and vegetables (carrots and tomatoes), bread sticks, raisins, crackers (Jacobs), cheese spread and rice cakes. We supply water or blackcurrant squash (well diluted) to drink. If your child will not eat any of the above items, please contact the class teacher and we will work out an alternative.

Dinnertime – A hot meal can be provided free to each child daily, following the Devon mealtime dinner menu. All meals are cooked on site by our own brilliant chef, and many adaptations can be made to suit our ASC young people to encourage them to eat. Drinks are as above (water, blackcurrant squash) or if preferred flavoured milk, or orange / apple juice. A menu plan is sent home regularly to parents so they can see the choices on offer.

Details of policies / procedures – please contact the administrator at school for all information regarding the schools policies and procedures on admin@oaklandspark.devon.sch.uk

Staffing in EYFS

The maximum class size for the EYFS class is 8 children. The teacher of the EYFS class is an experienced SEN teacher. She is Paediatric First Aid (1 day) trained. She is supported by 2 TA's both of whom have experience of SEN, who are both first aid trained (1 with a 3 day Paediatric First Aid qualification), and have worked with the younger age range of children. The Key person who each parent should contact initially will be the class teacher. Contact her on hfletcher@oaklandspark.devon.sch.uk or ring on the school main line number 01626 862363. When each child has had a chance to settle, we will allocate them their “key worker”. This will be the adult that they seem to have a strong attachment to.