

**First Friends**

**Early Years Foundation Stage Framework Policy**

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**Principles:**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a statutory framework set to provide standards for the learning, development and care of children up to five years old. It has been mandatory for all early years providers to follow from the first of September 2014 and ensures that the correct measures are taken to ensure that children are given the best possible start to life. (www.sparkearlyyears.co.uk)

At First Friends we strive to ensure that children attain their maximum potential and that we meet every child’s individual needs.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides equal opportunities and anti-discriminating practice to all children. All children will be included regardless of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties or disabilities, gender or ability.

The aim of the EYFS is to help children in our setting to achieve the five ‘Every Child Matters’ outcomes. Ensuring that all children are thriving and developing, which will result in the children achieving their maximum potential.

The ‘Principles’ of the EYFS are split into four main ‘Themes’. The theory behind the EYFS can be analysed through looking at these four themes. These themes ensure that children are treated individually, and that they are provided with every opportunity to enable them to succeed. The four themes are:

* The unique child.
* Positive relationships.
* Enabling environments.
* Learning and development.

Within the four themes are the seven areas of learning and development, these are split into ‘Prime areas’ and ‘Specific areas’. By promoting and developing these areas within the curriculum will set the foundation for all future learning. The seven areas of learning and development are:

**Prime areas:**

* Personal, Social and Emotional Development.
* Communication and Language.
* Physical Development.

**Specific areas:**

* Literacy.
* Mathematics.
* Understanding the World.
* Expressive Arts and Design.

At First Friends we understand that there are key factors which play a central role in a child’s learning for them to become an effective learner. These key factors are summarised within the Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoEL). These characteristics run through and underpin all seven areas of learning and development. The Characteristics of Effective Learning are:

* Playing and exploring.
* Active learning.
* Creating and thinking critically.

At First Friends we understand the importance of children learning through play. Children having access to both the indoor and outdoor areas to explore will encourage their own play and imagination. We also understand the key role that adults will play in supporting the learning and development of children. All of our staff is skilled in supporting children within the setting, and guiding parents and carers with their responsibilities at home.

**Aims and objectives:**

* For all children to be thriving and achieving their maximum potential.
* To be inclusive for all children.
* To provide a learning rich environment for all children attending the setting, according to the curriculum.
* To encourage the learning and development of children through play.
* For all staff to take into account the children’s needs, interests and their stages of development to help them plan an enjoyable, rich learning experience for all children.
* To encourage and support parents and carers learning at home.

**Every Child Matters Outcomes:**

Every Child Matters is a Government approach to ensure that the well-being of children and young people up to the age of 19 years old is a key focus in the UK. To achieve this, the Government wanted to make sure that every child had the support they needed to achieve the following five outcomes:

* Staying Safe
* Being Healthy
* Enjoying and Achieving
* Making A Positive Contribution
* Achieving Economic Well-Being

Every Child Matters ensures that all agencies and professionals working with children and young people will share information and work together to ensure that the child or young person is kept safe and to create the best outcomes for children and young people. This will also see that children and young people will be supported to achieve their goals in life.

Every Child Matters has provided children with a voice, and in 2005 the appointment of a Child’s Commissioner within the Government ensured that Every Child Matters has the necessary platform needed for it to succeed. (www.everychildmatters.co.uk)

**The ‘Themes’ of the EYFS:**

The theory behind the EYFS can be analysed through looking at its four main themes. These themes express the important principles underpinning effective practice in the care, development and learning of young children. These themes describe how the principles of the EYFS can be put into practice. The four themes are:

* **A Unique Child –** Understanding that every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
* **Positive Relationships –** Understanding that by supporting the children and building positive relationships with them, they can learn to be strong and independent.
* **Enabling Environments –** Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents/carers.
* **Learning and Developments –** Children embrace learning and development in different ways and at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

**The development areas of the EYFS:**

There are seven areas of learning and development in the EYFS which are grouped into two categories:

* **Prime areas –** 
  + Personal, Social and Emotional Development.
  + Communication and Language,
  + Physical Development.

The prime areas are important because they lay the foundations for children’s success in all other areas learning and of life. The prime areas are fundamental to children’s successful learning in the specific areas. The specific areas cannot be encountered in isolation from the three prime areas, as children always experience the world through communication, physical and sensory involvement. A strong foundation in the prime areas is essential as evidence shows that, if it is not securely in place by the age of five, it holds children back in other areas of learning and development.

The EYFS framework makes it clear that practitioners should focus on the prime areas for younger children, with gradual building in of support in the specific areas for older children, as they develop. In all instances, the support should be appropriate to an individual child’s level of development and progress.

Practitioners are encouraged to take a flexible approach, responding to each child as an individual learner. There is nothing in the framework that prevents a practitioner from introducing aspects from the specific areas of learning and development for an individual child earlier than they might for other children, if they judge that to be appropriate. Staff will be asked to justify this during the moderation process. (www.my.optimus-education.com)

* **Specific areas –**
* Literacy.
* Mathematics.
* Understanding the World.
* Expressive Arts and Design.

Once children are more secure with the prime areas, they can begin to build on their skills within the specific areas of learning and development.

**The Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoEL):**

The Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoEL) advocate that in planning and guiding children’s activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn, and then reflect these in their practice.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning focuses on how children are learning not what they are learning. So it focuses on the process of a child’s learning rather than the final outcome. Research shows that the attitudes towards learning that children develop in their earlier years of life will last them a lifetime. If children receive the right sort of support and encouragement during these years will be creative and adventurous learners throughout their lives. Children who do not receive this support and interaction will likely have a very different attitude towards learning as they become older. (www.eyfs.info)

All children are unique and have their own learning characteristics. Depending on the child’s learning characteristic will determine the way that they respond to both the teaching and learning taking place in the setting.

There are three characteristics of effective teaching and learning that are identified by the EYFS, these are:

* **Playing and exploring –** For children to be competent in playing and exploring means that they are able to ‘have a go’, that they will choose or create specific activities that enable them to engage with others or play alone. Children will be inquisitive and active in their own investigations and experiences.
* **Active learning –** For children to be an active learner they will show good concentration skills throughout their learning experiences. Active learners will continue to ‘have a go’ even if they encounter difficulties along the way. These children will enjoy their accomplishments and celebrate their own achievements.
* **Creating and thinking critically –** For children to be creative and critical thinkers they will develop their own ideas and ways of thinking, often making links between different ideas and developing different strategies to achieve things.

At First Friends we understand the importance of nurturing these characteristics. This means that we encouraging children to be individuals and celebrating their own talents and catering to their individual needs.

All observations will be linked to the Characteristics of Effective Learning, and staff will be familiar with the learning styles of their individual key children.

**Teaching and learning styles:**

The key features of effective teaching and learning within our setting are defined in our ‘Teaching and Learning Policy’.

High quality teaching and learning is vital for children to be able to achieve their maximum potential. At First Friends we believe that this begins by staff being enthusiastic towards the teaching within the setting. Providing interesting and engaging activities will interest the children, and by having enthusiastic strategic role modelling and interventions when needed will ensure that children are engaged, and learning.

Staff will ensure that the learning environment is stimulating, for all children regardless of their age and stage of development. Activities must build on and develop the children’s interests, encouraging them to talk about their experiences and thoughts.

The partnership between parents/carers and other settings is paramount for the teaching and learning within the setting to be successful. By building these relationships will help the child feel secure and help them achieve a sense of well-being.

Children will be observed throughout their time in the setting, ensuring staff are aware of the child’s current abilities and interests. This will enable staff to ensure that the child has appropriate activities set up that will encourage them to develop further. The progress of child development will be assessed through assessments, see ‘The Assessment of Children Policy’.

**Children’s play:**

At First friends we believe that play, both indoors and outdoors, is the fundamental way in which children learn.

Children’s play can be enjoyable and challenging, if the environment is set up appropriately for the child’s interests and abilities. Staff are aware that children often behave differently when playing and understand that this is part of their individual development. For example some children may be more boisterous than others, some children may be quieter during play and others may communicate more.

All staff understands the importance of this and recognises that this is normal developmental behaviour for children. Staff will use these behaviours as focus points when extending the child’s play and experiences.

There are many different ages and stages of children’s play for example:

* **Solitary Play –** This type of play is appropriate around 12 months of age. This type of play is where children often choose to play alone even when around other children, and use their senses to explore the world around them.
* **Constructional play –** This type of play is appropriate around 24 months to 42 months of age. This is where children begin to have a longer attention span, and they begin to spend longer stretches of time sitting focusing on activities with one set of toys. It is often during this play that children begin to move toys around with more purpose.
* **Cooperative play –** Children become confident in this type of play between 48 months to 72 months. This is where children begin to build on their social skills and form friendships. They begin to play alongside others talking and working together.

There are many other different types of play such as schemas, parallel play, associative play and dramatic play. Staff will have extensive knowledge and understanding of different types of play to ensure that they can recognise this in the development of the children within their care, and document this in observations.

**The adult’s role:**

At First Friends we understand the important role that the adult plays. Staff has extensive training to enable them to effectively teach and support children within the setting.

Staff will ensure that the environment is stimulating and engaging for children, enabling them to support children’s learning through quality play experiences. Staff must support learning through planned play and have the knowledge and skill to support children’s spontaneous play.

Communication and language is a huge focus at First friends and all staff has ongoing training to ensure that they can develop and extend on children’s language and communication during play. All children have a communication and language tracker to ensure that they are meeting specific milestones, and have relevant interventions in place if needed. Children will also have a physical development tracker.

Although we understand the importance of child-initiated learning and play where adults have a key role in supporting learning, it is also vital to ensure that children experience an equal amount of adult-led activities. This provides the practitioner with the opportunity to introduce new knowledge and ideas, and for supporting the children to develop and practice new skills.

**The role of parents and carers:**

At First Friends we believe that parents and carers have an important role to play in the education of their child.

Parents and carers will be invited to regular parent meetings where they are informed of their child’s progress and future goals. Advice will be given around how to promote these skills at home. Support will be provided for parents and carers if needed.

Parents and carers are asked for input into their child’s learning, this is done in a range of ways:

* Verbal communication during the look round and before the child starts.
* Completing an initial assessment on the child during the settling in period to ascertain where the child’s starting point is.
* Encouraging regular communication through our ‘open door policy’ and verbal conversations at the beginning and end of every session.
* Encouraging parents, carers and other family members to take part in stay and play sessions throughout the year.
* Regular parent’s evenings to discuss development and future learning. It is also encouraged that any concerns are discussed if parents/carers have any.
* Parents, carers and family members are encouraged to share their child’s milestones with us, whether this is milestones such as taking their first steps, going on the potty, or maybe saying a word for the first time. For older children it maybe that they have counted to five or written their name. Parents and carers can share this information verbally or through home observations to feed into their child’s personal file.

By working together with parents and carers provides consistency for the children, enabling them to thrive and achieve goals effectively.