

# Sheffield Lower School



## Foundation Stage Curriculum Booklet

# Welcome to Shefford Lower School

We hope that this booklet will help to answer some of the questions you may have about the Early Years Curriculum. It is intended as a brief outline of the learning your child will be involved in during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. It also includes some ideas of ways in which you may be able to help your child at home to support their learning.

When children start Nursery and Reception, they bring with them a wide range of varied experiences. They have already learnt a great deal, particularly from their families, and the skills they have already developed provide a firm foundation for their future learning. The range of activities we provide are carefully planned to build on what they already know. At Shefford Lower, we believe that children flourish best when home and school work together to provide the best possible learning experiences.

In September 2012 a revised version of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum framework will be introduced. This phase of children's education is called the Foundation Stage. During this time we plan activities and experiences that will help children make progress in their development and learning. We provide opportunities for all children to succeed in an environment in which they feel valued and secure.

Our Early Years curriculum is based on the four overarching principles of the Foundation Stage guidance:

- Every child is a **unique child** who is constantly learning & can be resilient, capable, confident & self-assured.
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
- Children learn & develop well in **enabling environments** in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- **Children develop and learn 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.



Starting school is a big step in all children's lives and we spend a great deal of time when children first arrive making sure they settle into school routines as happily as possible. At Shefford Lower, we aim to provide a calm environment where children feel secure and confident and where their skills and talents are developed to the full.

# Planning the Curriculum

The curriculum is planned in advance on a two year rolling cycle. This means that the Nursery and Reception classes will be working on the same topic each half term, but that the children will experience different topics throughout their time with us in Nursery and Reception. The learning the children experience is carefully planned and differentiated to meet their needs in each class. Topics are carefully chosen to stimulate and interest the children. Our planning also reflects our commitment to equal opportunities and the provision of a curriculum which reflects our multi-cultural society.

Each week the Foundation Stage team meet, to evaluate the weeks learning and plan for the next week in detail. Work is planned around each of the broad areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. Each class team then plans specific activities to meet the children's needs and interests on a daily basis. Children have opportunities to work and play in groups, pairs and individually over the day.

We believe that children learn best when actively engaged in their work. The classrooms and outside area are organised to allow your children to become involved in purposeful activities that encourage exploration and investigation of the world around them. We are committed to providing high quality play provision to enable children to learn to their full potential.

***'Well-planned play, both indoors and outdoors is a key way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge.'***

Through play in a secure environment with effective adult support, children can:

- Practise and build up ideas, concepts and skills
- Understand the need for rules
- Take risks and make mistakes
- Think creatively and imaginatively
- Communicate with others as they solve problems



# Our Outside Area

The Nursery and Reception classes share the outside area. Children have the opportunity to develop skills that will support their learning in all areas of the curriculum. Activities in the outside area are carefully planned to meet the needs of the children and to extend their learning. The outside area is viewed as a classroom and as such the children have free access to the outside area for most of the day, with equal emphasis given to their learning outside and inside. This area is set up by the staff to provide stimulating and motivating learning experiences in the same way as the inside classrooms. The children have opportunities for both adult led and self-initiated play.

***"...when children are playing outdoors, they are exercising their growing intellectual and emotional muscles as well as their physical ones. They are developing their powers to think, to feel, to do, to see and to understand, to represent and to express. They are imagining, puzzling, exploring, befriending and sharing."*** ( Drummond, M. J. Bradford Education Committee [1995] *Can I play out?*)



# Areas of Learning

Within the revised Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum there are 3 Prime Areas of Learning. These three areas reflect the key skills & capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively to become ready for school. They are:

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2. Communication and Language
3. Physical Development



# Personal, Social and Emotional Development

For children to be successful in all areas of learning, they need to feel secure and to develop a positive sense of themselves. Much of our provision is based on the need to provide opportunities for personal, social and emotional development.

We aim to enable children to:

- Respect themselves and others and develop a positive self image
- Take turns and share
- Feel confident to take risks and cope with mistakes
- Make friends and co-operate in a group
- Develop a positive attitude to learning
- Understand and embrace differences in gender, special needs, ethnicity, religion and cultures



## Helping Your Child at Home

### Sharing and Taking Turns

Sharing and turn taking are often difficult concepts for children to learn. Give lots of praise when your child shares with others to encourage this behaviour. Play games which involve taking turns.

### Personal Care and Hygiene

Before coming to school, children should be confident in going to the toilet by themselves. Please help and encourage your child to roll up their sleeves and wash their own hands. Let your child practice getting dressed independently, even if it does take a long time! A collection of dressing up clothes can help develop these skills in an enjoyable way. Dressing Dolls and teddies provides useful practice in fastening buttons and zips.

Please encourage your child to tidy away their toys. Everyone is expected to help with tidying at school!

### Understanding Rules

Talk about and explain why we need rules. Children need to understand why it is dangerous to run indoors, or to throw sand or bricks. Recognising that you have similar rules at home will help your child to integrate more quickly into our school, and make it a safe and happy place in which to learn and play.



# Communication and Language

This area of learning involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

Our classrooms provide many opportunities for the children's development in this area with most aspects of our day and activities enabling children to practice and develop their skills.



Children will have opportunities to:

- Speak and listen in whole class groups, small groups, whilst working and playing with their friends and on a one to one basis with adults.
- Develop the use of appropriate language in many different activities and in every part of the curriculum
- Share and read a range of quality books with adults and each other and learn how text works
- Retell and talk about texts with confidence
- Ask and answer how and why questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events
- Express themselves effectively, showing awareness of their listeners
- Use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future.
- Develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.



# Helping Your Child at Home

Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing. Even everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting shopping away and getting ready to go out offer you the chance to talk to your child, explaining what you are doing. Through these activities, children hear the way language is put together into sentences for a purpose.

Books are a rich source of new words for your child; words you would not use in everyday conversations appear in books. Children need to have a wide vocabulary to understand the meaning of books, so read aloud and share books as often as you can. They will enjoy it and it will be useful to them when they come across these words in their own reading later on.

Listen to your child explaining how they do a favourite activity. Explaining how to do something is good practice for the type of speaking that your child needs to do in school. Ask your child to talk about how they made a Lego model, how they play a computer game or a board or card game. Try and listen without asking too many questions.

Asking Why? Children like to ask 'Why?' so try asking some back. Start off with some obvious ones (usually related to 'rules') such as 'why do we need to look both ways before we cross the road?', before making it harder with more abstract ones like 'Why do our bodies like us to eat breakfast?' to ones that require real reasoning such as 'which is better to have holidays in summer or winter? Why?'



# Physical Development

In the Foundation Stage, Physical Development is vital in helping children to develop a positive sense of well-being. Children learn to improve their co-ordination, control, manipulation and movement. Children learn through being active and their physical development takes place through other areas of learning.

Children will have opportunities to:

- Experiment with actions using small and large apparatus
- Use different resources in different situations
- Practice large movements both inside and outside, such as climbing and jumping
- Develop their skills using small apparatus and playing games
- Respond with movement to different stimuli, such as music, stories and rhymes



In Reception children also have more structured PE lessons, both inside and outside, to further develop their physical skills and special awareness.

## Helping Your Child at Home



- Encourage your child to handle small and large equipment.
- Allow your child to use scissors and develop their skills.
- Allow your child to run, hop, skip, jump and find different ways of travelling.
- Play games such as follow the leader and change actions to develop motor skills and coordination.
- Discuss changes to their bodies after exercise; heart beating faster, feeling hot etc
- Discuss how they keep themselves healthy, e.g. eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water, getting enough sleep, washing their hands after going to the toilet and before eating etc.



In addition to the 3 prime Areas of Learning there are also 4 Specific Areas. These are:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding the World
4. Expressive Arts & Design

These specific areas include essential skills and knowledge. They grow out of the prime areas, and provide important contexts for learning.

## Literacy

This area of learning involves building on children's speaking and listening skills to begin to develop their reading and writing.

Once again we will provide many opportunities for the children's development in this area with most aspects of our day and activities enabling children to practice and develop their skills.

Children will have opportunities to:

- Experiment with a wide range of mark making materials
- Have a go at mark making and writing for a wide range of different purposes
- Learn about specific letter sounds and the correct formation of letters
- Share, enjoy and discuss a wide range of books
- Begin to recognise key words around them
- Start to sound out simple words using their phonic knowledge



# Helping Your Child At Home

## Reading

Children who are read to and enjoy books from an early age are most likely to be successful readers in the future. Try and share a book with your child as often as possible. If you speak different languages it is important that your child can share this with you when looking at books. Try and find a quiet and comfortable place and sit so that you can both see the book. Encourage your child to hold the book and turn the pages. Talk about the pictures and ask your child questions. You can point to the words as you read.



## Writing

Children need lots of opportunities to make marks on paper, card, blackboards etc. These marks have real meaning for children, and are the beginnings of writing. Children learn about writing by noticing print and watching others. Try and give them opportunities to 'write' for themselves – lists, signs, cards and invitations.

# Mathematics

This area of learning involves counting, sorting, matching, recognising patterns, identifying shapes and measuring and problem solving.

We develop children's mathematical understanding through play, songs, stories and rhymes as well as investigative and problem solving activities. At Shefford Lower School we are committed to a practical approach to the learning and teaching of mathematics. We believe that children will develop a firmer understanding of mathematical concepts if they are provided with a range of practical experiences which allow them to practise and develop their skills. For this reason, recording is not introduced until the later part of the Reception year.



Children will:

- Use and recognise numbers
- Count and order numbers
- Develop an understanding of more and less
- Make simple calculations
- Become aware of, recognise and name simple shapes
- Understand and compare measures and learn about measuring time

# Helping Your Child at Home

There are lots of different ways you can help your child at home with mathematics.

- Use as many opportunities as you can to count with your child – stairs and steps, buttons, fruit etc. Look for numbers around you and recite counting rhymes.
- Look for shapes around your home, use the correct names and encourage your child to talk about features of different shapes. [e.g. number of corners, sides etc]
- Look for patterns around you such as laying the table, in books and with their toys.
- Playing board games and card games are important ways to help children understand about addition and subtraction.
- Involve your child in shopping trips by counting money and talking about prices.



## UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

In this area we help children to develop the knowledge skills and understanding to help them make sense of the world. It is the foundation for later work in Science, Design & Technology, History and Geography and Religious Education.

We give children opportunities to find out about the world around them and to ask questions. They design and make different objects using a wide range of tools and materials. We enable children to find out about the past and learn about the school and where they live. They become aware of differences in gender, ethnicity, culture language and religion.



Children will:

- Develop their skills to use and explore a variety of tools and materials
- Investigate how things work
- Learn about living and non-living things
- Measure, join, cut, select and combine materials
- Have opportunities to learn about foods and health
- Have opportunities for exploration, observation, problem-solving, prediction, critical thinking, decision making and discussion.



### **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

In the Early Years classrooms, children have access to programmable toys and a class computer. Class sessions are used to introduce children to computer programs and children are taught to use the computer confidently and purposefully to support their learning across the curriculum

## **Helping Your Child at Home**

Young children are naturally very curious and ask many questions. Wanting to know how does it work? what happens if...? why does..? etc is typical of children of this age, and there are many activities that encourage early scientific skills of observation, prediction and experimentation.

### **Growing**

Plant cress seeds and watch them grow each day. Sprout carrot tops and potatoes on saucers.

### **Natural Materials**

Make collections of pebbles, shells and leaves. Sort these objects using describing words such as smooth, hard, heavy and rough. Encourage your children to talk about the weather and how different weather conditions affect our lives. Work with water and let your child find out about bubbles or floating and sinking in a washing up bowl or in the bath.

### **People and Families**

Look at photographs of family and friends. Talk about how we change as we grow. Notice the different jobs that adults do as you go shopping.

# Expressive Arts and Design

This area of learning includes art, music, dance, role-play and imaginative play. Throughout the Foundation Stage, children need many and varied opportunities to develop creatively. It is an important area of the curriculum as being creative enables children to make connections between one area of learning and another.

Children will have opportunities to:

- Express their creativity and originality through music, art and imaginative play
- Develop an appreciation of art and music from different cultures
- Experiment and work with a range of different techniques and materials to express their ideas
- Explore making sounds with their bodies and with instruments
- Talk about their work and develop confidence to express their ideas
- Respond with movement to music and songs



## Helping Your Child at Home

- Allow your child to listen to and sing songs and rhymes.
- Engage in role play with your child.
- Explore different media; paint, pencils, crayons.
- Using scissors and glue; encourage cutting and sticking activities.
- Dance to songs and make up actions to complement; e.g. Wheels on the Bus.



**Thank you for taking the time to read this booklet. We hope you find some of the various strategies useful when working with your children.**

