



## **Worlebury St Paul's Church of England V.A. Primary School.**

### **Foundation Stage Early Learning Policy**

This policy should be taken as part of the overall strategy of the school and operated within the context of our vision, aims and values as a Church of England School.

#### **Our Image of Young Children**

We believe that young children are strong and confident learners. They are great researchers who explore, test their ideas, solve problems and try to make sense of their world.

We believe that learning is social in nature so we encourage and support children's interactions with other children and adults.

We understand that young children learn through seeing, hearing and doing. They are active learners and we aim to ensure that their environment promotes and protects the use of all their senses.

#### **Our Responsibility**

We believe it is our responsibility to support children to enjoy learning, be confident to take risks, ask questions, and understand that confusion and doubt are part of real learning.

We aim to fulfill our responsibility by planning projected learning experiences, which are linked to curriculum requirements. We understand that these experiences need to be challenging but achievable, so that children's self image is not harmed.

We listen carefully and respectfully to children so that the experiences we plan build on their interests, strengths, and questions.

Young children need time and space to learn effectively. We therefore place a high value on time and offer children many opportunities to repeat, revisit and reflect on their previous experiences.

#### **Our Aims**

We therefore aim to support young children:

- To be confident, independent and aspirational
- To form and maintain positive relationships, to work collaboratively and be valued members of the community
- To take responsibility for themselves, each other and their environment

- To question, challenge and solve problems creatively
- To know their strengths and to have the confidence to take risks
- To know that their ideas will be heard and respected, and that they can make a difference

## **Worlebury St Paul's Church of England V.A. Primary School Foundation Stage**

### **Rationale for Learning**

At Worlebury St Paul's School, learning in the early years is celebrated and promoted as a profoundly important stage of development, when vital emotional, social and cognitive functions are being formed in the brain (Blakemore, 1999). We do not view the early years as merely a prologue or a time of preparation for anything subsequent but valuable in its own right.

Supporting our youngest children to develop understanding is the aim of our early education policy. This has required us to re-examine the 'transmission' model of learning, where the adult's role is to transmit knowledge to the child.

We believe that learning and understanding requires feelings and emotions to be fully engaged. For us it is a complex process that involves more than just the disciplines of cognition. We therefore view our youngest children as strong and competent thinkers, not as weak and empty vessels to be filled up with pre-determined knowledge.

### **Young children as mastery learners**

The values that underpin our work with the youngest children in the school aim to promote an image of children as rich, powerful learners and problem solvers. Young children are supported and encouraged to become 'mastery learners' (Dweck, 1985) - to ask questions, take risks, develop resilience and take responsibility for learning. In this way we aim to give high regard to the processes of learning more than the product or outcomes. We believe that the 'imbalances' in young children's thinking should be valued and respected as much as that of reality because they are part of the process of learning and understanding. Therefore, curiosity, confusion, doubt and error are not viewed as moments of weakness but rather the thoughts and emotions that promote further and deeper understanding. In this way, they are valued as the characteristics of learning, thinking, research and creativity.

Our youngest children are viewed and supported as researchers who deserve our trust and respect as thinkers and co-constructors of their own understanding and learning.

### **Self image**

We understand that without positive self-image, this is impossible. Therefore creating esteeming experiences and activities are central to teaching and learning in the early years at Worlebury Primary School. This requires a

community of people within the school who value different points of view. It also requires adults who really look and listen for young children's interests, strengths, the questions they are asking and the problems they are trying to solve. The experiences that we create to scaffold challenge and prompt their thinking will have the potential to either detract or enhance their self-image. It is therefore vitally important that the adult-led experiences do no harm to a child's self-image or image as a learner

### **Social nature of learning**

We believe that learning is a process of social construction and acknowledge the pivotal role of relationships and interactions in all learning.

Our youngest children are challenged, encouraged and supported to work with others and to develop a strong sense of connection, community, collaborative enquiry, and co-operation. We believe that interaction between young children has its own kind of productivity for learning. It enables young children to negotiate and communicate in ways that are often more open, frequent and stimulating than those with adults. We therefore aim to construct experiences that develop children's roles in learning groups, supports their emotional engagement and creates a sense of shared history.

### **Active learners**

Young children are active learners who learn with their whole body and all their senses. Their sensory-motor approach to learning means we try to incorporate visual, auditory and kinaesthetic experiences in to all planned activities. We also respect their need to move around, and take account of their attention span and stamina. We understand that the highest form of physical control for a young child is to sit completely still (Lindon, 2000)!

### **Supporting children's learning**

We believe that young children learn because they want to and have the right to communicate their learning in many different ways. We understand that young children may be non-verbal or have difficulties in communicating through speech, so we aim to encourage children to express themselves through many forms of communication. This might include dramatic play, shadow play, painting, sculpture, dance, puppetry, drawing and collage.

### **Play and time for learning and reflection**

We acknowledge that young children need to be offered the gifts of time and freedom so that they can make connections in their learning, repeat their actions, develop and internalise their understanding. They need time to re-visit and reflect on their previous learning so that they begin to develop memory trace and meta-cognitive processes. We therefore aim to use time flexibly, without pressures of outcomes, and in the best interests of our youngest learners.

Play is a very powerful vehicle for learning for young children. During play they

often practice newly acquired skills, refine their understanding and perform cognitively beyond their actual development (Vygotsky, 1978). Play is defined in the Foundation Stage at Worlebury as central to the 'work' of our youngest children. It is their 'business' and we give it high regard and time throughout the Foundation Stage.

## **Conclusions**

In teaching our youngest children, we therefore draw the following conclusions about their learning;

- Young children learn best in social contexts - in learning groups with other children and adults
- Young children learn by actively exploring and constructing their understanding of the world through their explorations, questions and theories
- Young children learn through self-initiated play and with the guidance and support of informed adults
- Young children learn holistically
- Young children will express their learning and understanding in a variety of ways
- That language development facilitates their learning at all levels

## **Related Documents**

Policy for Assessment and Planning

Rationale for Relationships and Interactions

Rationale for Time Organisation

Rationale for the Physical Environment

This policy will be reviewed according to Policy cycle.

Signed:

Date : 10.09.2013

Equality Impact assessment Review :