

Philosophy

At Holbrook we believe that young children should have the opportunity to learn without pressure. We therefore aim to create a stimulating and challenging environment in which he/she can feel motivated to do just that. We believe that learning experiences should be enjoyable and appropriate to children's ages and stages of development, and that they should promote positive dispositions to learning. As early childhood is the foundation on which they build the rest of their lives we aim to develop confidence and self-esteem by developing skills to enable independent choices. If young children are to learn how to participate in a democratic society, they must have opportunities to take responsibility for their actions and intentions.

Approach to Learning and an Appropriate Curriculum

In our Early Years unit we aim to provide a rich and stimulating environment with ample opportunity for learning through well planned practical first hand experiences, play and talk. Because research has shown that young children learn by being actively involved we aim to allow adequate time for exploring, experimenting and consolidating their learning through play. We aim to foster personal, social and emotional well-being, and enhance the social skills of all our children. We recognise that young children have limited concentration and we aim to promote attention skills and persistence.

Children will sometimes be taught together as a whole class, and sometimes in small groups or individuals. Our activities and experiences are planned to work towards the Foundation Stage Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation year. We aim to provide a high quality curriculum which follows the Development Matters guidance and the Foundation Stage Statutory documents.

When planning our children's learning we aim to build on previous experiences and competencies. Our long term cross-curricular planning is taken from The Foundation Stage Guidance and Development Matters documents. During the Foundation year we gradually build up the lesson input time so that by the end of the year they are ready to transfer into the Key Stage One curriculum. The skills taught take account of the children's stages of development and the processes of learning and influence the organisation of the learning environment. The short-term daily and weekly plans are written by the early years team and evolve as a result of monitoring, evaluating and assessing.

The learning environment is divided into clearly designated areas, with equipment and resources stored on open shelves to allow children easy access. During the Foundation year the children are trained in getting out and organising their own resources and in cleaning and putting them away after use. They also learn to choose their own learning activities from the provocations planned by the Early Years team.

After collecting the pupils from the playground in the mornings they are expected to hang up their own coats, store their own lunchboxes and reading folders. This fosters their sense of independence. Staff then take the register and the children then join the rest of the school for a physical activity "Wake Up Shake Up". A curriculum input activity time follows this. At the end of this time the children have snack café and independent learning time where they have milk or water to drink and a piece of fruit to eat. We believe that this is an important social time together. In order to meet the physical needs of our energetic 4/5 year olds we follow snack cafe with the opportunity for outdoor play, before returning to the classroom for further curriculum activity sessions. There is also time for children to carry out activities outdoors during curriculum time. After lunch there are further sessions on curriculum areas. At the end of the session/day the staff share a story/songs/rhymes with the children, and encourage them to take responsibility for their possessions before they meet their parents/carers.

Assessment and Recording

All children entering school are assessed to ascertain their interests and to form a baseline grid across all 17 aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum, which is used to track progress and plan future learning. The baseline is carried out within the first term and forms part of their Early Years Learning Journeys. At Holbrook we use the Wiltshire Foundation grids as our record of the children's progress and achievements. This gives broad guidance on where children are on entry to school and provides the baseline data from which future work can be planned and progress can be measured. The Foundation Stage grids promote the good early years practice of assessment by observation. These observations and others are then part of the children's ongoing profiling and assessment. We carry out formal and informal types of assessment. The children's records are updated three times a year, Christmas, Easter and June. At the end of the Foundation year the pupils are given one of three levels, emerging, expected and exceeding. Children's progress is reported to parents twice a year and a written report is given towards the end of the Foundation year.

Admissions

At Holbrook we believe that it is good practice for all children to start school on a part time bases and therefore have planned out a phased programme of home visits and school visits which gradually lengthen to include whole mornings and lunchtimes.

Induction

We aim to make the transition from home to school as easy and enjoyable as possible. We try to be sensitive to the needs of the individual and work closely with parents/carers to prepare children for school. We believe that the children's entry into school will be enhanced by a close working relationship with the pre-school providers.

Initially parents are offered an induction meeting at the school the term prior to the new academic year. Then staff from school and pre-school exchange story telling sessions and meet up to discuss the children and to pass on any relevant information to the Foundation Stage teachers. At the beginning of September the children are invited to visit the school for induction sessions, the first of which parents are invited to stay with their children. This is followed up by home visits from the child's teacher and teaching assistant. All children start school on a part time basis and gradually stay for lunch and then full time attendance.

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