

Merstone School



**Early Years
Foundation Stage Policy**

July 2023

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Every Child Matters

Be Safe -

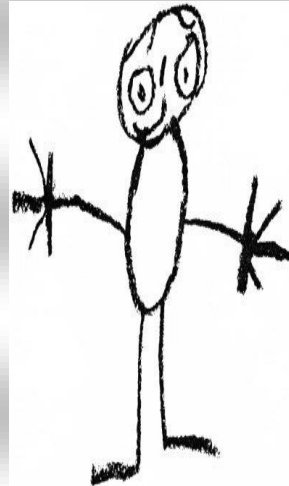
- Being safe and protected - We have high staff ratios to keep your child safe.
- Discovering Boundaries - We encourage independence with suitable support in all settings.
- Making Choices - We aid early choice making throughout the curriculum using Total communication strategies.

Be Healthy -

- Growing and Developing - We develop IEPs and Playplans which build on skills using small steps.
- Physical Well Being - We have access to excellent facilities including soft play and a pool.
- Emotional Well-Being - Each child is allocated a key worker when they arrive at the school..

Enjoy and Achieve-

- Learning Through Experience - Children are multi-sensory learners who need hands on fun.
- Adult Involvement - Adults function as play partners; supporting, not leading play.
- Contexts for Learning - Any opportunity can be used for learning.



Economic Well-Being -

- Respecting Diversity - Before children start we plan home visits to broaden our understanding.
- Communication - We see parents as partners and encourage 2-way communication like home diaries.
- Learning Together - We can best support our children through their parents. We run parent workshops which help us learn together.

Make a Positive Contribution -

- Understanding Feelings - Good behaviour is rewarded throughout the day to aid understanding.
- Friendships - We support children on Integration by setting up 'buddying' systems in mainstream.
- Professional Relationships - We are supported by the Early Years Advisory Service who moderates our assessment processes.

... in Merstone Foundation Stage

Access to Services -

- Transitions and Continuity - We meet regularly with staff from other agencies to ensure smooth transition.
- Multi-Agency Working - We work alongside different agencies such as Physio, Health and Speech and Language.
- The Community - Where appropriate, children have the opportunity to experience local schools supported by Merstone staff.

Introduction

At Merstone School, the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum is delivered to all pupils aged between 2 and 5 years old, in the academic years of Reception and below. Foundation aged pupils at Merstone are taught within 2 or 3 different classes depending upon the cohort sizes in any given academic year and the learning needs of pupils. Usually this will consist of the Pebbles EYAU nursery class (including pre-nursery pupils from the age of 2 years old), either 1 or 2 Reception aged classes or within a Rubies department specific needs based class.

Every Child Matters

The Merstone EYFS teams are committed to supporting the ECM principles using the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum.

The Themes and Commitments are mapped to the ECM principles, and refer to how we actually put these into practice, giving concrete examples.



Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Setting the Standards for Learning, Development and Care for children from birth to five



Every Child Matters
Change For Children



A Unique Child

'Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.'

Theme and the underlying Principle from Early Years Foundation Stage, DFES 2008.

- **Child Development**

We provide a learning environment for children who are aged from 2 to 5 years old. At Merstone EYFS we understand that all children develop at different rates and in individual ways. We complete a baseline using our own EYFS based Merstone Learning Through Play statements, which provides an accurate starting point for planning that child's learning journey. This plots the child against individual stages in all of the seven learning domains. The information is updated and reassessed on a termly basis. This ensures that termly planning includes appropriate next steps for every child.

We also recognise that a small number of children may lose skills as well as gain them if they have serious health issues or a regressive condition. We are able to plan for and support children and their families through this difficult period.

- **Inclusive Practice**

Merstone EYFS classes are fully inclusive class settings. Total Communication systems are threaded throughout the curriculum including the use of sign, symbols, communication aids, objects and pictures to aid understanding. Staff have additional qualifications and knowledge in Autism Spectrum Disorder and Makaton.

We use a range of equipment to ensure our children access the curriculum as fully as possible such as specialised cutlery and beakers or simple grip scissors. We chose rain ponchos for wet weather outside play times as these would be easy for those with physical impairments to wear.

Staff are regularly trained in the administration of emergency medication and at least one member of each class team holds a paediatric First Aid qualification.

We ensure that personal information about the child is collected on the initial Home Visit (appendix 1) and this allows us to have a greater

knowledge of that child's individual needs, behaviour patterns, medication regimes; things that only a parent or carer could know about their child!.

- **Keeping Safe**

In Merstone EYFS we recognise our role and understand our responsibilities when safeguarding children. Staff have regular training in child protection issues and are clear on what action they should take if required. The Head of the Foundation Stage is a fully trained Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) with additional DSL staff based in Merstone School.

Each Foundation aged class group will also have identified Paediatric first aiders within their staffing team with additional paediatric first aiders based in Merstone school alongside the school nursing team.

- **Health and Well-being**

The children within the Merstone EYFS department often have additional medical needs. Staff have regular whole school training in emergency medical procedures. For more specific needs the team would receive training on an individual case basis. Training has including Naso-gastronomy feeding and care administration of oxygen and suction training.

We work collaboratively with the school nurse, School doctor and other relevant health professionals to complete a medical care plan to provide the best support for pupils with complex needs.

The Merstone EYFS team work alongside the school nurse from the beginnings of pre-placement visits. They will often be the 2nd professional who accompanies the Merstone EYFS team member on the home visit; particularly if medical needs are identified as high. This will allow the nurse to ask questions directly from the primary carers about these needs and how best to meet them.

Our children's emotional well-being is of the utmost importance to us as well. The home visit paperwork provides opportunities to ask questions about likes/dislikes, comforts and strategies the parents use to re-assure their children.

Positive Relationships

'Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.'

- Respecting Each Other

Our children often require additional support managing their personal care needs. We have fully equipped bathrooms with a changing bed and hoist for children who require individual manual handling support, and small child sized toilets for children who may be learning to use the toilet. The team ensure that children's personal needs are met with dignity and respect. Good practice means that they will wear protective gloves and aprons. The areas will be wiped down with antibacterial spray after each child has used them.

Families' views are sought about their child's placement in a variety of ways. We seek to offer opportunities for parents to celebrate their child's progress with them by sending home information and encouraging parental input throughout the term. Parents are able to view their child's online learning journal, and are encouraged to look at assessment information and make comments about what they think would be appropriate for their child to work towards during the term.

- Parents as Partners

In Merstone EYFS we value and respect the role of parents as partners. We offer an open door policy which allows parents to come see their children at anytime and discuss concerns with an available staff member. In both EYFS classes, parent activity sessions are held at least once a term, linked to a current theme of learning, where families are invited to come and participate in activities with their child. These are really valuable sessions for all involved, with families being able to experience the EYFS classroom and learning opportunities, whilst also providing an informal opportunity for discussion with staff (see Parent Participation folder for examples and evidence). In Pebbles family trips are offered

once a term (often as a whole class group), where pupils and their families can visit new places with the additional support of nursery staff.

Merstone school offers parent workshops/ groups at different points throughout the term. These cover a range of topics from sessions designed to help families manage direct payments, and local support groups. They also offer opportunities to learn Makaton signs, use the school computers to make symbols for use at home and have training from other specialists.

- **Supporting Learning**

In order for the children to learn effectively in Merstone EYFS they must develop trusting relationships with the Merstone EYFS team. Some children will require additional support in managing their behaviour in order to fully access the curriculum. It is the responsibility of the Merstone EYFS team to set boundaries and rules to ensure the children foster secure relationships.

The Merstone EYFS children are often too young and egocentric to fully understand the feelings of others or follow complex classroom rules. Rules are kept to a minimum though expectations for these to be adhered to are high. Some children, particularly those on the autistic spectrum may require additional behaviour plans to help manage their behaviour effectively. Good behaviour is rewarded throughout the day and praise is more effective if immediate. Praise and positive adult attention forms the greatest part of our reward system and we recognise small achievements such as good sitting or kind hands. Stickers, good news tokens and certificates are used to reflect on a child's behaviour throughout a session or activity. More significant progress or completion of targets is celebrated in the class or whole school star assembly and end of term achievement assembly/ end of term postcards home.

- **Key Person**

The children in Merstone EYFS are allocated a key person from the team when they start at nursery or school. The key worker will often be the team member who completes the initial home visit paperwork and will have the main responsibility for completing the developmental baseline when the child starts Merstone EYFS.

We feel in Merstone EYFS that it is easier for the child to settle and foster a relationship with one member of staff initially and then extend

that trust to the team as a whole. In the same way it is easier for parents and carers at this difficult transition time to communicate with one person and remember one name!

(For further information on the Early Years Foundation Stage advice on the Key person role please visit ([Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/274242/Statutory_framework_for_the_early_years_foundation_stage.pdf))

In relation to Early Years settings, the EYFS describes the key person role as *'The key person must help ensure that every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs. The key person must seek to engage and support parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home. They should also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate.'*

Enabling Environments

'The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.'

- **Observation, Assessment and Planning**

Merstone Pebbles EYAU is an Assessment unit. One of the unit's primary functions is to support children and parents through the EHCP single plan systems, and to find the most suitable school placement for that child. The class teacher generally puts in the request for an EHCP when the child is at the end of their nursery/beginning of their reception year. It is usually advisable for the child to have spent at least 2 terms in the unit before the request for an EHCP is made. However, in some circumstances this is not feasible and an EHCP may be requested after only a term of assessment. At other times it may require much longer; for instance if the child makes significant progress on an integration placement or if medical needs change. The model for assessment information is as follows:

The class teacher completes the initial EHC referral paperwork which is submitted alongside a written report. The school's Family Support Worker meets with the child's parents/carers to complete the family

conversation paperwork which is also then submitted to the Local Authority.

Observation remains an important tool in the assessment process. Children are observed informally, using systems such as post-it notes and Learning Through Play (Earwig) observations in relation to the seven areas of Learning and Development. Staff use the Merstone Learning Through Play assessment statements to link the observational assessment progress to the curriculum on their individual learning journal through the Earwig program which is shared with parents. Observations allow for planning next steps for the Curricular Area and the child.

The Scheme of Work uses the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework ([Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-framework-for-the-early-years-foundation-stage)) and the Early Years Foundation stage profile [Early years foundation stage profile handbook_2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-handbook-2023) as a guide. Planning is child specific and marries the objectives from the Government Guidance with the individual progress data information from the Merstone EYFS assessment tracking systems.

- **Supporting Every Child**

To ensure that every child can be supported according to individual needs the children have Individual Educational Plans or Play plans which follow the SMART target guidance from the SEN Code of Practice 0-25 (please visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>)

Independence and Personal Care

If appropriate targets are also set for the children at Dinner and/or Snack times. These are usually to do with extending experience and fostering independence. These are also evaluated and re-planned on a termly basis.

The EYFS class teams are always happy to start toilet training programmes with children who are ready to be trained. A simple assessment is carried out at home and school to ensure the child is ready to start. This is to ensure we do not cause undue distress to a child and their family by attempting to force a development before the child is ready to make it. Support and advice for this is often also sought from the Children's Learning Disability Nursing team who are also able to provide additional support at home. A "Ready for toilet training?" pack is

available for parents who would be interested in exploring this with their child (see Appendix 2)

- The Learning Environment

Merstone's EYFS classrooms have been designed to encourage the children to be able to select activities with limited adult support. Merstone Pebbles consists of a self-contained building situated just off the main school site, to the left of Smith's Wood Secondary School. It is fully enclosed by fencing, with 2 gates that are locked during the school day except for when access is required. The Pebbles building consists of 2 teaching and learning rooms, a staff and parents room, a small kitchen area, children's toilets including personal care area, an accessible/staff toilet, and a large outdoor learning environment

The Reception class consists of two rooms which face out onto a courtyard. The first room has a bathroom and kitchen leading from it. The outside play facilities are safe and secure as there is no exit from the area except back into the classrooms. Half of the area is covered ensuring that it can be accessed even in bad weather. The area is surrounded by glass to allow for parents/professionals to observe the children at play.

From September 2023, Reception aged pupils with the a learning profile of profound and multiple learning difficulties will be based in the Rubies department. Their classroom environment will consist of a variety of multi-sensory areas relevant to their developmental learning stage. Reception aged pupils in the Rubies department will receive education based upon the 3 prime areas of the EYFS as is relevant to their learning needs. The Rubies department consists of 3 Ruby classes and classrooms all with kitchen area, shared toileting/personal care areas, 1:1/sensory room and secure outdoor learning environment.

- The Wider Context

At Merstone EYFS we actively seek to work in partnership with other settings and professionals. We have strong integration links with several schools and our parent workshops are not only utilised by parents of

children currently attending a Merstone provision, but by parents of children with additional needs in mainstream provision. Local schools and private settings staff have also come along and we try to publicise up and coming sessions as widely as possible. The Parent Workshops/Groups are hosted by a range of professionals from Merstone staff (class teachers, subject leaders/specialists etc.), Speech Therapists and specialist disability services.

Collaborative working runs through our curriculum and planning meetings are held with other relevant professionals to evaluate where the child is and plan for further work. Physiotherapists will work alongside children in the class base to ensure that staff are able to put children into their specialised equipment safely.

Learning and Development

'Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of Learning and Development are equally important and inter-connected.'

- Play and Exploration

Our children often require play skills to be modelled for them due to their learning needs. Staff in the EYFS classes are skilled play partners dovetailing approaches such as Intensive Interaction with the role of play partner. Many of our children will be unable to develop co-operative play skills for some time and feel less threatened by extended parallel play opportunities. The children are encouraged to tolerate peers and learn co-operative skills in small group sessions where activities will include sharing and turn-taking with resources. These skills will then transfer to freer play experiences.

Opportunities for play run throughout the curriculum and all activities have explorative properties to actively engage our learners. Some of our children may have additional sensory impairments and the use of real objects enhances activities. Counting sessions will be underpinned by the use of songs and toys that can be handled such as ten sausages in a real frying pan.

Children with limited physical skills may require some assistance when exploring media. Staff will use different approaches to match learning

needs such as painting with feet or supportive hand-over hand approaches.

- **Active Learning**

We encourage active learning throughout the curriculum and many of our children will be unable to be seated at an activity for some time when they first arrive in the learning environment. Due to the personalised curriculum the children receive we are able to build on small achievable steps which challenge our children, yet ensure they achieve to the best of their abilities.

- **Creativity and Critical Thinking**

The children in Merstone EYFS may have some difficulty when initially thinking creatively. Often the children can rely on repetitive play and routines to feel safe and achieve. Staff are adept at using subtle forms of sabotage to encourage children to problem solve. Staff may select the wrong object to encourage a child to ask for the correct one, sing the wrong song or hold a book upside down. These types of approach rely upon strong, trusting relationships being brokered initially in order to ensure that children understand the 'joke' and their anxiety levels are not increased.

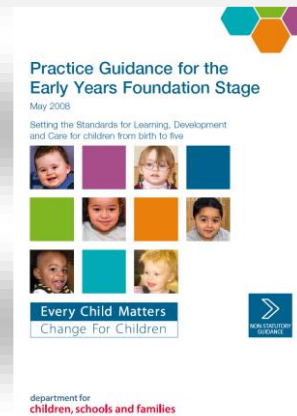
Individual Educational Plans are devised by looking at the child's strengths and building upon them in using small steps. This can encourage children who are quite rigid in their thinking to try new activities, as there is some element of familiarity. This also allows for transference of skills across curricular areas.

Children are encouraged to reflect upon their actions by a brief summary at the end of sessions where staff highlight success, development and achievement. Children are rewarded by stickers and this encourages them to start to develop a sense of agency.

- **Areas of Learning and Development**

The EYFS classes follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum which is made up of seven areas of learning and development. The three prime areas and the four 'specific' areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied: All areas are connected to each other and are equally important.

Activities are delivered as cross-curricular sessions and the children's progress is plotted using the Merstone Learning Through Play assessment framework and the Early Years Profile. Assessment and progress is moderated in a variety of ways to ensure assessment is accurate (see 'Assessment at Merstone EYFS' for further information).



British Values + SMSC

The fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development that encompasses personal development across the whole curriculum.

In Merstone EYFS, the overarching aspects of British values and SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development) are promoted throughout our curriculum and everyday practice. Pupils are encouraged and enabled to make choices and decisions to learn that their "voice" matters. Pupils are supported to respect each others choices, opinions and decisions, learning to take turns and share. They learn about classroom rules and use the whole schools' restorative justice practice to develop an understanding of consequences and values, with staff supporting pupils' developing understanding of how their actions may affect the feelings of others. Staff support pupils to develop their understanding of feelings through the use of stories and communication boards, developing self-confidence in taking measured risks and making choices. We use a range of multicultural resources within our everyday play for example having different play foods in our role play area, and small world figures that represent a range of abilities, cultures, age and genders. We plan for and celebrate key events and important festivals from a range of different cultures and beliefs throughout the academic year, inviting parents and carers to join in with our activities.

We provide opportunities to share and discuss practices, celebrations and experiences among families, faiths, communities, cultures and traditions

Children are encouraged to listen to others and to participate in turn taking games.

Mutual Respect

We promote diversity and challenge stereotypes, for example, sharing stories that reflect and value the diversity of children's experiences and providing resources and activities that challenge gender, cultural and racial stereotyping.

We have an ethos of inclusivity and tolerance where views, faiths, cultures and races are valued and children are engaged with the wider community

Pupils are supported to develop communication surrounding managing their feelings and behaviour

Staff support children to understand their own and others' behaviour and its consequences, and learn to distinguish right from wrong.

The Rule of Law

Class rules are used to promote codes of behaviour

When appropriate we provide opportunities to demonstrate democracy in action, for example, children sharing views on what the theme of their role play area could be with a show of hands.

Staff encourage children to see their role in the bigger picture, encouraging children to know their views count, value each other's views and values and talk about their feelings, for example when they do or do not need help.

Democracy

We provide activities that involve turn-taking, sharing and collaboration.

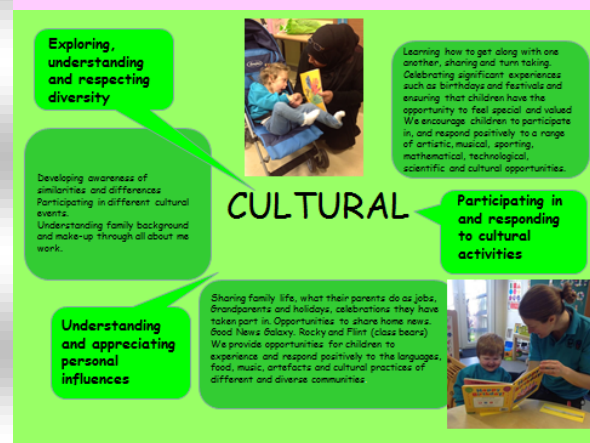
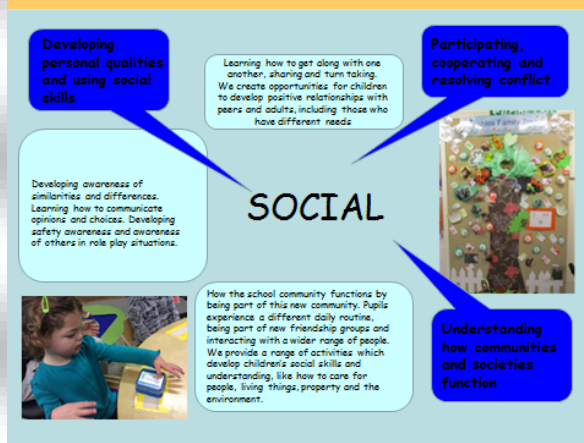
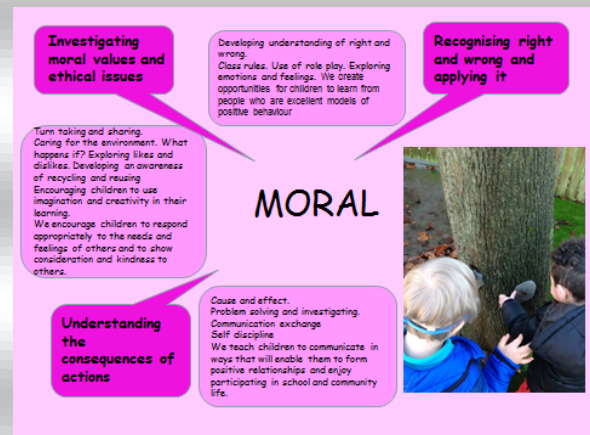
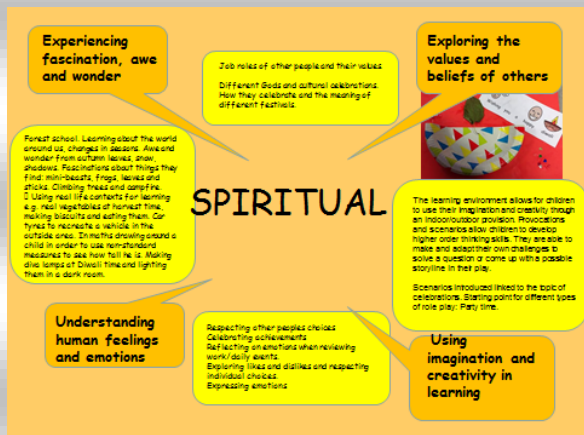
Children are given opportunities to develop enquiring minds in an atmosphere where questions are valued.

Pupils are supported to make choices

Children are given opportunities to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and increase their confidence in their own abilities, for example through allowing children to take risks on an obstacle course, mixing colours, talking about their experiences and learning.

Individual Liberty

Staff encourage a range of experiences that allow children to explore the language of feelings and responsibility.



Teaching and Learning

Quality of teaching, quality of learning, organisation and management, the Early Years curriculum

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Seven Areas of Learning are:

The three 'prime' areas:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

The four 'specific' areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Quality of teaching

This will occur when:

- The child's home background and primary language is valued and considered when preparing and providing learning opportunities and resources.
- Play is recognised as an important tool for children to develop and reflect on their learning
- There are plenty of opportunities for the children to communicate about themselves and the world around them
- They engage in first-hand experiences
- Learning is well planned and the needs of the individual/group are the starting point.
- Children have access to a variety of indoor and outdoor activities
- Resources are accessible to all pupils
- Partnership with parents and carers is positively addressed and is recognised as being vital to the development of the child.

Quality of learning

This will occur when:

- Children are motivated and instructions are clear
- Children are enabled to access materials independently and return them as independently as possible
- Children have a pride in their work and have high expectations
- They are encouraged to reflect on and evaluate their work and that of their peers
- This evaluation is used to raise the standard of their work
- Everyone is involved in the child's development
(parents/carers/adults/etc.)

The materials are appropriate to the needs of the child and the learning experience

Organisation and management

The daily routine of the EYFS classes involves circle times, child initiated activities and adult led small and large group activities. The pupils are encouraged to make choices about their activities as well as focusing on those specifically provided by the practitioners. Due to the complex

needs of the pupils at Merstone School, many learning opportunities are planned by the practitioners, although there is a balance of adult-led, adult initiated and child initiated activities, delivered through indoor and outdoor play.

Learning through play/Activity times - The adult's role during this time is to observe how children gather information, interact with peers, and solve problems, to enter into the children's activities, extend and set up problem solving activities.

The children are encouraged to access different curriculum areas and to put away materials independently.

The children are given the opportunity to evaluate and recall their work although frequently this needs to be supported by the practitioners.

Not all foundation stage focused activities will follow the format of a structured lesson, but instead make take the form of a more open ended experience; with practitioners acting as play partners, promoting the pupils interaction and engagement with others and different materials/resources, as well as extending their learning through the materials provided and questioning/ extension activities related to their individual developmental stages.

CIRCLE TIMES

This will take place at least once every day for all children. Practitioners will spend time taking the register and discussing plans for the day, encouraging and assisting pupils to make activity choices, playing games, singing songs, finger rhymes, reading /telling stories, talking about special events etc.

SMALL/ WHOLE GROUP activities (adult-initiated/ led)

This will take into account the needs, interests and abilities of the children alongside the overarching theme of the term.

Adults will:

- Extend the children's ideas
- Ask open-ended questions
- Set up additional problem solving activities
- Introduce new materials
- Help children practise new skills
- Consolidate previously learnt skills

All activities present the opportunities for cross curricular work and will be planned according to the needs of the individual children.

The Early Years curriculum

The Nature of Learning

Children learn through play. Play is a child's work and provides vital foundations for future learning. Play is the medium through which the Early Years curriculum is experienced by children.

Young children learn by experience. They need to look, touch, smell, listen taste and explore with a variety of play materials. This is of particular importance for young children with special educational needs. Within the EYAU group, all children are supported in developing their potential at their own pace. Pupils are presented with developmentally appropriate activities and adult support, to enable each child to reach their full potential.

Curriculum.

The Early Years Curriculum is an active learning programme, which recognises that learning is a social interactive process between the child, adults, materials and the environment.

The programme emphasises:

- Positive adult child interaction
- A child-friendly learning environment in which children are free to pursue and develop their ideas and share their discoveries with others
- A consistent daily routine
- Team-based child assessment

All EYFS aged pupils at Merstone School work towards the statutory guidelines of the Early Years Foundation Curriculum (see EYFS Scheme of Work for more information).

All Foundation Stage aged pupils at Merstone follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum which is made up of seven areas of learning and development. All areas are connected to each other with activities therefore being delivered as cross-curricular sessions. The children's progress is plotted throughout and at the end of the Foundation Stage using the Merstone Learning Through Play Assessment documents and The Early Years Profile. These assessment processes are moderated in a variety of ways to ensure assessment is accurate. How assessment is

conducted in Merstone's EYFS classes is explained in greater detail in the document 'Assessment at Merstone EYFS'.

Children are active learners and learning begins from birth; therefore we always assess where each child is in their stage of development and the level of their learning when they join the setting. Children's needs, interests and stages of development are always considered when evaluating observations and to inform the planning of future activities. Children's learning is facilitated by purposeful activities which are spontaneously chosen by the child as well as being adult-led and supported when appropriate.

Planning for the foundation stage at Merstone School follows a flexible format. Staff act as play partners supporting individual pupils learning requirements alongside providing a range of learning experiences to support the EYFS structure.

The EYFS requires providers to ensure a balance of child-initiated and adult-led play based activities

Child initiated activity - a self initiated activity wholly decided upon by the child and is the result of their own motivation to explore a project or express an idea. The child takes total ownership of the activity and may change it to a different purpose than originally intended by an adult

Adult initiated activity - an activity planned by an adult that focuses on a specific learning intention that the child may complete independently or with adult support. Children can have free access or they may be directed particularly if they will benefit from the experience

Adult led activity - an activity planned, structured and delivered by an adult to a child or group of children. It focuses on the direct teaching of skills and knowledge with a specific learning intention in mind

Throughout the day adults are able to focus on the unexpected and spontaneous and to look for opportunities to help children clarify their understanding and extend their thinking, for example, by offering additional materials which might help children broaden their goals; or by responding to an event, for example, when a child has a new pet or it begins to snow!

The process of education is as important as the content of the curriculum, i.e. when the children are actively engaged in first hand

experiences and are able to observe, explore and take risks, they are learning how to learn and are developing self-esteem and independence . There is always an adult focused activity for each area of learning throughout the week.

Whilst the overall sessions have clear beginning and end points, the EYAU practitioners are skilled in recognising learning opportunities, therefore activities often have a 'free-flowing' feel i.e. pupils will not necessarily be expected to immediately stop what they are doing due to time constraints (other than home times) or for an adult led focused activity if their current learning can be developed or another learning opportunity has presented itself.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We see this area as of paramount importance, within a secure and stimulating environment children are supported in developing self esteem and the confidence to discover themselves as an individual, to work, co-operate, experience and establish relationships with others in a group outside of their family.

The children are encouraged to:

- Make and express choices
- Demonstrate independence in selecting activities and resources
- Explore new learning
- Develop the perseverance to engage in new play experiences

Pupils are encouraged to, and supported in verbalising their feelings, acknowledging and respecting the needs of others and developing an understanding of what is right and wrong and why.

Adult example and support, activities, stories and the sharing of experiences help to develop an understanding of a range of feelings and care for all living things, property and the environment.

The children are introduced to concepts of: sharing, caring, honesty, relationships, kindness, and feelings.

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE / LITERACY

Merstone School uses Total Communication including the spoken word, Makaton sign language, augmentative communication systems, body signing, objects of reference, PECs and photo/picture cues. All staff have training in total communication and how implement these skills in order to promote individual communication depending upon each child's receptive and communication skills.

Children are encouraged to extend their vocabulary, fluency and listening skills by hearing, participating in having fun with and responding to stories, songs and rhymes, using their preferred method of communication.

Adult-initiated activities in small and large groups familiarise children with the pattern and rhythm of language using a Total Communication approach. Pupils are encouraged to listen to each other's contributions and to learn to play co-operatively.

Mark-making

A variety of mark-making implements for drawing and writing are offered to the children and they are encouraged to make marks, draw and write about things which interest them and which they want to communicate, as appropriate to their individual abilities.

Mark-making is a very important and necessary stage in the development of early literacy. Every child's work is valued and respected.

Fine motor skill development is encouraged through sensory play experiences such as sand and cornflour. A range of mark making tools, paints, clay, dough, and equipment that promotes more precise manipulative skills are provided in order to develop finer muscle tone in their fingers.

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Reading

We encourage our children to love and respect books. Every day, a member of staff will share books with the whole class and at other times with individuals or small groups as required.

We aim to share: fairy stories, poetry, factual books and picture books with the children. Whilst predominately in Merstone school (including Reception aged pupils), reading and phonics is taught through synthetic phonics using cued articulation, children in Pebbles will be introduced to the Jolly Phonics programme as it becomes developmentally appropriate in order to support pupils who may to alternative provisions where the use of Jolly Phonics is often the preferred teaching method. Our more multi-sensory learners will experience stories through story massage and multi-sensory bag books. In Reception, pupils access the school library bus once a week and are able to borrow a book to take home and then return.

We help the children to develop pre-reading skills by using key word symbols alongside text, as well as Makaton signing and talking books. The children are encouraged to use pictures clues and to predict events.

Spoken stories are available for the children to listen to, with all of these activities help the children to discover the relationship between the spoken and the written word. They discover words and pictures have meaning and discover rhymes, rhythms and patterns of words.

There are many games and puzzles provided which enable the children to develop visual discrimination and matching skills necessary for pre-reading development. We provide a fully literate environment in our Early Years and the children are exposed to many signs, symbols, labels and captions around the room.

MATHS

Mathematics enters every area of the Early Years and the development of mathematical concepts is happening all the time.

Through their play and by means of adult-supported practical experiences children become familiar with sorting, matching, ordering, sequencing, recognising and creating patterns and counting everyday objects.

Elements of the daily routine such as preparing snacks, counting those present, number games, songs, rhymes and number-related activities such as jigsaw puzzles help children recognise and use numbers to 10 (and beyond, where appropriate).

Children are encouraged to use their developing mathematical understanding to solve practical problems and their developing mathematical vocabulary to describe shape, position, and size.

Early mathematical concepts are developed such as sorting, matching, colour, shape, size and number.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

A safe and stimulating environment allows children to explore and experiment with a wide range of natural and manufactured materials. Pupils are encouraged to experience and observe features of objects and substances and to recognise differences, patterns, similarities and change.

Children are assisted both indoors and outdoors in exploring and understanding their environment, their families and past and present events in their own lives.

The children explore a range of found materials. They are provided with opportunities to develop skills in cutting, placing, fixing and fastening. Language skills are developed as children talk about what they have made. At times they are encouraged to make something to meet given criteria. The pupils will have opportunities to use ICT equipment and each classroom has at least an interactive whiteboard as well as an iPad. There

are a range of programmes to enable the children to develop switch skills, hand/eye co-ordination leading to fundamental keyboard skills. Specialist adapted equipment such as large rollerball mice and jelly bean switches, are provided for pupils who require additional support in using the computer system. Our programmes allow the children to draw and paint pictures and engage in early reading and numeracy activities. Pupils have frequent food technology sessions which provide the experience of as many techniques concerned with the safe preparation of food as possible, such as stirring, chopping, grating, mixing, rolling and squeezing. Everyone has the opportunity to smell, feel, taste the foods and observe the scientific changes when foods are: beaten, frozen, baked and mixed together.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

A range of large and small equipment and opportunities, both indoors and outdoors, allow children to develop confidence and enjoyment in the use and development of their own physical skills. Adult support enables children safely to meet physical challenges, developing increasing skill, co-ordination and control in moving, climbing and balancing. At the same time, children are supported in the development of the fine motor skills required to use tools such as brushes, pencils and scissors, to handle small objects with increasing control and precision and to choose the correct tool for the job. Children explore a variety of manipulative toys, which develop manual dexterity by slotting, pushing, pressing and threading. More specialist resources such as an accessible roundabout and swing are available on the school playground, and block scissors are provided for our pupils with more physical difficulties.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN

Children are encouraged to use their senses and a wide range of resources in order to express their own ideas, feelings and responses. Art equipment, including paints, glue, crayons, and pencils as well as natural and discarded resources provide for open-ended exploration of colour, shape and texture and the development of skills in painting, drawing and collage.

Children join in with and respond to music, dance and stories and practitioners support and encourage opportunities for imaginative role-play, both individually and as part of the group.

RESOURCES

The children will have the opportunity to select from the following areas:

- o Quiet / book
- o Sand and water
- o Outdoor
- o Construction play
- o Creative/ Role play
- o Writing/mark making
- o Arts + Crafts
- o Table toys/small world
- o ICT
- o Interest/investigation (including messy play)
- o Music

In addition

- Regular food technology sessions
- Regular P.E and or swimming sessions
- Regular access to specialist rooms including soft play, sensory, large playground equipment
- Regular access to the school library