ARK PRIMARY SCHOOLS

EARLY YEARS HANDBOOK

Inspire Excellence

Date of last review:	November 2014	Review period:	1 year
Date of next review:	November 2015	Owner:	Headteacher
Type of policy:	School	LGB or Board approval:	LGB

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Early Years Handbook
Early Years Policy- ARK Primary Schools

"A child is not a vase to be filled, but a candle to be lit" **– Francois Rabelais**

Our vision

Our vision is to create a group of outstanding schools that radically improve our pupils' life chances. We want every pupil at an ARK academy to do well enough by age 18 to have real options: to go to university or to follow the career path of their choice.

Introduction

The earliest years in a child's life are absolutely critical. There is overwhelming evidence that children's experiences in their early years strongly influence their outcomes in later life. A strong start in learning and development is an essential foundation for progress through life. Central to our ethos at ARK is recognising early childhood as this pivotal stage of life; important in itself, and also as providing the essential foundation for improving lifelong learning. The philosophy of ARK upholds the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensures that they permeate our school's aims and vision based on:

1. Inspiring Excellence through

   a. Perseverance

   b. Honesty

   c. Happiness

   d. Aspirations

   e. Respect

At ARK Conway Primary Academy we aim to provide effective practice throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage based on the principles and commitments of the *"Early Years Foundation Stage Framework – May 2008, revised 2011"*.

Aims

We aim to meet each child's needs by:

- caring for the whole child, their health, both physical and mental, their feelings, thinking and spiritual development

- respecting each child and their family

- ensuring each child has the opportunity to develop the skills knowledge and understanding to achieve success within the EYFS and to build a thirst for life long learning

- providing a stimulating environment, indoors and out, providing many opportunities of first hand experiences to encourage our children to be curious, ask questions and to be eager to discover and learn

- providing a thorough and well planned curriculum to meet the statutory requirements of the EYFS Framework and assessment procedures and the ARK principles

- providing a secure, happy, safe and relaxed environment with adequate spaces; inside and outside, busy and quiet, independent and structured, for children to develop as learners

- planning for purposeful play, focussed learning and creating opportunities for children to talk and listen

- providing opportunities and time for children to pursue their own interests

- providing opportunities and time for children to receive direct instruction

- providing opportunities for children to interact and share with others

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- valuing and respecting each child as an individual encouraging them   to gain self-confidence and a sense of self worth

- providing opportunities for each child to make choices and decisions to develop their independence

- providing multi-cultural experiences including resources and stories which reflect different cultures and values

- fostering a partnership with parents and the community

The Learning Environment

The learning environment is particularly important to the early years and when planned skilfully can provide additional support to children's learning and development.
In the early year's environment our children need:
- adults who will foster children's personal, social and emotional development
- adults who know how to interact and respond to children's actions and thinking
- well planned spaces - indoors and out
- learning opportunities - indoors and out
- quiet areas and noisy areas
- resources which will foster literacy, mathematical thinking, knowledge of the world, physical development and creative discovery,
- a strong focus on early literacy and numeracy
- opportunities and resources to encourage communication and language
- opportunities for independent learning
- daily structured teaching sessions
- time to complete tasks, ask questions and to follow through their thoughts and actions

The early years environment - inside and outside needs to be viewed as a whole providing different resources, materials and activities which are freely and easily accessible including:
:
- a role play area
- a wide range of good quality books
- a wide range of good quality numeracy resources
- a wide range of opportunities to draw write and communicate
- investigation area linked to our world
- construction area
- small world area
- music area
- creative area
- malleable area
- ICT area
- sand/water areas

Resources

Resources need to be readily available and of a good quality. The resources within each environment/classroom area need to be evaluated regularly and then added to/renewed as necessary through the findings of audits.
It is important to remember within early years that less is often more and we believe in quality rather than quantity. As far as possible we aim to provide resources which emphasise the natural materials of our environment and allow the greatest flexibility.

The Curriculum

The EYFS Framework covers the development and learning of children from birth to the end of their reception year in school. For us that means that children will arrive into our school having already experienced and

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developed through many aspects of the Framework. Therefore we aim to build on our children's previous experiences as they enter our school to ensure a happy and fulfilling reception year resulting in our children being ready for key stage 1 and beyond. Our nursery and reception curriculum based on ARK's principles has been devised to specifically meet the needs of young children, the statutory requirements.

At ARK our mathematics curriculum has been tailored to adhere to the EYFS statutory framework. For phonics and reading we follow use the Read, Write, Inc. programme.. Reading is further developed through a wide range of reading books.

The Curriculum is divided into seven areas of learning; three of which are prime: **Personal, social and emotional development; Communication and Language and Physical Development.** These prime areas of learning are integrally connected and are respected as transcending cultural differences, reflect the beginnings of child development, are critical for influencing later success in learning and emerge as an outcome of early experience.

The specific areas of learning are **Literacy; Mathematics; Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.**

The early years team's approach to curriculum delivery is through planning teaching, activities and experiences in a way which facilitates progress in learning.

- We aspire to ensure a breadth of balance in the curriculum through carefully planned adult input and sensitive interaction using the EYFS framework whilst also having regard for the skills, knowledge and attitudes the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum will demand. We prioritise enabling all pupils to meet and exceed expected national levels of progress in English and mathematics as the foundation for academic success.
- Appropriate intervention can help children to become more involved in the learning process and provide opportunities for new learning and development, so that they can make progress. Early intervention is a feature of our teaching and learning practice.
- Learning, in the Nursery, is predominately based on child initiated activities, with adult interaction introducing children to new skills, knowledge and understanding as well as extending their existing skills, knowledge and understanding. This approach continues into Reception but with a more formal approach to teaching and learning, in preparation for the beginning of Key Stage 1 in Year 1. This is especially so in the teaching and learning of mathematics and literacy.

At the end of the reception year the statutory assessment against the seventeen early learning goals and the three characteristics of effective learners is collated for each child.

Taking the curriculum outside:

It is important to develop learning opportunities outside because outdoor learning provides the opportunities for:
- the acquisition of gross motor skills
- taking risks
- fostering a love of nature and the environment
- gardening
- large play which is not possible indoors
- learning experiences suited to the outdoor environment
- physical fitness

It is also important to take into consideration the social world we live in which can confine the opportunities which children have to play outside either from a safety point of view or lack of space.

Some crucial aspects of learning can only take place outside e.g. play with large construction equipment, gardening, care of animals, some sand and water activities. It is possible for the child to be more actively involved outside without the restrictions of noise and space.

We aim to provide an outdoor curriculum which is complimentary and is an extension of the indoor curriculum. It is ever changing as it reflects the children's interests and needs.

Health and Safety Outside

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At our school we take health and safety very seriously and Meher Fara (Site Superviser) is the named member of staff to check our early years outdoor area and to ensure that our equipment and resources are in good condition. A first aid box is situated in the area and a system is in place whereby if an incident occurs additional help can be accessed as soon as possible.

Exploration and Play

One of the three characteristics of effective learning is playing.

Play provides opportunities for children to:
- practise co-operation/ make friends
- resolve conflicts
- solve problems/ investigate
- be aware of other people's feelings
- enjoy themselves
- be active
- explore
- have a go
- choose ways to do things and find new ways
- put into meaningful situations their own ideas
- persevere
- concentrate
- develop speaking and listening skills
- instigate and follow through their own learning
- rehearse and put into practise their skills, knowledge and understanding
- take risks within a safe environment

Play provides a rich context for learning and teaching as stated in the EYFS Framework 2008/11.

"Play and Exploration is one of the commitments key to Learning and Development. The explanation of the commitment includes learning through experience, adult involvement and plenty of space and time to play outdoors and indoors. Practitioners need to ensure effective practice and reflection, overcoming time constraints and balancing creative learning with planning for the group."

For play to be valuable it needs to be planned and purposeful. Children need time to develop their play. Adults' interactions with play must be supportive of and responsive to the child's needs and potential.

Planning Observation and Assessment

Long term planning

The long term plans breaks the year down into 6 half termly topics which cover all 7 areas of learning. They give an overview of the school year to ensure curriculum coverage and depth as well as highlighting specific events and activities. This long term overview allows forward planning for such things as school trips, specific specialist resources. The topics chosen have specific resonance and interest to nursery and reception aged children and may be adapted if necessary to take into consideration current events.

Senior management monitor and evaluate the long term plans to ensure curriculum coverage, breadth and depth in line with the statutory framework.

Medium term planning

Our medium term thematic planners for each half term are working documents responsive to children's specific learning needs and interest. They give a weekly breakdown for the half term for each area of learning to inform the short term planning. As such they can be likened to programmes of work used in key stage 1 and 2.

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Short term planning

The weekly plans include learning intentions, differentiation and groupings, assessment and observation opportunities, the role of the adult, key language and questions.

Personalisation Progression and Differentiation

The principle of starting with what the child knows and can do provides the basis for personalisation, differentiation and progression. The process of observation is used to determine each child's starting point and plans are made as to how to develop the child's learning further. Weekly evaluations and assessments are noted on the weekly planning sheets and these are used to inform the following week's planning; this will include any need to take an activity further and the needs of individual children.

Observation and Assessment

Assessment in the early years is based on ongoing observation and assessment which records the progress each child is making from a baseline on entry. The baseline on entry is focussed on early language and communication, personal, social emotional development, and physical development and the records from pre-schools. All staff contribute to the observations and an individual child profile is built up over the year which informs the EYFS Profile which is the statutory assessment at the end of the reception year. The EYFS Profile consists of 17 early learning goals across the 7 areas of learning and a judgement of a child's progress against the 3 characteristics of effective learning.

The profiles are shared with parents on a regular basis and parents are given the opportunity to add their own comments and observations.

Special Educational Needs

Due to the focus on the observation, assessment and planning for individual children any special needs are identified as early possible and shared with parents at the first opportunity. Full details of processes and procedures are found in the school's special needs and inclusion policy.

Parental Involvement

We believe the partnership between parents and the school is vital at this stage in the child's education.
Home/ School links are developed in the following ways:

- Active involvement of parents when settling their children into school
- Curriculum information being shared with parents on a half termly and weekly basis via newsletters and the parent's notice board.
- Nursery and reception children taking home story books/ reading books and through reading diaries.
- Class representative/ parent helpers/ parent workshops/talks
- Termly parent's evenings
- Home School agreements
- Clipboards to leave daily messages
- Notice boards
- Sharing days

Community Links

Visitors are invited into school on a regular basis, for example, school nurse, fire-fighter, optician, librarian, RSPCA, International visitors.
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Induction

It is important that children feel happy and secure when they start School. Therefore we have a planned induction programme consisting of home visits, induction sessions in small groups, parent information sessions and a staggered start over the fist day. We encourage parents to support their children during the early days to help them settle quickly.

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Prior to the child starting in the autumn term families are offered a parent/teacher sharing day. This provides an opportunity for parents to receive necessary information and exchange information with their child's teacher.

Conclusion

Areas for development within Early Years are planned for in the School Development Plan. The Early Years policy will be reviewed annually as part of the school's ongoing system of policy review and improvement.

Observing practice

To challenge and improve practice it is essential to observe both child-initiated play and focused learning both indoors and out.

1. Observation of learning, playing and interacting in the EYFS
(Focused teaching)

Teacher observed_____Observer_____

Date_____ Context_____Purpose_____

Possible prompts	Observation notes	Reflection: Impact on learning
Close, caring and respectful relationships Encourage and support children to relate to others Support children to resolve conflicts through problem-		

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solving		
Observe children as a natural part of all normal activity		
Interpret children's actions and words to try to understand the child's thinking and learning		
Scaffold children's learning through talk, discuss strategies and ideas, suggest possibilities and model approaches		
Provide brief, well planned focused learning opportunities in response to observed interests, learning and development		
Use daily events within the routine to provide worthwhile real-life experiences		
Vary experiences, using fresh, creative and playful approaches		
Provide first-hand experiences to explore and discover		
Directly teach through demonstrating or explaining		
Support children to persevere through difficulties, to take risks, to ask questions and problem-solve		
Use the language of learning to focus children on themselves as learners		
Identify and support next steps in learning		

2. Observation of learning, playing and interacting in the EYFS (child-initiated)

Teacher observed_____Observer_____

Date_____Context_____Purpose_____

Possible prompts	Observation notes	Reflection: Impact on learning
Close, caring and respectful relationships		
Encourage and support children to relate to others		
Support children to resolve		

conflicts through problem-solving		
Ensure sustained time to develop child-initiated activities		
Arrange, resource, and make time for children to freely use rich indoor and outdoor spaces		
Observe children as a natural part of all normal activity		
Interpret children's actions and words to try to understand the child's thinking and learning		
Use sensitivity when deciding when to interact		
Join in play and child-initiated activity following children's agendas		
Scaffold children's learning through talk, discuss strategies and ideas, suggest possibilities and model approaches		
Use daily events within the routine to provide worthwhile real-life experiences		
Directly teach, demonstrating or explaining		
Support children to persevere through difficulties, to take risks, to ask questions and problem-solve		
Use the language of learning to focus children on themselves as learners		
Identify and support next steps in learning		

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3. Observation of learning, playing and interacting in the EYFS
Discussion record

Elements of effective practice

Practitioner's Teacher's key strengths

Areas of development

Possible next steps

Date of feedback _____

Signed _____

Example - Observation of learning, playing and interacting in the EYFS (focused teaching)

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Teacher/Practitioner observed__**Emma**_____Observer_____**EYC**_____

Date__**xx/xx/xx**_____   Context **small group – planting bean seeds**_____

Purpose__ **review effectiveness of support for children's thinking**_____

Possible prompts	Observation notes	Reflection: Impact on learning
Close, caring and respectful relationships	**materials were prepared – yoghurt pots, spoons, compost, bean seed packs, jug of water**	*(Completed in discussion between practitioner and observer)*
Encourage and support children to relate to others	**Several children crowded round the table, and Emma selected 4 to have a go first; sent others off to choose another activity**	**Some children were disappointed – less motivated for child-initiated activity?**
Support children to resolve conflicts through problem-solving		**Focus on getting the job done left little time for children to first explore the materials, or to talk – children couldn't easily relate to their previous knowledge or experience**
Observe children as a natural part of all normal activity	**Emma first demonstrated, then children took turns to spoon in compost, push bean in, and water – waiting between each stage**	
Interpret children's actions and words to try to understand the child's thinking and learning	**Child said, 'I planted seeds in my garden – lettuce seeds.' Emma: 'Did you? With Mummy? That's nice, isn't it?'**	**Waiting for turns lowered involvement**
Scaffold children's learning through talk, discuss strategies and ideas, suggest possibilities and model approaches	**Some conversation about what will grow – Child: 'It will be a big, big plant, like Jack's'. Emma: 'Well, first we have to get them planted carefully.'**	**Missed opportunity to draw out child's thinking, and encourage sharing with peers**
Provide brief, well planned focused learning opportunities in response to observed interests, learning and development		
Use daily events within the routine to provide worthwhile real-life experiences	**Water jug was too big for children to manage alone; Emma held to support with each child.**	**Reduced independence; could have provided smaller jug; or asked children for other ideas of how to add the water by themselves**
Vary experiences, using fresh, creative and playful approaches		
Provide first-hand experiences to explore and discover	**First group sent to place pots on windowsill and choose another activity; Emma called next four to join her – two girls in role play area were reluctant but came when Emma said 'It will only take a minute and then you can go back to the house.'**	**Child-initiated activity interrupted – child sees as less valued by adult? 'Flow' of play broken**
Directly teach through demonstrating or explaining		
Support children to persevere through difficulties, to take risks, to ask questions and problem-solve		
Use the language of learning to focus children on themselves as learners		
Identify and support next steps in learning		

Example - Observation of learning, playing and interacting in the EYFS Discussion record
Elements of effective practice The activity was planned as part of a sequence including use of story and visit to allotments to provide a context for children's learning. It was hands-on, and prepared so that children could get stuck in quickly. The relationships were warm and considerate, and practitioner and children clearly enjoyed each other's company. Emma observed children's responses throughout the activity, and was able to discuss individual children's experiences.
Practitioner's key strengths Clear demonstration and explanation of the planting process to the children, with appropriate language and pace. Good relationships have been established with the children.
Areas of development Important to be clear about the learning objectives – while learning about content (e.g. seeds grow into plants), PSED and communication are also important and supported individually in the interactions. Adult-led activities, even when there is a 'product' or outcome, are better learning opportunities when they to enable children to explore materials, problem-solve and do things in their own way – exploration and discovery are important elements. Time is needed for conversation, and 'playing around' with materials and ideas. Adult as listener -- supporting and extending what children say, for example following through with the child who planted lettuce seeds, facilitating children to talk together about the activity rather than doing most of the talking. Organisation of session – ensuring adult-led activity is managed so that play is valued, supported and not interrupted
Possible next steps • Joint planning of a small group activity, with open-ended possibilities • EYC to model – particular focus on supporting children's thinking through talk • CPD on interaction strategies to support children's thinking – course next term
Date of feedback ____xx/xx/xx___ **Signed** ___Emma_____   _____EYC_____

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4. Observation Record

Setting: **Leader/Manager:**	**Date:** **Time: start:** **end:**
Practitioner(s):	**Observer:**
Contextual information: (including SEN, EAL, CIC etc)	**Age Range:**
	Focus:
Organisation: (e.g. child- initiated, adult – led, whole groups, individual etc)	

		Observation notes

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Observation evaluation /discussion notes	
Strengths:	
Areas for development:	
Agreed actions by:	**Timescale:**
EYC:	
Leader/Manager:	
Practitioner(s):	

Audits of Provision

Setting-based audits are useful to pinpoint and evidence strengths and areas for improvement.

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Literacy Learning Environment Audit

Providing a range of quality literacy experiences and a print-rich physical environment is an important factor in the facilitation and support of literacy learning. It may be useful to review the learning environment using the following guidelines.

	In place	Area for development	Comments
Environmental print: letters and words • Is the setting bright, well organised and inviting to walk into? • Are resources and working areas clearly labelled? • Do the resources reflect the range of families and cultures in Britain? • Are children's names and high-frequency words displayed at child height? • Are greetings/days of the week displayed in English and other languages and scripts? • Is there an attractive pictorial alphabet frieze displayed at child height? • Are poems, songs, children's writing and extracts from shared texts displayed? • Do displays include typed and handwritten text? • Does the teacher read and refer to the print that is displayed around the setting? • Do displays include typed and handwritten text and captions from adults and children? • Are children encouraged and supported to 'read around the room'?			
Opportunities for children to read independently and for adults to read with children • Does reading and writing happen inside and outdoors in YR? • Do adults read to the children most days? • Are there are lots of opportunities to hear, sing and discuss rhymes? • Is the big book stand easily seen by all children during shared reading? • Do children take an active role in group, shared and guided reading? • Are children building a good bank of known texts?			
Books and literacy areas			

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• Do the books in the book corner match the needs and interests of the children? • Are the books of appropriate quality, quantity and variety (hard cover, soft cover, fiction, non-fiction, rhymes…)? • Are big books, favourite and new books and phonics games available for independent use? • Are books included in displays and available resources related to areas of learning other than communication, language and literacy? • Are books from Read Write Inc used systematically by adults and children?			
Early writing • Do children see adults reading and writing for different purposes and in different contexts? • Is there an appealing writing area that includes writing materials, high-frequency word cards, interactive displays, messages, and examples of children's writing available for independent use? • Are there lots of different resources for writing and mark making, such as large sheets of paper, boards, chalks, big brushes, and pens and paper? • Are literacy targets displayed at child height in child-friendly language? • Is there an inviting listening post with a variety of stories and rhymes on tape? • Are puppets, props and small world available for role-play? • Do the outside area in YR and role-play area include opportunities for reading and writing, and have these been modelled by an adult? • Is there enough floor space inside and out in YR for being dramatic and creative, e.g. acting out stories, making dens, working on large sheets of paper? • Are children in YR able to access physical development activities that will build their fine and gross motor skills, e.g. building wrist strength by twirling ribbon sticks, practising writing patterns with big brushes			

and water, making letters in the sand? • Are there lots of opportunities to link language with physical movement, e.g. in action songs and rhymes, cookery, gardening? • Do children have access to a computer and are there suitable reading and writing software programs in use? • If there is an interactive whiteboard, is it accessible to children and are they taught how it is used?			
Resources for phonics teaching • Are there sufficient resources for children, including whiteboards and pens, letter fans (one each), and Yes/No cards? • Do the teacher resources include puppets for demonstration, large clearly visible whiteboard, sticky notes, cards of each phoneme, magnetic letters, and cards for games and activities? • Does the practitioner have a well-organised selection of phonics resources to draw on (fans, mini-whiteboards, etc.) for direct teaching sessions?			

Mathematics Learning Environment Audit

Wherever possible, ensure that all members of the staff team contribute to this audit. It can be completed as part of a PDM. Providing a wide and diverse range of high quality learning experiences and indoor and outdoor environments which support mathematics are vital.

	In place	Area for development	Comments
The Overall Environment – indoor • Is the setting bright, well organised and inviting to walk into? • Are the resources and working areas clearly labelled			

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– with words, pictures or real objects where appropriate? • Do the resources reflect all families and cultures? • Is there a number line which reflects children's interests displayed at child height – with picture clues where appropriate? • Do displays include typed and handwritten numerals, by both adults and children? • Do the displays celebrate children's achievements in Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy *and* support children's future learning? • Are there interactive displays/investigation areas which promote children's exploration of Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy? • Are numbers written in other languages and scripts?			
Mathematics **Workshop/zone/reference area** • Are there story and information texts which support numbers for labels and for counting, calculating and shapes, space and measures? • Is there a height chart showing standard and/or non-standard measures? • Is there a meaningful number line at child height? • Are resources clearly labelled so that children can access them independently? • Are there a wide range of natural resources? E.g. pebbles, fir cones, shells • Are there a wide range of commercially produced resources to support exploration of number and calculating? • Are there a wide range of commercially produced resources to support exploration of shape, space and measures? • Can children access games independently? E.g. lotto, snap, dominoes, track games			

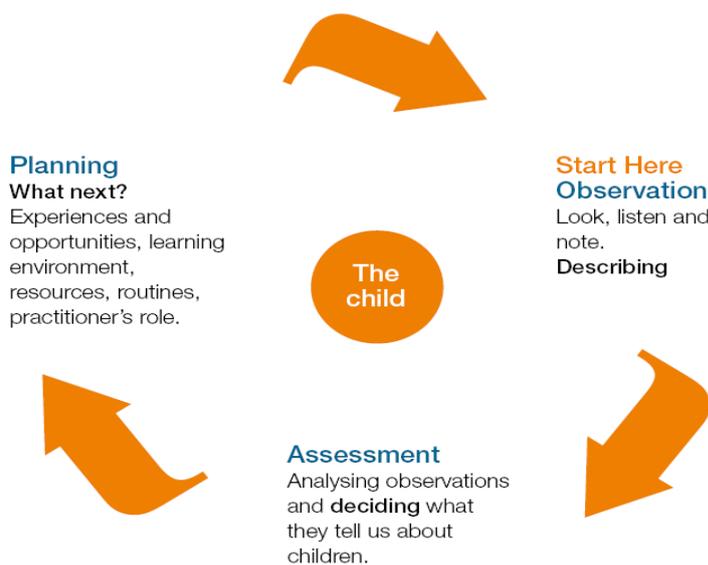|			
• Are there 'collections' of things for children to investigate, sort and sequence? E.g. boxes, buttons, socks, coins, beads, keys • Is there a display which draws attention to numerals in the environment/everyday life? • Can children display their early attempts at recording independently? • Is there a washing line at child height so that children can peg numerals in the correct order?			
Other areas of provision / learning zones • Are resources that support mathematical development high profile in all areas of provision/ learning zones? • Are children encouraged to use resources from the Maths workshop/area to support their learning in other areas of provision? • Are there opportunities for children to match 3D objects to 2D silhouettes in storage? E.g. water play, sand play • Are there books/ cards with words of number songs and rhymes in the music and sound making area? With number props? E.g. five frogs/ ten in a bed • Are there empty boxes and packaging, reclaimed materials, materials to encourage exploration of pattern in the creative workshop? • Are books which support maths high profile in the book area? With story props? • Are numerals explicit in small world, imaginative play? E.g road signs • Are there practical, hands on opportunities to explore shape, space and measures? Eg. Sand, water, play dough, clay? • Does the large block area/ small construction area have visual images of things			

children can construct, photos of children's constructions and a range of construction equipments, including reclaimed materials?			
The outdoor learning environment • Does the outdoor environment complement and extend the indoor environment? • Is the area well organised, inviting and challenging? • Are there opportunities for children to be physical? • Are there opportunities for children to be messy on a large scale? • Are there opportunities for children to explore maths through movement? E.g. obstacle courses, den making, travelling games, tracks, construction on a large scale? • Can children access resources and return them independently? • Is there a washing line at child height so that children can peg numerals in the correct order or socks/t shirts to make repeating patterns? • Are there opportunities to explore drawing shapes, patterns or numerals on a large scale? E.g. chalking on floors, large scale chalk boards, easels, 'painting' with water and decorators' brushes • Are there permanent playground markings or chalked markings which support mathematics? E.g. shapes, numerals, tracks • Is there a number line and height chart? • Are there small resources and 'targets' to support scoring? E.g. basket ball hoop, beanbags, quoits, skittles, knock down cans • Are there resources to support the use of tallies or scoring?			

Assessment

The observation, assessment and planning cycle is often thought of in terms of recorded observations, assessments possibly matched to areas of learning and stages of development, and planning for the next day or the next week. These are useful elements of good practice which may support practitioners in meeting the needs of the children and support the link between what is observed in child-initiated activity and how this can be built upon in planned adult-led activity (and vice versa). Young children, however, are experiencing and learning in the here and now, not storing up their questions until tomorrow or next week. It is in that moment of curiosity, puzzlement, effort or interest – the 'teachable moment' – that the skilful adult makes a difference. By using this cycle on a moment-by-moment basis, the adult will be always alert to individual children (observation), always thinking about what it tells us about the child's thinking (assessment), and always ready to respond by using appropriate strategies at the right moment to support children's well-being and learning (planning for the next moment).

Planning
What next?
Experiences and opportunities, learning environment, resources, routines, practitioner's role.

The child

**Start Here
Observation**
Look, listen and note.
Describing

Assessment
Analysing observations and **deciding** what they tell us about children.

Observation for Assessment

'Observation involves paying attention, noticing, and being able to describe accurately what a child does or says. The description could be written down, or the practitioners could make a mental note of what has been noticed.'

Learning Playing and Interacting (2009)

The revised EYFS emphasises the need for 'Starting with the Child'. Practitioners should:

- Observe children to find out about their needs, what they are interested in and what they can do
- Note children's responses in different situations
- Analyse observations and highlight children's achievements or their need for further support
- Involve parents as part of the ongoing observation and assessment process

Early Communication and Language

Stage	Listening and Attention	Understanding (Receptive Language)	Talking (Expressive Language)	Social Communication

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0-11 months	Turns toward a familiar sound then locates range of sounds with accuracy. Listens to, distinguishes and responds to intonations and sounds of voices. Quietens or alerts to the sound of speech. Fleeting Attention – not under child's control, new stimuli takes whole attention.	Stops and looks when hears own name. *(by 12 months ⊠)*	Gradually develops speech sounds (babbling) to communicate with adults; says sounds like *'baba, nono, gogo'*. *(by 11 months ⊠)*	Gazes at faces and copies facial movements, eg. sticking out tongue. Concentrates intently on faces and enjoys interaction. Uses voice, gesture, eye contact and facial expression to make contact with people and keep their attention. *(by 12 months ⊠)*
8-20 months	Concentrates intently on an object or activity of own choosing for short periods. Pays attention to dominant stimulus – easily distracted by noises or other people talking. Moves whole bodies to sounds they enjoy, such as music or a regular beat. Has a strong exploratory impulse.	Responds to the different things said when in a familiar context with a special person (e.g. *'Where's Mummy?'*, *'Where's your nose?'*). Understanding of single words in context is developing, e.g. *'cup', 'milk', 'daddy'*	Uses single words. *(by 16 months ⊠)* Frequently imitates words and sounds. Enjoys babbling and increasingly experiments with using sounds and words to communicate for a range of purposes (e.g. *teddy, more, no, bye-bye*)	Likes being with familiar adult and watching them. Developing the ability to follow an adult's body language, including pointing and gesture. Learns that their voice and actions have effects on others. Uses pointing with eye gaze to make requests, and to share an interest. *(by 18 months ⊠)*
16-26 months	Listens to and enjoys rhythmic patterns in rhymes and stories. Enjoys rhymes and demonstrates listening by trying to join in with actions or vocalisations. Rigid attention – may appear not to hear.	Selects familiar objects by name and will go and find objects when asked, or identify objects from a group.	Beginning to put two words together (e.g. *'want ball', 'more juice'*) *(by 24 months ⊠)* Uses different types of everyday words (nouns, verbs and adjectives, e.g. *banana, go, sleep, hot*) Beginning to ask simple questions.	Gradually able to engage in 'pretend' play with toys (supports child to imagine another's point of view). Looks to others for responses which confirm, contribute to, or challenge their understanding.
22-36 months	Single channelled attention. Can shift to a different task if attention fully obtained – using child's name helps focus. *(by 36 months ⊠)* Listens with interest to the noises adults make when they read stories. Recognises and responds to many familiar sounds e.g. turning to a knock on the door, looking at or going to the door.	Identifies action words by pointing to the right picture, e.g., "*Who's jumping?*" *(by 30 months ⊠)* Understands 'who', 'what', 'where' in simple questions (e.g. *Who's that/can? What's that? Where is.?*). Developing understanding of simple concepts (e.g. *big/little*)	Learns new words very rapidly and is able to use them in communicating. Uses action, sometimes with limited talk, that is largely concerned with the 'here and now' (e.g. reaches toward toy, saying *'I have it'*). Uses a variety of questions (e.g. *what, where, who*). Uses simple sentences (e.g.' *Mummy gonna work.'*) Beginning to use word endings (e.g. *going, cats*)	Uses language as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings, experiences and thoughts. Holds a conversation, jumping from topic to topic. Enjoys being with and talking to adults and other children. Interested in others' play and will join in. Responds to the feelings of others.
30-50 months	Listens to others in one to one or small groups, when conversation interests them. Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall. Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories. Focusing attention – still listen **or** do, but can shift own attention. Is able to follow directions (if not intently focused on own choice of activity).	Understands use of objects (e.g. "*What do we use to cut things?*") Shows understanding of prepositions such as 'under', 'on top', 'behind' by carrying out an action or selecting correct picture. Beginning to understand 'why' and 'how' questions.	Beginning to use more complex sentences to link thoughts (e.g. using *and, because*). Can retell a simple past event in correct order (e.g. *went down slide, hurt finger*). Uses talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next, recall and relive past experiences. Questions why things happen and gives explanations. Asks e.g. *who, what, when, how.* Uses a range of tenses (e.g. *play, playing, will play, played*)	Beginning to accept the needs of others, with support. Can initiate conversations. Shows confidence in linking up with others for support and guidance. Talks freely about their home and community. Forms friendships with other children.
40-60+ months	Sustains attentive listening, responding to what they have heard with relevant comments, questions or actions. Maintains attention, concentrates and sits quietly when appropriate. Two-channelled attention – can listen and do for short span. Integrated attention – can listen and do in range of situations	Understands humour, e.g. nonsense rhymes, jokes. Demonstrates understanding of "how?" and "why?" questions by giving explanations. Able to follow a story without pictures or props. Understands instructions containing sequencing words; first…after…last,	Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words. Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention. Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations. Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking,	Has confidence to speak to others about their own wants, interests and opinions. Initiates conversation, attends to and takes account of what others say. Explains own knowledge and understanding, and asks appropriate questions of others.

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Guidance on typical development of speech sounds	
Stage	*Developing speech and being understood applies to all languages. Order of acquiring specific sounds – here in English – may vary with other languages.*
0-11 months	Babbles using a range of sound combinations, with changes in pitch, rhythm and loudness. Babbles with intonation and rhythm of home language ('jargon').
8-20 months	Speech consists of a combination of 'jargon' and some real words and may be difficult to understand.
16-26 months	Many immature speech patterns, so speech may not be clear. May leave out last sounds or substitute sounds (e.g. *'tap'* for *'cap'*). Uses most vowels, and *m,p,b,n,t,d,w,h*
22-36 months	Speech becoming clearer, and usually understood by others by 36 months although some immature speech patterns still evident. May still substitute sounds or leave out last sound. Emerging sounds including *k,g,f,s,z,l,y*.
30-50 months	Speech mostly can be understood by others even in connected speech. Emerging use of *ng, sh, ch, j, v, th, r* – may be inconsistent. Sound clusters emerging (e.g. *pl* in *play*, *sm* in *smile*) though some may be simplified (e.g. *'gween'* for *'green'*).
40-60+ months	Overall fully intelligible to others. May be still developing *r* and *th*. May simplify complex clusters (e.g. *skr, str*).
	with range of people; varies according to the demands of the task.	and more abstract concepts – long, short, tall, hard soft, rough.	ideas, feelings and events. Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play.	Shows awareness of the listener when speaking. Expresses needs / feelings in appropriate ways. Forms good relationships with adults and peers. Works as part of a group or class, taking turns

Observation and best-fit judgements

- Judgements of a child's stage of development are made through a process of ongoing observational assessment.
- Observation involves noticing what children do and say in a range of contexts, and includes information from the family about what children do and say at home.
- For children learning English as an additional language, it is important to find out from families about how children use language in their mother tongue and how they communicate at home.
- The assessment is a 'best fit' match to a stage band. This involves considering what is known about the child, and matching it to the development described in the bands. This should be considered separately for each strand of communication and language.
- Within each band, a judgement will be made in two levels – either 'Emerging' when a child shows some development at that level, or 'Secure' when most of the statements reflect the child's current development.
- Development of speech sounds need not be assessed specifically, but it is useful to be aware of typical development which is described in the table to the right.

Checkpoints

- Alongside the 'best fit' judgement, certain 'Checkpoint' statements are included. Marked with a flag ⚑ and a specific age, these are particular statements which should be noted.
- Where a child has not reached a Checkpoint by the age indicated, this is not necessarily a sign of difficulty. The Checkpoint statements serve as an alert for close monitoring including discussion with the family, and perhaps further assessment or support.

Making good progress

- The goal of monitoring children's development is to plan and provide more accurate support for each child to make good progress.

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- How well a setting helps children to make good progress can be determined by analysing the proportion of children who are at risk of delay, as expected, or ahead of expectations in each strand of language and communication. If children are making accelerated progress, the proportion of children at risk of delay should decrease over time.
- In considering whether a child is at risk of delay, as expected, or ahead in each strand of language and communication, it is necessary to consider the child's actual age in months in relation to the overlapping age bands. If a child is within two months of the end of the age band and development is not yet within the band or is judged to be 'Emerging', then a judgement of 'risk of delay' would be appropriate.

From: National Strategies ECAT revised child monitoring document.

ARK Planning Pro Formas

Appendices

1. Long term planning overview
2. Medium term planning – thematic half termly
3. Weekly planner – learning intentions
4. Enhanced provision planner – weekly breakdown of indoor and outdoor activities – child and adult initiated
5. Dialogic book talk planning
6. Core books
7. Core rhymes