



Date of Policy: Autumn 2017

Date of Review: Summer 2020

The STEP Academy Trust Board of Trustees has agreed this Policy and, as such, it applies to all Academies within the Trust.

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) across STEP Academy Trust.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the individual academy EYFS settings, including both teaching and non-teaching staff. In the policy, the term 'setting' refers to the Early Years educational provision within each of the STEP academies. The term 'practitioner' refers to the members of staff working with children within the setting.

To be read in conjunction with the following policies: Teaching and Learning, Assessment, Marking and Presentation, English, Maths, Curriculum, PE, RE, MfL, SRE, RRS and Homework.

Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Although academies will take an individual approach to Early Years, teaching in the EYFS in each setting is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' (March 2017). This document is a principled approach to Early Years education, bringing together children's welfare, learning and development requirements through four themes: 'A Unique Child', 'Positive Relationships', 'Enabling Environments' and 'Children Learn in Different Ways and at Different Rates'.

STEP EYFS settings strive to provide:

1. **quality and consistency** in all early years settings, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind;
2. **a secure foundation** through learning and development opportunities which are planned around the needs and interests of each individual child and are assessed and reviewed regularly;
3. **partnership working** between practitioners and with parents and/or carers'
4. **equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

Areas of Learning and Development

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape educational programmes in STEP early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, the prime areas, are:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

Settings also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

Educational programmes involve activities and experiences for children, as follows:

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

Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children will also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Child will be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.

Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces and measure.

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

Expressive arts and design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

Practitioners will consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and will use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development. Practitioners working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the three prime areas, which are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively, and become ready for school. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime

areas. However, throughout the early years, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, practitioners will discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child. Practitioners will consider whether a child may have a special educational need or disability, which requires specialist support. They will link with, and help families to access, relevant services from other agencies as appropriate.

For children whose home language is not English, academies will take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home. Academies will also ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS; ensuring children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin Year 1. When assessing communication, language and literacy skills, practitioners will assess children's skills in English. If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, practitioners will explore the child's skills in the home language with parents and/or carers, to establish whether there is cause for concern about language delay.

Each area of learning and development will be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. There is an on-going judgement to be made by practitioners about the balance between activities led by children, and activities led or guided by adults. Practitioners will respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. As children grow older, and as their development allows, it is expected that the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults, to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for Year 1.

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners will reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- **playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go';
- **active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements;
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Each child will be assigned a key person. Academies will inform parents and/or carers of the name of the key person, and explain their role, when a child starts attending a setting. The key person will help ensure that every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs. The key person will 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.

A quality learning experience for children requires a quality workforce. STEP academies will endeavour to ensure every setting has a well-qualified, skilled staff.

The level of progress children should be expected to have attained by the end of the EYFS is defined by the early learning goals as set out in the statutory framework.

Assessment

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs and to plan activities and support. On-going assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. In their interactions with children, practitioners will respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share.

Assessment will not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive administration. The administration and management of assessment is limited to that which is absolutely necessary to promote children's successful learning and development. Parents and/or carers will be kept up-to-date with their child's progress and development. Practitioners will address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents and/or carers, and any relevant professionals.

Assessment at the end of the EYFS – the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)

In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, and no later than 30 June in that term, the EYFS Profile will be completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well- rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. The Profile will reflect: on-going observation; all relevant records held by the setting; discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution.

Each child's level of development will be assessed against the early learning goals. Practitioners will indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are exceeding expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). This is the EYFS Profile.

Year 1 teachers will be given a copy of the Profile report together with a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning. These will inform a dialogue between Reception and Year 1 teachers about each child's stage of development and learning needs and assist with the planning of activities in Year 1.

Academies will share the results of the profile with parents and carers and explain when and how they can discuss the Profile with the teacher who completed it. For children who attend more than one setting, the Profile will be completed by the academy where the child spends most of the time. If a child moves to a new school during the academic year, the original school will send their assessment of the child's level of development against the early learning goals to school within 15 days.

The Profile will be completed for all children, including those with special educational needs or disabilities. Reasonable adjustments to the assessment process for children with special educational needs and disabilities will be made as appropriate. Academies may consider whether they may need to seek specialist assistance to help with this. Children will have differing levels of skills and abilities across the Profile and it is important that there is a full assessment of all areas of their development, to inform plans for future activities and to identify any additional support needs.

INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

Academies will report EYFS Profile results to local authorities upon request and permit local authorities to enter their premises to observe the completion of the EYFS Profile. Academies will take part in all reasonable moderation activities specified by their local authorities and provide the local authority with such information relating to the EYFS Profile and assessment as they may reasonably request.

Admissions:

Nursery - Parents are encouraged to apply for a Nursery place for their child after their second birthday. Application forms for admissions are available from each Academy office and Nursery places are allocated during the Summer Term. Parents who are unsuccessful at gaining a place are placed on a waiting list.

Reception - Parents of children who require a Reception place will apply online to their home Local Authority. Please see the school admissions department of your home local authority, the Academy website and/or Academy Admission Policy for details. All prospective parents are invited to visit the Academies and are taken on an informal tour. A prospectus is available to all prospective parents. Once pupils have accepted a place they are invited to a New Parents meeting which is held towards the end of the summer term; separate meetings being held for children starting in Nursery and in Reception. Before children start Nursery or Reception, they will be invited to visit their class with their parents. Staff use the visits as an opportunity to start pupils' profiles and gather important information about the pupil.

Parents as Partners: Throughout STEP Academy Trust we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework. We understand that an effective partnership between Academy and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development. Practitioners will endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents. We value the role of parents as children's primary educators.

Practitioners will encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual.

Equal Opportunities

All practitioners have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered in the EYFS setting. All children, irrespective of gender, ability, special educational need, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development within the EYFS settings across the Trust.