



## Early Years Philosophy (Happy, Healthy, High Achievers)

### Introduction:

This highlights the educational theories and publications that have influenced our pedagogy within Lowbrook Academy and should be read in conjunction with our Curriculum and Teaching and Learning policies. At Lowbrook we feel our Early Years (EY) arrangements are unique, following recommendations of the Cambridge Review the EY encompasses the first two years at our school. The traditional Foundation stage and Year 1 work closely to ensure the transition is comprehensive and progressive. When the children start at Lowbrook we analyse their EYFS data from the previous settings and spend the first term getting to know each child individually.

At Lowbrook Academy our philosophy is based on the belief that all children will be good readers, writers and spellers as they progress through the school but furthermore that all children should be given a personalised education that ensures they all enter the primary phase as well rounded children who have achieved their EYFS objectives.

### Starting Date

Under current law, children in the UK must be in education from the term of their fifth birthday. The law also states that school admission codes must provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday.

Following guidance from the Department for Education here at Lowbrook we believe that most but not all children are ready for school in September. We therefore allow entry for children in the term of their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday if it is felt this would be beneficial.

The EYFS guidance advises that children who attend school shortly after their fourth birthday need special consideration to ensure that their particular needs are met. Here at Lowbrook we follow a ratio of 1:10 in our foundation stage classes ensuring all children receive high quality learning within a safe and stimulating environment.

### Staffing

The adults in our EY classes are well trained and have a range of qualifications and experience. These qualifications include QTS, BA (Hons) Education, NVQ 2, HLTA and FdA in Early Years Childcare and Education. All teaching assistants are EY specialists and have a wide range of experience in EYs. The Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) found that 'qualified staff in the most effective settings provide children with more experience of academic activities (especially language and mathematics) and they encourage children to engage in activities with high cognitive challenge.' REPEY found that the most highly qualified staff also provided the most teaching, noting that they were more effective in their interactions with the children, using the most sustained shared thinking. At Lowbrook we feel the level of qualifications held by the



staff members in the EYs supports REPE providing effective teaching and planning, ensuring all children reach their full potential. All Foundation Stage teaching staff have Paediatric First Aid training.

### **Child initiated and adult led play**

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

At Lowbrook the children receive a balance of child initiated and adult led learning judged appropriate to each child. Assessments are based on daily observations of children learning in a range of contexts. Some observation will be planned and other spontaneous. This follows the EYFS 2013 guidelines.

This is demonstrated during phonics teaching: the children are taught phonics based on the Letters & Sounds document, supported by Ruth Miskin materials and phonic reading books. However, the children are grouped based on their previous knowledge and their needs. They are regularly observed and assessed to plan next steps according to AoL. Books will be used where appropriate for example phonics extension activities.

Theory's such as Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) has been defined as

*'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in a collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978. P86).*

Therefore suggesting a child's development is minimal without adult interaction raising the importance of adult led activities and teaching in early years to ensure a child reaches their full potential.

Vygotsky believed that when a student is at the ZPD for a particular task, providing the appropriate assistance (scaffolding) will give the student enough of a "boost" to achieve the task. Once the student, with the benefit of scaffolding, masters the task, the scaffolding can then be removed and the student will then be able to complete the task again on his or her own.

### **Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY)**

Within the EY it is often observed that some of the children may well continue with the activity by themselves and even teach their peers. REPEY found best practice encouraged sustained shared thinking which occurred between child and either an adult or a single peer partner. We support this belief by encouraging pair and small group work within the setting.

We ensure our EY lessons are clear and concise with a short and active input where all children participate in peer or group discussion as well as team games and whole class singing or rhymes. The group work is based on the individual children's needs. While some group work during the lessons are independent and while the children may be steered towards particular activities they may use the resources for their own outcome and this is encouraged and celebrated rather than corrected. The children all work in groups with the teacher and work independently during the course of the week. Furthermore, REPEY (2002) found most effective settings involve a balance of 'teacher-directed, programmed learning approach [and] an open framework approach where children are provided with 'free' access to a range of instructive learning environments in which adults support children's learning' (p4). So, as well as 'teacher-directed' activities. The children have lots of time for free play during the course of the day to ensure they are fulfilling their own interests and schemes (as supported by Piaget) where they have free access to the outdoor area to play in the sandpit, water, bikes and scooters, in the play house, creative arts activities inc. musical instruments, the construction toys or small world. Inside it reflect the outdoor area there are always art activities, reading and maths activities, a role play area and also an excellent range of ICT activities including ipads, laptops and the IWB. The children know they can interact freely with the range of resources that are available.

### **The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE)**

The finding of EPPE (2003) suggests that the learning environment should be set out with activities to enhance children's learning, so that child initiated activities still extends learning. The learning environment at Lowbrook demonstrates this and as a result delivers outstanding results by creating children that feel positive in themselves to attempt tasks rather than saying it's too hard. All children leave EY with recognition of the phase 2 and 3 phonic sounds as well as being able to read and write basic sentences. All children can recognise the numbers to at least 10 and can count, order numbers as well as relate this to everyday life; they are confident and controlled within their own bodies and furthermore they have enquiring minds and all feel safe to develop and grow into well rounded individuals.

### **Assessment**

Here at Lowbrook we have high expectations, thorough initial and ongoing assessment identifies what children can do, what they enjoy doing and what they need to do to progress. Experienced adults use this information and their understanding of child development to plan effectively the next challenges to stretch each child's learning, play and exploration. As a result children at Lowbrook are enabled to build on what they already know and reach their full potential in their learning and development.

Assessment, based on observation of children's learning and development, is an integral part of the EYFS. At Lowbrook we complete an EYFS profile for each child during the academic year. The profile describes the child's level of attainment at the end of the EYFS and identifies their learning



needs for the next stage of school. Reporting arrangements are the same throughout the school and this is covered in detail in the Assessment and Reporting policy.

## References

- DCSF, (2013) The Early Years Foundation Stage, Nottingham, DCSF Publications
- SIRAJI-BLATCHFORD, I. SYLVA, K MUTTOCK, S GILDEN, R AND BELL, D (2002) Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY), London DfES publications.
- SYLVA, K MELHUIISH, E SAMMONS, P SIRAJI-BLATCHFORD, I TAGGART, B AND ELLIOT, K (2003). The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE), London DfES publications

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## Related Policies

Assessment  
Curriculum

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The Governing Body approved this policy on date:

Signed:

Chair of Governors

Signed:

Executive Principal