

Intent, Implementation, and Impact for Early Years

Rationale

At Dixons Allerton Academy, we aim to curate a learning environment in which children are encouraged to develop holistically. We provide motivating first-hand experiences to help children to reach their full potential, build resilience and a lifelong love of learning. Practical learning experiences, both indoors and outdoors, coupled with the development of key skills and powerful knowledge, ensure children are curious, motivated, happy and well-rounded individuals, capable of success both now and in the future of an ever-changing world.

“Play is essential for children’s development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems”
(Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DfE, 2026)

Play is a vital part of Early Childhood Education. Through our skills continuums and highly tailored staff interactions, we ensure our children are constantly challenged within provision and are afforded the chance to find out what they are best in the world at. We believe children should be offered ample time to revisit and consolidate their learning in a meaningful and playful way, which is why all our children engage in independent learning for at least 3 hours each day.

Every child in our care is a unique individual, with differing ideas and knowledge bases. We aim to capture the multitude of ways in which children express their ideas, thoughts and feelings within our pedagogy and space. Therefore, our curriculum is predominantly child-centred, guided by the principals of the Reggio Emilia approach, following the interests and fascinations of the children as they emerge. This, combined with coherent, well-planned and sequential teacher-directed inputs ensures our children leave EYFS with the knowledge and vocabulary they will need to succeed.

Dixons Allerton is an area with high levels of deprivation and many of our pupils join us from disadvantaged backgrounds and with complex needs. Many children arrive well below age-related expectations and with significant delays in communication and language development. As such, we prioritise the prime areas of learning throughout the whole of foundation stage but, particularly in Nursery, as we believe success in these areas underpins all future learning. As pupils move into Reception, we invest time and energy into helping pupils develop a love of reading, writing and number. A thoughtful and well-resourced environment, coupled with sensitive, tailored interactions and a well sequenced curriculum ensure that all children can reach their full potential.

Intent: What we aim to do

At Dixons Allerton Academy we recognise the importance of giving our children the best possible start to their education and place great value on the development of children as individuals and provide them with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to be prepared for the challenges in Key Stage One and beyond. Through living our academy values of Happiness, Industry and Responsibility we aim to deliver our vision of improving student achievement, developing character, creating an academic culture and raising aspirations by ensuring daily practices are outstanding.

Our intent is to:

- Create a natural learning environment that is nurturing and calming and one that is full of purposeful, provoking and challenging activities in which learning can take place.
- Deliver a holistic curriculum that considers each child’s existing knowledge and experiences, ensuring that we do not expect children to aspire to things they have never encountered. We will broaden children’s knowledge and experiences by providing opportunities to try new things and encourage children to relish challenges.
- Ensure all children achieve their full academic potential, no matter their starting points.
- Ensure play is a driver for children’s learning by allowing ample time to practise, revise and extend knowledge and skills in the learning environment.
- Using a Reggio approach, observe and respond to children’s interests and use these to inform planning and shape the learning environment.
- Enable children to develop characteristics of effective learning, which will enable them to become independent, resourceful and resilient learners now and throughout their education.
- Create an environment rich in opportunities to develop Oracy, so that all children develop their own voice and learn to communicate effectively.
- Uphold high expectations of children to encourage the development of respect, perseverance and problem solving.
- Work harmoniously with parents and carers to ensure children reach their full potential no matter their starting point.
- Develop the skills and expertise of staff working in EYFS through regular and comprehensive professional development.

Implementation: How we do it

Curriculum:

At Dixons Allerton Academy we follow the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. This consists of four key principles in which our Early Years curriculum is centred.

Unique Child – Every child is unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

Positive Relationships – Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.

Enabling Environments – Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and carers.

Learning and Development – Children develop and learn in different ways. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early year's provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

We ensure that all children experience and develop across the seven areas of learning set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, through a balance of adult lead teaching and child-initiated play.

Prime Areas of Learning:
Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Communication and Language
Physical Development

Specific Areas of Learning:
Literacy
Mathematics
Understanding the World
Expressive Arts and Design

The characteristics of effective learning (CoEL) underpin all that we do at Dixons Allerton Academy. By placing the focus on how children learn rather than what they learn, we ensure that children form positive attitudes about learning that will last a lifetime.

- 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.

At Dixons Allerton, we provide a curriculum and educational experience that combines key texts, children's interests, topic themes and enrichments, to ensure children are motivated to learn. Termly enrichments and celebrations that deepen children's life experience and knowledge of the world are key to building cultural capital in EYFS.

A sequential and well-planned, coherent curriculum, that sets out both the substantive and disciplinary knowledge children need across all areas of learning, is used to ensure children are thoroughly prepared for Key Stage One. With a progressive curriculum building on previous knowledge and skills, staff ensure all children make accelerated progress from their individual starting points.

To support a playful and provision-based curriculum, skills continuums in key areas of learning are used to ensure an increasingly difficult skill level is mastered year on year and to ensure staff have the knowledge to challenge and move learning forward for all children, no matter their individual starting points.

Reading is at the heart of our curriculum. Half termly key texts are chosen to help children develop an understanding of the world around them and to explore key PSED themes. Daily story times develop a love of reading in our children and offer a chance to develop comprehension and vocabulary. Children in Reception are read with 1-1 at least once per week with a book that is closely matched to their phonic ability, that is taken home to read with parents. Children in both Nursery and Reception take a library book home each week. In Reception, daily 'Talk Through Stories' sessions help children love stories and bring them to life through talk. It specifically and systematically builds their vocabulary and comprehension to they understand and love the books that they will go on to read for themselves in the future.

At Dixons Allerton, daily differentiated phonics lessons are delivered through the Read, Write Inc phonics scheme. Children are assessed on entry to Reception and are grouped according to their starting points. Children are re-assessed every half term and grouped accordingly to ensure children make rapid progress from their starting points. Daily phonics interventions happen for those who need it in Reception to allow them to keep up not catch up.

Successfully securing the Prime areas of learning is the key to future success. To support this, we place a great emphasis on the development of children's speech and language development. Staff implement colourful semantics, ELSEC and NELI intervention programmes for identified children. Early intervention, and referrals for children with an identified need help to ensure all children have carefully planned for next steps. Time for daily stories and rhymes is built in to ensure a focus on oracy and vocabulary development. Specific and high leverage vocabulary is planned for and identified across all lessons and provision areas. Alongside language development, our playful child centred curriculum promotes the development of children's executive function and self-regulation, through well-established rules and routines, that are embedded in positive relationships, behaviour management and rhymes.

Play:



Play is an integral part of the curriculum at Dixons Allerton Academy. Children have ample time and opportunity to consolidate their learning within their independent play, with at least three hours of uninterrupted provision time per day in Reception and 2 hours per session in Nursery. In EYFS, children spend the majority of their time engaged in playful, independent learning, that is scaffolded by highly intuitive and skilful staff. High-quality interactions with adults, based upon sustained, shared thinking theory and the ShREC approach, support children to extend and develop their thinking. Through a predominantly play based curriculum, interspersed with focussed teaching of knowledge and skills, we ensure children make rapid progress from their individual starting points, through a carefully planned balance of child led and adult led activities. Children in Reception have one adult led literacy focus per week and are individually chosen for same day maths interventions dependent on need. Children in Nursery partake in more focussed learning opportunities as the year progresses. The time in which all children are engaged in more adult led focussed learning will increase as the year progresses.

Environment:

A thoughtful, calm and holistic learning environment, based on the philosophies of Reggio, Montessori, Hygge and the Curiosity Approach is central to our educational offer at DAA. A well-resourced, provision-based learning environment ensures children are provided with challenge and inspired to explore, discover and are intrinsically motivated to learn. Provision enhancements are scaled back at the beginning of each year to match the developmental stages of the children and are enhanced progressively throughout the year to ensure adequate challenge. Activities and provocations are based upon children's learning, interests and identified gaps in knowledge and skills. A variety of materials and tools for learning are provided for children to use to explore, experiment with and capture their learning, thoughts and experiences with. Areas of provision are planned alongside the progressive skills continuums, to ensure resources are suitable and challenging for children.

Outdoor Learning:

As Margaret McMillan once said, "The best classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky". At Dixons Allerton, we recognise the way in which young children spend their time has long term implications for their physical and mental health, the skills they develop and their attitudes towards the world. We recognise the modern challenges of screentime and lack of outdoor space many of our families have and so children at DAA engage in outdoor learning every day. Our aim is to prepare our children for life, not merely the next phase of their education and so we place great emphasis on the development of problem solving, resilience and risk management skills that outdoor learning gives our students. A well-resourced provision, coupled with highly skilled staff ensures all children can develop their mental and physical health and well-being, alongside development in all other areas of learning.

Reggio Emilia Approach:

At Dixons Allerton, the Reggio Emilia approach is an educational philosophy that underpins all our work with the children. The approach is based on seeing children as protagonists in their own learning, as strong and intelligent people who should be given every opportunity to reach their full potential. It puts children in the driver's seat and sees them as curious individuals, with the power and potential to develop and learn from their environment and the relationships they build with others. Learning is driven by the children themselves, and we undertake projects based upon subjects and topics the children are interested in. Children think of their own questions and set about conducting their own research to find the answers. Children are inspired and influenced by everything that is around them and so our environment and what we provide to children are crucial. The classroom is the children's "third teacher" and so we put lots of thought and effort into our classroom and the resources we provide to the children. Teachers spend lots of time observing and working closely with the children. Scaffolding their learning and thinking about how to extend the projects children are undertaking.

Parents as Partners:

We recognise that parents and carers are children's first educators and research shows that involving parents and carers in their children's learning is the most important factor in enabling children to do well, regardless of background. At DAA, we pride ourselves on having excellent relationships with our families, to secure the best outcomes for our students. Parents are invited to regular stay and play sessions and parents workshops are provided on a termly basis to give parents the tools to support their children with their education at home. Home learning opportunities in the form of reading and key facts sheets are provided half termly. Learning is shared with parents through online learning journal Tapestry, to help build a shared understanding of children's accomplishments and life at school.

Inclusion:

Children with special educational needs will be supported as appropriate to enable them to access the curriculum fully. This includes children that are working beyond the expected level and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. Learning Plans and Development Journals identify targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support in line with the school's Special Educational Needs Policy. The use of BSquared allows us to track the development of our highest need children in the smallest steps, so that all progress can be celebrated no matter how small.

The school's SEN Co-ordinator is responsible for providing additional information and advice to staff and parents and for arranging external intervention and support as necessary. Due to the growing need of communication and language difficulties, all children in EYFS are screened and interventions/ tailored in class support is planned and delivered.

In line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy, we will provide all children, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability with equal access to all aspects of school life to ensure that every child is valued as an individual. All staff are role models and are aware of the influence they have in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical attitudes.

Safeguarding and Welfare:

Children's safety and welfare is paramount. By implementing stringent policies and procedures we ensure our children's safety and create a safe, secure environment for children to learn in. We promote the good health of children by; including the provision of nutritious food, teaching and discussing the importance of oral health each half term, providing Nursery children with toothbrushes and toothpaste and organising for health visitors and a nutritionist to deliver a parent workshop each year.

A staff ratio of 1:6 ensures that children are kept safe during any trips or visits.

At mealtimes, all children are supported by paediatric first aid teachers and teachers continually monitor all children for signs of choking or allergic reactions. Please see our safe sleep policy for specific details on how we support children who fall asleep at school.

Transitions:



As a school, we recognise the importance and impact transition has on a child's wellbeing and educational attainment. To help support our children in achieving their potential we do the following:

Nursery: A home visit is completed before the child attends their first session in Nursery. This is followed by a settling in visit with the parent. Next steps are decided on an individual basis and if necessary, a child will attend with their parent or have shorter visits to school. Where possible, a child attends full sessions immediately after their visit with a parent.

Reception: During the Summer term, staff will visit each child in their preschool to meet the child and gather information to support their transition to school. Each child and their parents will then be invited to spend time at DAA, to familiarise themselves with the environment. We host a transition evening where parents can find out the crucial details to their child's transition. All families are sent a welcome family booklet, that inform them of everything they need to know. In the Summer term, we hold a large outdoor event for all children, including those who will be joining us in the September to come and experience outdoor learning. In September, all children receive a home visit to help build relationships between staff and children.

Year One: When transitioning to Year One, Year One staff will spend time in Reception to build relationships with the children. Children will then have short visits up to the Year One classrooms to familiarise themselves with the environment. Class teachers will meet to discuss each child, the EYFSP and their next steps.

Impact: How we know it is successful

At Dixons Allerton Academy we strive to ensure all our children leave us as happy, confident, well-rounded children. All our children often make more than expected progress from their varied starting points and we aim for all children to reach the Early Learning Goals and be at least in line with National Expectations. The broad and balanced curriculum design ensures that the needs of individual children including EAL, SEND and disadvantaged children can be met within the environment of high-quality first teaching, supported by targeted intervention where appropriate.

Progress is measured across the year through formative and summative assessments, which are based on teacher knowledge and observations and how well children are progressing through our bespoke curriculum. Below are the official summative assessment points. All formative assessment will be on-going using online assessment tool Tapestry, with children deemed as either on track or not yet on track. Children identified as not on track will become focus children and will be discussed in greater detail, where steps to support the child will be put in place. All assessments are best fit.

1. Baseline – September (or on entry for Nursery)
2. C1 – November
3. C2- February
4. C3- June
5. End of Year – Reception assessed against Early Learning Goals. Nursery assessed against development checkpoints and our curriculum.

Teachers use their detailed knowledge of their children and their expert professional judgment to assess children. While we do not require reams of physical evidence to support this judgement, we aim to observe children once every two weeks to help support our assessments. These observations will be broad and balanced, and recorded on Tapestry for parents to view. It is the responsibility of class teachers to classify observations into the appropriate area of learning and publish observations on a bi-weekly basis. The learning environment and planned activities will be moulded by assessment and observational outcomes. Children deemed as 'not on track' are discussed at regular team meetings to ensure the whole staff team are aware of next steps and can support children as needed.

Alongside formative assessment, staff will assess Reception children using Read, Write Inc Phonics assessments every half term. Children will then be placed into phonics groups according to assessment outcomes. To ensure secure and consistent judgments, external moderations are held with other schools within our trust, and we hold termly internal moderations as a staff team.

