Intent statement for Reception outdoor area

BEACON PRIMARY ACADEMY

Intent:

Our EYFS outdoor area is divided into two parts. Both spaces encourage the rapid development of physical skills (both fine and gross motor), promote collaborative play to enhance children's social skills, develop imagination and act as a hot spot for communication, awe and wonder, where children can become curious and independent learners. This space is a place where learning is both child-led and interest-led, fostering high levels of engagement, problem solving, critical thinking and most importantly, a real love of learning.

We aim to create a space where child-led exploration is at the heart of all learning, with children taking ownership of their play, problem-solving, and decision-making. The construction area is intentionally open-ended, enabling children to return to their ideas over time, follow their fascinations, and direct their own learning.

High-quality adult interactions underpin our approach, with our skilled practitioners observing closely and joining play sensitively to extend thinking and introduce and expand vocabulary. Communication and language development is a key focus for our children, with every experience providing opportunities for conversation, questioning, storytelling, and new language to be embedded in context.

Through imaginative play in areas such as the mud kitchen, stage, 'The yard' and loose parts area, children develop creativity, collaboration, and narrative thinking. Natural materials and seasonal changes inspire exploration, risk-taking, and a deepening understanding of the world around them.

Our outdoor provision is not a separate part of the curriculum, but an integral space that supports children's next steps through careful consideration of enhancements to the space, planned activities and deliberate addition of resources to enrich children's play.

Year on year our entry data for our F2 children demonstrates the need to prioritise communication and Language (speaking, listening and attention and understanding) PSHE (Managing self, building relationships and self-regulation) as well as physical skills (fine and gross motor). Our entry data drives our intent to secure rapid progress within these areas of learning.

Implementation:

CPD- research led approach:

- Regular ongoing CPD is provided to all staff that explores the latest research around high quality interactions in EYFS.
- Staff learn about effective strategies to develop communication and language through interactions during play and child led activities- including expanding language, modelling, rephrasing, conversations and narrating.
- Staff are familiar with the ShREC approach – four evidence informed strategies to promote high quality interactions with young children. Practitioners work hard to embed these strategies in their daily practice.
- On going monitoring and evaluation at school and trust level ensures that CPD is having an impact on delivering high quality interactions with our children.

Interest-led and child-led activities:

- Activities will be flexible and responsive to the children's interests. The adult's role will be to observe and listen to children's ideas and extend their learning with open-ended questions and facilitation of further resources or enhancements.

- In practice, this might be responding to a child that shows an interest in insects, by providing magnifying glasses, non-fiction books, paper to encourage observational drawings or research habitats by hunting for more bugs- sparking further inquiry.
- Through opening ended resources, children will be encouraged to create their own play scenarios, such as building a den, collecting and exploring natural materials to make a potion in the mud kitchen. These opportunities foster problem-solving and collaboration, where children lead the learning and adults support and facilitate.

High-quality interaction and facilitation:

- Adults will engage with children at their level, providing rich, open-ended questions that encourage deeper thinking. Practitioners begin their questions with "I wonder…" in order to encourage children to make connections and develop curiosity and motivation to what to know more.
- Adults will model vocabulary and communication skills, while also allowing children the space to verbalise their thoughts and ideas.
- Adults will narrate children's play in order to allow children to hear and learn well-structured language and new vocabulary which links directly to their actions in play.
- By actively participating in play, adults will scaffold experiences- offering new words, concepts, or materials when necessary to extend children's thinking.

Independence and curiosity:

- The outdoor area will encourage children to explore at their own pace, whether that's navigating their way around the road, gathering materials for their mud kitchen recipe, making observational drawings or building an obstacle course using the planks and crates in the loose parts area.
- The mud kitchen will be a key focus for developing both independence and creativity. Children will be encouraged to change into their boots, gather, mix, combine and explore natural materials, promoting sensory development, fine motor skills and imaginative play.
- The water area (not limited to water), which includes guttering and different height containers encourages problem solving, critical thinking and collaboration through the exploration. This is also an area which naturally encourages the exploration of mathematical concepts.
- 'The Yard' (consisting of shed, crates, tyres, cones, wooden blocks and planks) will be used for role-play, helping children explore concepts of travel, story-building, and teamwork. Children will take the lead in deciding the destination, creating roles, and sharing their own experiences.
- Our investigation station encourages children to become explorers of the natural world, through using magnifying glasses and bug collectors they develop their early scientific skills of enquiry, observations and recording.

Imaginative play and exploration:

- Our outdoor area encourages imaginative, dramatic play and collaboration opportunities. For example, children role-play as chefs, musicians and explorers. Open-ended resources will support the development of social skills, cooperation, and problem-solving.

- Children will be encouraged to extend their role-play by using equipment and loose parts available, as part of their play narratives.
- Our adults will introduce new challenges or materials, such as new tools for the mud kitchen or new props for role play areas, to extend imaginative play in response to the children's ideas and interests.

Developing awe and wonder:

- Children will be encouraged to notice the changes in the environment, from weather and seasonal transformations to the discovery of new insects.
- The use of the outdoors will also inspire questions about the natural world, giving children the chance to voice their wonderings and guide their own learning about the environment.
- Adults will skilfully model curiosity and a love of learning through our "I wonder approach" where staff will ask "I wonder why…", "I wonder what would happen if we….", "I wonder how…" during a range of learning opportunities to encourage problem solving and critical thinking and a motivation to want to gain more knowledge.

Observations and identifying next steps:

- Adults will regularly observe children's play to identify their next steps in development and provide appropriate challenges or opportunities.
- Children's ideas and interests will inform adaptations and enhancements to the outdoor environment, ensuring that learning is relevant, personal, and reflects the children's evolving interests.

Impact:

The impact of our outdoor provision is seen in the confidence, independence, and deep engagement of our children.

Children demonstrate:

- High levels of curiosity and sustained focus, showing excitement and fascination in their explorations.
- Improved language and communication skills, mastering basic vocabulary and developing subject-specific and descriptive vocabulary through play and conversation with peers and adults.
- Greater independence and resilience, as they take ownership of their learning, manage risks, and solve problems creatively.
- Enhanced social skills, as they collaborate, negotiate, and build relationships through shared experiences and role play.
- Progress in physical development, both gross and fine motor, as they move, climb, carry, dig, and manipulate tools and materials.
- Children are motivated, curious learners who are increasingly capable of following their own interests and making meaningful connections across the curriculum.
- Observations and assessments demonstrate clear progress across the Early Years curriculum.