MARY SHERIDAN OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT UNIT POLICY

This document is a statement of the aims and principles for the teaching and learning of the Early Years Curriculum at the Mary Sheridan Observation and Assessment Unit.

Background
The Mary Sheridan Unit is part of St Nicholas School. It is based at the Children’s Assessment Centre within Kent and Canterbury Hospital; within this multi-agency building, we are well placed to provide education services for children who may be accessing health services, such as Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Speech and Language Therapy. Children with profound, severe and complex needs are identified by multi-agency professionals and allocated places through the Early Support Programme and approved by the Severe and Complex Accessibility Forum (SCAF). Within the Early Support Framework we have the opportunity to share information about a family and child. This is an essential prerequisite to the joint and holistic review and co-ordination of services and support.

Access
All three years olds are entitled to fifteen hours a week at a pre-school. When children have been identified as potential beneficiaries of the Specialist setting the allocation of these sessions is taken into consideration. Children can access up to 3 sessions per week at MSU with up to 2 sessions within a mainstream setting. In some instances the parents may choose to continue with Portage and this will impact on the child’s other education provision. At the heart of these decisions are the parents’ requests for what they think is most beneficial for their child. This can be reviewed at any time and the ratio adjusted accordingly. The Unit supports children from three years old, up to school age. There are 6 children per session.

The Unit works in partnership with parents, carers, multi-agency colleagues and mainstream pre-schools to remove barriers so that all children can access the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (EYFS). This has been revised for September 2012 and the changes are being reflected within the unit.

We seek to actively work with parents and recognise that parents are their children’s first teachers. We respect the unique relationship between parents and child, and spend time getting to know the child, as the parent sees them. ‘Open play’ sessions are offered for the child and parent to come into the unit to meet staff, allow children to begin to explore the class and begin to develop relationships. These relationships begin before the child enters the unit classroom with liaison with health services. All families receive a home visit in which the parents have an opportunity to tell their family’s story, and gives staff working at the unit the opportunity to meet and play with the child.

Ethos
The Mary Sheridan Observation and Assessment Unit aims to provide a free and protected space in which all children can experience themselves as learners. We recognise that his may be a child’s first encounter with formal education and we work to ensure that children experience a flexible yet predictable, inclusive environment; this provides a good balance of security and appropriate
levels of challenge. We aim to support children to become independent learners by supporting them to find their inner resources of curiosity and enthusiasm, so that they can enjoy engaging with learning and as they develop, manage their own ways of learning. We encourage all children to experience themselves positively and believe that nurturing and respecting the child’s self-autonomy will lead them to recognise their own ideas, skills and knowledge leading to a positive sense of self.

We recognise that all the children who have been referred into the unit have Special Educational Needs. These needs vary.

Within each session the children’s needs will be varied. In some instances there may be potential to provide a specific curriculum, such as Sensology approaches, but this depends upon the needs of the children within each cohort and each session.

**EARLY INTERVENTION**

We recognise the profound and continued effect of Early Intervention and pre-school education on equipping children with the skills they need for the rest of their lives and in helping them to understand themselves, each other and the world around them. We recognise that where children have special needs or disabilities, it is important that these are identified at an early stage and that identification leads directly to early intervention and support for families and children. It emphasises that early intervention strengthens the ability of families to provide effective support for their children and improves outcomes for the whole family.

We believe that the Early Intervention they receive at the Observation and Assessment Unit will enable children to access the most appropriate and suitable school for their needs.

We involve parents/carers and all other professionals in the Early Years to meet the needs of each individual child through an open, innovative child-centred curriculum, based on Every Child Matters and the revised EYFS.

We aim to give the individual child the means by which to reach their full potential by:

- Working with parents and family
- Work within the framework of Early Support
- Collaborative working with the keyworkers
- Working with mainstream pre-schools and Reception classes
- Multi-agency working eg OT, PT, SALT, Paediatrician
- Developing strong relationships with individual children in all environments to know their strengths and needs.

Team Around the Child meetings (TAC) are held on a regular basis to review and update any intervention needed for the child and family. These are family led, in conjunction initially with Health Professionals and maybe held in a venue of their choice and they may invite professionals,
friends and family or any independent advisors and mediators. The meeting highlights any parental/carer concerns and professionals set targets or give advice for the next steps in the child’s progress. The Family Plan is given to the parent/carer at the time of the meeting so they have a permanent record of the outcomes; including any appointment dates, professional contacts and advice.

THE CURRICULUM

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To develop skills that have already been acquired and use them in a wider environment
- To generalise these skills to make them functional in all environments.
- To understand the power that particular modes of communication can have upon an increasing circle of people and to help extend, refine and develop them in the most positive and successful way
- To make learning pleasurable and rewarding
- To help children think and communicate about their learning
- To develop independence and self-control

The curriculum is taken from a combination of sources.

- Every Child Matters
- Revised Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (2012)

The revised EYFS focuses on the ‘How’ of effective learning. These are defined as:

- Playing and exploring- engagement
  Finding out and exploring
  Playing with what they know
  Being willing to have a go
- Active Learning- motivation
  Being involved and concentrating
  Keeping trying
  Enjoying achieving what they set out to do
- Creating and thinking critically- thinking
  Having their own ideas
  Making links
  Choosing ways to do things

The ‘what’ of the revised EYFS has been divided into Prime and Specific areas. The ‘Prime’ areas are:

- Personal, Social and emotional development
  Making relationships
  Self-confidence and self-awareness
- Communication and Language
  Listening and attention
  Understanding
  Speaking
- Physical development
Health and self-care
Moving and handling

The 'Specific' areas are:

- Literacy
  - Reading
  - Writing
- Mathematics
  - Number
  - Shape, space and measure
- Understanding the world
  - People and communities
  - The world
  - Technology
- Expressive arts and design
  - Being imaginative
  - Exploring and using materials and media

The breadth of the EYFS considers the following areas regarding factors that influence children's learning:

- **A unique child** - every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- **Positive Relationships** - children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person;
- **Enabling environments** - the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning;
- **Learning and Development** - children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of Learning and Development are equally important and inter-connected.

The curriculum planning is in the form of a bank of activities which can be individualised for each child to help them access the curriculum. Each session is planned for with a balance of child led and adult led learning experiences that are evaluated at each session and used to inform future planning.

**OTHER INTERVENTION:**
It is acknowledged that the children may be accessing other services, depending on their needs and these may include:

- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Specialist Nursing Team
- Hearing and Visual Impaired Service
- Specialist Teaching Service
- Behaviour Service
- Educational Psychology
Clinical Psychology
Play Therapy
Mainstream settings

The Unit works closely with the other agencies involved with the children and their families.

Children at the Observation and Assessment Unit work on individual targets (IEP’s) which have been highlighted through multi-agency meetings. These targets are based on the EYFS, B squared assessment tool, Early Learning Goals and shared therapy goals which support their ability to learn.

OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT
The work of the Unit encompasses the following in order to fully assess an individual's needs:

- EYFS
- B-squared Birth to 5 assessment tool
- Family's views
- Paediatric Developmental Assessments
- Liaising with the child's mainstream pre-school
- Multi-agency assessments and reports
- IEP's
- Liaising with Portage
- Leuven's scale of Well-being and Involvement
- Alternative assessment through High/Scope observation records.

Currently the major source of assessment and the generation of IEP's are devised by use of the B-Squared assessment tool. Other information from the High/Scope infant and toddler and pre-school observation records are also used as the detail regarding Sense of Self, Social Relations and Exploration and Early Logic in particular more accurately reflect the small steps progress children attending the unit tend to make. Whilst there is on-going observation, the findings are charted 3 times a year and the pupil progress monitored. IEP's will be reviewed and updated. This information is scrutinised and collated in order to support and advise both parents and professionals on the child's level of need. As a result, advice may be given to apply for a Statement of Educational Need in order for the child to access a special school placement or designation or to support them in a mainstream setting. Not all children will require a Statement of Educational need and will leave the unit on School Action Plus with a support package and a comprehensive transition process.

TRANSITION
Families receive support within the unit throughout the Observation and Assessment Period and beyond. Parents/carers are continually informed of their child's progress via a home link book, home school symbol board, multi-agency meetings and direct verbal contact. Staff attend Team Around the Child meetings and liaise regularly with other professionals involved in the child and family's well-being. Parents/carers are supported by the teacher in charge as to where the child's educational needs may be best met at the time of School Entry. Statements of Educational Need will be applied for where applicable. We support the parents through this whole process and accompany parents on school visits.
When the children leave the unit for School Entry we organise, in collaboration with the keyworker, a Team Around the Child and Transition meeting. Schools are invited to come and observe their prospective pupils and they receive recorded information.

As part of the transition process to St Nicholas school or other school placements we provide the following:

- Observation notes
- Assessment against the Birth the Five curriculum statements
- Mobility programmes
- Communication programmes, including PECS and use of visual supports
- Visual impairment programmes
- Hand function programmes
- Physiotherapy programmes where appropriate
- Pen portraits
- Reviewed IEPs and potential future targets to focus on.

The children are invited to attend at least three taster sessions in the Reception Class if transferring to St Nicholas School. Reception staff work at the Mary Sheridan Unit to gain experience and get to know individual children as part of the Transition process. The Reception Teacher then gives parents the opportunity of a home visit and/or individual meeting to help put the parents/carers at ease and feel secure with this next big step in their child’s education.

SAFEGUARDING

Within the Foundation Stage children are taught about themselves and keeping themselves safe through adult and child led activities. The emphasis is about understanding themselves, naming body parts, and expressing feelings, developing a strong sense of self and feeling valued, relating to one another, taking care of personal needs and resolving conflict. It is recognised that the children are at the early stages of this development. The consistent messages given from adults emphasise staying safe and support children to learn these vital life skills. The Foundation Key-stage manager is a Designated Child Protection Co-ordinator (DCPC) and any incidents or accidents which cause concern are recorded and reported according to school procedures, and held by the Headteacher.

St. Nicholas School will endeavour to support the welfare and safety of all pupils through:

- Maintaining children's welfare as our paramount concern
- Ensuring the content of the curriculum includes social and emotional aspects of learning
- Ensuring that child protection is included in the curriculum to help children stay safe, recognise when they don’t feel safe and identify who they might / can talk to
- Providing suitable support and guidance so that students have a range of appropriate adults to approach if they are in difficulties
- Promoting a positive, supportive, neutral and secure environment where pupils can develop a sense of being valued and heard in their own right
- Ensuring all steps are taken to maintain site security and student’s physical safety
- Working with parents to build an understanding of the school’s responsibility to ensure the welfare of all children including the need for referral to other agencies in some situations
- Ensuring all staff are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and are aware of the school’s procedures and lines of communication
• Monitoring children and young people who have been identified as having welfare or protection concerns; keeping confidential records which are stored securely and shared appropriately with other professionals
• Developing effective and supportive liaison with other agencies

All key safeguarding, health and safety, behaviour policies and practices follow the procedures adopted by St Nicholas School.

**MONITORING AND REVIEW**

This policy will be monitored on a yearly basis by the Foundation Key Stage manager to keep up to date with any adjustments to statutory legislation or curriculum and any changes will go via the Governing Body when necessary.

**EQUALITY, SAFEGUARDING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT**

St Nicholas School, in all policies and procedures, will promote equality of opportunity for students and staff from all social, cultural and economic backgrounds and ensure freedom from discrimination on the basis of membership of any group, including gender, sexual orientation, family circumstances, ethnic or national origin, disability (physical or mental), religious or political beliefs.

St Nicholas School aims to:
• Provide equal opportunity for all
• To foster good relations, and create effective partnership with all sections of the community
• To take no action which discriminates unlawfully in service delivery, commissioning and employment
• To provide an environment free from fear and discrimination, where diversity, respect and dignity are valued.

All aspects of Safeguarding will be embedded into the life of the school and be adhered to and be the responsibility of all staff.

**LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES**

- Safeguarding Policy
- Community Cohesion Policy
- Early Years Foundation Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- e-Safety Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Single Equality Policy
- PSHEEC Policy
- Physical Education Policy
- Healthy Schools Policy

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