

Gad’s Hill School

Early Years Policy

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STAFF RESPONSIBLE: Early Years Manager
GOVERNOR RESPONSIBLE: Chair of Education Committee

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1. Introduction

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which sets the standards for Early Years children’s learning, development, health and safety is followed in our Early Years Setting and has fully informed this policy.

1.1. The Structure of the Early Years

The EYFS applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At Gad's Hill School, EYFS consists of three academic year groups as part of the Lower School: Lower KN; Upper KN; and KR.

The Nursery offers provision for 3-4 year olds. KN is split into two year groups, Lower and Upper KN, and placement in an academic year group will depend on a child's birth month. KN children learn and play together in the nursery and are not separated based on age. Children may attend morning or afternoon sessions or full days. Once in Upper KN, children must attend a minimum of 3 full days (see admissions policy).

Children begin Reception (KR) the year in which they turn five. Children will attend full time from September in KR.

2. Aims

We value Gratitude, Respect, Equality, Aspiration and Tenacity. These attributes underpin all that we do. Our Mission and Vision are shaped by our commitment to educate children holistically, as articulated by our school motto: "First to thine own self be true".

At Gad's Hill School we believe that the Early Years phase of a child's physical, emotional and intellectual development is critical and should build a firm basis for future success.

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a safe, secure, well-ordered, challenging, and stimulating environment, which promotes independence and builds on children's prior learning.
- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum, which extends previous learning and is implemented through planned purposeful play and through a mix of child-initiated and adult-led activities.
- A close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.
- That every child is included and supported through equal opportunities and practice which considers the individual needs, interests and stage of development for each child.
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress.

We want this policy to support and promote children who:

- Develop positive attitudes to learning and are curious about the world around them.
- Develop positive self-image, confident in their own identity and feel proud of themselves.
- Are happy individuals who experience positive relationships with their peers and adults.
- Communicate confidently, able to express their needs, emotions, and ideas.
- Are social individuals who can show empathy, respect and kindness to others.
- Develop a strong foundation in the prime areas of learning to prepare them to

develop as well-rounded individuals who are able to go on to achieve strong academic outcomes.

- Make strong progress in the specific areas of learning during the Early Years, to support them to excel in the next stage of their education and beyond.

3. Safeguarding and Welfare

The safeguarding and welfare requirements set out in the Statutory Framework that applied from September 2023 ensure we create high quality settings which are welcoming, safe and stimulating. Staff to pupil ratios, as outlined in the EYFS framework are strictly adhered to within the setting. Staff who work with Early Years pupils take part in supervision meetings with the Early Years Manager at least once per half term.

The whole school (including EYFS) Safeguarding Policy is fully adhered to within the KN and KR classes. This policy covers in detail: procedures for identifying and responding to abuse and neglect; use of mobile phones and cameras; allegations against staff; whistleblowing; staff behaviour/code of conduct; intimate care procedures.

All additional whole school policies specifically relating to the EYFS and its statutory requirement are listed in the appendices (7.1). This includes the school's Safer Recruitment policy which outlines the relevant checks and procedures in place for recruitment of staff working with early years children.

In the EYFS we promote good physical and mental health by talking to the children and sharing information with their parents. We promote the importance of good oral hygiene and support parents with teaching children how to brush their teeth.

3.1. Healthy Nutrition

At Gad's Hill we are committed to fostering a clear understanding of healthy eating habits from the earliest years. We proactively promote nutritional education by providing a food environment that encourages children to make wholesome choices and understand the benefits of a balanced diet.

Children in the Early Years are provided with a healthy snack each morning. This provision is limited to fresh fruit or nutritious alternatives, such as breadsticks, to ensure sustained energy levels and dental health.

To support cognitive function and physical well-being, the consumption of water is prioritised. All children are required to have a School Regulation Water Bottle in school daily. These bottles are kept in an accessible location, ensuring that children can hydrate freely and independently throughout the school day.

School lunches are planned to be well-balanced and nutritious. We ensure that compliance with 2025/26 EYFS Nutrition Guidance, providing children with the essential food groups required for healthy growth and development.

Mealtimes are a supervised and social occasion. To ensure the highest levels of safety and

welfare, children are monitored throughout their lunch by members of staff who hold valid Paediatric First Aid certificates.

Staff ensure that food is cut and served in a developmentally appropriate manner to prevent choking, maintaining a vigilant presence while children are eating.

4. The EYFS Curriculum

At Gad's Hill our Early Years curriculum is guided by the latest version of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage that applies from September 2023. The curriculum in KN and KR is part of the whole school One Curriculum.

4.1. The EYFS Framework

The EYFS framework consists of 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and interconnected. The 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as being particularly important for stimulating curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, as well as building children's capacity to become independent learners, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

These prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the world
- Expressive arts and design

Each area of learning set out in the EYFS framework form the basis of our curriculum, which is dynamic and builds upon the interests and needs of each cohort.

Practitioners in KR believe that the reception curriculum must go beyond simply repeating children's nursery experiences and should ensure children are sufficiently prepared for the demands of the K1 curriculum. Teaching in KR will aim for most pupils to be achieving above and beyond simply meeting the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) set out in the Early Years Framework.

4.2. The EYFS Curriculum at Gad's Hill

Adult-led activities and inputs are used throughout the EYFS as appropriate, and the proportion of adult-initiated experiences (guided learning) increases as children get older. Staff are skillful communicators and respond to each child's emerging needs and interests to guide and extend their learning and development through caring and positive interactions.

Reading is at the heart of our curriculum and children are provided with numerous daily opportunities to engage with a variety of stories, poems, and rhymes. Children are taught to decode through a systematic, synthetic programme of phonics (Read Write Inc) beginning as soon as children demonstrate readiness during KN. In KR this includes daily direct teaching to support spelling and handwriting.

Early mathematics skills are taught practically with a strong focus on linking concrete experiences with visual and abstract representations. In KR concepts are taught using a balance of adult and child-led activities as appropriate. All children take part in an adult-led maths input at least four times a week.

Topic work in Early Years is carefully planned to ensure broad and balanced learning opportunities. Each term focuses on a different theme, enabling children to explore concepts in depth while building on their knowledge and skills. Planned topics support key areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), particularly: Understanding of the World and Expressive Arts and Design. Through these thematic units, children engage in hands-on, creative and exploratory activities that promote curiosity, critical thinking and early problem-solving.

PSHE underpins all areas of learning in Early Years and is embedded throughout the daily routine and provision. Children develop their personal, social and emotional skills through child-initiated play, interactions with others, and modelling of positive behaviours. Discrete teaching of PSHE takes place during daily Circle Time sessions in all Early Years classes. In KR this is in addition to weekly PSHE lessons delivered using the Jigsaw scheme of work.

Children also enjoy weekly learning opportunities with subject specialists for: Music and Movement; Forest School; Spanish (KR); and Physical Education (KR).

4.3. The Learning Environment

Each area of learning and development is implemented through a carefully planned environment – both indoors and outdoors - which is stimulating and offers opportunities for children to engage in purposeful play as active learners.

Opportunities for children to practise their developing early reading, writing and mathematics skills run through all aspects of the continuous provision, both indoors and outdoors.

High quality adult-child interactions to develop children’s language, thinking, and learning are a crucial part of teaching here at Gad’s Hill in all EYFS classes and emphasis is placed on outdoor learning in all weather conditions, providing conditions are safe.

4.4. Curriculum Planning

Staff plan experiences for the children that are stimulating and allow them to develop and learn effectively. Staff working with the youngest children focus strongly on the 3 prime areas. Reading and the development of children's spoken language and vocabulary underpins planning in the EYFS.

Staff also take into consideration the interests, individual needs and stage of development of each child and use this information to plan challenging and enjoyable activities.

In KN and KR, there is a long-term plan for topics which provide powerful experiences for children to enjoy and build their understanding of the world around them. The topics are broad to allow for themes and mini topics to develop throughout the year in response to children's interests, the natural world, and their local communities and environment.

The curriculum is planned and sequenced to help children to build their learning over time. Each term, Knowledge Organisers are shared to inform parental support at home and Topic Overviews are used in school to provide a medium-term overview of learning taking place each half term.

Short term planning takes the form of weekly planning grids, which include an evaluation from the previous week and identifies any children that need intervention or next steps to be planned for. These weekly plans, along with a timetable, are visible in each classroom outlining planned adult-led and child-led activities and when they will take place. These plans outline the time devoted each day to the direct teaching of curriculum subjects, including reading, writing and maths.

Maths planning is written using the White Rose scheme as guidance. Teaching of phonics and transcription skills are planned and taught via the Read Write Inc. phonics scheme, whilst English teaching uses CLPE's Power of Reading planning for inspiration alongside daily 10-minute drawing club inputs.

5. Assessment

Ongoing assessment is an important part of the learning and development process. This is a continuous process where staff observe and interact with the children to identify their level of development, achievement and interests. This allows staff to move the children onto their next steps 'in the moment' by extending language and thinking as they play, as well as being used to inform future planning.

5.1. Tapestry

Practitioners use the online assessments and observation tool, Tapestry, to capture significant moments of new learning. Tapestry ensures formative assessment is useful and does not remove practitioners from working with the children in the moment. Tapestry is used to gather evidence of children's achievements through adult observations, photos and capturing of the voice of the child. Early Years staff in KN and KR ensure that all children have a minimum of one entry on Tapestry each week

recording a significant moment of learning or progress towards the ELGs. Staff also consider observations shared by parents and/or carers on Tapestry when assessing children's progress.

5.2. The Early Learning Goals

In the Lower School, point in time assessments are used which means that children's progress is assessed in line with where a child is typically expected to be in a particular term and year group. In KN, children's progress towards ELGs for the prime areas of learning are assessed each term, as well as an overall judgement of their progress in the 4 specific area. In KR, children's progress towards all 17 ELGs is assessed at the end of each term. Attainment is assessed as being either: Below; Working Towards; On-Track; Secure; or Greater Depth. Pupils assessed as 'On-Track' or above are currently working at an appropriate level to meet the relevant Early Learning goal at the end of the EYFS.

5.3. Moderation in the Early Years

Moderation meetings take place termly led by the Early Years Manager and enable practitioners to discuss the progress and attainment of pupils using evidence on Tapestry and their knowledge of each child. Assessment data is then discussed at termly assessment meetings with Lower School Senior Leaders and is shared with parents in writing at the end of each term. Following each termly assessment meeting Provision Maps are completed to detail specific interventions for children who require additional support or challenge (see Inclusion Policy).

Assessment meetings are attended by the Director of Inclusion and are a formal opportunity to review the provision for pupils with SEND, as well as discuss those where staff or parents have identified potential need. This is in addition to the Director of Inclusion's open-door approach where staff may request support or observations throughout the term and the half-termly supervision meetings with the Early Years Manager also offer opportunity for staff to discuss any pupil concerns.

5.4. Assessment of prospective pupils

During the admissions process (see Admissions Policy), the Early Years Manager will liaise with the current setting, as well as parents and carers to gather initial information around a child's current stage of development. All children take part in a 'taster day' before being offered a place at Gad's Hill. In KN this will often be one session (morning or afternoon) whereas KR are typically invited for a full day. During the day, EYFS practitioners will observe the child and conduct an initial assessment of their current areas of strength and development.

5.5. The EYFS Profile

At the end of the EYFS, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against all 17 early learning goals to show whether they are:

- Meeting the expected areas of development

- Not yet reaching the expected levels ('Emerging')

EYFS profile data is moderated internally (referring to the Development Matters guidance) to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority as requested. The results of the profile are shared with the parents/carer of each child.

6. Working with Parents and Carers

At Gad's Hill School, we greatly value the strong positive relationships we build with the children in our setting and their families. We believe that working in partnership with all parents and carers within our school community supports our shared aim of benefitting children's learning and development.

We do this in the Early Years by:

- Having an open-door approach so that the parents can have regular informal discussions with the adults who teach their child. Parents are also able to make direct contact with class teachers and senior leaders via email should they wish to request a more formal discussion.
- Providing all children with a contact book which is checked daily by staff and used to record informal messages between home and school. KR children also have a home-school reading record to ensure reading at home is celebrated and acknowledge in school.
- Holding parent consultation meetings twice per year, halfway through the Autumn and Spring terms, to formally update parents on their child's development and attainment.
- Sharing details of children's attainment and progress towards the ELGs via termly grade sheets (Autumn and Spring) and a detailed end of year report (Summer).
- Sharing knowledge organisers with parents at the start of each half term which detail an overview of curriculum coverage and topic plans as well as ideas of ways to reinforce learning in each area at home.
- Updating Tapestry with key learning moments for each individual child so that parents can celebrate and build on these experiences at home.
- Sharing photographs of whole-class experiences such as trips, workshops and exciting lessons in the Lower School newsletter.
- Encouraging parents and carers to share key learning moments and experiences on Tapestry for children to share with their peers and the adults who work with them.
- In KR, setting weekly tasks on Tapestry for children to engage with alongside their parents and carers which is linked to the learning they have been enjoying in school that week.
- Hosting a parent information evening shortly after the start of the Autumn Term for KN, to give parents an overview of the Early Years Curriculum in KR and to answer any questions they may have.
- Inviting parents to attend celebratory events including performances, celebrations and sporting events as well as workshops such as 'How to support your child with phonics'.

Each child in KN is also assigned a key person who helps to ensure that each child's learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. The key person works alongside the class teacher to support parents and carers in guiding their child's development at home.

7. Appendices

7.1. Related policies linked to EYFS Statutory Requirements

Additional whole school policies covering statutory aspects of the EYFS are available on the school website and include:

Safeguarding Policy: Procedures for identifying and responding to abuse and neglect; use of mobile phones and cameras; allegations against staff; whistleblowing; staff behaviour/code of conduct; intimate care.

Safer Recruitment Policy: Suitable checks for all staff; verification of staff qualifications and identity; obtainment of references; recruitment procedures.

Medical Treatments and First Aid Policy: First aid arrangements; care of sick children; accident reporting; parental consent; storage and administration of medicines; record keeping.

Health and Safety Policy: Risk assessments; safety of premises. Risk assessments linked to this policy cover evacuation procedures in the event of a fire or emergency event. Suitability of the procedure for young children has been considered appropriate.

Behaviour Management Policy: Promoting positive behaviour; managing challenging behaviour; physical intervention.

Inclusion Policy: Support for children with SEND; promoting equality and diversity; EYFS inclusion and early identification; links to SEND code of practice

Parental Complaints Policy: How parents can raise concerns; timescales and procedures

Other relevant policies and documents include: Admissions Procedures; Anti-bullying policy; Out of Hours policy; Code of Conduct for Staff policy; Taking, Storing and Using Images of Children policy; Privacy Notice.