

EARLY YEARS POLICY



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Grange Park Primary School and Nursery

Early years policy

This document is a statement of the aims and principles for Early year's Foundation stage at Grange Park Primary school. The implementation of the policy is the responsibility of all early years' staff and the Deputy Head Teacher who is the Foundation stage leader. The policy provides a basis for the monitoring and evaluation of good practice.

Rationale

Children in the Early Years are constantly encountering new experiences. They are seeking to understand these experiences in order to extend their skills, develop their confidence and build on their previous learning and develop. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early year's providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

Early year's teaching and learning at Grange Park Primary school and Nursery follows the principles of the new EYFS guidance and lays secure foundations for children's later learning. We intend to foster independence and confidence in every child.

At Grange Park we seek to provide:

- quality and consistency, so that every child makes good progress, and no child gets left behind;
- a secure foundation through learning and development opportunities which are planned around the needs and interests of each individual child and are assessed and reviewed regularly.
- partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers.
- equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.
- safeguarding and welfare requirements to keep children safe and promote their welfare.

Principles and Aims

At Grange Park Nursery and Grange Park Primary School the EYFS four guiding principles shape our practice. These are:

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
- 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/or carers.
- children **develop and learn** in different ways and at different rates.

The EYFS learning and development requirements comprise:

- the seven areas of learning and development and the educational programmes (described below).
- the early learning goals, which summarise the knowledge, skills and understanding that all young children should have gained by the end of the reception year; and

- the assessment requirements (when and how practitioners must assess children's achievements).

At Grange Park we support through the **3 prime areas** and the **4 specific areas**:

- **Communication and language development** involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.
 - **Physical development** involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity including moving energetically and developing strength. They are also encouraged to make healthy choices in relation to food as well as being expected to use cutlery correctly.
 - **Personal, social and emotional development** involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to self-regulate their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.
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- **Literacy development** involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.
 - **Mathematics** involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to explore shapes, spaces, and measures.
 - **Understanding the world** involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people (past and present), places, technology and the environment.
 - **Expressive arts and design** involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities including singing, dancing and inventing and adapting their own stories.

As practitioners we consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in our care and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all the areas of learning and development. When working with the youngest children we focus strongly on the three prime areas, which are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively and become ready for school. It is expected that the balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas. But throughout the early years, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, we will discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child. We will consider whether a child may have a special educational need or disability and may require specialist support. Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. We respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction.

In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice. The **three characteristics of effective teaching and learning** are: **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; and
creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Welfare requirements

At Grange Park we ensure that children's unique needs are met and that they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We provide an environment which is welcoming, safe and stimulating.

We safeguard and promote the welfare of children in our care. Mrs Meredith (Deputy Head) is the 'Designated Safeguarding Lead', along with deputy DSL's - Rebecca Marshall (Assistant Head), Ian Lambie (SLT Behaviour and Online safety), Jemma Roberts (SLT and SENDCO), Gail Rance (Reception Teacher and foundation stage coordinator) are all responsible for safeguarding children. We adhere to Grange Park child protection procedures and use CPOMs to record any safeguarding incidents which are then followed up by DSL's. All staff undertake regular child protection update training, and it is part of any new staff induction.

Ways of Working

Admission arrangements

Children may now enter Nursery the term after they reach three years old and we have limited spaces available for two year olds if they are eligible. The children will attend Nursery under the universal offer of 15 hours per week. They may also be eligible for 30 hours - although these places are limited. The children enter Nursery from pre-school provision, voluntary or private or straight from home.

Admission to the Nursery follows guidelines set out by Telford and Wrekin. The Nursery has capacity for 72 children. The nursery admission form states that putting in an application does not automatically guarantee a place. The nursery manager will assess the needs of the child and the current cohort and decide whether a place can be offered or not. The decision is always discussed with the parents/carer.

Children enter their allocated Reception class in September if this is the parent's wishes. All children can start school in the September of the year they are 5 years old. Again strict procedures pertaining to admissions prevail and follow the Telford and Wrekin guidelines. The 2 Reception classes can take a maximum of 30 in each.

Appeals by children wishing to secure a place at Grange Park when the Reception classes are already at 60 are organised by Telford and Wrekin and decisions given to the Head in writing after the appeal is heard.

Parents have the right to defer entry to the Reception class before the age of 5 years old.

Induction procedures

Nursery Staff visit all new entrants in their home setting during the half term before they start Nursery. Staff group the children according to needs and previous siblings - after the home visit the new entrants join a 'Key person' group. There are 3 groups in 3 colour areas in the Nursery each with a similar number of children a.m. and p.m. Our morning sessions are for our older children and our younger

children attend in the afternoon. We operate a staggered entry for children during their first week so staff can get to know children and settle them in.

Prior to transferring to school, Reception staff speak to staff from the child's previous setting and visit children who have not attended the school nursery. Parents and children are invited to visit the Reception classes for a morning during the summer term. This builds up 'Positive relationships' with parents and children. Children and parents have;

- An initial meeting where information is discussed such as the school day, uniform, lunchtimes, as well as discussing the school prospectus and required paperwork with the Head and Deputy Head for parents, the children meet their new teacher.
- A morning session for the children to work in the Reception class and meet staff. Nursery staff support in the reception class for these sessions.

Reception children begin school on the same day as the rest of school but have a part time timetable for the first week. Nursery children may start Nursery later than School to allow staff to undertake any home visits of new Nursery pupils to take place and these start dates are staggered so staff can really get to know each new child in their group.

The curriculum and effective practice

The Nursery and Reception environments are organised into areas to link with the 7 areas of development and learning as described earlier. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. None of the areas of learning can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across several learning areas. They require a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities for most children to reach the levels required at the end of EYFS.

The Early Learning Goals provide the basis for planning throughout the Foundation Stage. The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Revised Development Matters Statements from the Early Years Foundation Stage Document. The planning is based upon themes with discrete phonics (following the Little Wandle Program), maths (White Rose Maths) and reading delivered through directed teaching.

However planning, which is based upon a different topic using Curriculum Maestro is identified as a vehicle of interest to deliver the children's next steps in learning, therefore responds to the needs, achievements and interest of the children. Planning reflects all areas of learning, and all areas are interlinked and equally as important. Foundation Stage staff use observations as the basis for planning. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning. Relevant and significant observations are then recorded for the children.

The Learning Environment

The Foundation Stage is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are specific areas where the children can be active, be quiet, creative etc. Children have access to both inside and outside areas across the day; this has a positive effect on the children's development. The Foundation Stage has its own playground, where children can ride bikes, construct, role play and have quiet moments for example and is complete with an explorer's zone which is used both in teacher directed learning and child-initiated learning, as the children progress further into the year and become more independent. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and in

different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant, allowing the children to take risks and explore safely. All areas of the curriculum can be explored outside. Nursery operates a free flow access to the outdoor area whereas the children in reception have a designated time outside in order for staff to develop their learning and understanding further through very targeted and specific support to a smaller number of children. In the Nursery, parents can follow their children's interests on Storypark and add evidence of activities they have completed at home.

In the Reception class active learning is still paramount and teaching methods will reflect a balance of child - initiated and adult - led activities across all 7 areas of learning. The Early learning goals establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation stage.

Assessment and records

During the first term in Reception, the teacher assesses the ability of each child using a mixture of the statutory government baseline and through teacher observations. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, to adjust the teaching program for individual children and groups of children. We record each child's level of development throughout the year and record whether each child is on track or not on track to meet a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of the year in July. Children will be judged at either an emerging level or an expected level in each early learning goal. The exceeding level no longer applies. We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, photographic evidence and through planned activities. Assessment is completed regularly and involves both the teacher, teaching assistants, parents, and children, as appropriate.

All Foundation staff are involved in the assessment and monitoring process. Monitoring of Early year's practice is undertaken regularly to ensure the requirements of the EYFS are planned for and carried out effectively and the needs of all the children are fully met.

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers, and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It is continuous and takes place seamlessly as part of everyday teaching. It happens in the teaching moment and is fast and responsive to what is seen and heard. There is a constant flow of information from the formative assessments that are made, and the teaching actions taken. Therefore, it is important that the flow of teaching is not halted by taking unnecessary photographs or notes and staff will instead take immediate action and capitalise on every learning opportunity that presents itself. They reflect on and tweak their teaching because of the knowledge they have gained from assessment. The EYFS leader tracks the GLD across the cohort and the specific areas of maths and literacy are tracked with the Head Teacher each term to help identify children who need extra support with these subjects and provide necessary intervention.

At the end of the final term in Reception (and no later than 30 June) we assess whether each child is emerging or expected in each strand within each area of learning and submit this data to the local authority. The Profile provides parents and carers, practitioners, and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. The Profile must reflect ongoing observation; all relevant records held by the setting; discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution.

Assessments in the Nursery

We start this process before the child joins the Nursery, by listening to parent's accounts of their child's development and interests and note any concerns. The parents complete a home visit sheet with staff, and this provides the starting point of a child's profile.

Practitioners in the Nursery make systematic observations and assessments of each child's developments, interests and learning styles. These are then used to identify learning priorities and plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child. Observations are matched against the expectations of the EYFS. Children need to build on previous learning experiences, and staff provide learning opportunities to ensure they make progress.

All nursery children have an Electronic Learning Journey (Story Park) and this is now used as is deemed necessary and staff's own knowledge and expert professional judgment is used to make assessments of the children. The evidence is linked to the child's online Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP), which is available for parents to view and comment on at any time.

Reception class assessments

In the Reception class careful observations and assessments ensure that the developmental needs of the child are met. These are undertaken throughout the child's time in the Reception class and build up a child's Foundation stage profile. Child initiated evidence and some independent evidence will be kept in the child's theme book to build up a picture of each child's development to inform the child's EYFSP. Phonics knowledge and Reception key words are assessed termly. At the end of the Reception year the EYFS profile is completed and submitted to the local authority.

Record keeping

Staff make ongoing assessments of the children, and their progress is discussed regularly at pupil outcome meetings, based on any evidence that has been collected as well as the teachers' knowledge of the children.

Staff in the Nursery and the Reception class write 'parent friendly' reports which provide a more rounded picture of individual children. Parent meetings take place formally two times during a child's time in the Nursery and in the reception class.

Partnership working with parents and carers

Parents are children's first and most enduring educators. We at Grange Park Nursery and at Grange Park Primary school endeavor to establish 'positive relationships' with parents. All staff are available in the morning and after Nursery sessions to discuss children's needs and all parents are made to feel welcome and valued.

The effects of COVID meant that parents of our foundation stage children were not allowed into school, this was seen as a benefit to the children as it was noted how much earlier in the term they were

settled and ready to tackle their day. Staff were available for those few children who found the separation difficult, and parents were supported through the process with phone calls and photographs sent home by lunchtime of the same day to show how well the children had settled down. As the settling in process was seen as a benefit this is something that has carried on beyond COVID restrictions with parents being invited to drop-in sessions where they can play and learn with their child as well as the planned for information sessions to continue to foster the links between home and school. The EYFS staff are always available to discuss any issues with parents at the end of the school day/session. Longer appointments can be made through the school office.

Foundation stage staff use a variety of ways to keep parents fully informed about the curriculum and activities on a regular basis.

- **All termly and weekly planning is placed on the Nursery notice board.**
- **Termly newsletters are sent to parents with a list of forthcoming events with dates in a parent friendly format.**
- **Regular letters to inform parents of trips and meetings.**
- **Curriculum information letters.**
- **Foundation stage meetings to explain the principles of the stage and how it affects their child in Nursery and Reception as required.**
- **Phonics, maths and fine motor drop-in sessions to enable parents so they can support their child at home.**

In the Reception class the above emboldened statements are used to keep parents informed as well as;

- Reading diaries used to communicate between school and home.
- Literacy and Numeracy meetings specifically for parents of reception children.
- Induction meetings.
- Information from home to support children's development and progress.
- A fortnightly read with me session, where children share their guided reading books with their parents/carers.

Meeting the Diverse needs of children

Meeting the individual needs of all children is at the heart of the Foundation stage at Grange Park. We promote positive attitudes to diversity and difference so that all children and families feel included safe and valued and that all children and adults are treated as individuals and are not discriminated.

We plan for each child's individual care and learning requirements. We focus on helping to counter underachievement and overcoming barriers for children where these already exist.

We identify and respond early to needs which could lead to the development of learning difficulties. Similarly, we provide for children who are working beyond their developmental age and extend their learning.

The role of adults and Key person role

Every child at Grange Park Nursery has a key person who, from the induction day, gives them reassurance to feel safe and cared for and builds relationships and strong attachments with both the child and their parents. As the child's 'trusted adult' they provide emotional security enabling the child to become familiar with the Nursery environment and confident to explore it. The children are also taught the language of feelings, which helps them to develop their emotional literacy and resilience.

The Nursery and Reception class welcomes students and has built up strong relationships with local further education institutions and local schools.

Nursery and the school welcome parents working in classrooms.

All adults who work regularly in school are police checked and their DBS forms kept in school.

Starting in Key stage 1

Throughout the Reception year, each child's involvement in whole school life will have been built upon; many of the teaching and support staff will already be familiar people to them. They will have taken part in Key Stage and whole school assemblies as well as sharing some playtimes with the Key Stage 1 children. Children can meet their new class teacher and spend up to 2 mornings in their new class during the summer term. Reception class teachers will also have had meetings with year 1 class teachers to discuss the characteristics of effective learning of each individual child, i.e., how the child learns best and their levels in relation to EYFS Early Learning Goals.

Success criteria

These are the criteria to which the policy will be monitored and evaluated.

- Nursery and reception staff fully aware of the EYFS curriculum, welfare requirements and developmental stages of the EYFS and the Early Years outcomes.
- Nursery/Reception staff effectively using their observational evidence to inform planning and the development and learning record and at the end of Reception the Foundation stage profile.
- Parents are partners in the process.

Review and further developments

The policy will be reviewed annually by all early years' staff and then updated by the Foundation stage co-ordinator and shared with all staff.

- Self-evaluations, learning walks, monitoring and audits will take place termly involving all early years' staff and the early year's coordinator along with other Senior Leadership team will monitor on a regular basis to ensure practice reflects policy.
- The Policy will be shared with staff and Governors.
- All staff access CPD as part of the schools CPD priorities.
- An audit of early year's resources / environment will be undertaken each year and curriculum priorities identified and resources requested to meet the needs.