

Rookery School

Early Years policy



Approved by: Full
Governing body

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1. Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- Close partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

2. Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the 2021 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

3. Structure of the EYFS

The Early Years setting at Rookery School consists of two reception classes and a part time nursery. The nursery part time provision consists of a three hour morning session and a three hour afternoon session.

4. Curriculum

[Rookery School EYFS Curriculum – Intent, Implementation and Impact](#)

[Intent: Why do we teach what we teach?](#)

At Rookery School we place great value on the development of children as individuals and providing them with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to prepare them for the challenges in Key Stage One and beyond. Our aim in the EYFS is to build strong foundations rooted in academic success as well as moral and spiritual development, so that ultimately our pupils can be successful, go on to be active citizens of society and happy, curious life-long learners.

Our curriculum is therefore the cultural capital we know our pupils need so that they can gain the knowledge, skills and understanding they require for success. They can only do that if we embed the right habits for learning through the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning – Play and Exploration, Active Learning and Creative and Critical Thinking.

We teach them how to listen, speak and meet the high expectations for behaviour by working together and being kind. As such, we prioritise personal, social and emotional development and communication and language in the Early Years Setting. Our enabling environment and warm, skillful adult interactions support the children as they begin to link learning to their play and exploration.

We invest time and energy into helping pupils set and reflect on their own goals by aiming high and developing a love of reading, writing and number. This is delivered through a holistic curriculum which maximises opportunities for meaningful cross-curricular links and learning experiences as well as promoting the unique child by offering extended periods of play and sustained thinking following children's interests and ideas. We value imagination and creativity and seek to create a sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning through a vibrant continuous indoor and outdoor provision, visits and regular forest school sessions. Our investment in specialist teachers in art and physical development mean that children continually receive high quality teaching.

Implementation: How do we teach what we teach?

Pupils learn through a balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities. The timetable is carefully structured so that children have rigorous directed teaching of phonics, maths and circle time sessions to focus on essential basic skills and PSED. These sessions are followed by group work where children work with a member of staff to develop their individual targets. This focused group time means the teacher can systematically check for understanding, identify and respond to misconceptions quickly and provide real-time verbal feedback which results in a strong impact on the acquisition of new learning.

Children are provided with plenty of time to engage in 'exploration' throughout the variety of experiences carefully planned to engage and challenge them in the provision. The curriculum is planned for the inside and outdoors and equal importance is given to learning in both areas. The curriculum is planned in a cross-curricular way to enable all aspects of the children's development including understanding the world and expressive art and design as well as to promote sustained thinking and active learning. Intellectual preparation and co-planning is led by the Early Years Leader every week with short 15 minute 'child-led' planning sessions happening three times a week. During these sessions the teachers reflect on three questions: "What do our focus individuals need to learn or are curious about? What embedded learning have we observed in this area? What can be changed to exploit the learning and interests of the children/individuals in this area?" In this way, we ensure that the children contribute to their environment and that the provision leads to depth of learning across the curriculum.

Reading is at the heart of our curriculum. We promote and celebrate the love of reading in every aspect of learning. We have a clear reading spine and many additional texts that are shared with the children depending on how they lead the learning.

Children follow the rigorous and highly successful Read, Write Inc program faithfully so that they meet the age appropriate expectations for reading.

Early Years have a big question to answer over the course of the year which is broken down into a questions . The themes are based on questions from the EYFS curriculum: from "how many do friendships grow?" as part of PSED, to "how can I be healthy?" related to health and self-care. From this, we have chosen multiple high-quality texts to create an integrated approach to learning from which pupils can experience the full curriculum.

We follow White Rose Hub in Reception with an emphasis on studying key skills of number, calculation and shape so that pupils develop deep understanding and the acquisition of mathematical language. Pupils learn through games and tasks using concrete manipulatives which are then rehearsed and applied to their own learning during exploration. Nursery pupils begin to develop these key skills during daily maths sessions where they explore sorting, quantities, shape, number and counting awareness. These early mathematical

experiences are carefully designed to help pupils remember the content they have been taught and to support them with integrating their new knowledge across the breadth of their experiences and into larger concepts.

Our inclusive approach means that all children learn together but we have a range of additional intervention and support to enhance and scaffold children who may not be reaching their potential or moving on children who are exceeding national expectations. This includes, for example, staff use 'pinny time' which is a quick, on the spot intervention focused on sight words, blending and number retention with target individuals. The characteristics of effective learning are viewed as an integral part of all areas of learning and are reflected in our observations of children.

Our regular monitoring of teaching and learning includes coaching and feedback from peer teacher using the Zinnia Research approach so that teachers develop a good subject knowledge and are effectively supported. We tailor our staff CPD to be early years specific and are focused on moderating outcomes across the phase so that every member of our team feels confident in making accurate judgements about where individual pupils are and their next steps for learning.

Impact: How do we know what pupils have learnt and how well they have learnt it?

Our curriculum must meet the needs of our children, including our disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, so we spend time observing and evaluating how children are learning. This is achieved through talking to children, looking at their work, observing their learning experiences and analysing data and progress of year groups, classes, groups and individuals. Every member of staff uses **ongoing observational assessments** to identify children's starting points and plan experiences which ensure progress. This information is tracked using Otrack which enables us to measure our starting points against a national data set. We use this information on a weekly basis to plan learning experiences and next steps so that knowledge and skills are built cumulatively. During each assessment window, three times a year, teachers update the progress children have made onto Otrack which allows us to assess the impact of teaching. Evidence of children's learning including observations, work samples, photographs and contributions from parents are recorded on Class Dojo which children use to reflect on their progress through pupil voice.

During their time in our EYFS, children make rapid progress so that they meet the national expectation for GLD at the end of the year. Pupils also make good progress toward their age-related expectations before transitioning into Year One. We believe our high standards are due to the enriched play-based exploration alongside the rigour of assessment and teaching the children have as they move through the early years – a rich diet of balanced learning experiences is undoubtedly the best way to develop happy, curious children.

The Early Years provision at Rookery School ensures that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning that gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2021 statutory framework of the EYFS.

There are four guiding principles that shape our practice in early years at Rookery School.

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 with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- Importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates. The education and care of all children in early years' provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape our educational programmes at Rookery School. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

There are three areas that are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving.

These are the prime areas:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

We also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The specific areas are:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

4.2 Planning

Staff plan activities and experiences for children that enable children to develop and learn effectively. In order to do this, practitioners working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime areas.

Staff also take into account the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice.

4.3 Teaching

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Practitioners respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interactions.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year 1.

5. Assessment

At Rookery school, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Practitioners also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

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

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Exceeding expected levels or,
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are then shared with parents and/or carers.

6. Working with parents

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development through Class Dojo. This helps to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

Each child's teacher is the key person who helps to ensure that their learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. The teacher and teaching assistant support parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home. The key person also helps families to engage with more specialist support, if appropriate.

7. Safeguarding and welfare procedures

Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the DHT every two years.

At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

Appendix 1. Summary of our Early Years Philosophy

At Rookery School in the Early years we have adopted elements of the following approaches:

Montessori where the method promotes independence in learners through carefully designed self-directed activities and environments both inside and outside the classroom.

Key points:

- environment encourages hands-on learning
- resources are natural and open-ended
- adults play a crucial role in supporting development in children's own time
- 5 curriculum areas; sensorial life, practical life, mathematics, language and culture

Reggio Emilia – We place children at the centre of practice. Children are seen to have unlimited potential where adults support and promote the children's interests.

Key points:

- children are encouraged to express themselves and the '100 languages' metaphor explains the many varied ways children demonstrate understanding
- promotes independence, resilience and exploration
- adults should support not instruct learning

Forest School – Where there are child-centred, hands-on experiences in a natural setting. Risk and vulnerability are central themes

Key points:

- long term process of regular sessions
- takes place mainly on our field where there is natural setting that we have enhanced with natural resources
- learner centred
- builds resilience, confidence, independence and creativity
- build opportunities to take supported risks
- run by qualified Forest School practitioners

The Curiosity Approach - It centres on providing a safe and comfortable environment for children to be curious.

Key points:

- real life resources
- neutral décor and natural materials
- promotion of children being independent thinkers
- homely environment so that children feel safe and comfortable

Steiner/Waldorf - Holistic development of pupils' intellectual, artistic, and practical skills in an integrated manner

Vygotsky – Exploring the value of play and impact of environment

Appendix 2. List of statutory policies and procedures for the EYFS

Statutory policy or procedure for the EYFS	Where can it be found?
Safeguarding policy and procedures	See child protection and safeguarding policy
Procedure for responding to illness	See health and safety policy
Emergency evacuation procedure	See health and safety policy
Procedure for checking the identity of visitors	See child protection and safeguarding policy
Procedures for a parent failing to collect a child and for missing children	See child protection and safeguarding policy
Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints	See complaints policy