



# Early Years Policy & Guidelines

**Date of ratification by trustees: November 2024**

**Date of review: November 2025**

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# Our School's Mission Statement

*This school is committed to developing and maintaining excellent relationships in an open, transparent atmosphere of mutual trust. We provide a stimulating, challenging curriculum within a safe, happy environment.*

*Our children will gain a lifelong love of learning and a thirst for knowledge, enabling them to achieve the brightest of futures, confidently contributing as citizens of the global community.*

## **Aim**

At Westminster Primary, we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent. Quality and consistency in teaching and learning to ensure that no child gets left behind and every child makes good progress. We value the individual child and work closely alongside parents and others to meet their needs and help every child to reach their full potential.

## **Legislation**

This policy is based on requirements set out in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that applied from November 2024.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

## **Structure**

Our Early Years Foundation Stage accommodates children from the age of 3 to 5 years. In our school we have two part-time Nursery classes and full-time Reception classes. In Nursery, staffing includes a teacher and teaching assistants. Children attend our Nursery on a part-time basis for 3 hours each day, either mornings or afternoons.

Each Reception class has a teacher and a teaching assistant. To ensure best practice and continuity, our foundation stage classes work closely together, share planning and an outdoor learning environment.

## **Curriculum**

Our early years setting follows the statutory curriculum requirements as outlined in the EYFS statutory framework. The framework defines what we teach and we use the Development Matters guidance to support our curriculum. We offer a broad and balanced curriculum that covers the statutory aspects as well as other knowledge and skills to

support pupils' personal development, prepare pupils for their next stage of education and develop the whole child.

We ensure that these 4 the four guiding principles shape our practice within our early years setting.

- Unique child
- Positive relationships
- Enabling environments with teaching and support from adults
- Learning and development

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and interconnected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

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

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive Arts and Design

These are also underpinned by the Characteristics of Effective Learning, as detailed in the framework. The characteristics are used to inform practitioners about how a child learns through their play and how they use their attitudes and ability to play using what is around them.

The three characteristics are;

- **Playing and Exploring**- children investigate and experience things and 'have a go'
- **Active Learning**- children concentrate and keep trying if they encounter difficulties, they enjoy achievements
- **Creating and Thinking Critically**- children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which children explore, think creatively and are active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development. A rich and stimulating environment is provided for children indoors and outdoors to promote a love of learning.

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice. They also show ambitious intent for all children. Staff are expected to develop a strong continuous provision, and then plan enhanced provision and additional adult directed activities to support this.

Staff also consider 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.

Practitioners write medium-term plans using the EYFS framework based on a series of topics, each of which offers experiences in all seven areas. These plans then inform our short-term weekly planning, alongside our observations. 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 progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, activities will be planned, as appropriate for the age and stage of the pupils, which help to prepare children for more formal learning, ready for their next stage of education.

Practitioners working with the youngest children in Nursery will 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. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as the children move through the early years at Westminster and grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.

Children have whole group and small group sessions, as they progress through the EYFS with time for a daily phonics session using 'Little Wandle, Letters and Sounds Revised' programme, literacy and mathematics lessons. Reception staff use White Rose Maths to ensure that the teaching and learning is in line with preparation for year 1. The Jigsaw PSHE scheme is also taught throughout our curriculum.

Nursery children are provided with a book each week from their class library to share with their parents/carers. Reception children are provided with two books. The first, is a decodable phonics book which matches the sound/s that they are learning. The second, is a book that they can read for pleasure and parents can read to their child. Practitioners ensure that children are provided with a language rich curriculum, which develops a life-long love of reading, by using a variety of texts within all areas of learning.

### **Play Policy**

The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined by the EYFS. Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

Practitioners plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are planned by the adults. Our continuous provision provides children with stimulating, active play to encourage creative and critical thinking alongside other children, as well as on their own. Children are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experiences at their own level and pace.

Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests, inspire those around them and consolidate their understanding and skills. Children are provided with opportunities to learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. Practitioners take an active role in child-initiated play through observing, modelling and questioning. They teach and extend play whilst developing skills and language.

Opportunities to explore play on a larger scale are provided in the outdoor environment. Children are able to participate in activities that can be messy i.e. in the mud kitchen, and can use large pieces of construction to build models on a larger scale. These in turn allow the children to develop their social skills and language skills, whilst using a variety of materials and resources.

### **Assessment**

At Westminster Primary, 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 consider observations shared by parents and/carers.

All practitioners are expected to show an understanding of what the pupils know and can do and what their next steps in learning are. They are regularly expected to discuss this with leaders to ensure we meet the needs of all pupils within the setting and we adapt timetables, the environment and planning to ensure we continue to be ambitious for all pupils.

Before a child begins in the Foundation Stage, we aim to use the expertise of the child's parents and carers to help inform baseline information. Practitioners gather this essential information during home visits and visits to the class where the child's entry profile can be discussed. After entering the Foundation Stage, the children are closely observed within the first 6 weeks and this is collated to form an on-entry baseline. Observational evidence allows us to match children to ages and stages in the Nursery and Reception. Staff track the children's progress each term, focusing on observations, address gaps in their learning and plan next steps in order to inform assessments.

Within the first 6 weeks of a child starting reception, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

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 or,

- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging').

The profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions with parents/carers. The results of the profile are then shared with parents/carers. The profile is moderated internally using moderation materials and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.

### **Safeguarding and welfare procedures**

We promote good oral health, as well as good health in general, in the early years through our curriculum, for example by talking to children about:

- The effects of eating too many sweet things
- The importance of eating healthy food
- The importance of brushing your teeth

We also teach e-safety across our EYFS in an age appropriate way.

The rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy.

### **Managing transition**

We believe that the child's initial experience of entering the Early Years at Westminster Primary School must be positive, inclusive and respectful of home experience. We consider this an important first step towards developing the future partnership between school, parent and children. We acknowledge the transition can be both an exciting and challenging time for children for children and carers alike. We hope to provide a welcoming, happy and secure environment which minimises disruption as the child moves through the Foundation Stage and into Key Stage 1.

### **New parents meeting**

In both nursery and reception, new parents are invited to a meeting during the summer term prior to their child being admitted. This is an opportunity for parents to meet the Early Years Lead and staff. Short presentations are given to introduce the Early Years curriculum. They also receive a welcome pack which includes:

- Nursery/Reception Prospectus
- Start dates
- Admission form
- Medical form
- School forms
- Example of lunch menus (reception only)
- Induction packs given to the children to take home over summer holidays
- How to prepare children for Nursery and Reception

- Information about the child's interests, likes/dislikes.

### **Class Visits**

Parents and children can visit their Nursery or Reception setting before they start so the children can be welcomed and begin to familiarise themselves with their new environment and meet the staff. They are encouraged to play games with others to meet new friends so they can quickly recognise a friendly face as they come on their first day.

### **Home visits**

Home visits provide an opportunity for one-to-one interaction with the family. They should enable an exchange of information between parents, early years staff and children. The visit also provides a starting point for practitioners to understand family background, including cultural background.

For children, a visit carried out by their teacher shows that they are important, and means that some faces will be familiar when they start school.

For parents, a home visit provides an opportunity to talk about their child and the school, to voice concerns and to lessen worries and fears.

For parents and children, a visit gives them the opportunity to meet early years staff in a safe environment, where they feel confident and at ease.

For early years staff, a visit provides the opportunity to:

- Establish an early, positive contact
- Meet other family members, people and pets who are important to the children.
- Understand the problems that children might encounter at school

The teacher talks to the parent/carer and gathers vital information about the child's previous experiences, cultural background, likes and dislikes, preferred activities, health/medical concerns and possible special educational needs. The teacher also gathers a view of the parent/carers expectations of what they hope their child will gain from their time at Westminster Primary School. Parents are free to ask the staff any questions and help can be given in completing admission and entry profile forms.

### **Settling in procedures**

To enable children to settle in smoothly, Nursery and Reception stagger entry dates. Specific details are given in the new parents' pack.

## **Parent- teacher consultations**

Parents have the opportunity to discuss how their child has settled into their class and to discuss their progress and joint strategies between home and school. These meetings are scheduled once per term. Parents/carers are also able to make appointments with EY staff if they have other matters they wish to discuss. Written reports on progress are produced at the end of summer term.

## **Reception to year 1**

To make this transition as smooth as possible, it is ideal if year 1 teachers spend more time in Reception during the summer term to meet the children. The children also get the opportunity to visit their new classroom and teacher as a class for an introductory session towards the end of the summer term. Reception staff and year 1 staff meet to discuss each child's learning, end of year report and any transitional issues which may arise.

## **Equal opportunities**

### **Aims**

- To ensure that no children is excluded or disadvantaged because of ethnicity, religion, culture, family background, disability, gender, home, language, special educational needs or ability
- To ensure that we support the development of children's mental health by focusing on our children's physical, social and emotional development and continuing to encompass this in our day to day practice
- To ensure that we prevent the impairment of children's mental health by focusing on our children's physical, social and emotional development and continuing to encompass this in our day to day practice.
- To ensure that all the children feel secure, included and valued
- To establish feelings of respect and trust with all children and their parents or carers
- To treat each child as an individual and provide equality of opportunity
- To encourage self-confidence, self-regulation and a positive approach to learning in all children.

During home visits, we will talk to the child and the parent about the child's ethnic, religious and cultural heritage and experiences. Staff will use this information when planning and carrying out activities to ensure that familiar experiences are used as starting points for learning.

When planning, setting up and altering the rooms, outdoor areas, displays and equipment, the staff will aim to create an environment that encourages a positive attitude to learning. This will include:

1. Keeping the environment free from discriminatory practice or stereotypical images



2. Valuing the local community and environment as a source of learning opportunities.
3. Using displays, resources and equipment that reflect the community in which the children live as well as the wider world.

The curriculum will include activities to encourage children to respect their own cultural background and develop cultural capital about the beliefs of other people. These will include:

1. Activities relating to a wide range of religious, ethnic and cultural festivals
2. Telling stories, listening to music and using resources from a range of cultures and religions
3. Role play activities that reflect a variety of cultures.

Discussions with and between the children about the similarities and differences in their experiences and the reasons for those similarities and differences.

Staff will ensure that all children are given support to participate in activities, experiences, visits and discussions and to ensure that all children are listened to carefully and with respect.

Staff will carefully consider the need for equality of opportunity when planning activities and experiences. When necessary, staff will modify activities or provide equipment or materials to ensure children are not excluded.

### **EY Policy for the use of cameras and mobile phones**

#### **Cameras**

- Photographs are taken for the purpose of recording a child or group of children participating in activities or celebrating their achievements. This is an effective form for recording their progression in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They may also be used on our website and/or by the local press with permission from the parents.
- It is essential that photographs are taken and stored appropriately to safeguard the children in our care.
- Only the designated cameras are to be used to take any photo within the setting or on outings.
- Cameras should be placed within the filing cabinet in the classroom at the end of the day.
- Images taken and stored on the camera must be downloaded as soon as possible, ideally once a week.
- Photographs should then be distributed to members of staff (keyworkers) to record in children's learning journals.

It is the responsibility of all members of staff to be vigilant and report any concerns.

### **Mobile phones**

- Personal mobile phones and video recorders cannot be used when in the presence of children either on school premises or when on outings
- All mobile phones must be stored securely within the setting during contact time with the children. (This includes staff, visitors, volunteers and students)
- Personal calls may be made in non-contact time, when children are not present.
- Personal mobiles, cameras or video recorders should not be used to record classroom activities. Only school equipment should be used.
- All telephone contact with parent/carers must be made using the school telephone
- During school outings nominated staff will have access to the school mobile which can be used in an emergency or for contact purposes
- In the case of school productions, parents/carers are permitted to take photographs of their own children in accordance with school protocols.

### **Monitoring and Review:**

It is the responsibility of all staff to adhere to this policy. It will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees.