

Gresham Village School and Nursery Early Years Policy

Vision

Central to our vision is our desire to prepare our children for their next steps in learning and life through giving them the opportunity to learn through immersion in the world around them. We believe that every child is unique and will flourish in all aspects of their learning, if we provide the environment, challenges and support they need as an individual to develop their full potential.

We give children the best possible start in early education, recognising their prior learning and experiences in order to support them in becoming independent, confident, successful learners with positive self- image and high aspirations.

Each child is encouraged to approach the world around them with awe and wonder. They have an intrinsic desire to explore and investigate their surroundings and want to prosper for their own inner reward. During their play, children show their understanding of British Values and the aims and values of Gresham Village School; they take part, aim high, challenge themselves, are resilient and are respectful of themselves, others and the environment.

The Early Years Team model and inspire children to take a nurturing approach to themselves and others. Whilst children are assertive, confident and are developing the skills to resolve conflicts they also know that they can seek reassurance, comfort and guidance from adults when they need it. This support equips children with the confidence and security to try new things and embrace mistakes on their journey of learning and development. The setting promotes an evolving awareness and appreciation of their community and the greater world with a focus on celebrating individuality and diversity.

With well- developed indoor and outdoor learning environments, rich with opportunities to explore, discover and take risks, children have plentiful opportunities to problem solve, be reflective, think critically and review and adapt their approaches to child-led tasks. With children taking the lead in their learning they are not only more engaged but create much more memorable experiences.

Key principles

We believe that:

- Every child is a unique child with differing experiences.
- Children are constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, independent, confident and self-assured
- Children learn through investigative play, positive relationships and meaningful interactions.
- Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs

- Children develop and learn in unique ways and are most engaged when their learning is led by their own interests.
- A strong partnership between practitioners and parents or carers is essential for children to meet their potential

Statutory requirements

We follow and comply fully with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, March 2021.

Associated documents

- **Early Years Progression Map** This maps out child development in each area of learning through nursery and reception towards the Early Learning Goals.
- **Early Years Educational Programme** is the curriculum we follow in Early Years. It details how we organise our environment, how adults interact with children and the direct teaching we provide
- **Reading Strategy** and **Writing Strategy** and individual subject **Programmes of Study** show how teaching in Early Years fits within the overall progression of the curriculum across the school.

Enabling environment

The indoor and outdoor environments are set up to promote children's curiosity, inquisitiveness and engagement through giving them rich opportunities to explore, investigate and take risks. The care that is taken in setting up the environment allows the child to think of innovative and creative ways to use the resources provided, enabling them to be fully engaged and inspired.

Both indoors and outdoors, we set up a core provision of resources to encourage children to use their creativity to create their own activities and learning opportunities. The environment is dynamic and is adjusted to suit the changing needs and skills of the children and what we intend for them to learn and achieve. Outdoor environments enable children to work on a bigger scale, encouraging their minds to think bigger and expand the depth and breadth of their thinking.

Children develop good attitudes to learning with behaviour consistently high due to the mutually respectful relationships with their adults and the other children, through simple routines and clearly explained boundaries.

Effective interactions and positive relationships

Children are challenged and supported by effective and considered observations and interactions by adults who have developed positive and trusting relationships with the children. Sometimes we stand back and observe, deliberately not interrupting the learning that is taking place. All staff are trained to recognise teaching moments and then to decide the most appropriate way to move the learning on in an effective way. It is through these hundreds of

‘teaching moments’ every day that our children thrive, make progress and continue to develop admirable attitudes to learning.

As a consequence of this ‘planning in the moment’, we write very few forward plans for continuous provision, although we make adjustments to the environment and direction of interactions as a result of the observations we make.

Assessment

We are assessing every time we observe or interact with the children and try to record as many of these as is practicable on a daily basis in order to build a picture of every child’s development. We record on paper or use our online recording system, Tapestry, this builds a thorough learning journey for each child.

The purpose of observations is to inform us of where each child is at in that moment in a particular area of learning or areas of learning. It guides us to what challenge they need and how to support them with this in the moment. Written observations all contribute to focus child meetings, termly summative assessments and ultimately the Foundation Stage Profile. All staff are trained to make regular, rich and effective observations as part of their daily practice. They are also trained to make accurate assessments using the *Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage* document.

Every term, each child becomes a ‘focus child’ for a week. The aim of the focus child week is to focus observations and assessments for that individual child. It enables us to accurately assess an individual child’s learning and development, drawing on the expertise of all adults working with that child, including parents/ carers. The resulting assessment and conversation with parents is more accurate and in greater depth and enables home and school to have a complete picture and shared understanding of the whole child in all areas of development and characteristics of effective learning.

On entry, children are baselined within the first ten sessions or maximum of two weeks against all seven areas of learning and the three characteristics of learning. In reception, this is using the **Reception Baseline Assessment**. Children are subsequently assessed on a termly basis against these criteria and the data used to track individual children’s attainment and progress, which is discussed at a termly pupil progress meeting with the Headteacher; the data is also used to track the attainment and progress of the cohort in respect of each area of learning and characteristic of effective learning, which informs future improvement planning.

At the end of the reception year, each child is assessed using the statutory *Foundation Stage Profile*. The results of these assessments are reported to parents as part of the end of year reporting process. We moderate our judgements using the national exemplification across our settings, with other local settings and through the Local Authority moderation process.

Working with parents

Parents are involved at all stages of their child's journey through Early Years. Staff are always available to talk to parents on an informal basis before and after sessions; parents are an integral part of the Focus Child meeting; they have access to Tapestry and are encouraged to make their own contributions. Following a Focus Child meeting, parents receive a copy of the assessment and at the end of each year receive a full written report based on the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

Language and Literacy

Communication and language is one of the key foundations for all areas of learning in Early Years and beyond, particularly in relation to developing early reading and writing skills. We are therefore careful to assess children's speech and language development as soon as they enter our settings. How we do this, and the action we take if we feel there is a particular weakness, is set out in our SEND Information Report and Policy.

We develop positive attitudes to literacy by ensuring that there are opportunities to read and write as part of our continuous provision both indoors and outdoors. Adults are quick to read stories to children, assist them with 'helicopter writing' and encourage the retelling of stories through drama. All areas of each setting are equipped with a broad range of texts and books that are displayed well and available to the children. The setting has its own fiction and non-fiction 'library' that is frequently refreshed according to the interests of the children.

We are very aware that a good foundation in early reading and writing skills and developing positive attitudes to literacy in Early Years gives our children confidence when they transfer to key stage 1 and will have an extremely positive impact on their attainment in this phase. See our separate Reading Strategy and Writing Strategy for full information.

Safeguarding, safety and welfare

Our schools' safeguarding policies set out clearly the responsibilities and procedures around safeguarding and apply to Early Years as well as the rest of the school. Our schools' attendance policy also applies to Early Years and sets out what to do in the case of a pupil absence.

An Early Years risk assessment is carried out once a year and the outcomes shared with staff; every term, the Early Years teacher and Headteacher carry out a setting inspection and any remedial action is taken. The schools' Health and Safety policies set out the roles and responsibilities of staff with regard to health and safety.

Both settings comply fully with the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*. Staff also need to be aware of the school Safer Working Practice Guidance.

Staff working with children in Early Years will inevitably have to help children with their Intimate care. Our Intimate Care Policy sets out the safe working practices and procedures around this.

Special educational, disability and medical needs

We are committed to providing the best possible provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and different medical conditions.

Monitoring and evaluation

Maintaining a self-reflective practice is of high importance within our team. We therefore regularly organise and attend network meetings with other local settings and are involved in national forums that enable us to compare our practice with others. The Headteacher and Early Years Teacher monitor provision regularly and update the Early Years section of the Self-evaluation Framework once a term and modify action plans accordingly. At least once a year, we commission an external expert to monitor our provision.

Admissions

We have an Admissions Policy that includes Early Years and a Terms and Conditions document for parents. Both are available on our school websites.

Associated Policies

Safeguarding

Health and Safety

Intimate Care

Attendance

Admissions

Reading Strategy

Writing Strategy

Safer Working Practice Guidance