

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy Handbook 2023 - 2024

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The Early Years Foundation Stage

Principles

Here at William Patten we believe that children learn best when they are in a secure, happy and caring environment. Children develop quickly in the early years of their lives and their experiences between birth and 5 have a major impact on their future life chances. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), we provide a secure foundation through learning opportunities that start from the child's own interests and learning needs. We aim to enthuse and engage the children we teach through motivating and carefully planned indoor and outdoor learning opportunities. We use the Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (updated in 2020 to reflect the new Early Adopter EYFS Framework 2020) to plan for the children we teach. The framework is based on four guiding principles

A Unique Child
Positive Relationships
Enabling Environments
Learning and Development

Positive relationships

All children in Nursery and Reception are assigned a key person – the class teacher, a teaching assistant or the Nursery nurse. Parents are informed in writing, within the first four weeks of their child starting in the EYFS, whom their child's key person is. Key persons are allocated based on relationships the children develop with the adults in the setting. The key person has a special responsibility for a group of children, giving them reassurance to feel safe and cared for. The key person also works hard to build relationships with their parents/carers by engaging and supporting parents/carers with their child's development. Key persons are displayed on parent noticeboards outside classrooms.

Enabling Environments/ Learning and Development

Here at William Patten the Nursery and Reception class work closely together. This liaison ensures a smooth transition for those children moving from our William Patten Nursery into Reception. The team meet bi-weekly to plan for learning which helps to ensure progression and continuity of skills in the seven areas of learning in the EYFS curriculum; we believe all areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. The seven areas of learning are separated into prime and specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively, and so become 'school ready'. These are:

Communication and Language
Physical Development
Personal, Social and Emotional Development

The specific areas through which the prime areas are strengthened and applied are:

Literacy
Mathematics
Understanding the World
Expressive Arts and Design

A Unique Child

In planning and guiding children's activities, staff must reflect on the different ways that children learn and use this to inform their practice. Development Matters in the Early Years outlines three characteristics of effective teaching and learning.

These 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
- creating and thinking critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

Attendance

At William Patten School we believe that it is important that Nursery and Reception children attend school on a regular basis. **The expected level of attendance is 97%.** If children miss school, for any significant period, then they often find it difficult to return to school and can have 'gaps' in their learning which impact on the child and on the other children in the class. Therefore, we ask that you read the following information on our attendance policy.

We are aware that children in the Nursery and many children in Reception are not of statutory school age, but our policy applies to all children in the school.

As a parent you do not have the right to take your child out of school during term time. By law you must ask permission for your child to miss school.

Headteachers will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**, and they will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. This is line with current legislation.

DO NOT ASSUME LEAVE WILL BE AUTHORISED. There are many situations which may constitute exceptional circumstances but, as a generality we would interpret "exceptional" in this context as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time.

If a family is considering taking their child out of school for a period of time, an absence request **form must be completed** and handed in to the office. The forms are available from the office, or they can be downloaded from the school website. You will need to make it very clear, on the absence request form, how and why the circumstances are exceptional.

All applications for leave must be made to the school **at least 10 school days in advance** of the proposed leave. Permission cannot be given retrospectively.

The Headteacher would then consider the request and you would be informed, in writing or by phone, of the outcome of the request. A record is kept of all requests and the decision made.

Sickness absence

Parents / carers need to let us know, on the first day of absence, why their child is absent. This can be done by phone or in person and it needs to be done by 9.30am. We also ask that parents / carers inform the school if the absence is going to be prolonged and when the child is expected to return to school.

Authorised absence

Only the school can authorise an absence. For example, if we are informed that a child is unwell, but we are aware that they are away on holiday, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

An authorised absence will in most cases be covered by a note, calling in at the office or a telephone call. The following are classed as authorised absence.

1. Illness
2. Medical / dental appointments (these should be arranged outside school hours, wherever possible. If a child must be taken out of school, during school hours, then sight of an appointment card is requested.)
3. Bereavement
4. Religious observance
5. Examinations

The school can also use discretion to authorise absence in relation to:

1. Death of a close member of the family
2. Attending an interview (in relation to secondary transfer)

Unauthorised absence

An unauthorised absence is usually when no reason has been given for the child's absence, or when the reason for absence has not been accepted by the school.

Lateness

We ask that parents and carers ensure that their child is brought into school on time. It can be very upsetting for the child, and disruptive for the class teacher and other children in the class, if they are late. If your child is late and their classroom door is closed, then please enter the school via the school office, where the register can be updated.

Nursery: Morning Nursery starts at 9:00 am. A child arriving after 9.10 am will receive a late mark (L). If a child arrives after 9.15 am, they will be marked down as "late after the register has closed" signified by (U). Children attending the afternoon Nursery should be in school for 12:30 pm. A child arriving after 12:40 pm will receive a late mark (L). If a child arrives after 12:45 pm, they will be marked down as "late after the register has closed" signified by (U).

Reception: Reception starts at 9:00 am. A child arriving after 9.10 am (will receive a late mark (L). If a child arrives after 9.15 am, they will be marked down as "late after the register has closed" signified by (U).

Timetables

All timetables are updated weekly and are displayed on class planning boards, so all staff have access to where children and adults are at any time during the school day. Planning indicates which adults are leading activities each day. Visual timetables are used in all classes, so that children also know the routine for the day; children are guided through the day and any changes to the normal routine are clearly explained. The visual timetable is used at the start of the day and after lunch.

Daily timetable:

Please use this as a rough guide for how the EYFS day is structured during the autumn term; timings and activities regularly change to reflect children's interests and our curriculum offer. Changes are also made to these timetables during the spring and summer terms.

Nursery:

- 9:00 FT and PT AM Children arrive; hang up their coats etc. self-register.
- 9:10 Core book and literacy input followed by free-flow and focus activity.
- 10:45 Fruit time and maths, outside learning and play opportunities.
- 11:50 PT AM children - free reading, story time and home time at 12:00
Full time children have lunch, from 11:50 until 12:20
- 12:30 Afternoon PT children arrive; hang up their coats and self-register.
- 12:30 Outdoor play FT and PT PM children
- 12:55 Maths input, followed by free-flow and focus activity
- 13:45 Storytime, free-flow inside/outside
- 15:00 Free reading, story time and home time at 3:30

Reception:

- 9:00 Children arrive; hang up their coats etc. self-register.
- 9:10 Core book and literacy input followed by free-flow inside/outside and focus activity.
- 11:00 Fruit and story time
- 11:20 RWI
- 11:50 Handwriting
- 12:10 Prepare for lunch, lunch and lunch playtime
- 1:30 Maths input, free-flow inside/outside and focus activity
- 3:00 Independent reading and story time
- 3:30 Home time

Lunchtime

The EYFS team support Reception children during their lunchtime. Staff help to settle children and ensure they feel safe, secure and happy in the dining hall and also support children in the KS1 playground and the Reception playground.

Risk Assessments

We prioritise children's safety. In accordance with the school's Health and Safety policy and Risk Assessment policy, risk assessments are carried out for activities where we feel that there may be a risk to children. Prior to educational trips, staff make an initial visit to the venue and then complete a risk assessment form and a trip checklist, following the school's Educational Visits policy.

It is also necessary to complete daily outdoor risk assessments in the EYFS, as children can freely choose the different learning areas they access. The daily risk assessment is

displayed next to the door to the outdoor area and is completed twice a day before the children access the outdoor area. The risk assessment identifies aspects of the outdoor environment that need to be checked on a regular basis to ensure that it is safe for the children to use and play. Staff members should take turns to complete the risk assessments and should print their name once it is complete. It is the staff's responsibility to ensure that all potential hazards are reported or removed immediately upon completing the assessment.

Planning

Yearly topic overview (Long-Term Planning)

Long-term planning outlines which topics Nursery and Reception will study during each half-term across the year. This Yearly Curriculum overview links the topics being studied to other school and celebration events throughout the year. Yearly overviews are displayed in all classrooms on planning boards. Early Years long-term planning runs on a two-year cycle so there is no repetition of themes or activities, for those children moving from our Nursery to Reception. A curriculum booklet will be emailed to parents, at the start of the academic year, which explains the topics which will be covered throughout the year and also the focus of each area of learning.

Early Years Half-Termly Planning (Medium-Term Planning)

Half-termly planning outlines the key learning activities and experiences for each half-termly topic. Staff identify areas of need and stages of development, according to assessments, and use this information to plan meaningful and motivating experiences in all seven areas of learning. Nursery and Reception teachers plan together and this half termly planning is then further annotated and differentiated to match the needs, interests and stages of development of the children in each class. Medium term planning is informed by teacher assessments and carefully considers the skills the children need to develop and identified gaps in learning. Half-termly planning is used to produce a one-page Topic Web overview, this is emailed to parents at the start of each half-term and is also displayed on the Parents' Notice Board. We use this planning to produce half-termly Topic and Maths Vocabulary Mats; these vocabulary mats outline the key vocabulary (with visual prompts) that we will focus on during the half-term.

Weekly Planning (Short-Term Planning)

All carpet sessions, indoor and outdoor child-initiated and adult-directed activities and additional sessions such as PE and computing are planned weekly. The EYFS team meet once every two weeks to plan for the weeks ahead. Medium Term plans are used as a starting point for weekly plans, as well as information from observations and assessments completed by individual teachers. Core books are used to create a link between experiences and ensure high quality literature is at the heart of everything we do, and planning is based on themes that connect with this core book. Current planning / timetables / rotas are on display in all classrooms on planning boards.

All weekly planning includes a balance of meaningful and purposeful play-based adult directed and child-initiated activities. All focus activities are differentiated and carefully matched to the ability of the children in each class. In Reception, carpet sessions are focused on communication and language (CL) and literacy (LIT) and mathematics (MATHS). Carpet sessions last for around 10-15 minutes.

In Reception, children will complete at least one MATHS focus activity and one LIT focus activity per week; these activities are carefully differentiated to match the child's interests and abilities. It is expected that as children become more independent, especially during the latter part of the spring term, there will be a gradual shift to more adult directed activities in preparation for more formal learning in Year 1. Children will also be given further opportunities to work without adult support and in larger groups.

During the summer term parents are invited to a transition meeting, where the transition to Year 1 is explained.

Focus activities take place in both the indoor and outdoor learning environments and, although they may focus on MATHS or CL/LIT objectives, cross curricular links are made with a particularly strong focus on developing physical and social skills.

Independent activities are carefully planned and clearly linked to the weekly objectives, topic, children's interests and the core book. Weekly indoor and outdoor plans are displayed in all classrooms on planning boards.

Marking and Feedback

Marking has the potential to be the most powerful, manageable and useful diagnostic record of achievement. Clarke, Shirley 2001

Feedback in Reception

- Reception teachers use the Foundation Stage marking code for all pieces of work in exercise books and follow the school's marking policy. The marking code is clearly displayed in Reception classrooms.
- Marking and feedback should involve the child directly and therefore adults mark with children alongside them giving both verbal and written feedback as, especially for younger children, it is important that the feedback is oral and immediate. We have a clear marking key; teachers tick any success criteria that has been achieved and identify (using the symbol T) any areas to focus on in the future. Teachers also update a key which indicates the date the work was completed, if the activity was completed independently or in a group, and the level of support provided by the adult. The key also records any visual support or resources used to complete the activity.
- Marking indicates areas of achievement and any targets in relation to the success criteria.

Feedback in Nursery

- Once a child completes a focus activity, they will receive a Focus Activity sticker. Children should receive a sticker for every focus activity they complete. The sticker is the success criteria worded in child-friendly language and it helps children and parents/carers know what they did and what they have learned, during the school day.
- The children also receive a daily Home School Link sticker, which reflects the carpet sessions they have had that day. The sticker briefly explains the carpet session and

asks an Early Years version of a 'Green Pen Question' (GPQ) that the child could answer when another adult reads the sticker or inquiries about an activity. The GPQ could also be an activity for parents/carers to follow up at home as 'next steps'. For instance, if a child had worked on retelling the story 'Whatever Next' the GPQ might be 'Today we read Whatever Next and practised sequencing events in the story. Ask me what Baby Bear took with him to the moon' or 'Today we read Whatever Next and practised sequencing event from the story. Ask me about what Baby Bear did when he got to the moon.'

- All stickers to be used are planned on a weekly basis and are on weekly planning sheets which are displayed in all classrooms on class planning boards and are stored on the shared drive.

RWI in the Early Years

Phonics

We use Read Write Inc. to teach phonics and reading at William Patten.

In Nursery, after the children have settled, we play lots of sound games or 'Fred games' to develop the children's phonological awareness in preparation for learning Set 1 sounds. We ensure that the learning environment is language rich, that specific topic vocabulary is planned for so that children experience appropriate and higher-tier vocabulary throughout the day. We ensure that children regularly listen to stories and that these stories are explored with the children to help them to recognise rhythm, rhyme and language patterns. We try to ensure that children have very regular opportunities for 'Fred talk' so that they become more able to hear and blend sounds, a precursor to blending when reading. During the spring term, children start to participate in more formal RWI sessions, where they learn to read two phonemes/graphemes every week. Parents are informed in the weekly newsletter of the sounds their children will be learning the following week. They also start to learn how to blend these graphemes to read words. They are given several opportunities, throughout the day in both the indoor and outdoor learning environments, to consolidate their learning.

In Reception, at the start of the academic year, children are assessed to determine their phonic knowledge and ability to blend sounds. They are then split into groups, according to their baseline RWI assessment, and they are then taught unknown Set 1 sounds, how to orally blend these sounds and how to read simple words containing these sounds. Once children become more confident with these early reading skills, they then start to read RWI Ditty books and RWI Story books. At each phase in the programme, the children read carefully matched books that include sounds the children can already read and words the children know. Children are given plenty of opportunities throughout the day, in both the indoor and outdoor learning environments, to consolidate their learning.

Reading

Core books are used in the Early Years and are linked to each half-termly topic. Teachers choose one of the core texts to focus on each week. The core text is read to children throughout the week and some of the planned activities are linked to that story. The core texts are either high quality fiction storybooks by celebrated children's authors or non-fiction texts. Staff ensure that there are other types of books related to the topic such as non-fiction

texts, magazines or comic books also available for children to read.

In Nursery and Reception, whole class shared reading happens every day. During shared reading sessions, where an adult is reading to the children, a particular focus should be delivered (e.g. story language, comprehension, decoding, high frequency words, characters/settings, rhyming words).

Reading books are changed at least once a week. In Nursery, the children select two books, from the class book box, to share with their parents at home for pleasure. In Reception, the children take home one book to share with their parents. Once the children progress onto RWI ditties/storybooks they will take home their RWI storybook. In addition to these books, from November, one Oxford Reading Tree book is sent home every week to complement the child's reading stage.

Writing

Children practice writing their name during the daily self-registration sessions. All children start off with a picture of themselves with their name next to it. Once they can recognise their name, then the picture is removed. Name writing is a very important part of mark-making and emergent writing and children have access to their name cards in various learning areas and are encouraged to use them. We encourage children to write in all areas of learning, to develop confidence, stamina and grapheme/phoneme correspondence and 'see' themselves as a writer. In Nursery, there is a focus on mark-making, letter formation and the development of fine motor skills. In Reception, children complete both independent writing activities as well as literacy focus tasks, where they use their phonic knowledge to sound out their chosen sentence(s).

Assessment in the Early Years

Learning Journey

The EYFS team observe, monitor and support children during their independent play, child-led and adult-led learning. These observations and the work samples that children make are used to monitor children's progress, using the Development Matters statements as a guide, and to set relevant and appropriate next steps. The key objectives for the week, which we will focus on during both adult and child-led activities, will be shared in the weekly newsletters and also displayed on the Parents' Noticeboard. Additional tasks will also be shared, to provide increased challenge and opportunities for development.

The weekly newsletters will also contain photos of children engaged in activities and serve to record the week's curriculum focus.

In Reception, from the autumn term children also have a 'literacy book', a 'maths book', a RWI book and a handwriting book where children's writing and mathematical activities, in response to adult-led activities, are recorded.

Assessment

Schools should not include burdensome evidence gathering requirements against any of the areas of learning in their assessment policies so that teachers and practitioners can spend as much time as possible interacting with children and directly supporting their learning and development. (**EYFS Handbook 2023**)

Ongoing formative assessments, based on the teacher's knowledge of the child supported by a firm understanding of children's developmental stages (DM statements) ensures that teachers know children's developmental needs. Termly summative assessments, in all areas

of learning, allows teachers to track children's progress and identify children needing additional support.

In Reception children's English, maths, RWI and handwriting books also record children's progress throughout the year.

On-entry or Baseline Assessment

When a child first starts in the Nursery or in Reception, EYFS staff complete an on-entry or baseline assessment. This helps to identify the child's stage of development and plan for their next steps. This baseline assessment will help form a judgement about which developmental band the child is functioning in and to highlight the on-entry levels on the assessment sheets. Staff use different types of evidence to form the on-entry judgement such as but not limited to: observations, previous reports, progress checks, school visit parent questionnaires and interviews and day-to-day interactions with the children. This on-entry assessment should be completed within 4 weeks of the children starting at school. In addition to this, the Reception Baseline Assessment (statutory from September 2021), will be administered to all Reception children, during the first 6 weeks of the autumn term.

Tracking

The EYFS coordinator takes responsibility for the termly tracking of Development Matters data. Following the input of baseline data, each term's data is updated onto an Early Years assessment tracking system. The data is then used to track the progress of particular groups, suggest additional support that might be needed and identify teaching priorities. Assessment is monitored and tracked each term by the Early Years Lead.

Observations

Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves staff observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles.

In Nursery and Reception, observations are completed across all areas of learning and this information is discussed with parents during the Autumn, Spring and Summer Parents' Evenings.

At William Patten we believe assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork.

Reporting on progress

At the end of Reception, the EYFS Profile must be completed for every child. The profile must reflect ongoing observations, other types of assessment and discussions with parents/carers. Each child's level of development must be assessed against the EYFS 2020 Curriculum Early Learning Goals. Teachers decide whether children are at expected levels or have not yet reaching expected levels (emerging). Moderation across the EYFS phase, and with other settings, supports teachers to make valid and robust assessments.

Year 1 Handover

Year 1 teachers are given a copy of the EYFS Profile report together with a commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning.

These will inform a dialogue between Reception and Year 1 teachers about each child's stage of development and to assist with the planning for Year 1.

Parents in Partnership

Learning Journeys

In the Foundation Stage, parents are encouraged to contribute to their child's learning. Parents are encouraged to email photos, provide work samples or other things of significance to add to their child's learning journey. Photographs will be taken and can be added to Google Classroom. Staff should respond to the observations that parents and carers share in the same way they respond to their own day-to-day observations.

Parents' Evening Meetings

Parents/carers are invited to attend Parents' Evening meetings during the autumn and spring terms. Parents are also invited to attend a Parents' Meeting during the summer term where progress, transition and next steps will be discussed. In addition to these meetings, we also organise Nursery and Reception Teddy Bears' Picnics, where parents can meet their child's teacher and teaching assistants and find out facts about the EYFS day.

Reception parents are also invited to two RWI meetings; one in autumn, where the teaching of RWI is reviewed and tips on how to help your child start to read are shared, and another meeting in spring where the next stage in the teaching of RWI is explained. Nursery parents are invited to a RWI meeting in spring, where we explain how we teach Set 1 sounds and how parents can support this at home.

School Visits and Settling in

In the Foundation Stage, teachers and Early Years educators meet with parents before children start Nursery/Reception. These meetings ease the transition to starting school considerably as children get to know the teaching staff and can see their classroom and the outside area. Before these school visit parents/carers will receive information confirming their child's start date, daily routines, the settling in process and some brief information about the curriculum in the EYFS. Parents will also be asked to complete a brief form relating to their child's name, health, previous setting experiences etc. The information gathered is confidential and not intended to be intrusive.

Nursery and Reception children have a staggered start to help ensure that children settle quickly and have a stress-free start to their Early Years' education. Children are carefully supported to settle in and children who are finding this difficult receive a bespoke settling timetable. Specific details of your child's school visit date and start date will be sent to parents in June 2023.

Reception Class Admissions - September 2024

Please be aware that there is no automatic transfer from our Nursery to our Reception class. Parents of Nursery children, that want a place for their child in our Reception class, must submit their Reception application online or via the Common Application Form to Hackney Learning Trust by the deadline date in January 2024. Please see the Hackney Learning Trust website for further details regarding admission criteria.

Newsletters

Every week a newsletter is emailed to parents informing them of important information including activities that children have taken part in during the week, what has been planned for the coming week, any changes to timetabled sessions, workshops or special events, ideas for activities to do at home and the RWI sounds being taught that week. Parents are also informed of children selected to be the super achiever of the week. All newsletters are written by the Early Years Lead and are emailed to parents on Friday afternoon.

Homework

On completion of an adult led or focused activity, Nursery children are given a sticker which is designed to inform parents and other adults in school of the learning which has taken place. The sticker normally encourages other adults to ask the child a question about the activity they have been covering.

In Nursery, at the end of the session/day, children are given a Home School Link sticker which encourages parents and carers to question and discuss the learning and activities the children have experienced, as well as to follow up these activities with learning at home. In Reception, these follow up activities are suggested in the weekly newsletter.

Nursery and Reception children receive weekly online homework using Google Classroom. Children may be asked to complete a variety of activities, linked to the week's focus literacy, topic or maths tasks. This could be to draw a picture to demonstrate understanding of a topic, show number sentences using objects, marks or numbers, record an audio or video clip to demonstrate their understanding. RWI homework is also provided, to support parents to continue children's reading activities at home. Paper-based homework is not provided.

Behaviour Systems

All classes at William Patten are required to display and follow our behaviour policy to promote desired behaviours. If children are disruptive, they are given a warning. If the behaviour continues, then they are given some 'thinking time' in a quiet area of the classroom. If the behaviour continues, then SLT will be called, and the behaviour incident will be recorded in the class Behaviour book.

We have a positive behaviour system; we praise and encourage children and recognise and celebrate good and appropriate behaviour. This is across all aspects of learning; good sitting, good partner work, good lining up, being kind and helpful to friends, trying hard etc. We use an online application – Class Dojo – to recognise these achievements and children receive Class Dojo stickers to celebrate their success.

Equal Opportunities

Early Years Foundation Stage staff are committed to providing the full range of opportunities for all children regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, social, religious, of cultural background. All children should have equal access to the curriculum and the right to a learning environment which dispels ignorance, prejudice and stereotyping. The diversity of languages in the school is seen as both positive and valuable and should be in evidence in the classroom.

SEND procedures

Consideration is given to all children with Special Educational Needs, including the most able children, children with learning difficulties, children with physical disabilities and children with emotional or mental health difficulties. Special Educational Needs should be considered when planning, to ensure inclusion of all children. William Patten is an inclusive school, and we believe that all children should have their needs met within the classroom setting, with the support of specialists from external agencies where appropriate.

If Early Years Foundation Stage staff have any concerns about a child they will first speak with the parents and devise and discuss strategies to be tried together. Following this the SENCO would become involved and if a child needs 'SEND Support' a SEN Pupil Profile and support sheet would be drawn up with the parents (and the child, where appropriate). If the involvement of external agencies were deemed necessary, the SENCO would arrange this.

Staff training and development

All staff working in the EYFS have access to Early Years Foundation Stage training programme provided by the Hackney Learning Trust and other organisations. It is important that Early Years Foundation Stage staff keep up to date with current developments. Some school staff meetings and INSET are run separately for Early Years Foundation Stage staff when the content is more appropriate to be looked at in separate key stages. Some of these meetings should be devoted to critical reflection on progress.

Written by Maria Sullivan

Early Years Lead

Date of next review - July 2024

To be reviewed by Maria Sullivan Early Years Lead