



Early Years Policy

Effective from: May 2022

Review: May 2025

Mrs Hardman

Policy confirmed by the Governing Body of Grace Mary Primary School on:

Date: 6th July 2022

Signature: _____
(Chair of Governors)

Signature: _____

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Statement of intent.

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five DfE 2021

At Grace Mary Primary School, we truly value the importance of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) in providing a secure foundation for future learning and development. This policy has been developed in conjunction with the relevant DfE guidance and legislation to ensure that each child has a happy and positive start to their school life in which they can build a foundation for a love of learning. We believe that every child deserves the best possible start in life.

We aim to make a significant contribution to that start by helping young children to develop a love for learning which they will carry with them through life. It is their right to be safe, healthy and happy and the welfare of the children is central to our provision of care, learning and play. We ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. The ‘Reggio Emilia’ approach influences our everyday practice within class. The philosophy behind the approach promotes respect, responsibility and community, and a strong emphasis on exploration and discovery. We believe all children have potential and curiosity, and it is our role as adults to observe, then further develop their natural abilities.

The Early Years education we offer our children is based on seven key features of effective practice, these are:-

- 1) The best for every child
- 2) High quality care
- 3) The curriculum; what we want the children to learn
- 4) Pedagogy; helping children to learn
- 5) Assessment; checking what children have learnt
- 6) Self-regulation and executive function
- 7) Partnership with parents

1. Legal Framework.

This policy has due regard to statutory legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Childcare Act 2016
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The GDPR Data Protection Act 2018

This policy has due regard to statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2021) 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage'
- DfE (2021) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2018) 'Working together to safeguard children'
- DfE (2015) 'the prevent duty'

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2021-2022
- Data Protection Policy 2022
- Administering of Medicines Policy 2019-2022
- Inclusion Policy 2021
- SEND Policy 2022
- Teaching and learning Policy 2018-2021

2. Roles and responsibilities.

The EYFS lead, Mrs. Hardman, in conjunction with the head teacher, Mrs. Sturmy, has responsibility for the day-to-day implementation and management of this policy.

Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, are responsible for familiarising themselves with, and following, this policy.

Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, are responsible for remaining alert to any issues of concern in children.

3. Aims.

Through the implementation of this policy, we aim to:

- Give each child a happy and positive start to their school life in which they can establish a solid foundation for a love of learning.
- Enable each child to develop socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- Encourage children to develop independence within a secure and friendly atmosphere.
- Support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing.
- Work alongside parents to meet each child's individual needs to ensure they reach their full potential.

There are Seven Key Features of effective practice that guide and shape our Early Years setting:

- 1) The best for every child
- 2) High quality care
- 3) The curriculum; what we want the children to learn
- 4) Pedagogy; helping children to learn
- 5) Assessment; checking what children have learnt
- 6) Self-regulation and executive function
- 7) Partnership with parents

To put these principles into practice, the school:

- Provides a broad, balanced and tailored curriculum which takes children's different stages of development into account.
- Promotes equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.
- Works in partnership with parents.
- Plans challenging learning experiences, based on individual needs, which are informed by observation and assessment.
- Implements a key person approach to develop close relationships with children.
- Provides a safe and secure learning environment.

4. Learning and Development.

Key documents to underpin learning and development within the Early Years: ***Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2021 and Development Matters 2021 (Non Statutory curriculum guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage.)***

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are important and inter-connected. Three areas are crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships. These are known as the **prime** areas. There are also four **specific** areas, through which the prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The **Prime** areas are:

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

The **specific** areas are:

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

The EYFS Framework identifies three characteristics of effective learning. Teachers plan activities within with these characteristics in mind:

- 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.

Curriculum.

Our curriculum is ambitious, accessible and tailored to the needs of the cohort of children we are currently working with. It is also influenced by the development matters document that gives an outline what skills children should be working towards obtaining and when.

We have our own personal curriculum goals that outline what we want children to achieve by the time they leave Nursery and Reception class. The goals have been carefully considered and reflect aspects of our practice that are truly valued at Grace Mary, such as children spending time in forest school.

We have overarching long term plans that map out key themes and texts for the academic year. The key themes have been carefully considered so that children are exposed to specific knowledge around a broad range of subjects.

We have progression maps for prime areas of learning that outline what skills we expect to see children achieving, and when.

We have also developed knowledge organisers for certain areas of learning, for example 'knowledge and understanding of the word,' that outline the specific knowledge teachers impart to children and when.

How our children learn.

In both Nursery and Reception classes, we adopt a 'child led' approach to learning which focuses on children's interests and individual learning styles.

This child led learning is supported by skilled Early Years Practitioners who observe what the children are interested in and push their learning further through 'in the moment' teaching and scaffolding.

Our timetable and environment demonstrate how we value the true importance of giving children within our Early Years setting time within the day to take part in meaningful play.

Alongside 'child led' learning, precise teaching in small groups is carefully planned for and delivered throughout the school day, in order to deliver a knowledge rich curriculum. We aim to expand children's knowledge and skills range in specific areas such as Literacy, Mathematics and Understanding the World.

We are aware that many children come into school with limited experiences, so we meticulously plan the key knowledge we expect them to acquire in order to broaden their horizons.

We use long term plans in order to carefully consider what knowledge is taught, when, why and how.

Each half term is planned around a loose theme and supported by key texts.

Early Years teachers and practitioners are aware of the Grace Mary teaching and learning policy, which states knowledge is at the heart of our teaching and learning.

Early Years practitioners are also aware of overarching school policy that promotes the importance of the working and long term memory.

Previously taught knowledge is consistently drawn upon in subjects such as phonics and mathematics.

Approaches to teaching and learning with our early year's unit include:

- Whole class teaching inputs
- Focus group activities
- Child initiated learning facilitated by an adult supporting provision using the sustained shared thinking approach.

5. Inclusion.

All children are valued as individuals irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender.

The EYFS curriculum is planned in order to meet the needs of the individual child and support them at their own pace.

The Equal Opportunities Policy ensures that the needs of all children are met, regardless of any protected characteristics they have.

SEND in the EYFS setting will be monitored and managed by the school's SENCO.

6. The learning environment and outdoor spaces.

We carefully plan our environment to provide a range of stimulating experiences and opportunities. Activities that are accessible to children within the environment are developmentally appropriate, engaging and well planned in order to encourage children to apply taught knowledge independently. Children's current interests and fascinations are also carefully considered when planning what will be out in the environment for children to access.

Our environment is not left to chance, and each area has been carefully planned and resourced in order to promote children's learning and development. It is regularly evaluated and updated by members of the team.

As part of our Reggio Emilia approach, we use loose parts and natural, found materials to encourage curiosity, investigation and imagination. As long as materials can be moved, redesigned, put together and taken apart in a variety of ways, they are classified as loose parts. We believe loose parts provide the variables children require to create new options in their play.

Outdoor play is truly valued within our early years setting.

Learning outside the classroom supports the development of healthy and active life styles by offering children opportunities for physical activity, freedom and movement, and promoting a sense of wellbeing. It gives them contact with the natural world and offers them experiences that are unique to outdoors, such as direct contact with the weather and the seasons. Outdoor play also supports children's problem solving skills and nurtures their creativity, as well as providing rich opportunities for their developing imagination, inventiveness, and resourcefulness. At Grace Mary, our Outdoor Environment is planned as carefully and purposefully as our indoor environment. Children are encouraged to free flow between the classroom and the outdoor space, utilizing all equipment. Children also take part in Forest School sessions with a trained member of staff, where they are encouraged to look closely at nature and all it has to behold.

7. Assessment.

The way in which we assess children within the early years happens in a variety of ways. When children begin their Nursery and Reception year, they are observed closely by key workers to allow practitioners to make a 'baseline' judgement. Class teachers consider if children are working at, below or well below age related expectations, referring to our own progression documents and the development matters framework. Alongside observations, children also take part in a 'Wellcomm Screening' which is a tool that measures children's use and understanding of language. Reception children also take part in the RBA (Reception Baseline assessment), which is now mandatory for every school. Formal phonics and mathematic assessments are also carried out half termly during a child's reception year.

Our early year's team comes together each half term for a pupil progress meeting to discuss each child and their development across the seven areas of learning. This enables every member of the team to share what they know about the children, identify any areas of concern and plan our provision so that it is meeting the needs of the current cohort. From these meetings, class teachers consider if children are working at, below or well below age related expectations. The early years lead

inputs and analyses data in order to track progress and to identify any areas of intervention that are required. How data is stored is outlined below:

- Produced every half term by class teacher for each child and each area of learning.
- Baseline data analysed in order to identify areas for development
- Autumn 2 data analysed in order to identify areas for development
- Spring 2 data analysed in order to identify areas for development

8. Safeguarding and welfare.

All necessary steps are taken to keep the children in our care safe and well.

Any safeguarding or welfare issues will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, and all members of staff in the EYFS are required to read this policy as part of their induction training.

Staff will receive safeguarding training that enables them to understand the safeguarding policy and procedures, have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, and recognise signs of potential abuse and neglect

9. Mobile phones and devices.

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'mobile phone' refers to any electronic device that can be used to take images or record videos, including tablets.

Staff members must not use personal mobile phones or cameras when children are present.

Staff may use mobile phones on school premises outside of working hours when no children are present.

Staff may use mobile phones in the staffroom during breaks and non-contact time.

Mobile phones should be safely stored and in silent mode whilst children are present.

Staff may take mobile phones on trips, but they must only be used in emergencies and should not be used when children are present. Mobile phones must not be used to take images or videos at any time during trips.

Staff who do not adhere to this policy will face disciplinary action

Staff may use their professional judgement in emergency situations.

Staff must report any concerns about another staff member's use of mobile phones to the DSL, following the procedures outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the Allegations of Abuse against Staff Policy.

Parents, visitors and contractors are not permitted to take photographs or record videos without prior permission.

Parents may take photographs and videos only containing their own child during school events.

10. Health and Safety.

A first-aid box is located in each of the Early Years classrooms.

Practitioners will report any accident or injury involving a child to their parents on the day it occurs, and any first-aid treatment administered to a child will also be reported to their parents.

Accidents and injuries will be recorded on an accident form, a copy of which is kept in each classroom.

The school has a Fire Evacuation Plan in place

Information about any dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies and any special health requirements a child has will be recorded.

Fresh drinking water is available at all times.

Smoking is not permitted on the school premises.

The Health and Safety Policy outlines the full health and safety policies and procedures.

11. Staff taking medication or other substances.

The school implements a zero-tolerance approach to drugs and alcohol misuse.

The use of alcohol or any other substance that may affect the ability to care for children by a member of staff will not be tolerated. If there is a reason to believe a member of staff is under the influence of alcohol or any other substance, they will not be allowed to work directly with children and further action will be taken.

Any member of staff taking medication which may affect their ability to care for children will seek medical advice. Staff will only be allowed to work directly with the children if it is confirmed that the medication is unlikely to impair their ability to look after children properly.

12. Staffing.

A robust Recruitment Policy is in place, which aims to ensure that members of staff employed in the EYFS are suitable.

Upon employment, all EYFS staff receive induction training to ensure that they understand their roles and responsibilities, including information about emergency evacuation procedures, safeguarding, child protection and health and safety.

Staff will be supported to undertake the appropriate training and professional development to ensure children receive the best quality learning experience.

All members of staff who have contact with children and families will be supervised by Mrs Flaherty. The supervision will provide opportunities for staff to:

- Discuss any issues, particularly concerning the development or wellbeing of children, including any child protection concerns.
- Identify solutions to address issues.
- Receive coaching to improve their effectiveness.

There will be at least one member of staff on the school premises at all times who has a current paediatric first-aid (PFA) certificate.

The school provides a staffing ratio in line with the safeguarding and welfare requirements set out in the 'Statutory framework for the early year's foundation stage'.

The school adopts the following staffing ratios:

- For children aged three and over: - Where a staff member with qualified teacher status (QTS), early years professional status, or another suitable level 6 qualification is working directly with the children, there is one member of staff for every 13 children, and at least one other member of staff holds a full and relevant level 3 qualification. - Where a member of staff does not hold QTS, early year's professional status, or another suitable level 6 qualification, there is one member of staff for every eight children. At least one staff member holds a full and relevant level 3 qualification, and at least half of all other staff hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification.

Only under exceptional circumstances, and where the quality of care and safety of children is maintained, will changes be made to the ratios.

Parents will be informed about staffing arrangements and, when relevant and practical, will be involved in staffing arrangement decisions.

Each child is assigned a key person whose role it is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs.

13. Information and records.

Information is stored in line with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, and with regard to the school's Data Protection Policy.

The following information is recorded for each child:

- The child's name and date of birth
- The name and address of every parent or carer who is known to the school, and which parent or carer the child normally lives with
- The emergency contact details of the child's parent or carer 13.3.

The following information about the school is recorded

- The school's name, address and telephone number

- The school's certificate of registration
- The name, address and telephone number of anyone who will regularly be in unsupervised contact with the children
- A daily record of the names of the children being cared for in the school.

14. Parental involvement.

We recognise parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educators. We aim to work closely with families as it is widely understood that this can have a very positive impact on a child's development. We develop and foster these relationships in various ways:

- Home visits are carried out prior to children starting Nursery/ Reception class.
- Parents and carers are made to feel welcome to speak to staff members at drop off and collection times. Staff invest time in building relationships with families and are always friendly and have time to listen.
- We hold regular themed stay and play sessions and workshops that all parents are welcome to attend.
- We deliver termly Newsletters
- We hold a Parents day (termly) where parents are invited in for a one on one meeting with their child's class teacher.
- At the end of Reception, children receive a formal written report outlining the progress their child has made against the Early Learning Goals.
- We share observations of children with parents via 'Evidence Me.'
- We invite parents in to school for events such as Christmas plays, Easter bonnet parades, sports days etc.
- We regularly update our class pages on the school website to showcase children's learning.
- We carry out a parents meeting prior to children beginning their Reception year.

15. Monitoring and review.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Grace Mary Primary governing board and the head teacher, Mrs Sturmy.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff

All members of staff directly involved with the EYFS are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is June 2023.