

Early Years Policy

September 2022

Our Intent and Aims

In the Early Years at The Belham Primary School, we want children to be happy and confident individuals with a love of learning. Our children are at the heart of everything we do, and learning is led by children's individual wants, needs and interests to promote excitement and wonder.

Children have the opportunity to learn through play. Learning is fun, engaging and suitably challenging. Children have the opportunity to continue their learning outdoors on a larger, louder and messier scale. Learning is inspired by the children's interests, meaning it is suitably challenging and no child gets left behind.

All adults provide high quality interactions and they are role models for learning. Adults create a language rich environment to support children's communication skills.

We aim to support all children to become independent and collaborative learners. We will provide an exciting, open-ended curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential.

Legislation

The policy is based on requirements set out in the statutory framework for the [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) that applies from September 2021](#)

Implementation

Structure of the EYFS

Our Early Years includes Reception and Year 1 and they are under the leadership of a Phase Leader.

The Belham has an intake of 60 children, who are allocated into two separate Reception classes. These classes share a large classroom, and have access to an outdoor area. Each class has a class teacher, with at least two teaching assistants and one Early Years Practitioner working across the year group.

In Year 1, the children move into adjacent classrooms, with a shared outdoor space. They continue to have a class teacher, at least two teaching assistants and an Early Years Practitioner working across the year group.

We advocate for a play-based approach across Reception and Year 1; however this looks different in the two year groups. In Reception, the children spend the day learning through play, with only a few short teacher-led inputs each day. In Year 1, we plan a more structured day to ensure that children cover the Y1 national curriculum in a developmentally appropriate way. This includes a mix of direct teaching in small groups, independent tasks, and time for self-directed play.

Curriculum

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Our Early Years setting follows a clear sequence of learning which enables children to achieve well. It is structured following the EYFS statutory framework that applied from September 2021.

Children are intrinsically motivated learners. This motivation is described in the EYFS as the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning'. These are concerned with Engagement, Motivation and Thinking.

- **Playing and Exploring**- describes how children are engaged in their learning by finding out and exploring; playing with what they know; and being willing to have a go.
- **Active Learning**- describes children's motivation to learn by being involved and concentrating; keeping on trying; and enjoying achieving what they set out to do.
- **Creating and Thinking Critically**- describes how children learn by having their own ideas, making links, and choosing how to do things.

Our provision is designed to enable children's development of these characteristics to support the children to learn well and make good progress in all the Areas of Learning and Development.

Prime and Specific areas of the EYFS

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development, which are equally important and interconnected.

Three of the areas are known as the prime areas. These are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving (Early Years Framework, 2021)

The prime areas are:

Communication and Language	Listening, Attention and Understanding Speaking
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Self-regulation Managing Self Building Relationships
Physical Development	Fine Motor Gross Motor

Research shows that children that do well in these areas, achieve well later on.

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through the further four areas, which are referred to as specific areas.

Literacy	Comprehension Word Reading Writing
Mathematics	Numbers Numerical patterns
Understanding the World	Past and present People, culture and communities The Natural World
Expressive Arts and Design	Creating with materials Being imaginative and expressive

We enrich the Early Years framework with our own 'glittering curriculum' to enhance the experience and opportunities available to the children. This includes outdoor learning at Copleston Garden or Lettsom Gardens, regular trips across London and a range of external visitors. The children also have regular opportunities to cook – ranging from our popular weekly 'Toasty Tuesdays' to more advanced cooking led by the children's interests.

Teaching

We ensure there is a balance of child- initiated learning through continuous provision, and adult led activities, across the school day. In Year 1, the number of adult-led inputs increase, and children participate in frequent guided groups with their teachers.

Whole class reading and story time are important parts of the day. We want our children to develop a life-long love of reading. Children are exposed to a wide range of both fiction and non-fiction texts to provide them with opportunities to hear and use new vocabulary. We make sure there is always time for a whole class story during the day, as well as opportunities to enjoy books within the continuous provision. We promote a love of reading through our weekly 'Secret Storyteller', where a surprise guest reads the children a story each week.

During independent learning, the adult plays a crucial role. The adults respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In some cases, the adult will ask a child to complete a task with them; at other times they will participate in the child's play, extending it where possible.

Every child is provided with their own book bag and receives a fully-decodable 'reading' book three times a week. In school they will share this book with an adult either on a one to one basis or in a group. They will also have the opportunity to select a book for enjoyment from the school library on a weekly basis.

Play

Learning through play underpins our approach to teaching and learning across Reception and Year 1. We embrace the fact that how children learn is as important as what they learn. Finding those moments of high involvement requires giving children time and space to explore their own ideas and interests through play. Therefore, in our EYFS, most of the day is spent in child-initiated play, where children have choice over what they learn.

Continuous provision is used throughout Reception and Year 1, where the classrooms and outdoor areas are set up with a range of resources and activities. Each area has cross-curricular resources, which children can access independently throughout the day. Continuous provision provides children with stimulating, active play to encourage creative and critical thinking alongside other children.

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 interest, inspire those around them and consolidate their understanding and skills. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. Our adults take an active role in child-initiated play through observing, modelling and questioning. They teach and extend play whilst developing skills and language.

We understand that outdoor play is of equal importance as indoor play and that the outdoor classroom offers children 'bigger', 'louder' and 'messier' experiences. We therefore offer free flow access to our outdoor learning areas throughout the school day.

Planning

Our well-planned and sequenced curriculum provides the basis for planning in our Early Years classes. The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are supported by the Development Matters Statements from the Early Years Foundation Stage document, and Year 1 is planned following the National Curriculum. Our planning is thematic, with discrete lessons in PSHE, phonics, writing and maths.

Practitioners select themes according to children's interests, experiences and prior learning. Progress and curriculum coverage are monitored half-termly. Each learning area in the classrooms and outdoor areas have provision plans, which identify learning opportunities and suggested enhancements. Staff reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice. They also respond to children's social and emotional needs as well as their academic targets.

Assessment

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

Within the first 6 weeks that a child starts reception, staff will administer the Statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA, May 2021).

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:

- Expected - meeting expected levels of development
- Emerging - not yet reaching the expected levels of development

Children's development levels are assessed as the year progresses. If a child's progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, practitioners will discuss this with the child's parents/carers and agree how to support the child.

Working with parents

We recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education.

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

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

- Messaging through the ClassDojo app – where communication is shared with parents, and parents can contact the teachers.
- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts school at our New Parents Evenings.
- Outlining the school's expectations in the Home-School agreement.
- Inviting parents/carers and children the opportunity to spend time at Stay and Play sessions.
- Operating an open-door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns. Conversely, if the Early Years team have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them.

- Regularly communicating our areas of learning and the overarching theme of the half-term as well as a weekly dojo post about current learning.
- Inviting parents to attend informal meetings about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics or reading.
- Valuing the on-going contributions to Tapestry from parents/carers.
- Offering two parent/teacher consultation meetings per year at which their child's progress is discussed.
- Sending a detailed written report on their child's attainment and progress in Spring, with targets for the Summer term.
- Inviting families to a range of activities throughout the school year such as assemblies, workshops, Christmas productions and sports day etc.
- Offering opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school on a volunteer basis to assist with the children's learning e.g. listening to readers.

Transition

Our transition process into the EYFS at The Belham includes:

- A phone call to the previous nursery/ childcare provider by the EYFS phase leader
- A New Parents social event for parents to meet senior leaders and class teachers
- A Stay and Play session in the Summer term for children to attend with their parents
- A staggered start to the school year, with small groups of children joining over two weeks
- A meeting with parents / carers with the class teacher within the first half term

Safeguarding and welfare procedures

Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our Safeguarding Policy.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Headteacher.

Impact

We recognise that every child is unique and that they develop and learn in different ways and at varying rates. We want all of our children to develop a positive attitude to learning and therefore we strive for our children to become curious, resilient and self-assured in order to prepare them for the next stage of education, laying secure foundations for future learning and development.