



GATLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

This policy describes the first stage of education at Gatley Primary School – the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The policy encompasses all areas of learning, describing the school's commitment to providing the best possible start for the education of all children.

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Head of School

Date:

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Date



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Introduction

It is our belief that it is the right of children to grow up in an environment that supports them to be safe and healthy. We strive to create a positive culture and ethos, through which children enjoy their learning and achieve together. At Gatley, we maximise upon the talents of all of our children, supporting them with opportunities to make a positive contribution to society, and the potential to achieve economic well-being. The overarching aim of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy is to help young children achieve these five outcomes.

The Early Years Foundation Stage framework (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At Gatley the EYFS applies to children attending from the age of three (our school Nursery age) to the end of the Reception year. Entry into our primary school is at the beginning of the school year in which the children turn five. The documents 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the Educational Programmes' and 'Development Matters' provide guidance on how to implement the learning and development requirements, and the welfare and legal requirements for all children at Gatley Primary school and are used alongside each other. The level of development children should be expected to have attained by the end of their Reception year is defined by the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) and are used for assessment purposes at the end of the year. The above documentation is interwoven into the school's progression grids helping curriculum content to be aligned from Nursery up to Year 6.

The statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage states that *"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. The Early Years Foundation Stage promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life."*

We view every child as a unique and competent learner, preparing them with the skills for life. Research has shown that children's outcomes in later life are strongly influenced by the experiences they have had in the early years.

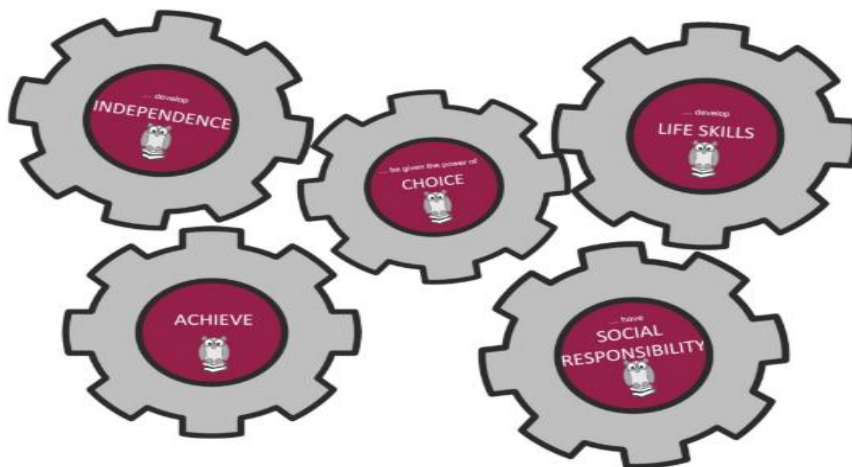
"The evidence is clear that children's experiences in their early years strongly influence their outcomes in later life, across a range of areas from health and social behaviour to their employment and educational attainment. A strong start in the early years increases the probability of positive outcomes in later life; a weak foundation significantly increases the risk of later difficulties." **The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning - An Independent Report on the Early Years Foundation Stage to Her Majesty's Government' by Dame Clare Tickell.**

Policy Statement

At Gatley Primary School, we provide a setting that:

- Is engaging, safe and welcoming to children and their carers;
- Encourages the children to be independent and resourceful;
- Cultivates enthusiasm, motivation, critical thinking and an enquiring mind;
- Delivers a broad and balanced curriculum accessible to all children;
- Provides opportunities for first-hand experiences, practical exploration and recognises the importance of play based activities;
- Provides opportunities for the children to work both individually and collaboratively;
- Enables children to develop key life skills through the school's unique provision such as; collaboration, communication, reflection, application, ICT/research and problem solving;
- Offers opportunities for the children to develop their own creativity and imagination;
- Celebrates differences, compassion and generosity to others;
- Cultivates an awareness and a respect for their own cultures and beliefs and the cultures and beliefs of others and
- Enables children to develop self- regulation strategies and to gain awareness of others' feelings, showing sensitivity and empathy.

Our School's values are for all pupils to:



Aims

Our intent for the curriculum in early years is to create a positive culture and ethos, through which children enjoy their learning and achieve together. Our broad and balanced curriculum is ambitious and designed to give our children the knowledge, self-belief and cultural capital they need to succeed.

Curriculum mapping, which is co-constructed with the children, parents' and teachers, builds upon the knowledge our children bring and capitalises upon their interests and passions, whilst opportunities to develop an awareness of their local culture and context are interwoven.

Our curriculum is well sequenced to build upon pupils' entry points and to support them in their successful transition to Year 1. The 'Big Ideas' we form our curriculum around (alongside development matters and the EYFS reformed curriculum including the newly updated educational programmes) are shared and built upon as children move through the school and leave us in Year 6.

It is our aim to provide our children with exciting, engaging and enriching opportunities and to ensure practical exploration is encouraged and always at the forefront of our planning to support the development of our pupils' fundamental skills for life.

In our department, there is a sharp focus on developing pupils' vocabulary and communication skills where 'back and forth' conversation between children and adults and child to child is actively promoted and celebrated. Reading and phonics forms the backbone of our curriculum delivery, supporting our children to gain the tools to become fluent readers and to share their knowledge with confidence. The children have daily reading and phonics sessions that are suitable to their phonetic knowledge and matches the reading book they take home.

Our curriculum offer is consistent for all children and is highly ambitious for all; supporting our children with SEND and our disadvantaged to make accelerated progress from their starting points and based on the understanding that children develop at different rates. The ambition we share for all of our children is evident through our outcomes that are consistently around 90% GLD and the standards we hold for our children in terms of our high expectation of behaviours for learning.

30 Hours Free Childcare

In September 2017, funding for early education for 3 and 4-year-old children changed. All families with a 3 and 4-year-old child are still eligible for the universal offer of free early education of up to 15 hours a week term time or a total of 570 hours taken throughout the year.

Some children are eligible for extended childcare, which is up to 30 hours a week term time. The entitlement to 30 hours free childcare is intended to support working parents with the cost of childcare and enable parents, where they wish, to return to work or to work additional hours.

At Gatley Primary School we provide a childcare offer that is unique within the local authority, and one that has been shaped by feedback from and consultation with parents. This offer allows parents and carers to have flexibility in organising their childcare, spreading the hours allocated across the week. This approach will continue to evolve, building upon feedback and further consultation.

Parents are invited to check what help they could get with childcare costs and an indication as to your eligibility for 30 hours free childcare via [the www.GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk).

Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage framework (EYFS) is based upon four overarching principles:

- A unique child
- Positive relationships
- Enabling environments (with teaching and support from adults)
- Learning and development

Learning and Development

The EYFS framework guidance states that, *“there are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in the early years settings.”* All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. However, three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children’s curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for building firm foundations for their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These are the three prime areas:

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

In addition to these, there are four specific areas against which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied:

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

In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners must reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately. The characteristics of effective teaching and learning 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 their achievements
- Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

Through the characteristics of effective learning, we develop children's active skills and help them to understand and respond to feedback. Perseverance is highly valued and praised. We strongly believe that in order to develop resilience, we must teach children to be independent learners who problem solve for themselves and know to keep trying and how and when to ask for help. Excitement and a motivation for learning is developed through planning fun, engaging and challenging lessons based on the needs of the children.

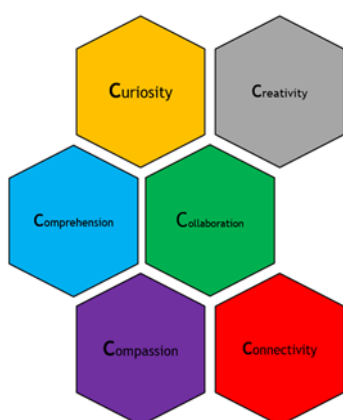
We facilitate learning by providing children with access to purposeful experiences, ensuring that there is a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. We believe that the best quality learning happens when children are immersed in the subject matter and have the opportunity to consolidate their learning, both through quality first teaching and the development of independence.

Through a range of opportunities, whether this be indoor or outdoor, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build on their own ideas or prior knowledge, learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. Adults will scaffold new learning and further facilitate children's interactions.

We provide flexible resources that encourage children to be eager explorers, communicators and negotiators. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. Both children and adults learn through valuable interactions with one another, deciding together the direction of travel for the learning journey of the child.

Teaching and Learning Style

The features of effective teaching and learning in Early Years are defined within our school's policy on teaching and learning as we share pedagogical approaches that are consistent throughout the school, including the 'the 6 Cs of our curriculum' (please see Teaching and Learning Policy 2023).



Observation, Assessment and Planning

Early Years staff use a range of strategies, such as observations, formative and summative assessment and discussions with the children, parents and carers to inform and develop planning. The staff are skilled at observing what children say and do and are able to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning.

Primarily, the team use the children's interests to plan for themes; these themes are influenced by parents and carers and are used by the EYFS staff to inform long term (year), medium term and weekly planning. The children have the opportunity to guide learning during the summer term before they start school. On one of their visit days as part of our transition offer, children are encouraged to bring in or talk about items of interest to them: this may be a book, object, picture; it may even be a question. This is used as a basis for discussion with their new teacher and class, in order to outline three topics ready for the start of the new academic year. These interests are then woven into three overarching questions (one for each term) and a selection of sub questions, these then create their curriculum map for each term and the children answer these questions through their learning experiences over the course of the year.

At the beginning of their year in Reception, all the children will take part in a Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) which is a short online assessment completed with the children during the first six weeks in which a child starts and is used to inform future planning. The assessment contains practical resources designed to be inviting for the children and is completed with a familiar adult.

As the year progresses, children will have additional ideas that they would like to build into their learning experience. Regular consultation with the children and parents supports this. This consultation is paired with the use of assessment as a diagnostic tool to support staff in planning for learning in a way that effectively meets the needs of the children.

Each term, careful analysis of assessments allows for the identification of groups of children requiring intervention work. This intervention is carried out regularly to ensure that learning moves forward for every child.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes various forms. Observations (professional judgements), photographs and videos are collected to show the learning journey of the child across the curriculum alongside the children's own recording within their focus task. This evidence, including the independent work of the child, can be found in their Topic, Maths, Literacy and Phonics books, as well as through the use of display.

Children's continuing skills and progression can then be tracked and assessed over time which all builds to inform our judgements of attainment at various points throughout the year (as outlined in the Teaching & Learning Policy). In addition, the team identify the crucial role parents play in observing learning and have an established partnership assessment system that also supports teacher judgements. This may also be shared through homework tasks or through the use of Class Dojo.

At the end of their Reception year, the children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). Parents/Carers receive this information through an annual report with comments on each child's progress in each aspect of the curriculum. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs and gives details of the child's progress and achievements throughout the year.

Home/School/Pre-school Links

We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first educators and we aim for the schools and parents/carers to work closely. This can have a very positive impact on a child's development, but relies on a two-way flow of information and knowledge. We develop this working relationship between the school and parents and carers as follows:

- We offer visit sessions for both child and parent to attend before starting Nursery or Reception in September. Teachers will also endeavour to visit previous settings for those that are new to Reception, supporting a smooth transition between settings.
- We have developed close links with the feeder pre-schools and we spend time sharing information about individual children's progress. Cluster meetings that we attend and networking meetings allow for sharing of good practice between settings and across the Trust.
- We celebrate children's achievements on a daily basis, using the ClassDojo app to communicate successes 'live.' Additionally, we encourage parents and carers to share the positive achievements of their children through the use of Class Dojo, and do the same in return.
- We allow parents and carers to discuss successes, concerns and any other developments in an informal manner. The opportunity to arrange a more formal meeting is available. If Early Years staff have successes to share, concerns about the progress of a child, or any other item that they feel need to be addressed, they will approach parents and carers to discuss these things.
- An opportunity for workshops will be advertised to parents and carers to enable them to become familiar with the teaching methods used in school to make it easier to emulate them at home.
- We conduct two parent consultation sessions in the Autumn and Spring terms to inform parents and carers formally of a child's development and overall progress. This is also an opportunity for parents and carers to look at the children's books.

How does the environment support all children?

A cognitive approach to learning that is embedded through planning ensures that challenge and higher order thinking are embedded throughout our classrooms. Adults, as facilitators, support children to make connections in their learning and develop an awareness of themselves as learners; resulting in children being able to capitalise on the environment which allows them the opportunity to explore and learn.

“I like being able to choose which activity I want to do” (Pupil)

“Children are allowed to go and choose which activities will interest or support them. Adults act as facilitators which encourages the children to develop as learners” (Reception TA)

“Children are independent within the learning environment, this enables them to take a lead on their own learning and they are able to challenge themselves and use the environment to explore their learning further” (Reception TA)

All adults involved in provision for learning in the Early Years are aware of the needs and targets of children in their care and strive to provide the best opportunities to support learning in all curriculum areas, for all children. Children are assessed as individuals on a daily basis and progressive learning goals are set by the team. The environment is appropriately resourced, allowing teachers to pitch learning at a suitable, yet challenging level for every child, using open-ended activities to ensure that learning is extended. This notion is supported by adult facilitation and the use of the stages of learning; activities are planned for children learning at a range of stages which aim to support them to make conscious choices within their learning whilst moving through the stages of learning. Specialist partners and agencies are consulted where appropriate and families are able to access any support that may come with this.

How is transition supported?

It is important that children feel confident and secure to allow them to flourish within the Early Years, and continue to grow throughout their learning journey at school. One of the ways in which this is facilitated is through planned opportunities for children to meet their new teacher before they move into the next year group. Time is planned for the new teacher to visit the children during the Summer term to begin to develop relationships and get to know the children as they learn. This will mean that Reception teachers will visit children both in our own setting, and in other settings beyond Gatley Primary School, as well as Year 1 teachers visiting the current Reception children.

Children inform every aspect of learning at Gatley Primary School, and as such, before entering their new year group, the children will have met with their new teacher in order to begin to plan the year ahead, considering what they would like to learn about. After these sessions, enthusiasm for the next year's learning is high and children are excited to move on.

Reception and Year 1 staff meet to discuss developmentally appropriate learning experiences for the children, based upon the end of term Early Learning Goals, paying attention to and moderating the transition in accordance with the 2014 National Curriculum requirements. This supports effective progression once children move up. Termly progress meetings allow teachers the opportunity to celebrate the achievement of the children within their class and to report on the progress that has been made.

Teaching, learning and the design of the curriculum at Gatley Primary are grounded in consultation and research. Emphasis is on developing professional practice of the teachers and support staff to enable them to facilitate a pupil led and holistic approach. Wiliam (2016) argues that, through this, personal empowerment, transmission of culture, preparation for citizenship and work will follow. Both teachers and pupils have the choice and autonomy of how they wish to develop, ensuring that statutory expectations are the starting point.

We believe that people learn best in different ways. At our school, we aim to provide a rich and varied learning environment that allows all pupils to develop their skills and abilities to their full potential. Pupils are given opportunities to lead on curriculum design to embed a deep understanding of how learning evolves. Strong links are developed between skills, learning behaviours and knowledge.

The independent learning provision that progresses throughout Gatley Primary school is born out of the specialist provision provided in the early years, celebrating conscious

choices and the development of the key skills of an individual on their own learning journey.