

# Early Years Policy

## **Introduction**

The Early Years applies to children from three years of age to the end of the reception year. At The Willows, children can join our nursery class in the September following their third birthday. The majority of the children attend the nursery full time while a small proportion attend part-time from 9 a.m. until 12 noon each day. Children start their reception year, in the September of the school year, in which they are five.

Our Early Years consists of one nursery and three reception classes, each led by a Qualified Teacher. Each reception class has a full time Teaching Assistant working alongside the teacher. The nursery children are divided into four keyworker groups of 15 with an Early Years Practitioner working in each group.

We consider that the quality of children's early learning experiences is very significant, as it essentially provides the basis for a love of learning and the foundation of skills and knowledge that will underpin all future achievement. We work hard to ensure that each child is motivated and equipped to achieve their personal high aspirations in whatever area they may be.

## **Intent**

At The Willows we believe that all children matter and give them every opportunity to achieve their best. We set realistic, but challenging expectations to help children reach their potential, irrespective of gender, ethnic grouping, social background, special needs or disability.

The Early Years is underpinned by four main themes and at The Willows we aim to build upon each child's individual strengths and knowledge by:

- Remembering that each child is **A Unique Child**. We welcome and value each child as an individual, ensuring that no child is excluded or disadvantaged, providing additional support for those with Special Educational Needs.
- Supporting children in developing **Positive Relationships** with all adults and other children in the setting. Through these positive relationships children learn to be resilient, confident and independent.
- Providing **Enabling Environments with teaching and support from adults**. We aim to create an environment which is warm, caring, engaging, challenging and relevant to the children's cultures and communities. Rich learning experiences are provided based on children's developing needs, ensuring that each child makes progress from their starting points.
- Facilitating effective **Learning and Development** through our carefully planned and ambitious curriculum, we aim to foster the characteristics of

effective early learning including; playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically in all curriculum areas.

## **The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum**

We follow the 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years' which outlines the seven areas of learning to be taught, all of which are important and interconnected. There are three prime areas which build the foundation for learning in all of the areas and four specific areas which further develop the prime areas and ignite curiosity and enthusiasm. Our curriculum promotes, supports and develops learning in the following seven key areas:

### **Three prime areas**

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

### **Four specific areas**

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

We use 'Development Matters', which is non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years as a basis for our curriculum. This sets out the pathways of children's development in broad ages and stages. There are observation checkpoints which allow you to notice whether a child is at risk of falling behind in their development.

## **Implementation**

Our curriculum has been designed to ensure that children get a wide breadth of experience across the seven curriculum areas and learning activities are specifically related to learning outcomes. Planning also reflects the need for a variety of teacher directed and child initiated experiences.

### **Communication and Language**

We recognise the importance of communication and language in our young children's learning as this impacts heavily on their progress in all other areas of our curriculum. Communication screens are used to assess children's understanding and speech development according to their specific age. It is a priority to ensure that all children,

particularly those with a language deficit, have lots of language rich opportunities as well as structured teaching opportunities to support their language development and understanding. These children who have greater difficulty communicating will have the 'Early Talk Boost' programme or 'Time to Talk' programme delivered to them, as appropriate, to support their progress. Where children are identified as having speech difficulties or SEN difficulties that require expert help, the appropriate referrals are made or paperwork completed.

### **Language Rich Environment**

Books play an important part in creating our language rich environment and each week we immerse the children in activities related to the book of the week. This book will be shared a number of times throughout the week and the children will engage in a whole range of activities linked to it.

As well as the book that is the focus for the week, the children also have a daily story. The stories are carefully matched to the book of the week and have been chosen for a specific purpose. For example, they may link to the curriculum or Personal, Social and Emotional Development, be a revisiting author or reinforce vocabulary introduced.

There are lots of opportunities in the environment for the children to speak to each other and other adults. There are inviting book areas in each room with a small number of books with props and puppets and there are lots of opportunities for children to play in small groups to encourage discussion. The role play areas are changed regularly and either link with the theme of the book or real life experiences. These create and encourage lots of opportunity for discussion.

Observant adults look out for opportunities to join discussions and take the learning forward.

Every other week, the children visit the woods at the back of the school which is another great opportunity to consolidate the week's learning and create more communication opportunities. On the week that the children don't go to the woods, they do P.E. where we link to the P.E. hub for some of our activities or use our current book as a platform. For example, during our P.E. sessions we are able to retell a number of the traditional tales through music and movement.

### **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

Personal, Social and Emotional Development is one of the prime areas from our curriculum and is extremely important in relation to the children's ability to learn and make progress. All staff form excellent relationships with the children and support them

in making positive relationships with their peers. We believe that children need to feel happy and safe in their environment in order to make progress.

We aim for the children to be as independent and confident as possible and put very strong routines in place to encourage this. We have a morning routine when children come in to school along with other routines throughout the day. Children are responsible for their own belongings, asked to carry out tasks, learn strategies to get help if they need it, become familiar with the bathroom routine and are rewarded for their achievements.

Children are encouraged to share and take turns which many young children can find difficult. Children are given strategies to help them deal with any problems they might encounter when negotiating turns and resolving disputes.

Alongside the daily, informal teaching in this area, explicit teaching takes place in group situations, as the children are taught about feelings, sharing, friendship etc. through our 3D PSED programme as well as story and discussion.

### **Behaviour Management**

Behaviour management in the Early Years is based on building positive relationships with the adults. Time is spent with all children, following their interests and engaging in their play to ensure that those relationships are valued and nurtured. Every opportunity is taken to notice children doing the right thing so that they can be verbally praised for their positive behaviour. However, there may be times when a sanction needs to be put in place and this will depend upon the child and the behaviour.

As a general rule, children are given a warning, followed by time away from their friends to think if the warning isn't adhered to and the behaviour is repeated. If the behaviour is more serious e.g. another child has been hurt, children may not need a warning and will lose time with their friends while thinking about their behaviour. When incidents have not been witnessed by a member of staff every effort is made to find out what has happened from all parties involved to make sure that the incident is dealt with fairly. A restorative chat will take place afterwards to ensure that the child has understood why what they did was wrong and be given strategies for dealing with this type of situation at another time.

Other strategies to manage persistently poor behaviour may be implemented if necessary. These will be tailored to children's specific needs e.g. personalised stories, personalised PSED time, reward charts, indoor playtime etc. Parents will be consulted as appropriate.

All Early Years staff are sensitive to the children's needs and those children who are usually well behaved but have had a momentary lapse in behaviour will be spoken to

and reasoned with where possible. It is often quite evident from their demeanour whether further action is needed.

Every week, children are celebrated in our 'Star of the Week' assembly and children are chosen to take home the class pet and record their adventures in a diary which is then shared with the rest of the class on its return. Nursery join this assembly in the Spring term when they have had the opportunity to settle into school life.

## **Organisation**

In nursery, the day is very structured to encourage children to try lots of different activities rather than return to old familiar and favourite ones. The room is divided into three areas – literacy, creative/understanding the world, and maths. The fourth area is our outdoor area. Throughout the day each group of 15 children rotate around the areas to complete different activities. In each area, there will be a large group activity delivered by the teacher or key worker, as well as activities for the children to choose, and an adult led activity for the children to complete with the support of an adult. The key worker stays in a particular area for the week before rotating to the next area. This allows the key workers to get to know all of the children, the children to interact with all of the adults and for the key workers to develop a good knowledge of the children's progress throughout the week. This way of working also ensures that the children have access to a wide range of well planned activities, designed to move children's learning forward.

As a result of this way of working, children are encouraged to expand their interests while skilled staff spot opportunities to develop personal interests further to move the children's learning on. As well as all of these opportunities, the children also have a phonics and maths session four times a week.

In Reception, the timetable ensures that the children have directed teaching in Maths (using the White Rose Maths programme), Literacy and Phonics throughout the week, along with regular R.E. and PSED sessions. There is a balance of all other subject areas which may be taught through the Literacy lessons if appropriate. The continuous provision is carefully planned to cover all areas of learning and is designed to build on previous skills and knowledge as well as consolidate the children's learning through independent play. Teachers and teaching assistants will work with small groups of children to practise and reinforce the concepts taught in the main teach.

In phonics, children in the Early Years are grouped by ability in order to focus on children's specific developmental needs. In reception, children will be grouped across the three classes and in nursery, the four key worker groups. These groupings are flexible, with children moving between them as they progress. This ensures that children are getting exactly what they need in order to build on prior learning.

Children will be taught phonics using the 'Letters and Sounds' phase 1 activities or the 'Read, Write, Inc' programme depending on children's different abilities. Those children in a 'Read, Write, Inc' group will take letter sounds home to reinforce and practise. Once children are learning to blend, they will take home blending books to practise and then reading books once they begin to read.

'Wow' days and trips are carefully planned to support the children's learning in a number of different areas each term or half term.

### Assessment

In the Early Years, assessment plays an important part in helping all practitioners working with a child to plan appropriate activities to meet children's specific needs and to ensure that these are effective in relation to a child making progress.

Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. When assessing whether an individual child is at the expected level of development practitioners use their knowledge of the child and their own professional judgement.

There are a number of more formal assessments that are carried out while children are in the Early Years, illustrated in the table below.

	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Nursery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Communication Screen</li> <li>• Maths Assessment Booklet</li> <li>• Reading Assessment Booklet</li> <li>• RWI Phonics Assessment (where appropriate)</li> <li>• Long observations (where necessary)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Communication Screen</li> <li>• Maths Assessment Booklet</li> <li>• Reading Assessment Booklet</li> <li>• RWI Phonics Assessment (where appropriate)</li> <li>• Long observations (where necessary)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Communication Screen</li> <li>• Maths Assessment Booklet</li> <li>• Reading Assessment Booklet</li> <li>• RWI Phonics Assessment (where appropriate)</li> <li>• Long observations (where necessary)</li> </ul>
Reception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutory Reception Baseline Assessment</li> <li>• Early Communication Screen</li> <li>• Maths Assessment Booklet</li> <li>• RWI Phonics Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Communication Screen</li> <li>• Maths Assessment Booklet</li> <li>• RWI Phonics Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Years Foundation Stage Profile</li> <li>• Early Communication Screen</li> <li>• Maths Assessment Booklet</li> <li>• RWI Phonics Assessment</li> </ul>

The **Reception Baseline Assessment** (RBA) is a short assessment, taken in the first six weeks in which a child starts reception. It is an activity based assessment of pupils' starting points in:

- language, communication and literacy
- mathematics

It is used to show the progress pupils make from reception to the end of Key Stage 2.

The EYFS Profile is a statutory assessment of children's development in relation to age related expectations of the 17 early learning goals (ELG's) across the 7 areas of learning. If children are considered to be meeting the age related expectations they will be assessed as 'expected', if they are not, they will be assessed as 'emerging' for each ELG. Teachers will use their professional judgement to make these assessments using their knowledge of what a child knows, understands and can do. This will provide a summative assessment at the end of the reception year that can be shared with year 1 teachers to support transition as well as parents and the local authority.

Children are defined as having a good level of development if they are at the expected level for the 12 early learning goals within the 5 areas of learning relating to: communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; physical development; literacy; and mathematics.

Ongoing assessment throughout the year will inform teaching and learning as well as identify children who may need additional support.

## **Parents**

We consider effective and meaningful partnerships between parents and educators to be the best guarantee of children's successful learning. The curriculum provided at school can only be part of the child's learning experiences. Therefore good links between parents and school are essential and highly valued. We encourage parents to take an active part in their child's education by:

- Going on home visits when children are new to nursery or reception to establish early relationships.
- Providing induction opportunities to support the smooth transition of children starting nursery or reception. This will include liaising closely with other settings and Early Years providers during the summer term.
- Informing them of the learning activities and themes through termly newsletters specific to the children in the Early Years.
- Daily communication through dojo to share information, news, homework etc.
- Inviting parents into school to find out how the children are being taught and how they can support at home. The workshops and coffee mornings focus on a range of themes including reading, songs and rhyme, maths and giving up the dummy.
- Organising a range of activities throughout the year which encourage collaboration between child, school and parents.



- Providing library books and reading books for children to share with their parents to foster a love of reading.
- Encouraging parents to share 'WOW' moments of new things that their child may have demonstrated or learnt at home. This information is then displayed and celebrated in school.

We aim to develop parental trust and support by:

- Listening to and respecting parents.
- Ensuring parents always feel welcome in school and are received well by both staff and children.
- Communicating on a daily basis through personal contact thus giving them an opportunity to discuss any issues on a regular and informal basis.
- Offering parent consultations in the Autumn and Spring terms to talk about children's learning and progress along with ways to support this at home.
- Providing parents with a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of the school year. Reception parents will be provided with the Foundation Stage profile so that they can see if their child is meeting age related expectations and achieving the Early Learning Goals.

## **Impact**

Our philosophy of Early Year's education is for children to learn and make progress from their different starting points in an enabling environment where they feel happy and safe.

Through our rigorous process of observation, assessment and careful planning we are able to provide all children with experiences and opportunities in a positive learning environment which will move their learning forward towards the end goal. All of this is done in a considered, caring and compassionate manner by skilful practitioners.

Our Early Year's children will reach the end of the Foundation stage fully prepared to move on to the next stage of their learning journey as independent, confident, resilient learners.