

# The Birches Specialist Support School

## EYFS Policy



**Date Written:** February 2021

**Written by:** Laura Whittaker Assistant Headteacher

Signed: .....  
On behalf of the Governors

Signed: .....  
Head teacher

**Date of next review:** May 2023

## Introduction

Every child deserves the best possible start in their school career, a place where they feel safe, comfortable and supported to reach their full potential. Our EYFS classes offer a happy, inclusive learning environment with high quality teaching and learning, resources and opportunities to thrive and grow. With a focus on children's independence, communication and interactions with others we will nurture and encourage their talents and excitement to learn.

Our EYFS provision is made up of four classes. Two classes welcome new-to school Reception and Y1 pupils and two classes of pupils that benefit from an extended EYFS approach of play-based learning with lots of opportunities for child-led play and exploration. Class staff will judge and carefully plan classroom provision with the needs of their children at the centre of the decision making. Striking the balance of providing an enabling and inviting environment that doesn't over stimulate the senses of our more structured learners who need a lower distraction environment.

### Our EYFS provision reflects and supports the overarching EYFS principles of:

- **A unique child** – every child is unique, is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- **Positive relationships** – children learn to be independent through forging positive relationships.
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments** with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time.
- **Learning and Development** – children develop and learn in different ways. Supporting the education and care of all children in Early Years provision, regardless of need or starting point.

We are committed to fostering strong partnerships between school and our families to support the child's holistic development, to ensure all needs are met as well as taking into account parental views and priorities into their child's learning journey. We work alongside multidisciplinary teams and professionals to ensure all of a child's needs are met, offering very individualised approaches as required.

### Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

- To provide quality learning experiences for all the children. Learning will be developed through practical and play activities, which are structured, balanced, relevant to the child and related to the real world.
- To provide a curriculum which takes account of, and responds to, the children's developmental needs and allows them to make progress related to their differing abilities. "What the child can do" will always be our starting point.
- To ensure the children have positive experiences of success at their own levels in order to give them confidence and motivation for learning in the future.
- To provide a curriculum which provides equal learning and development opportunities for all the children.

## The Curriculum

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) classes at The Birches we aim to provide a broad, balanced, differentiated curriculum which addresses the children's social, emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development within a secure and stimulating environment. The environment is inclusive and accessible to all, to develop independence and cater for our pupils differing needs and starting points. Our curriculum enables the child to learn and develop skills, attitudes and understanding in these areas of learning:

The prime areas	The specific areas
Personal, Emotional and Social Development (PSED)	Mathematics
Communication and Language (CL)	Literacy
Physical development (PD)	Understanding the World
	Expressive Art and Design

The Prime areas of learning provide the foundation to all areas of learning and are fundamental in supporting development, these principles underpin learning in all areas. Throughout the EYFS we plan activities to give children learning experiences and opportunities to work towards the Early Learning Goals and allows them to develop confidence, skills, knowledge and independence to prepare them for their next phase of education. Teaching and learning takes place within the classroom, outside areas and within the multiple, specialist sensory areas around school. Within these areas, children will participate in a variety of activities, both with an adult and independently.

An emphasis on Communication: at The Birches we promote a total communication environment alongside onsite support from Speech and Language Therapy and specially trained staff in strategies such as Intensive Interaction, PECS, symbol/photograph rich environments and signing, all pupils are given a voice and the tools to engage in meaningful communication at an appropriate level.

Topics are planned on a 2-year cycle, this ensures that children will experience activities within each topic as they progress through the EYFS and into KS1 Classes, ensuring no topics are repeated. Topic planning takes place on a half-termly basis. Topics may be developed to consider and reflect children's interests. The curriculum structure ensures a broad and balanced curriculum offer with an emphasis placed on the Prime areas, Maths, Literacy and Science. Remaining Specific areas and Cultural Capital coverage are placed on rotation across the year and delivered through a mixture of theme days, topics enhancements, celebrations and opportunities to be emersed in cultural experiences and a variety of meaningful trips and visits. Curriculum coverage is plotted on class timetables with adult focused and continuous provision activities planned on a weekly basis. Classes follow a medium-term plan pathway with a focus on continuity and progression of learning and themes.

Children have the opportunity to access provision in each of the learning areas within both the classroom and outdoor area. Each EYFS class has access to their own or a shared outdoor area. At The Birches School we are lucky to have a variety of outdoor spaces that promote physical and gross motor development, independence, social

skills and risk taking. A popular environment is our woodland area where children have access to a Forest School provision on rotation.

## **Play**

We recognise the importance of play in Early Years. It is through play that pupils are able to:

- Build confidence
- Learn to explore
- Think about and solve problems
- Develop their imaginations
- Relate to others
- Develop curiosity and a motivation to learn
- Develop their own communication styles

Planned and purposeful play activities are a key strategy for introducing and consolidating all areas of learning and development. They are also carefully planned to take into account pupils' needs and reflect their interests.

### **Play activities will include a mix of:**

- Child initiated Activities - children make choices from within the learning environment to meet his/her outcome for learning.
- Adult Initiated Activities - staff provide the resources to stimulate and consolidate learning.
- Adult Directed Activities - Children engage in planned activities to meet specific learning outcomes.

Staff within the EYFS will continually make judgements through observations and assessment as to the balance required for pupils between child and adult initiated play activities.

Although we recognise that pupils will be, over time, working towards being able to participate in more adult led activities in readiness for moving into Key Stage 1, we understand and appreciate that our pupils will develop at different rates and having very specific and individual learning needs.

### **Adults in the setting will support play by:**

- Planning and resourcing a stimulating environment
- Supporting children's learning through planned play
- Extending and supporting children's spontaneous play
- Extending and developing children's language and communication in their play.
- Listening to all forms of children's communication and their ideas and taking these into account when developing play and planning.
- Narrating children's play.
- Asking questions about children's play.

## Tracking Pupil Progress and Assessment

Targets are set for all children in EYFS. Targets are set in line with the areas of the EHCPs and support the holistic development of each child considering, communication, behaviour, physical development and independence skills as well as cognition and learning.

All pupils across school have a 'one page profile' document which outlines their holistic needs and key information. This document supports adults that may be less familiar with the group, an overview of each child with key information such as communication needs, allergies or behaviour support to be aware of.

Pupils are assessed using the Development Matters in Reception and PLevels from Year 1 onwards; these are plotted using assessment tool BSquared. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is completed at the end of the Reception year. Staff completing the profile attend annual moderation meetings to ensure accurate input and judgements.

Pupil progress is tracked and monitored through a mixture of informal observation, adult/pupil interaction, data input and analysis to inform next steps, target setting with a wider multi-disciplinary team and regular discussions with all staff. We observe the children working independently both indoors and outdoors and how they respond and engage in child-initiated activities as well as adult directed learning. Getting to know each child well is crucial in supporting their learning and development and in making appropriate and accurate judgements on progress.

Observational assessment is the most reliable way of building up an accurate picture of children's development and learning. Observational assessment is central to understanding what children really know and can do. Some observations will be planned but some may be a spontaneous capture of an important moment. It is likely that observations of everyday activities will provide evidence of children's development in more than one area of learning.

Children are assessed during adult focused activities against the objective for that activity. A note is made of those children achieving above or below learning intentions. These are updated on a regular basis to monitor progress and inform planning. Every Reception child has a learning journey which contains examples of their achievements and work throughout the year. Y1 pupils have a progress file, that captures learning in the 7 areas of learning, plus cultural capital.

Information gained through recording and assessment will be shared with parents, other school staff and outside agencies as appropriate. Parents evenings are held in the Summer term and are an opportunity for parents to discuss their child's progress. Parents can contact the staff at any time; all parents have access to Class Dojo and the opportunity to directly message their child's class teacher with queries, messages and to engage in their child's learning. Parents are encouraged to share moments of learning and development from home and share achievements and celebrations. We also like to host family learning events such as stay and play, which are well attended.

## **The learning environments**

We know that a rich and varied environment supports children's learning and development. It gives them the confidence to explore and learn in secure and safe, yet challenging, indoor and outdoor spaces. We have 4 EYFS classrooms that are paired, our Reception and Y1 children sharing an outdoor space and our Y1/Y2 mixed classes share an outdoor space and an additional space with an emphasis on continuous provision and child led exploration.

The profile of learner in two of our EYFS classes are more structured, ASC learners and this is reflected within the learning environment. Here, classrooms are lower distraction with fewer resources on offer to prevent pupils from becoming overstimulated and overwhelmed. These classes very much reflect the EYFS principles and sessions of continuous provision but are slightly more structured in their approach and offer to better meet the individual needs of the children.

## **Policy Information and Review**

*Review frequency: every 3 years*

Date	Version	Changes made	By whom (name and role)	Due date for next review	Reviewed & Ratified by Govs.  (sign and date)
February 2021	1	This is a new policy	Laura Whittaker EYFS Lead	May 2023	