

## Early Years Policy

At Guildford Grove School, it is our task to promote and support our children's learning and enable each one of them to achieve their full potential. We endeavour to provide a school day that excites, challenges and motivates each child, allowing them to develop as independent learners. Our organisation of their learning promotes enjoyment, perseverance and self-discipline. We encourage the children to achieve personal excellence in all aspects of work and behaviour. We provide support for parents and families with pre school children to encourage positive interaction with their children enabling appropriate development preparing them for their future school life. We aim to empower parents to improve outcomes for their families through parenting support and adult learning.

### **Key Contributions to children's learning**

Our nursery and reception classes provide a happy and secure environment where children can succeed and feel valued. We encourage the children to be independent and take responsibility for their own learning. The practitioners demonstrate their enthusiasm and love of learning which inspires the children to acquire a positive attitude. Our children have access to a range of experiences across seven areas of development which underpin their future learning. Children engage in activities inside and outside which are well planned with clear, achievable learning objectives. The children also initiate their own play which enables them to become absorbed and able to persevere with more challenging tasks. Incidental opportunities are a valuable part of a foundation stage classroom and teachers are flexible in their delivery of the curriculum to ensure the children benefit from these.

Our policy and practice are based on and closely related to the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2012. (See Appendix A- Principles of the EYFS)

Key objectives:

- *learn through play inside and outside*
- *establish a learning environment in which children feel secure, can learn from mistakes and are confident to take risks in their play*
- *provide the essential foundations for all future learning*
- *to consider the child as a whole*
- *to learn through first hand experience*
- *practitioners to have a good understanding of how young children learn*
- *to follow guidance in the Equality Policy to ensure equal opportunities for every child*
- *to use assessment as a tool for learning*
- *to use high quality resources to aid learning*
- *to provide smooth transitions throughout the foundation stage*
- *to value the importance of working with parents*

Young children need:

- space
- care
- security
- consistent routines and clear rules and boundaries
- time to play and explore
- appropriate resources that allow them to make choices
- opportunities to develop social skills
- opportunities for speaking and listening and to be listened to
- positive role-models
- personalised learning
- continuous provision
- adults who know them well

### **Teaching and Learning in the Early Years**

The Early Years begins when the children start in our Nursery and continues through to the Reception year. The opportunities the children experience provide the essential foundations for all future learning. Practitioners provide a broad and balanced curriculum which is planned across the seven areas of learning.

All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. There are three prime areas that are particularly important for laying foundations for learning. The three prime areas are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional development;
- Communication and Language;
- Physical Development.

Alongside these three prime areas there are four specific areas through which the prime areas are applied. The four specific areas are:

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

The EYFS identifies the stages of learning which the children will progress through. By the end of the Foundation Stage children are expected to achieve the **early learning goals**.

In the Nursery and Reception years, a topic based approach is adopted throughout which encourages cross curricular opportunities. Children are given opportunities to engage in teacher led and child initiated play activities. Play is an important way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge (See Appendix B – The Importance of Play). Children learn in different ways so a range of styles are incorporated into everyday opportunities. We value the outdoor environment and realise the impact it has on the children’s learning. (See Appendix C – Outdoor Learning).

The EYFS (2012) identifies three **characteristics of effective learning** that focus on how children learn.

“The way in which the child engages with other people and their environment- playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically- underpin learning and development across all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner.”

(Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Early Education, 2012)

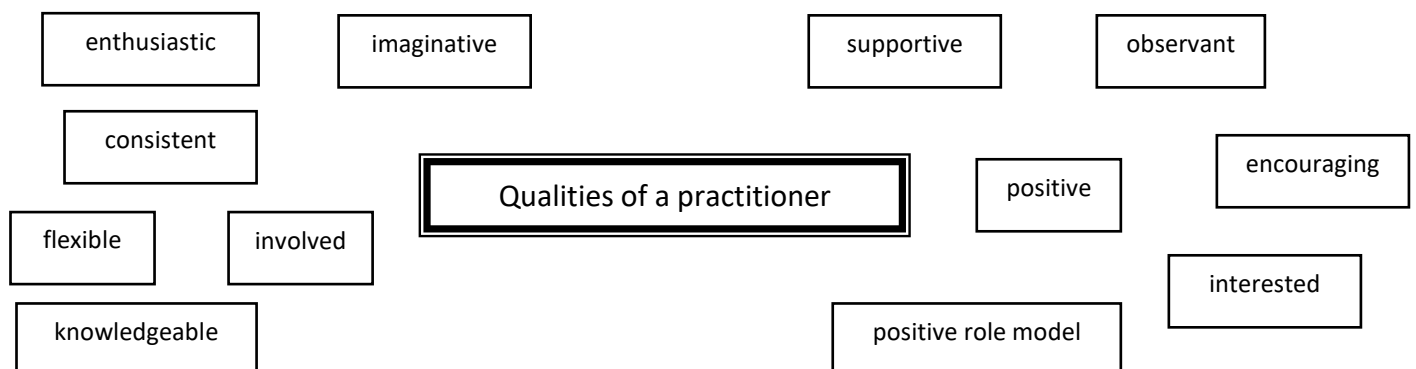
(See Appendix I- Characteristics of Effective Learning)

The role of the practitioner:

The role of the practitioner is crucial in:

- planning and resourcing a supportive and challenging environment;
- supporting children’s learning through planned play activity;
- extending and supporting children’s spontaneous play;
- extending and developing children’s language and communication in their play;
- observing individuals, groups or a particular learning area.

*(QCA curriculum guidance)*



Adults have high expectations of the children, they know where the children have come from in their learning and can identify the next steps to take to ensure progress. We ensure all children have access to all activities (See Appendix D – Inclusion) We recognise that parents have the best understanding of their child and we ensure our partnership is a two way process (See Appendix E – Partnership with Parents)

## **Planning, Assessment and Evaluation**

Following a curriculum review in 2019-2020, we have created an Early Years Curriculum that meets the needs of our pupils, capitalises on the expertise of our staff and reflects our whole school priorities, aims and traditions. Our long term overview of themes informs the planning focus for nursery and reception. Regular review and evaluation of children's engagement ensures planning reflects the key skills and interests of the children.

Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the teaching in our foundation stage. It informs future planning to ensure all children are given tasks appropriate to their level. Evidence is gathered across all areas of learning and observations are recorded on Tapestry: an online learning journal for Early Years education. Practitioners record observations of the children's learning and play. Photographs are taken to capture evidence which back up judgements. We annotate children's work and a selection is kept as samples across the ability range. The children's work is monitored to ensure appropriate standards are being achieved and discrepancies are challenged. (See Appendix F- Assessment Procedures)

## **Resources**

We believe high quality resources are essential for effective learning. Each classroom has a range of resources to support the children's learning. They are clearly labelled and easily accessible for the children to select and use independently. For our outdoor learning, resources are kept centrally in an outdoor store. Many outdoor resources are also accessible for children to select and use independently.

## **ICT**

ICT is used where appropriate to enhance learning. Each class has a smart board that is connected to the internet. Children learn how to use other ICT equipment such as programming Bee Bots. The children have opportunities to listen to stories on CDs and to watch on smartboards.

## **Admissions (See Admissions Policy for Guildford Grove Nursery) and Induction procedures (See Appendix G)**

We have criteria in place for admissions to our nursery for 3 year olds. We also have an effective induction programme to ensure our children have successful transitions between home and the Early Years setting. We feel this is crucial as it's often their first experience of spending time away from home.

## **Staff Development/Training Needs**

Staff development and training needs are met through:

- identifying the need through monitoring, assessment and evaluation;
- staff INSET, including GEP cross-school sessions;
- attending courses and network meetings;
- Performance Management;
- class observation and feedback.

## **Equal Opportunities (including SEND and EAL)**

All our children:

- are valued equally and have the same entitlement within the foundation stage;
- receive a rich variety of opportunities;
- receive differentiated support, activities or resources to allow them to develop at their own pace.

## **School Policies**

Please see also school policies for Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety, Special Educational Needs, English as an Additional Language and Behaviour.

This policy should be reviewed annually.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **PRINCIPLES OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

See Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage  
(Department for Education 2012)

#### A Unique Child

*“Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.”*

#### Positive Relationships

*“Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.”*

#### Enabling Environments

*“Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/ or carers.”*

#### Learning and Development

*“Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.”*

## **APPENDIX B**

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY**

*“Play is essential for children’s development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others.”*

(Department for Education 2012)

Our Early Years curriculum provides children with daily opportunities to play indoors and outdoors. Children’s understanding is consolidated and their learning extended through detailed planning which covers all seven areas of learning. Provision is made for children to take part in structured play activities and spontaneous play. The adult plays a crucial role - knowing when to intervene and when to stand back and observe the play.

#### The role of the practitioner:

- to support children in their play where necessary;
- to ensure children have uninterrupted time to play and explore;
- to model and encourage open-ended exploratory play;
- plan and resource a challenging environment where play is open-ended and flexible;
- develop language and communication in play through sensitive observation and appropriate intervention;
- act as a “play tutor” for children with little experience of imaginative play;
- encourage children to try new activities and to assess risks for themselves;
- encourage a growth mindset, presenting failures as opportunities to learn;
- focus on processes and not outcomes;
- always intervene in play if it is racist, sexist, offensive, unsafe, violent or bullying.

(Taken from: “How children learn: The characteristics of effective early learning” Nancy Stewart, 2011)

Through safe and stimulating play opportunities children can:

- make sense of the world in which they live;
- play alone, alongside others or co-operate with others;
- take risks and make mistakes;
- investigate and solve problems;
- develop ideas, concepts and skills;
- engage themselves creatively and imaginatively;
- develop empathy towards others.

“Play is the most powerful way for children to make sense of the world in which they live”  
(Surrey Early Years Guidelines)

## **APPENDIX C**

### **OUTDOOR LEARNING**

*“Outdoor play is unique, offering young children space and freedom; a changing environment that invites children to explore; a multi-sensory experience; opportunities for problem solving and risk taking; opportunities for movement and experience of the natural world.” (Tovey 2007)*

#### **The outdoor environment**

- Being outdoors has a positive impact on children’s sense of well-being and helps support all aspects of development.
- Being outdoors offers opportunities to do things in a different way and on a different scale to indoors.
- Children have first-hand experiences outside through the weather, seasons and the natural environment.
- Being outdoors offers children the freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

(See The Learning Environment, EYFS (2008), 3:3)

#### **Planning and organisation of the outdoor learning environment**

- Within the nursery and reception classes, children are given the opportunity to have free access to the outside learning environment each day. Activities across the six areas of learning are set up which the children are able to choose from.
- Outdoor learning opportunities are planned alongside indoor learning.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **INCLUSION**

#### **OUR AIM:**

- Equality of opportunity (see also school policies for equal opportunities and EAL)

Practitioners should identify children's learning needs and through their planning and support lower or remove any barriers so they can access the full curriculum inside and outside.

Practitioners should value children who have English as an additional language by providing opportunities to use their home language in their play and learning.

*All children, whatever their ability, are able to play and explore the outdoor area (exercising muscles and minds)*

*Children are all given the same opportunities and encouraged to play with cars, dolls and building materials without the label of girls' toys and boys' toys.*

*Respect for cultural issues which may arise e.g. clothing or dietary requirements*

## **APPENDIX E**

### **PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS**

#### **OUR AIM:**

**To develop effective partnerships with the parents and carers to ensure the highest quality provision is made for each child's needs.**

*"Children learn to develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers."*

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage  
(Department for Education 2012)

We recognise that working in partnership is a two-way process, sharing knowledge and information both ways. It is vital that each partnership is built on trust, respect and confidence to enable it to flourish. We understand this takes time and all practitioners recognise the importance of the impact it will have on the children's development and learning. By sharing information about their child with us it enables us to plan experiences and activities to stimulate their interests and develop their enthusiasm.

How do we create and maintain the partnership?

- It is crucial that parents' first experiences of the school are positive.
- Our environment is welcoming to parents with stimulating displays, signs, notices for their information and friendly faces to greet them.
- There is an effective induction programme including opportunities to be introduced to the practitioners and other parents.
- Parents are invited to attend Workshops to give them ideas about how they can support their child's play and learning
- Parents are invited to 'Stay and Play' sessions and other engagement sessions in school, e.g. reading for pleasure/sharing books (taking place outdoors or online in accordance with COVID-19 restrictions)

How do we communicate with parents?

- School newsletters
- Parent evenings (twice a year) in Foundation Stage

- Opportunities for parents to see their child’s profile and contribute to it
- End of year report
- Parents of children with special needs meet regularly with practitioners to discuss their child’s learning and needs
- Incidental opportunities at the beginning or at the end of school day e.g. to share with a parent a step in their child’s learning
- Letters e.g. trips, requests, forthcoming events
- Curriculum information e.g. topic webs, parent planners and activities to do at home
- Emails from year group generic email addresses
- Communication about home learning via the Seesaw platform

## APPENDIX F

### ASSESSMENT

What evidence do we keep?	Which yr grp?	Where is it kept?
<b>Foundation Stage Individual Assessment</b> N & R – Where is the child in terms of development matters age bands? R – Foundation Stage Profile at the end of Year R	N & R	Individual Classes
<b>Folder - children’s work (ongoing) Hard copy and/or uploaded to Tapestry</b> Adult-led, adult initiated and child initiated	N & R	Individual Classes
<b>Tapestry observations</b> Ongoing observations throughout the year ensuring we have a range of evidence in all areas of learning. Child’s choice of evidence 2/3 pieces a term. (N & R only)	N & R	Individual Classes
<b>Writing book (Literacy time)- Reception children</b> This includes a half termly sample of independent writing.	R	Individual Classes
<b>Maths folders</b> This includes evidence of each child’s recording of maths activities.	R	Individual Classes
<b>1-1 assessments in teacher’s file (at specific times throughout the year – see yearly timetable)</b> Number Letters and sounds (letter recognition, tricky words)	Reception	Individual Classes
<b>Reading record</b> Reading record – home/school book Reading record – teacher’s file <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tick list of who has heard ch. through week</li> <li>• Reading skills/strategies</li> <li>• Books/comments sheet</li> </ul>	N – just teacher’s file R – Home/school book	Individual Classes
<b>Reports</b> N – Photo and PSE section. Children’s comments about friendships, what they like doing and what they’d like to get better at. R – Comments on the 7 areas of learning and characteristics of learning. Children’s contribution – what they’d like to get better at. Teacher’s action points – Literacy, Numeracy and maybe PSE.	N & R	Office, parents and next teacher.
<b>Weekly joint evaluations of all activities</b>	N & R	Individual Classes
<b>Provision maps</b> N & R – ongoing evaluation as needed.	N & R	Individual Classes A.L/ Z.J to oversee

## APPENDIX G

### INDUCTION PROCEDURES

(Dates will vary each year but procedures should remain the same)

July	Home visits take place for all new Nursery and Reception children. Head Teacher and Foundation Stage Leader to meet with Reception parents (Induction Presentation) Reception children to visit the unit Home School Link Worker meets all new families
September	Reception start - half days only Reception then attend for lunch sessions Nursery begin induction process for new and returning children
Second full week in September	Reception children attend full-time All nursery in attendance
September-October	Workshops for parents to support their child's learning
January/ April	New Nursery to start following Home Visits and visit to unit

NB. Induction procedures were adjusted in 2020 to meet Government restrictions due to COVID-19.

## APPENDIX I

### CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Playing and exploring- engagement

- Finding out and exploring
- Playing with what they know
- Being willing to "have a go"

Active learning- motivation

- Being involved and concentrating
- Keeping on trying
- Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

Creating and thinking critically- thinking

- Having their own ideas
- Making links
- Choosing ways to do things