Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Within this document, the term Early Years Foundation Stage is used to describe children who are in our Reception class.

Aims

At The Free School Norwich, we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children, thereby giving them a strong and secure foundation for their future learning.

We aim to create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences which provide quality and consistency, enabling children to become confident and independent learners.

We value the individual child and work alongside their parents or guardians to meet their needs and to help every child to make good progress, experience regular assessment and review of learning.

As outlined in the EYFS Statutory Framework 'All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years have a major impact on their future life chances.' The Free School Norwich adheres to the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework and the four guiding principles which shape practice within Early Years settings.

- Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- 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 or guardians.
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

Principles into Practice

As part of our practice we:

- Provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven areas of learning, using play as the vehicle for learning.

- Promote inclusive practice. We provide early intervention for those children who require additional support through regular assessment and a responsive delivery of the curriculum, including small group intervention groups and differentiation. Where necessary, with the help of School SENDCO (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Coordinator), targets are drawn up and progress is monitored.
- Work in partnership with parents or guardians and within the wider context.
- Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment.
- Provide opportunities for all children to engage in activities that are adult-initiated and child-initiated, supported by the adult.
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and out.

Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve early learning goals. All the seven areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These three areas are the prime areas:

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

Children are also supported through the four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The specific areas are:

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

These seven areas of learning are underpinned by the Characteristics of Effective Learning which are promoted in all parts of Reception life:

- 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 achievements.
- Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Throughout, our pedagogy and learning programmes support children to develop the vital skills of self-regulation and executive function. Development Matters and Birth to 5 Matters, EYFS non-statutory guidance for the EYFS, is used as a guide and built upon to ensure rich and varied provision led by knowledge of child development and an up-to-date knowledge of best practice.

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which they can explore, think creatively and be active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

As a staff team, we write long term and medium-term plans using the EYFS based on a series of themed topics, each of which offers experiences in all seven areas. An Annual Curriculum Map is available to parents via the school's website, alongside other helpful documents and guidance for parents. Medium term plans are reviewed by the Principal on a termly basis and shared with parents via email. The plans inform our short-term weekly planning, alongside our observations, which remains flexible for unplanned circumstances or children's responses.

Teachers working with children in Reception will initially focus on the three prime areas, which are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively and become ready for school. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as the children move through Reception and grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas. Children have whole group and small group times during the day, with taught phonics and maths sessions becoming more formalised as they progress through the EYFS. There are daily phonics lessons, taught using the 'Phonics Bug' programme, as well as Mathematics. Literacy is applied through thrice-weekly topic and Talk for Writing (TfW) lessons, where the children's writing skills can be practised, with weekly guided reading taking place from the second term. Skills and knowledge taught are applied and explored further throughout the continuous provision.

The curriculum is delivered through planned, purposeful play and in a way that fully respects the values outlined in the most up to date EYFS Development Matters guidance:

- Effective pedagogy is a mix of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other, and through guided learning and direct teaching.
- Practitioners carefully organise enabling environments for high-quality play. They make time and space available for children to invent their own play. Sometimes, they join in to sensitively support and extend children's learning.
- Children in the early years also learn through group work, when practitioners guide their learning.

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are planned by the adults. During children's play, early years practitioners interact to stretch and challenge children further. In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and reflect these

in our practice. We create a stimulating environment to encourage children to free-flow between the different inside and outside areas.

Observation and Assessment

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is a short mandatory assessment, taken in the first six weeks in which a child starts reception. The purpose of the reception baseline assessment is to provide an on-entry assessment of pupil attainment to be used as a starting point from which a cohort-level progress measure to the end of key stage 2 (KS2) can be created.

As part of our daily practice we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform our future plans to enable a responsive curriculum and targeted support. We record our observations in a variety of ways. Everyone is encouraged to contribute and discussions take place. Significant observations of children's achievements are collated using Tapestry, an online Learning Journey, which is shared with and can be added to by parents or guardians, subject to their consent.

Two times a year, parents are invited to attend a parents' evening to discuss their child's progress. At the end of the Summer term in Reception, we assess the children against the Early Learning Goals. The ELGs support teachers to make a holistic, best-fit judgement about a child's development, and their readiness for Year 1. We provide all parents or guardians with a detailed written report based on their child's development against each of the Early Learning Goals and the characteristics of their learning. The parents are then given the opportunity to discuss the judgements made against each of the Early Learning Goals with the Reception teacher in preparation for Year 1. As with Local Authority schools, The Free School Norwich takes part throughout the year in internal and external moderation activities, to compare and discuss judgements made in relation to the Early Learning Goals and ensure evidence is correctly gathered and pupil judgements of progress are fair.

Our practice reflects the values expressed in the most up to date EYFS Development Matters guidance:

- Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know. It is not about lots of data and evidence.
- Effective assessment requires practitioners to understand child development. Practitioners also need to be clear about what they want children to know and be able to do.
- Accurate assessment can highlight whether a child has a special educational need and needs extra help.
- Before assessing children, it's a good idea to think about whether the assessments will be useful.
- Assessment should not take practitioners away from the children for long periods of time.

Safety

Children's safety and welfare is paramount at The Free School Norwich. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to be safe, make positive choices and assess risks. We have stringent policies, procedures and risk assessments in place to ensure children's safety. Risk assessments are reviewed as and when the outdoor and indoor environments change to suit the children's needs. We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways, including the provision of nutritious food, and following set procedures when children become ill or have an accident. Please see the school's separate policies and procedures for Health and Safety, Child Protection, Food and Drink, and First Aid.

All staff understand the school's safeguarding policy and procedures and have up to date knowledge of safeguarding issues. Staff are trained at least annually on how to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity and are enabled to respond in a timely and appropriate way. Children are regularly asked how they are feeling and if they have any worries. Please see the school's Safeguarding Policy for further details.

Inclusion

We value all our children as individuals at The Free School Norwich, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum which meets the needs of the individual child and supports them at their own pace, so that most of our children achieve a Good Level of Development. We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents or guardians, our SENDCO, and outside agencies. Please see the school's separate policies on Equality of Opportunity and SEN. Our practice reflects the values expressed in the in the most up to date EYFS Development Matters guidance:

- All children deserve to have an equal chance of success.
- High-quality early education is good for all children. It is especially important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- When they start school, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are, on average, 4 months behind their peers. We need to do more to narrow that gap.
- Children who have lived through difficult experiences can begin to grow stronger when they experience high-quality early education and care.
- High-quality early education and care is inclusive. Children's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly.
- All children promptly receive any extra help they need, so they can progress well in their learning.

English as an Additional Language is recognised as an advantage, and the needs of children learning English are met through careful information gathering at admission, close working with parents, ongoing assessment and responsive intervention. Our setting celebrates diversity and

multilingualism; we understand that children will learn English from a strong foundation in their home language, and thus it is important to encourage families to use their home language for linguistic as well as cultural reasons.

Parents and Guardians as Partners

We strive to create and maintain a close working partnership with parents and carers as we recognise that together, we can have a significant impact on a child's learning. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate confidently in their child's education and care, using Tapestry as one vehicle to do this. We report to parents and provide key information on how the EYFS is delivered, on the range of activities and experiences provided for children, daily routines and how parents and carers can share learning at home, how food and drinks are provided for children, details of policies and procedures, staffing, the key person (Class teacher) and their role and a telephone number for parents/carers in an emergency. A complaints policy is in place. Records are kept and are accessible and available. Confidential information and records are held securely and only accessible to those who have a right to see them. Working with outside agencies and professionals is integral to our practice in order to meet the needs of our children. At times we may need to share information with other professionals to provide the best support possible. We also draw on our links with the local community to enrich children's experiences by taking them on outings or inviting members of the community into our setting. Our practice reflects the values expressed in the in the most up to date EYFS Development Matters guidance:

- It is important for parents and early years settings to have a strong and respectful partnership. This sets the scene for children to thrive in the early years.
- This includes listening regularly to parents and giving parents clear information about their children's progress.
- The help that parents give their children at home has a very significant impact on their learning.
- Some children get much less support for their learning at home than others. By knowing and understanding all the children and their families, settings can offer extra help to those who need it most.
- It is important to encourage all parents to chat, play and read with their children.

We understand that, in an early years setting, cultural capital means that each child arrives with a number of experiences and ideas based on their own personal circumstances. Getting to know our children and families enables us to celebrate and acknowledge this uniqueness and use it to steer learning experiences in meaningful and inspirational directions.

Transitions

Transitions are carefully planned for and time is given to ensure continuity of learning. At any transition, we acknowledge each child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings, including nurseries and childminders. Children attend an introductory session to Reception on the school's New Intake Evening to develop familiarity

with each other and with the school setting and practitioners. There is also a familiarisation session in the Autumn term when children who will be starting in Reception are invited with their parents or guardians to spend an hour or two in the setting getting to know the teachers and environment. We then stagger start with half class / half days alternating until part way through second week of term. This gives children a chance to know the rules and routines in a quieter environment and gives adults a chance to spend more time with each child getting to know them personally. Where deemed necessary and practically possible, the class teacher or SENDCO will also endeavour to carry out Nursery visits. This is usually only in the case of special circumstances or SEN. In the Summer term in Reception, the Year 1 teacher will meet with the Early Years staff and discuss each child's development against the Early Learning Goals in order to support a smooth transition to Year 1. This discussion helps the Year 1 teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children.

Principal: Darren Webster

Chair of Trustees: Julia Virgoe

Approved: September 2026

Policy Review Date: September 2027