

# ROWAN GATE PRIMARY SCHOOL



## EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

*This school policy reflects the consensus of opinion of the whole teaching and support staff and has the full agreement of the governing body.*

*"This policy reflects the philosophy of the Equality Policy, the Mission Statement and the School Aims in relation to the whole curriculum".*

### 1. Philosophy

The education pupils receive in the Early Years Foundation Stage at Rowan Gate is designed to build upon the child's previous learning begun at home, often with the support of pre-school services. It further aims to provide the child with a secure emotional base on which to begin his or her educational career and to foster development in skills, knowledge and attitude relating to all areas of the curriculum.

We understand that young children learn best through first-hand active experiences, situated in a secure and happy environment, where each child feels individually valued by the adults caring for them.

We know that the four guiding principles should shape practice in 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 with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

### 2. Admission

(Please see Admission Policy for more information)

It is county policy that children with need of a special school nursery placement identified on their Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) should be admitted in the September term after they are three years of age. It is acknowledged, however, that some children, with very significant needs outlined on their plan may be admitted at an earlier age. The vast majority of

pupils are admitted to school with a completed EHCP, in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice (2014, Updated April 2020).

The department mainly caters for pupils between the ages of 3 to 5 years. Placement for pupils in year N (3-4 years) is normally part-time (usually mornings only) with children in year R (4-5 years) attending full time. Induction arrangements can be more flexible if required by the family or child.

Admission to school should be a positive experience for all involved. To assist this, we provide parents with an information pack and children with a child friendly information booklet. In addition, we carry out home visits in order to provide time for parents/carers to discuss information about their child's abilities, priorities and concerns with the Early Years Foundation Stage Leader and class teacher/key person. We offer Stay and Play sessions prior to the child's entry to our setting. This allows parents and children to become familiar with the school environment, staff and class group. Parents also have the opportunity to meet and talk with a member of the Family Liaison Team.

### **3. Partnerships with Parents and Carers**

We are keenly aware that much learning takes place at home and of the importance of parent and carers as prime educators. We believe the relationship between parents, child and school is one that should be fostered to create an open partnership, which supports and enhances the child's learning. It is recognised that parents may be able to contribute to this partnership in different ways, and this may vary over time to respond to family, as well as the child's, needs. In line with this philosophy, the school aims to maintain good communication with all families, and this is seen as especially important during the admission period.

"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." (Development Matters, DfE, London: Crown copyright July, 2021)

Communication, shared responsibility and support are fostered through visits, home-school books, telephone calls, admissions and review meetings and consultation meetings (e.g. Parents Evenings). Parents are encouraged to make an appointment if they wish to discuss specific issues or seek advice. Further support is available via the Family Liaison Team.

Parents and carers are encouraged to share their child's achievements at home with school and to share in and contribute to their child's Learning Journey.

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

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum is an integral part of the whole school curriculum, forming the earliest part of the curriculum continuum and providing a foundation for later achievement.

The reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage, statutory from September 2021, help practitioners to improve outcomes for all children, especially disadvantaged children, and put early language at the heart of a broad curriculum.

#### **4.1 The Foundation Curriculum**

The EYFS is about how children learn, as well as what they learn. Children need enjoyable and motivating opportunities to develop their own play and independent exploration. Children need adults to model play and positive

interactions and to 'scaffold' their learning by giving them the appropriate level of help and support to achieve something they could not do independently. It is important to help children develop the characteristics of effective learning; to think, discuss and plan ahead.

"There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected" (EYFS Statutory Framework, DfE, London: Crown copyright March, 2021).

The prime areas of learning; Physical Development, Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication and Language are particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving.

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through the specific areas of learning; Literacy, Mathematics, Expressive Arts and Design and Understanding of the World.

The curriculum focuses on helping children improve, use and integrate their visual, auditory, tactile and kinaesthetic awareness through immersive learning experiences, in order to develop skills and knowledge in all areas of learning.

At Rowan Gate our early years curriculum is guided by Development Matters, (DfE, London: Crown copyright July, 2021), helping our early years practitioners to deliver an effective early years curriculum, building on the strengths and meeting the needs of the children we work with. It guides, but does not replace, professional judgement.

## **5. Teaching Methods**

### **5.1 Play**

Play holds a central place in the curriculum for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Play is not a break from the curriculum; play is the best way to implement the curriculum. Play provides benefits for cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and moral development (American Academy of Paediatrics, 2006; Elkind, 2007) for children from all socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Zigler, E. & Bishop-Josef, S., 2006).

Play is consciously facilitated by skilled practitioners, who are well-trained in observing children and in understanding how play contributes to the child's mastery of concepts and skills. The way play features in the individual child's curriculum at Rowan Gate, varies greatly, based on the nature of their specific special educational needs and the play skills, and experience of play, that they have on entry. Staff are trained in how to recognise and capitalise on children's schemas; repetitive patterns seen during play.

There is great value in opportunities, both for unstructured play with peers, and structured play with a trusted adult. Some children, by nature of their physical or learning difficulty, including autism, will require a different type of adult intervention and structure in order to learn specific play skills. This is often addressed, initially, through children's IEP targets, on a 1:1 basis and through key learning outcomes within continuous provision areas, to ensure opportunities for engagement and, in turn, progress.

The role of the adult is of paramount importance here:

- To role model the use of resources, safely, correctly and creatively, allowing children to practice and consolidate skills
- To encourage children to access the area and explore available resources

- To support children as they develop their skills of independence within routines and activities within the space
- To role model playing collaboratively and follow directions
- To support child self-initiated play through positive and challenging interactions, following the child's lead

## 5.2 Thematic Approach

The Early Years Foundation Stage Leader has devised a curriculum map (2-year cycle) which starts with the child's experience of him/herself (e.g. myself, my senses, houses and homes) and begins to encompass the wider world around them and associated learning opportunities, for example, weather, space, plants and trees.

Opportunities are provided to address all EYFS areas of learning in a cross-curricular manner, as the areas are inter-connected and rarely taught in isolation.

It is acknowledged that due to the nature of our pupils' special educational needs, a higher incidence of adult-led learning is essential and found to be successful in ensuring pupil's progress in specific areas of learning, and towards their individual targets, related to their EHCP outcomes.

We have high regard for the key features of effective practice; in this case, pedagogy, "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".

There are always opportunities to extend, repeat and re-visit activities, often led by the child's interests and/or deemed appropriate by the practitioners, based on the child's responses to activities. Children can also practice what they have learned through accessing the class interest table, for example, to explore story props or themed resources, including natural objects, supported by visuals.

## 6. **Assessment, Recording and Reporting**

When pupils enter school a period of entry assessment begins.

This draws upon information from parental opinion, the child's EHCP, previous reports from pre-school agencies and other professionals, multi-disciplinary discussion and a period of observation and structured assessment. The *Reception Baseline Assessment* (statutory from September 2021), is a short assessment, taken in the first six weeks in which a child starts reception.

This period culminates in an informal *admissions meeting*. Here, the class teacher meets with parents/carers to review how their child has settled and progress they have made. Priority targets are shared and agreed for the next six months. These targets form the basis of the pupil's *Individual Education Plan (IEP)*.

Progress towards these targets is reviewed at the formal *six-monthly review meeting*, and again, along with EHCP outcomes, at the *annual review*, where new targets are also agreed and set. Once the child reaches the age of five, review meetings occur annually rather than six-monthly.

A *termly report* is sent out to parents/carers, culminating in an *annual report to parents* at the end of the summer term. Parents are given the opportunity to have a meeting to discuss this report. The report details progress and experience across the whole curriculum. Parents/carers have the opportunity to share and discuss their child's *Learning Journey* and make a comment about their child's progress and achievements. Parents/carers comments are recorded within their child's *Learning Journey*.

Parents are however, welcome to discuss pupils progress and needs with teachers and other professionals, on a less formal basis at any time.

Children's progress is tracked on a termly basis; October (baseline), December, March and June using the school's online assessment tool; *Onwards & Upwards*. The outcomes included in the Rowan Gate EYFS assessment tool are an amalgamation of *Development Matters*, *Birth to 5 Matters*, *Routes for Learning* and *Derbyshire Small Steps*. This enables us to assess and track our children's development accurately and evidence their progress. The *Onwards & Upwards Steps* correlate with the age bands, of *Development Matters* and *Birth to 5 Matters*. In order to evidence and celebrate the smaller steps of progress many of our children make and ensure that all children's progress can be demonstrated, regardless of their starting point, the decision was made by the EYFS Lead to keep the age bands broken down into months (rather than the broad age ranges included in *Development Matters*, 2021). To explain, Steps 1-2 represents birth -11 months, Steps 3-4 represents 8 to 20 months, Steps 5-6 represents 16-26 months, and so on.

Assessments are examined and analysed on a termly basis by the EYFS co-ordinator and Assessment Lead.

Significant work evidence, photos and post-it notes are kept in *Individual Learning Journeys*. These give a holistic picture of the child, their strengths and achievements and their experiences during their time in the EYFS. Work is carefully annotated and Steps that the child is working within for that activity are noted. Next steps are detailed if appropriate. Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. "It involves practitioners knowing children's level of achievement and interests, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share". (EYFS Statutory Framework, DfE, London: Crown copyright March, 2021).

Children are observed regularly either ad-hoc; using post-it note observations for example, or planned; using *Individual Observation Sheets*.

At the end of reception year, children are assessed using the *EYFS Profile*. "The Profile must be completed for all children. Reasonable adjustments to the assessment process for children with SEND must be made as appropriate. Children will have differing levels of knowledge, skills and abilities across the Profile and it is important that there is a full assessment of all areas of their development, to inform plans for future activities and to identify any additional support needs.

Early years providers must report EYFS Profile results to local authorities, upon request.<sup>12</sup> Local authorities are under a duty to return this data to the relevant Government department" (EYFS Statutory Framework, DfE, London: Crown copyright March, 2021).

## **7. The Environment**

In line with the key feature of effective practice – ‘Pedagogy: helping children learn’, the aesthetic, physical and sensory environment will be considered in terms of its appeal and stimulation to young children. “Practitioners carefully organise enabling environments for high-quality play. A well-planned learning environment, indoors and outside, is an important aspect of pedagogy” (Development Matters, DfE, London: Crown copyright July, 2021).

Due regard is given to access, an appropriate visual/auditory environment (particularly for pupils with sensory impairments) and health and safety. Children’s Sensory Processing Difficulties are taken in to consideration and where needed, resources are used to support the child. Advice is sought and given by the Occupational Therapist. Pupils have access to an appropriately resourced outdoor area. Staff undergo training led by the EYFS Lead, in the importance of providing and maintaining a stimulating and inviting environment to enable children to learn, make progress and thrive.

Naturalistic play, heuristic play and loose parts play are all integral parts of the environment at Rowan Gate.

## **8. Links with the Community**

Groups of pre-school children aged 0-2 years and 2–3 years meet at Rowan Gate with their parents. The groups are led by two Rowan Gate early years practitioners. The children take part in a range of activities, including sunshine circles, heuristic play and use some specialist spaces such as the sensory room and soft play room. Often the resources and play activities are linked to the current Rowan Gate theme from our 2-year cycle. Where appropriate, the older children join the Foundation Stage children for outside play and pre-arranged activities.

Naturally, links are fostered between EYFS departments; joining for planned activities and events, such as assemblies and performances from outside visitors.

Pupils visit the local community with their class on a regular basis. Often through walks and visits to local parks, in line with our ‘weekly mile’. Teachers plan trips, related to the theme, such as to a local farm or a train ride, to provide further opportunities for children to practice skills and consolidate learning. There are opportunities for volunteers and students provide help in the EYFS.

## **9. Equal Opportunities**

“All children deserve to have an equal chance of success” and “high-quality early education and care are inclusive”. With due regard to the EYFS Statutory Framework, DfE, London: Crown copyright March, 2021, we seek to provide equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child and their family is included and supported. We will, therefore, will to challenge stereotypes and eliminate bias in line with the school’s main equal opportunity policy.

## **10. Multi Disciplinary Team**

The teachers and learning support assistants work as part of a multi-disciplinary team with physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, teachers from the advisory services and other professionals in the planning, implementation and evaluation of pupils’ programmes.

## **11. Organisation of the Early Years Department**

The Early Years Department caters for pupils between 3 and 5 years old. Grouping is based on individual needs and takes in to account the child as a whole, such as their vulnerability, which may be as a result of physical or emotional needs. Where possible, groups are formed with the vision that positive relationships may be fostered between certain peers, but naturally this is subject to the needs of the intake each year.

A comprehensive system of medium-term planning details differentiated activities and learning outcomes, groupings and staffing.

Weekly and daily planning is drawn from the medium-term plan.

Continuous Provision guides outline the key learning opportunities and detail the role of the adult in facilitating learning through play.

## **12. Review**

*This policy was reviewed in January 2023 by Miss Maxine Anthony-Hill and will be reviewed again in February 2024.*