

The Raleigh School Early Years Policy

Updated November 2023

to be reviewed July 2025

Early Years Policy

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the first year of school. In our school, all children join us at the beginning of the school year in which they are five. We have a staggered admission procedure, with all children full-time within the first 2 weeks.

Scheme of Work

We use the 'Development Matters' document, which is non-statutory guidance from the DfE. The full document can be found here;

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1180056/DfE_Development_Matters_Report_Sep2023.pdf

In this document, there is specific guidance on what children in Reception will be learning. This forms the basis of our curriculum.

There are seven key features of effective practice which are listed below, are detailed in the Development Matters document previously mentioned. These are central to the ethos of the setting and underpin all our interactions with the children.

- **The best for every child**
- **High quality care**
- **Curriculum**
- **Pedagogy**
- **Assessment**
- **Self-regulation and executive function**
- **Partnerships with parents**

Alongside these we also place a high priority on The Characteristics of Effective Learning, which detail the way in which we want children to learn. These are:

- **Playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and give things a go
- **Active learning** - children enjoy achievements, they concentrate and keep trying if they encounter difficulties
- **Creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

Areas of Learning

Communication and Language (C&L)

This area of learning includes communication through speaking and listening in different situations and for different purposes with both adults and peers. Children are encouraged to ask questions, articulate their ideas and develop story language. Staff understand that the acquisition of vocabulary is vital to children's learning and development. New vocabulary is planned into all lessons and in addition, staff seek out any opportunities to enhance and extend children's vocabulary still further.

Personal, Social & Emotional Development (PSED)

Successful personal, social and emotional development is crucial for very young children to develop a positive sense of themselves and alongside the planned activities, adults constantly reinforce the aims of good PSED. They need to be taught to express their opinions and empathise with those of others, show resilience and perseverance as well as identifying and then moderating their feelings. Self-regulation can be quite challenging and is a skill that needs to be specifically taught.

Physical Development (PD)

Young children's physical development is inseparable from other aspects of development because they learn much through being active. PD is split into gross and fine motor skills and also includes self-care such as understanding the importance of hygiene.

Literacy

This area includes both reading and writing. Phonics is the nuts and bolts of both and we teach it daily using our Phonics Steps validated scheme. Reading is split into 2 strands, decoding and comprehension, with children being asked to read and understand words, sentences and longer texts. They will use their phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately. They

also learn to read some common irregular words by sight and demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read. Children need to show that they have understood what they have read by talking about the text. In writing children will be taught to use their fingers as 'sound buttons' and so use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds. They also write some irregular common words. They write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others. Some words are spelt correctly and others are phonetically plausible. When ready, they will be taught to start each sentence with a capital letter and end it with a full stop.

Maths

This includes counting, sorting, matching, seeing patterns, making connections, recognising relationships and working with numbers, shapes, space and measures. There is a large focus on the language of maths and much less on the recording of it. Children are encouraged to verbalise what they are doing. Mathematical understanding is developed through stories, songs, games and imaginative play, which means that children learn to enjoy using and experimenting with numbers. They have opportunities to count, subitise, recognise numbers, explore cardinality, compare numbers, calculate one more / one less and recall bonds of numbers within 1 and 10. Children will spend time exploring patterns and shapes and comparing the length, weight and capacity of various objects.

Understanding the World

In this area of learning, children are developing the crucial knowledge, skills and understanding that help them to make sense of the world. They will be able to talk about their family as well as using images and stories from the past, from other countries and from a range of religions, as a focus for discussion. Both similarities and differences should be celebrated. They will explore the natural world around them, expressing their feelings and noticing changes through the year.

Expressive Art and Design

Creativity is fundamental to successful learning. Being creative enables children to make connections between one area of learning and another and so extend their understanding. This area of learning includes design and technology, art, music, dance and role play.

Planning

- The long-term plan outlines the topics to be covered and medium term plans are completed termly for subjects that are taught as a whole class.
- Short term planning consists of a foundation plan which covers Personal, Social & Emotional Development, Understanding the World, Expressive Arts and Design and Physical Development. There are additional plans for Maths, Literacy and Communication & Language.
- We use overarching themes, which last for between 1 and 3 weeks. These topics are not set in stone and can be led by the needs / interests of the cohort. Resources for existing topics can be found in labelled boxes in Walter's Wing.
- Alongside this planned learning, there is scope for the children to do what interests them. If the activity is purposeful and safe, the children are allowed, and encouraged, to follow their own ideas.

Assessment Procedures

- Assessment is continuous in Reception and involves all adults in the setting. The online assessment tool Tapestry, is used by all staff to record observations, which are linked to the Development Matters document. In keeping with current guidance from the DFE, there is no requirement for there to be evidence for every statement; practitioner knowledge is equally valid.
- Data is analysed through Tapestry, with staff looking for areas where children are not keeping in line with age-appropriate expectations. Gap analyses are regularly undertaken on Tapestry. These enable teachers to identify areas for where planning may need to be adapted for the cohort as well as aspects where individual children may need support.
- Evidence of the work that children have done is kept in their individual learning journey (LJ) which contains a mixture of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Any independent work that the child is proud of, goes on their personal display square on the wall. Whenever possible, staff speak to the child about this learning and they write these thoughts in 'child-speak' on a post-it note, which is then attached to the piece of work. Once a month, the child selects favourite pieces of work to be added to their LJ.

- The end of the Reception year, marks the end of the EYFS. At this point, we make judgements against the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) for each strand within the above areas. These goals are separate from the Development Matters document and should not be used until the end of year assessment point.
- The outcomes of these end of year judgements are reported nationally, using both statutory and Fischer Family Trust (FFT) assessment procedures.
- In addition to this statutory assessment, as a Trust, we also use the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) assessments. These are done one to one with an adult at both the start and end of the school year.

Learning through Play

Play is vital for young children's development. Through play, children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or uncertainties in controlled and safe situations. They practise and build up ideas, learn how to control themselves and begin to understand the need for rules. With this in mind, we offer ample opportunities for self-initiated and planned play activities.

Enabling Environments: the Learning Environment

The setting is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. The classroom is divided into learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently wherever possible. The children access a mixture of planned and child-initiated activities in each of the areas across the week. The setting has its own enclosed outdoor area which offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. Here children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. Here, we offer learning and resources that mirror those offered inside.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the role that parents have played so far, as well as their future role, in educating the children.

We do this in the following ways:

- By talking to parents about their child before s/he starts at our school
- We make visits to the child's home prior to their starting school
- While the children spend time with their teacher for story visits, we offer parents the opportunity to meet each other in an informal setting
- We welcome parents with an induction meeting the term before their child starts school.
- We run parent information sessions on reading, phonics, handwriting and numeracy, during which we outline both how we cover these areas in school and how parents can best support at home
- We encourage parents to talk to the child's teacher if they have questions or concerns
- We give parents access to our online assessment platform, Tapestry, so that they can see observations of their child and so keep up to date with their progress
- There is a formal meeting for parents during the autumn and spring terms at which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress. A summer term meeting is available on request following the issue of the end of year report.

Roles and Responsibilities of Early Years Leader

- To lead policy development
- To write and implement the subject action plan
- To support colleagues with their knowledge of Early Years
- To monitor progress and improve standards in teaching and learning
- To be familiar with current best practice in the EYFS and apply when appropriate
- Audit, maintain and replace resources
- To manage and monitor expenditure within the annual budget.

Health and Safety

- There is always a member of staff in each of the areas of learning, including the outdoor area
- Staff show children how to use any new tools/resources safely

Roles and Responsibilities of Link Governor

To meet the Early Years Leader at least annually to discuss the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the action plan. Visit the setting at least annually and relate findings back to the governing body.

Equal Opportunities

Staff will ensure that all children have equal access to the curriculum. They will be encouraged to respect similarities & differences within cultures other than their own (see Inclusion & Equality Policies). In order to help all children to reach the expected standard, staff will focus more of their time on those children who are not in line to meet this standard in any areas.