

ROSEWOOD FREE SCHOOL

Title: Early Years Policy

Lead Reviewer: Early Years Lead: Niki Seel

Who this is aimed at: All Staff involved in the Early Years Department

Version	Reason for Change
V4	Biannual Update

Date Initially Implemented	2008
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Frequency of review	2 years	Review due	March 2024
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Philosophy

The experiences of a young child in their Early Years are crucial for the development of their physical, cognitive, communication, emotional and social development. However, we believe that the Early Years are a valuable developmental stage in their own right, and are not solely about providing the vital building blocks for later learning. The Early Years department provides a safe and secure environment within which children and their families can be introduced to the school and school life. We acknowledge that parents are their child's primary educators and most important and enduring advocates, and we seek to partner with families, supporting and empowering them as well as their child. All children have individual strengths and needs, and everything we do is tailored to match these in a highly personalised way, reflecting our school motto that we are a place 'Where Individuality Leads Learning'. Young children do not learn in discrete curricular areas and the curriculum is therefore delivered holistically, with educational and therapeutic objectives incorporated into all activities. Play is the main mode of learning for all children in Early Years. We wholeheartedly endorse the statement that

Practitioners must stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and interests, and guiding their development through warm positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning

EYFS Statutory Framework 2021

1. Aims

- a. To provide a caring, secure, child-centred and playful environment within which each child is valued as a unique individual, and diversity is celebrated.
- b. To ensure that each learner both enjoys and is enjoyed during their time in Early Years.
- c. To ensure that the safety of children and adults is at the heart of our ethos, and that our safeguarding and health and safety procedures are robust??
- d. For the Early Years team to function as a community of people committed to the well-being of the children and to their holistic development.
- e. To provide an emotionally safe environment where children are supported by warm attuned relationships with a key person

Each child must be assigned a key person. The key person must help ensure that every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs

EYFS Statutory Framework 2021

- f. To nurture high self-esteem in the children and confidence in themselves as learners.
- g. For all adults to show high levels of adult engagement with all children, flexibly responding to learners' individual needs, so that well-being and learning opportunities are maximised.
- h. To ensure that there is a positive and stimulating learning environment (both indoors and outdoors) within which children's opportunities for learning and development are maximised.
- i. To maximise each learner's involvement throughout the day, using their 'individual involvement indicators' as a constant reference point.

Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests and development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development

EYFS Statutory Framework 2021

- j. To create a responsive environment which supports children to develop intentionality both in relationships and in their engagement with the wider world.
- k. To adapt the environment in order to minimise the impact of any visual or hearing loss, and provide opportunities that may increase children's abilities to use these senses.
- l. To establish routines within which learners can begin to make sense of their world, gain security, and begin to anticipate, participate and lead interactions.
- m. To use a multisensory approach to all aspects of learning.
- n. To encourage active independent learning.
- o. To establish, maintain and grow strong links with families, valuing the vital contribution of the wider family to a child's wellbeing and development, and seeking to learn from them and to support them in that role.
- p. To value, reflect and celebrate family and cultural diversity, providing an inclusive approach and setting for all our families.
- q. To provide a detailed, accurate, sensitive and child centred multidisciplinary assessment of each learner's abilities and needs.

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.

- r. To ensure co-ordinated multi-disciplinary development of individual programmes which seek to minimise the impact of disability on a child's development and to establish clear goals for learning in order to help children thrive.
- s. To ensure that medical needs are met as a seamless part of a learner's day, with minimal impact on their learning and social opportunities, always ensuring that the child is at the heart of the activity.
- t. To ensure that children's nutritional needs are met in the most beneficial way for them throughout the day.
- u. To provide the building blocks of early learning which can be built on when a child reaches statutory school age either here at Rosewood Free School or elsewhere.
- v. To ensure that relevant experiences are provided to promote equal opportunities for all children irrespective of race, culture, religion, gender or special educational needs.

2. Objectives

- a. For children to settle happily and confidently into their early school days, thriving and showing high levels of well-being and involvement
- b. For each child to have an empathic key person who is able to help regulate their emotional well-being, and who ensures the child's evolving self-regulatory behaviours are sensitively supported and understood.
- c. To maintain close links with families by means of an open door policy, the use of all appropriate modes of communication including face to face, telephone, home school books, email and Class Dojo, providing opportunities for families to be involved with their child at school.
- d. For children to have opportunities to hear their home language and those of their peers sometimes at school
- e. To foster positive relationships between children and their peers and between children and adults, encouraging co-operation, sharing, turn-taking and respect for others.
- f. To observe children closely, identifying characteristics of effective learning and seeking to build on these.

- g. To develop children's confidence to try new activities and a security within which they have the freedom to fail.
- h. To nurture and respond to children's potentially communicative behaviours and responses.
- i. To develop children's pre-verbal, non-verbal and vocal communicative capabilities.
- j. To develop children's desire and ability to communicate.
- k. To seek every opportunity to give learners a voice, encouraging them to be vocal initiators and responders.
- l. To enable children to use their existing vision and hearing effectively, and to provide targeted opportunities for them to develop their visual and listening skills.
- m. To maximise opportunities for sensory stimulation, using both single sensory input (to develop skills in specific areas) and multisensory input.
- n. To provide rich and varied experiences which invite curiosity, initiation and investigation, and provide opportunities for responsiveness, discovery, anticipation and persistence.
- o. To maximise each learner's individual involvement in all aspects of the school day, following the child's lead and fostering agency and control.
- p. To enhance children's experiences through the use of stories, songs and rhymes
- q. To offer a wide variety of musical experiences in which children can create and respond to music, including responsive musical interactions in which children can respond, influence, lead and control an adult partner.
- r. To foster creativity by providing a wide range of media and sound making resources for children to explore.
- s. For children to develop a positive self-image and good body awareness.
- t. To promote the development of functional motor patterns.
- u. To engender confidence in, and enjoyment of, movement activities.
- v. To promote functional fine-motor development and good hand/eye co-ordination.

- w. To establish a means for all children to access environmental control technology.
- x. To maximise involvement and reduce dependence in all areas of self-help – eating, drinking, dressing, undressing and personal hygiene.

3. Content

Early days

- a. Children may attend a Nursery class from 2 years of age. They start on a part-time basis, attending for half days, and gradually increase their attendance to full time in Year R, on a timescale agreed by both parents and the school staff. The full time children are in an Early Years class.
- b. Families are encouraged to visit the Nursery and Early Years classes prior to their child's admission, to familiarise themselves with the setting and to consider its suitability for their child.
- c. Prior to a child starting in the Nursery a home visit will take place involving the class teacher, the child's key person and possibly a therapist or school nurse where this is appropriate. A "My Unique Child" booklet will be completed to ensure that transition from home to school is as smooth as possible.
- d. Information is gathered from other adults and settings who are currently involved with a child. For example, Portage teachers usually visit children during their early school days to ensure that information which may help us to support that child is transferred to us.
- e. A Pre-Admission meeting is held with families, and the Head teacher, Early Years teacher, Family link worker, school nurse, physiotherapist and occupational therapist, to discuss arrangements for a child's transition to school, to ensure that everything is in place to meet the child's needs as fully as possible.
- f. The teacher will be the child's Key Worker, acting as the main point of contact and information for families. However, a member of the Early Years team will be allocated as a key person to each learner, to act as their advocate. They will help with settling them into the school environment, support them in care and learning routines and in transitions, develop expertise in their child's needs and responses, and contribute to their on-going assessment.

- g. Parents or carers are encouraged to attend school with their child initially, both in order to support the child as they settle in and to share information about their child's abilities and needs in different situations.
- h. Once a child has settled into school and the multi-disciplinary team have had the opportunity to get to know them, a Post Admission meeting will be held with families to discuss how the placement is going, to talk about ideas for helping the child and to iron out any issues which may have arisen. This usually takes place about 6 weeks after admission.
- i. We plan transitions for our learners very carefully when the time comes for them to move from the Nursery to an Early Years class. This usually happens over a number of weeks to ensure that both the learner and the new class team are confident and ready for the move.
- j. Families are welcome to visit the Nursery or Early Years class/es at any time and will be invited to specific social events such as coffee mornings, picnics or art sessions. Regular communication occurs via a home-school book and Class Dojo, and telephone calls and home visits may be made. More formally, parents are involved in the statutory EHCP process, and in 6 monthly and annual reviews of their child's plan.
- k. We run a Sensory Stay and Play session each week for children with complex needs from 0-3 years to attend with their families. Some children will transition from Stay and Play to the Nursery, and may attend both for a while.

Assessment and Curriculum

- a. Initial assessment is a major function of the Nursery and is undertaken by the multi-disciplinary team. This will lead to a statutory 'Education, Health and Care plan' for those children who do not already have one prior to starting with us. Statutory assessment involves liaison with a child's Educational Psychologist who will usually visit them at school as well as talking with the class teacher and with families. The EHC plan is written in consultation with the child's family, and, once in place, is followed up by regular reviews to ensure that all elements of the plan are in place and that it continues to meet the needs of the child and their family. Educational aspects of the plan are followed up by ongoing assessment in class to ensure that a child's programme and indeed the school placement continue to meet their specific needs.
- b. All pupils will be assessed against Rosewood's functional visual and auditory profile. For many pupils this will result in detailed assessment work being undertaken of their visual or auditory skills, with

programmes being devised to support the development of these skills where this is possible.

- c. Physiotherapy, Occupational therapy, Speech and language therapy and nursing care is available on site. Teacher advisors for children with hearing and visual impairments make regular visits to the school.
- d. The Early Years curriculum is very broad based and is needs led. Play is considered to be the vital tool of learning in the Early Years, and the holistic development of the child is paramount, rather than progress in discrete curricular areas. The curriculum is concerned with the children and their immediate environment, and is practically based, involving the children in a wide variety of sensory exploration. Independent and active learning is encouraged, though most children require careful structuring of activities and judicious adult input if learning opportunities are to be maximised.

Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore and relate to others....children learn by leading their own play and by taking part in play which is guided by adults

EYFS Statutory Framework 2021

- e. Routines are developed for key activities during the school day, such as 'hello', lunch and snack times, and bathroom visits. These routines are carefully structured to provide meaningful opportunities for frequent repetition to support individual learning targets. Quality time is afforded to these routine activities in order to maximise their impact on learning.
- f. The Early Years department follows the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, fully supporting and striving to implement their 4 guiding principles:

A Unique child – Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured

Positive relationships – Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and /or a key person

Enabling Environments – The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning, especially where it is tailored to respond to individual needs

Learning and Development – Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected.

- g. Rosewood Free School has its own Early Years Curriculum, which has been specifically designed to meet the very particular needs of learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties. In order to ensure breadth and balance for children it incorporates aspects of the Engagement model and the 7 Areas of Learning and Development outlined in the EYFS.

These include 3 Prime Areas:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Communication and Language
Physical Development

And 4 Specific Areas:

Literacy
Mathematics
Understanding of the world
Expressive Arts and design

The curriculum in the Nurseries is based on the 3 Prime Areas of Learning and Development, with opportunities for enrichment provided through the Specific areas.

Practitioners working with the youngest children are expected to ensure a strong foundation for children's development in the 3 prime areas

EYFS Statutory Framework 2021

Older learners access all 7 areas, with Mathematics being addressed through Understanding the World for children at the earliest stages of development, and Literacy being addressed through Communication and Language. Occasionally we have learners in the EY department who may transition to other settings, and it may be appropriate for these learners to access literacy and numeracy activities at an appropriate developmental level.

Additionally the Early Years curriculum incorporates strands from the 5 Key Skill areas in Rosewood's ImPACTS, ensuring developmental relevance. These are:

Personal, Social and Health Education
(towards self-help and towards self-advocacy)
Communication
Cognitive skills
Environmental Control Technology
Physical Skills
(gross motor and fine motor)

See Rosewood Free School Early Years Curriculum and Rosewood's ImPACTS curriculum (Individualised Profile, Assessment and Curriculum for Target Setting) for further details.

- h. Early Years pupils are assessed using the assessment and profiling sections of ImPACTS in the 5 Key Skills areas.
- i. Each child has a detailed Individual Learning Intentions Profile derived from these assessments, outlining specific learning objectives in the 5 Key Skill areas. Children's progress is recorded and observations made related to these targets daily.
- j. Opportunities for SCRUFFY (unplanned and incidental) learning are an important and valued part of the Early Years day, and progress and successes here are also recorded and celebrated.
- k. We are exempt from the baseline assessment at the beginning of year R
- l. At the end of the Foundation Stage children are assessed against the EYFS profile, as this is a statutory requirement. A report for parents at the end of year R includes reflection on each child's characteristics of effective learning.

Practice

- a. The fundamental approach used by adults at all times is a playful and responsive one, however structured a session may appear, allowing the child to set the pace, respond, initiate, reject, or request more.
- b. Within the school day there is a balance between adult initiated highly structured and targeted activities carried out on a 1:1 basis, child initiated sessions, and group sessions (for example resonance boards, creative activities or understanding the world sessions) where children's needs are met by differentiating the task or the outcome of an activity.

The EYFS does not prescribe a particular teaching approach. Play is essential for children's development...Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults

EYFS Statutory Guidance 2021

- c. The Early Years department is able to make regular use of school facilities, such as the hydro pool, trampoline, the multi-sensory room, and the sensory gardens.
- d. Both the Nurseries and the Early Years class/es have their own outdoor classroom areas which enable children to encounter all areas of learning in most weathers.
- e. The school has a therapy dog who makes regular visits to classes.
- f. Children eat lunch in their classroom and there are sufficient staff to enable children to follow specific programmes aimed at developing oral-motor and independence skills. Learners who are unable to eat by mouth follow carefully devised non-oral programmes. A blended diet is available for children whose families choose this.
- g. Close links are established with other agencies or settings providing support to children: for example Advisory teachers for children with visual and hearing impairments, Portage teachers, The Child Development Centre, Children's centres or local or other specialist pre-schools.

4. Special Needs

- a. All children are of equal value and have equal right to participate in all activities in an appropriate way.
- b. The contribution of every child to the group is encouraged, respected and valued.
- c. Specialist therapy and medical advice are essential to ensure that children's needs are met and that progress is maximised in all areas. This advice should be integrated into the child's day and should influence their activities wherever relevant. (for example, the children have physiotherapy programmes, hydrotherapy programmes, eating and drinking programmes, ECT programmes, moving and handling programmes and medical protocols)
- d. Specialist seating and positioning as advised by the occupational therapist or physiotherapist will be used to ensure maximum function is achieved.
- e. Specialist equipment to foster independence in self-help skills will be used on advice from the appropriate therapist.

- f. All children work on an individual needs based programme, sometimes on a 1:1 basis – although there is also opportunity for children to work as an equal member of a group.

- g. Alternative routes to communication will be provided for children where appropriate. This will include the use of body cues and transition cues, and for some learners may include the use of Objects of Reference, symbols, or signing if appropriate. We have access to a range of technologies such as eye-gaze and i pads, which may support communication for some of our learners.