

St Leonard's Lower School Early Years Foundation Stage Policy



“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”

Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, DfE September 2021

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Foundation Stage year. Children usually join St Leonard’s Lower School full time in the September of the year in which they are five years old.

Children joining our school have already learned a great deal and many have attended a preschool setting in our community. During a child’s final year of Early Years in our Foundation Stage Unit, we help children build upon their previous experiences by offering a range of stimulating learning opportunities in an exciting environment that enables individuals to achieve the Early Learning Goals identified in the Statutory Framework (DfE, September 2021). We offer an Early Years provision based on the following principles:

- Ensuring that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
- Including opportunities to cater for all learning styles
- Offering a structure for learning that has:
 - o a range of starting points,
 - o provides context and content that matches the needs of young children
 - o opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- Providing an effective transition from home to school.

The EYFS is based upon four overarching principles:

- **A Unique Child**
- **Positive Relationships**
- **Enabling Environments**
- **Learning and Development**

A Unique Child

At St Leonard’s Lower School, we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We know children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. A child’s attitude and disposition to learning are influenced by feedback from others. Therefore, we establish a safe, friendly environment, underpinned by our shared values, that promotes positive learning behaviours, through praise and encouragement, as well as weekly celebration and reward assemblies.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individual members of our school community. We place a high priority on treating children fairly regardless of race, religion or ability (see equality policies, RE and SMSC policies).

We believe that all children in our care are important. Their wellbeing and education matters to us so we strive to provide every opportunity for each child achieve their best.

EYFS practitioners take account of each child's range of life experiences when planning for their learning, and set realistic and challenging expectations that meet their needs, guided closely by the schools Teaching and Learning policy.

It is important to us that all children in the school are safe. We make children aware of boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological wellbeing of all children because we understand that when a child's emotional wellbeing is at its highest they can learn more effectively (see Safeguarding Children Policy).

Welfare

"Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them."
Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, DfE September 2021

In accordance with DfE Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, we understand that we are legally required to:

- Promote the welfare of children
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill (Health and Safety Policy, First Aid Policy, Administration of Medicines Policy)
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs (Behaviour Management Policy)
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so (Safeguarding Policy)
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose (Health and Safety Policy, Early Years Risk Assessment)
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development
- experiences tailored to meet their needs (Teaching and Learning Policy)
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children

Positive Relationships

At St Leonard's Lower School, we recognise that children learn to be self-assured, independent people from forming secure relationships. We develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating children.

We do this through:

- meeting and talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school;
- children are offered an introductory afternoon
- offering home visits to all children prior to starting school;
- providing the opportunity to spend time at school with their parents during 'Book look' afternoons, coffee afternoons;
- inviting all parents to an information evening during the term before their child starts school;
- offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress
- encouraging parents to talk to practitioners about any concerns; either at school or through the teacher email
- formal Parent Consultation meetings during Autumn and Spring term providing the opportunity to discuss your child's progress in private with their teacher;
- sending parents a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year;
- providing a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents such as Whole school assemblies, Sporting events, Big Breakfast, Christmas and summer fayres
- promoting shared moments of pride at your child's achievements through our 'Star of the week'
- keeping parents regularly informed through a daily update of activities in the classroom and the schools weekly newsletters that share learning and up and coming events;
- operating an open door policy and are very keen to work alongside parents to benefit the children.

Secure relationships

If children are allowed time to settle into school, they will flourish, encounter success and develop positive attitudes towards learning. We know that positive relationships are key to high levels of involvement so all staff involved with the children in Early Years aim to develop excellent relationships with all children, regularly interacting with them and taking time to listen to them. Each EYFS teacher acts as the **Key Person** to all the children in the EYFS class, supported by our Teaching Assistant team.

We have built strong links with our feeder preschools to ensure a smooth transition into St Leonard's Lower School. Our EYFS staff visit relevant settings during the summer term and discuss children confidentially in detail. Staff and children from preschools are regularly invited to school events such as Christmas Concerts and Summer Fayres. We promote continuity and coherence by sharing information about children's achievements.

Enabling Environments

At St Leonard's Lower School, we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development. Children in our care feel safe and secure with clear routines and boundaries. Our transition programme allows children to become familiar with their new surroundings and we ensure each child has their own space for their belongings, so they feel part of the school community.

By providing a stimulating and varied environment, both in and outdoors, we cater for each child's interests, ensuring they can achieve the next steps in their learning through challenging but achievable experiences that build their confidence and independence.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

The planning within the EYFS follows the schools Long Term Plan and 'Learning Journey' plans, which are based around termly themes. These plans are used by the EYFS teachers as a guide for weekly planning; however, staff may alter these in response to the needs, achievements and interests of the children on a weekly and daily basis.

Staff use a range of assessment procedures to help plan for what each child needs to do next. Observation and assessment notes are kept in the children's individual Learning Journey folders along with photographs and collections of work the child has produced. Staff formally record judgements within the EYFS against the Early Learning Goals as an ongoing process throughout the year. There are planned parent consultation meetings during Autumn and Spring term for staff and parents to discuss progress. During the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their child's achievements and progress towards the ELG's. Parents are also given the opportunity to discuss these judgements with their child's teacher.

The Learning Environment

The EYFS classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be peaceful and rest. The classroom is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. The EYFS class has its own enclosed outdoor area to develop all areas of learning throughout the year. This has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children the opportunities to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. The children use the hall for PE. They have access to the Interactive Whiteboard and ICT equipment within the classroom on a daily basis and computer suite on a regular timetabled basis.

Learning and Development

At St Leonard's Lower School, we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected.

Teaching and Learning Style

Our policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our school. These features apply to teaching and learning in the EYFS just as much as they do to the teaching further up the school. It includes whole class teaching, working with small groups or individuals and on-going observations. Features that relate to the EYFS are the:

- partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;
- range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication;
- carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards the Early Learning Goals throughout EYFS;
- provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;
- encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management;

- support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are shared with parents;
- good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school;

Play

“Children’s play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children’s development.”

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Active Learning

“Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.”

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfactions as they take ownership of their learning.

Creativity and Critical Thinking

“When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.”

Children should be given opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults can support children’s thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

The statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provides the guidance and requirements supporting the learning and development of children in our care. The Framework describes the stages for the development of children (from birth to 5 years of age) and how children’s health, wellbeing and safety are our priority within an environment that provides opportunities to allow them to reach their true potential.

Areas of Learning

The EYFS is made up of 3 **prime areas** of learning:

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

And 4 **specific** areas through which the 3 prime areas are strengthened and applied

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive arts and design

The Prime Areas of Learning cover the knowledge and skills which are the foundation for children's school readiness and future progress and which are applied and reinforced by the Specific Areas of Learning. All of these areas of learning and development are important and are inter-connected.

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other to support a rounded approach to the development of each child. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. Early Learning Goals (ELG's) define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

The Early Learning Goals provide the basis for planning throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Termly learning journeys identify the intended learning, with outcomes, for children working towards the Early Learning Goals. EYFS practitioners address the requirements in a flexible way that builds on children's interests. Focussed tasks and continuous provision is planned for on a daily basis including the indoor and outdoor learning environment as well as a specific weekly phonics plan. Staff regularly share information and feedback about learning and teaching. Daily debriefings enable staff to assess the day and plan for the following day according to the needs of the children.

As part of the smooth transition into Statutory School, the children visit Year 1 classes and participate in joint events throughout the year, especially during the Summer term.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staffing team to follow the principles stated in this policy. There is a named Governor responsible for the EYFS who is responsible for discussing EYFS practice with the team regularly and to provide feedback to the whole governing body, raising any issues that require discussion. The Head teacher and Early Years Foundation Stage Leader will carry out monitoring procedures in the EYFS Unit as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

Reviewed by	Curriculum and Standards Committee
Date	13 th October 2021
Next Review	October 2024