

The Birches Specialist Support School

EYFS Policy



Reviewed by (name and role)	Laura Whittaker
Date reviewed (month and year)	May 2024
Date of next review (month and year)	
Date of submission for ratification (specific date)	May 2027
Method of ratification (e.g. via email responses or at a specific Governors' meeting)	To be ratified at next Full governing body meeting

Introduction

Every child deserves the best possible start in their school career, a place where they feel safe, comfortable and supported to reach their full potential. Our EYFS classes offer a happy, inclusive learning environment with high quality teaching and learning, resources and opportunities to thrive and grow. With a focus on children's independence, communication and interactions with others we will nurture and encourage their talents and curiosity to learn.

Our EYFS cohort is made up of four classes. Two classes welcome new-to school Reception and Y1 pupils and two classes of pupils that benefit from an extended EYFS approach of play-based learning with lots of opportunities for child-led play and exploration. Class staff will judge and carefully plan classroom provision with the needs of their children at the centre of the decision making. Striking the balance of providing an enabling and inviting environment that doesn't over stimulate the senses of our more structured learners who need lower distraction provision.

EYFS staff are skilled and have a good knowledge of the EYFS framework and principles. Compliance with Paediatric First Aid requirements is ensured. Internal staff training ensure teams are up to date with relevant changes, curriculum developments and priorities within the department.

Our EYFS provision reflects and supports the overarching EYFS principles of:

- **A unique child** – every child is unique, is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- **Positive relationships** – children learn to be independent through forging 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.
- **Learning and Development** – children develop and learn in different ways. Supporting the education and care of all children in Early Years provision, regardless of need or starting point.

We are committed to fostering strong partnerships between school and our families to support the child's holistic development, to ensure all needs are met as well as taking into account parental views and priorities into their child's learning journey. We work alongside multidisciplinary teams and professionals to ensure all of a child's needs are met, offering very individualised approaches as required.

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

- To provide quality learning experiences for all the children. Learning will develop through practical and play activities, which are structured, balanced, relevant to the child and related to the real world.
- To provide a curriculum which takes account of, and responds to, the children's developmental needs and allows them to make progress related to their differing abilities. "What the child can do" will always be our starting point.

- To ensure the children have positive experiences of success at their own levels in order to give them confidence and motivation for learning in the future.
- To provide a curriculum which provides equal learning and development opportunities for all the children.

The Curriculum

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) classes at The Birches we aim to provide a broad, balanced, differentiated curriculum which addresses the children 's social, emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development within a secure and stimulating environment. The environment is inclusive and accessible to all, to develop independence and cater for our pupils' differing needs and starting points. Our curriculum enables the child to learn and develop skills, attitudes and understanding in these areas of learning:

The prime areas	The specific areas
Personal, Emotional and Social Development (PSED)	Mathematics
Communication and Language (CL)	Literacy
Physical development (PD)	Understanding the World
	Expressive Art and Design

The Prime areas of learning provide the foundation to all areas of learning and are fundamental in supporting development, these principles underpin learning in all areas. Throughout the EYFS we plan activities to give children learning experiences and opportunities to work towards the Early Learning Goals and allows them to develop confidence, skills, knowledge and independence to prepare them for their next phase of education. Teaching and learning take place within the classroom, outside areas and within the multiple, specialist sensory areas around school. Within these areas, children will participate in a variety of activities, both alongside an adult and independently.

An emphasis on Communication: at The Birches we promote a total communication environment alongside onsite support from Speech and Language Therapy and specially trained staff in strategies such as Intensive Interaction, AAC, symbol/photograph rich environments and signing, all pupils are given a voice and the tools to engage in meaningful communication at an appropriate level. For children who have English as an additional language, opportunities to engage with and have exposure to their first language within learning and provision are considered.

Topics are planned on a 2-year cycle, this ensures that children will experience learning within each topic as they progress through the EYFS and into KS1 classes, ensuring no topics are repeated. Topic planning takes place on a half-termly basis. Topics may be developed to consider and reflect children's interests. The curriculum structure ensures a broad and balanced curriculum offer with an emphasis placed on the Prime areas and Maths, Literacy and Science. Remaining Specific areas and Cultural Capital coverage are placed on rotation across the year and delivered through a mixture of theme days, topics enhancements, celebrations and opportunities to be emersed in cultural experiences and a variety of meaningful trips and visits, as well as through continuous provision. Curriculum coverage is plotted on class timetables with

adult focused and continuous provision activities and enhancements. Classes follow medium-term planning with a focus on continuity and progression of learning and using topic themes as vehicles for engagement. As a whole school, we recognise the valuable contribution personal development has upon our pupils and opportunities for coverage are intertwined into daily practice alongside additional learning opportunities.

Children have the opportunity to access provision in each of the learning areas within both the classroom and outdoor area. Each EYFS class has access to their own or a shared outdoor area. At The Birches School we are lucky to have a variety of outdoor spaces that promote physical and gross motor development, independence, social skills and risk taking. A popular environment is our woodland area where children have access to a Forest School provision on rotation.

Play

We recognise the importance of play in Early Years. It is through play that pupils are able to:

- Build confidence
- Learn to explore
- Think about and solve problems
- Develop their imaginations
- Relate to others
- Develop curiosity and a motivation to learn
- Develop their own communication styles

Planned and purposeful play activities are a key strategy for introducing and consolidating all areas of learning and development. They are also carefully planned to take into account pupils' needs and reflect their interests and ensure exposure to a broad and balanced curriculum offer.

Play activities will include a mix of:

- Child initiated Activities - children make choices from within the learning environment to meet his/her outcome for learning.
- Adult Initiated Activities - staff provide the resources to stimulate and consolidate learning.
- Adult Directed Activities - Children engage in planned activities to meet specific learning outcomes.

Staff within the EYFS will continually make judgements through observations and assessment as to the balance required for pupils between child and adult initiated play and learning activities.

Although we recognise that pupils will be, over time, working towards being able to participate in more adult led activities in readiness for moving into Key Stage 1, we understand and appreciate that our pupils will develop at different rates and have very specific and individual learning needs.

Adults in the setting will support play by:

- Planning and resourcing a stimulating environment
- Supporting children's learning through planned play

- Extending and supporting children’s spontaneous play and providing challenge within this
- Extending and developing children’s language and communication in their play.
- Listening to all forms of children’s communication and their ideas and taking these into account when developing play and planning.
- Narrating children’s play.
- Asking questions about children’s play.

Tracking Pupil Progress and Assessment

Targets are set for all children in EYFS. Targets are set to reflect the 7 areas of learning and development with individualised targets set in each area. The PPPs support the holistic development of each child considering, EHCP outcomes, focusses from multi-disciplinary team, communication, behaviour, physical development and independence skills as well as cognition and learning.

All pupils across school have a ‘one page profile’ document which outlines their holistic needs and key information. This document supports adults that may be less familiar with the group, an overview of each child with key information such as communication needs, allergies or behaviour support to be aware of.

Pupils are assessed using the Ranges from Birth to 5 Matters in Reception and BPPs (Birches Progression pathway) from Year 1, these are plotted using our assessment platform, Evidence for Learning. The Reception Baseline Assessment is conducted in line with statutory expectations within the first 6 weeks of Reception pupils joining us in September and the Foundation Stage Profile is completed at the end of the Reception year. Staff completing the profile attend annual moderation meetings to ensure accurate input and judgements.

Pupil progress is tracked and monitored through a mixture of informal observation, adult/pupil interaction, data input and analysis to inform next steps, target setting with a wider multi-disciplinary team and regular discussions with all staff. We observe the children working independently both indoors and outdoors and how they respond and engage in child-initiated activities as well as adult directed learning. Getting to know each child well is crucial in supporting their learning and development and in making appropriate and accurate professional judgements on progress with less emphasis on the need for physical evidence to support this.

Formative assessment is captured in all areas of learning and development using assessment tool; Evidence for Learning with tags used to highlight the focus. Pupil knowledge and skill developments are noted against objectives, levels of engagement and independence. Observational assessment through EfL is the most reliable way of building up an accurate picture of children’s development and learning over time. Observational assessment is central to understanding what children really know and can do. It is likely that observations of everyday activities will provide evidence of children’s development in more than one area of learning.

Information gained through recording and assessment will be shared with parents, other school staff and outside agencies as appropriate. Parents evenings are held in

the summer term and are an opportunity for parents to discuss their child's progress. Parents can contact the staff at any time; all parents have access to Class Dojo and the opportunity to directly message their child's class teacher with queries, messages and to engage in their child's learning. Parents are encouraged to share moments of learning and development from home and share achievements and celebrations. We also host family learning events such as stay and play, which are well attended.

The learning environments

We know that a rich, enabling and varied environment supports children's learning and development. It gives them the confidence to explore and learn in a secure and safe, yet challenging, indoor and outdoor space. We have 4 EYFS classrooms that are paired, our Reception and Y1 classes have their own outdoor space with an additional larger area for shared opportunities. Our Y1/Y2 mixed classes share an outdoor space. Space outside the classroom is also utilised with additional provision to meet pupil needs and provide an area for more focussed, quiet work or a place to self-regulate or engage in ready to learn activities.

The profile of learner in two of our EYFS classes are more structured, ASC learners and this is reflected within the learning environment. Here, classrooms are lower distraction with fewer resources on offer to prevent pupils from becoming overstimulated and overwhelmed. These classes very much reflect the EYFS principles and sessions of continuous provision but are more structured in their approach and offer to better meet the individual needs of the children.

Policy Information and Review

Review frequency: every 3 years

Date	Version	Changes made	By whom (name and role)	Due date for next review	Reviewed & Ratified by Govs. (sign and date)
February 2021	1	This is a new policy	Laura Whittaker EYFS Lead	May 2024	
May 2024	2	Tracking pupil progress and assessment section has been amended to reflect newly introduced internal systems and also statutory reforms around RBA.	Laura Whittaker EYFS Lead	May 2027	