



Early Years Policy

Person responsible:	Early Years Leader
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Approved by:	SSB
Date of next review:	Summer 2024

“No job is more important than working with children in the early years” (Development Matters 2021)

“A high-quality early years education is vitally important. Children attend early years provision at a crucial developmental point in their lives. The education and care that they receive affects not only future educational attainment but also their future health and happiness.” Best start in life: a research review for early years (Ofsted, 2022)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. In our school, children can join us in Nursery, from the age of two. They then start full time school in September of the year in which they are five.

We are fully committed to the purpose and aims of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (September 2023)

[Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)



We follow the seven features of effective practice
(Julian Grenier - Working with the revised EYFS principles into practice 2020)

1. The best for every child, equity of offer for all to ensure the best high-quality teaching and learning to equip them with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need for the next stage in their life.
2. High-quality care in a secure and safe environment alongside positive relationships.
3. A well-planned and deliberately chosen curriculum (GLF Curriculum, Mastering Number, RWI/Little Wandle/Sounds Write) that prioritises language development and has a supporting environment that ensures provision is coherent and children are highly motivated and progress systematically.
4. Pedagogy in helping our children to learn, knowing that each child is unique, they develop at different rates, knowledge of their next steps is key, our teaching and play are interconnected, and the adults sensitively support the children to learn.
5. Accurate assessment of what our children have learnt, the use of effective screening tools (WellComm) following a plan, do, review cycle.
6. Effective understanding of the Characteristics of Effective Learning and in particular a child's ability to self-regulate and executive function. Language is our golden thread throughout to enable children to guide their actions and plans.
7. Strong respectful partnerships with parents and feeder settings to support all children and enable ease of transition and early identification.

Our schools follow the Four Guiding EYFS Principles, they are as follows and shape our practice.

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



A Unique Child

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We understand that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children’s attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, in order to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion:

We value the diversity of individuals within the school; diversity of people and diversity of brains and do not discriminate against children because of ‘differences’. All children are treated fairly, regardless of race, religion, gender or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children’s range of knowledge and life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the EYFS we set realistic yet aspirational expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by meeting the needs of every child through:

- planning opportunities that build upon and extend children’s knowledge and skills, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- using Rosenshine’s teaching strategies based on children’s learning needs;
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- providing a safe and supportive, communication friendly learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- monitoring and assessing the children’s progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

Welfare and Safeguarding:

“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.”

We comply with the welfare and safeguarding requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2023.

We are fully committed to:

- Promote the welfare of children.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Work within ratios as set out in Statutory Framework.
- Promote good health, including oral health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children’s stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose by regular risk assessing.
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Intimate Care:

Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child. Depending on a child’s age and stage of development, they may need some support, for example dressing, wiping their bottom after using the toilet and changing underwear following an accident. (Refer to GLF Intimate Care and Nappy Changing Policy for further detail.)

Positive Relationships

Positive relationships are key to language development *“knowing children well enables practitioners to make fine-tuned judgements about what will be the right thing to say, in the right way and at the right time” Interacting or interfering Julie Fisher 2016* this supports our approach of oracy being our golden thread throughout our curriculum.

Supporting children to become better communicators is one of the most powerful things we do as early educators. Oral language skills are fundamental to children’s learning, thinking and emotional wellbeing. All practitioners use the ShREC/ ECAT approach to developing language. These strategies encourage us to become more responsive and attuned to children. They encourage children’s active participation in meaningful, stimulating, and linguistically rich back and forth conversations.

As practitioners, we have expert general knowledge about children’s development. Parents are experts in their own children. When practitioners and parents understand and trust each other, they can work collaboratively. This ensures the best outcomes for every child. Our partnership with parents begins through our transition program, meeting parents and children at school and home.

We recognise that children learn to be strong independent learners from secure relationships. We develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families. Through the research-based strategies that we use, such as the Zones of Regulation and our individual school values we develop the child’s executive function

and self-regulation.

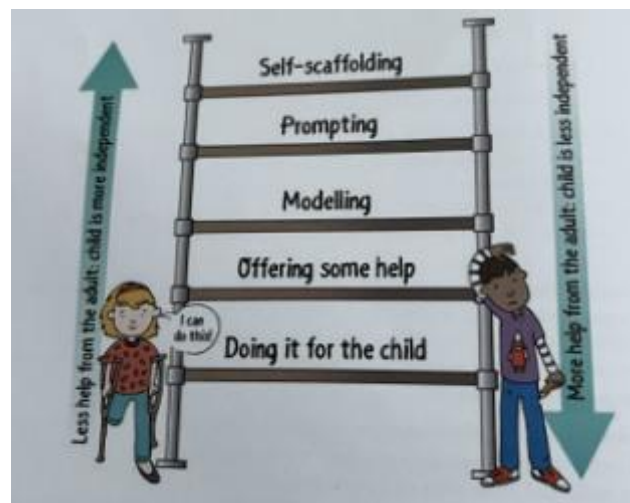
We know that communication comes in many forms, and we aim to ensure that we reach all members of our school community. We prioritise communication through a variety of means such as daily face to face, Apps, newsletters, phone calls, parent meetings, reports and the website. This will look different in each GLF school.

In line with the EYFS statutory framework, we have a key person system. Each child in our settings will be assigned a key person and they will ensure the learning and care will be tailored to the needs of each child. The key person will engage and support parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home and with more specialist support with health or educational colleagues if appropriate.

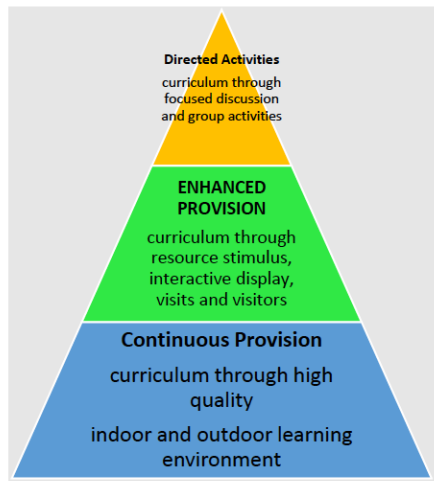
Enabling Environments

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Our whole school approach to teaching and learning is underpinned by the Cognitive Load Theory. Thus, our environment is exposed to as much natural light as possible, clutter free with purposeful learning scaffolds.

We know that sustained play can afford a child many developmental experiences at once, covering multiple areas of learning and reinforcing the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Maximising these opportunities so that they are as powerful an experience as possible involves us teaching children how to play and teaching them through their play. Teaching children how to play is done as part of our everyday routine when adults introduce the daily environment to the children. The adult's role is to engage the children and draw out the learning. The adult is on a continuum, making constant decisions about the level of formality, structure and dependence that would promote the best possible learning.



Our effective pedagogy is a mix of different approaches, we use the diagram below to remind us that the best quality learning happens when the children are exploring the Continuous and Enhanced provision with an adult to carefully weave in the learning through high quality interactions.



An enabling environment supports in play through allowing children to:

- Explore, develop and represent learning experiences which help them to make sense of the world.
- Practice and build up ideas, concepts and skills.
- Be alone or alongside others and to cooperate as they talk or rehearse their feelings.
- Take reasonable risks, making and learning from mistakes.
- Think creatively and imaginatively.
- Communicate with others as they investigate or solve problems.

The Continuous Provision describes all the different provision areas which are available for the children to use every day. Within each area of provision, there should be a range of core resources. Planning effectively for continuous provision is crucial and involves a consideration of classroom layout, resourcing and staffing.

The Enhanced Provision is developed through adult observation where we assess the children’s interests, stages of development and learning needs. We do this before planning challenging, achievable activities and experiences to extend the children’s learning. The adult is key at facilitating those quality interactions.

We know that time outdoors benefits children by offering unique opportunities. It develops children’s health and wellbeing in all areas of development and learning. First-hand experience outdoors helps children to make sense of the world, and to learn to care for their environment. Through a sense of belonging and understanding the impact of their actions on their environment, children can become confident caretakers and problem-solvers of the future.

Birth to Five Matters 2021

Being outdoors offers the children further opportunities to explore, use their senses, develop their language skills and be physically active within gross motor.

Daily and area risk assessments of our learning environment are completed to ensure resources are clean and well looked after. The welfare and safety of the children are constantly assessed, and teams will ensure that staff ratios are adhered to and designed to meet the needs of the children in all areas.

Learning and Development

The EYFS is made up of seven areas of learning:

Three Prime Areas

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

The prime areas are interlinked. For example, a child with more developed language and communication are associated with better emotional well-being. Children more physically

active in the early years are better at regulating their emotions.

Four Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

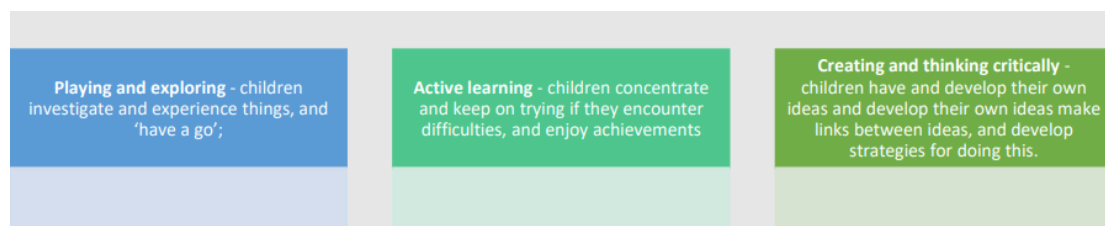
The specific areas of learning provide children with a broad curriculum and with opportunities to strengthen and apply the prime areas of learning.

Children are powerful learners; every child can make progress in their learning with the right help. Our high-quality Early Years Curriculum and Pedagogy has the following features:

- The curriculum considers what all children should learn. It offers plenty of opportunity for children who are disadvantaged or who speak English as an additional language to learn and practise speaking and listening.
- Practitioners choose activities and experiences after they have determined the curriculum. The most appropriate activities and experiences then help to secure the children's intended learning.
- Adults think carefully about what children already know and can do when deciding what to teach first.
- Children with gaps in their knowledge get the additional teaching they need so that they can access the same curriculum as their peers.
- Practitioners consider a child's interests when choosing activities while also expanding interests further, so that children make progress in all areas of learning.
- Children's play is valued and is used to teach many aspects of the curriculum. Their learning through play is enhanced by skilful adult intervention.
- Explicit teaching is used to introduce children to new knowledge and followed up by opportunities to practise new learning through play.

These areas are underpinned by the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning', which show the learning styles of individual children.

The Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning are;



Children cannot learn scientific concepts simply through playing freely with materials. PEDAL (Play in Education Development and Learning- University of Cambridge) 2022 found that guided play can be highly effective. Guided play consists of playful activities that are steered gently by an adult who makes sure that the children can explore the intended learning in their own way. This means that the adult must have a clear intention behind the activity and needs to understand the scientific concepts they plan for children to learn.

Play provides the opportunity to practise skills, develop ideas and think creatively alongside other children as well as individually. The children communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

Continuous and Enhanced provision is planned carefully so that children are able to make links and connections between what is set out and what they have already learned. This gives them opportunities to use and apply the knowledge and vocabulary that they have already learned during their play and through direct teaching. Their learning through play is enhanced by skilful adult intervention, via the ShREC approach of high-quality interactions.

Teaching Offer

- At GLF, we believe every interaction between a practitioner and a child is a teaching opportunity.
- All teacher led sessions have specific tier 1, 2 and 3 vocabulary to teach the children. This language has been identified on planning documents to ensure all our children receive the same high quality language input.
- Phonics is taught daily in Reception using a DFE approved synthetic phonics programme. Children are streamed each half term and move groups as required.
- Children review learned sounds regularly throughout the day to enable all children to keep up with new learning.
- Nursery children are introduced to phonological awareness through sounds in the environment and then move on to the synthetic phonics programme in preparation for Reception.
- Maths is taught daily using the NECTM. Children build on previous experiences of numbers from their wider environments to develop their subitising and counting skills.
- Through small steps and opportunities within the wider environment, children will have a secure knowledge of number facts through varied practice by the end of reception.
- The curriculum is taught through half termly projects which ensure coverage across all areas of the curriculum. This is aided by a skills progression document from nursery through to year 6.
- Our interdisciplinary curriculum ensures that explicit links are made between the different areas of learning as children move through the curriculum, maximising retention of learning over time.
- Children are taught in a variety of ways including whole class teaching, group teaching and individual teaching.
- The explicit teaching of new skills and knowledge are extended into the wider environment providing appropriate consolidation and challenge opportunities for all children.
- Cultural capital has an impact on children's access to education. Ofsted (2023) define cultural capital as 'the essential knowledge that children need to prepare them for their future success' or 'essential knowledge that children need to be educated citizens'. In our early years setting, we use the curriculum to enhance children's experiences and opportunities, particularly those of the most disadvantaged children.

Assessment:

Assessment is about noticing what pupils can do, and what they know. It is not about lots of evidence and data.

- Accurate assessment requires practitioners to understand child development
- Practitioners must be clear about what they want children to know and be able to do

- Accurate assessment can identify the child's next steps

It is essential that we have a deep and accurate understanding of the current position of our Nursery and Reception pupils. By giving careful attention to the strengths, interests and learning approaches of each child, alongside in-depth conversations with parents, staff will be building up a holistic understanding of each child's profile.

We make regular assessments of children's learning, using a 'keep up, not catch up' approach and we use this information to ensure that future planning meets their identified needs.

Formative assessment in the EYFS takes the form of daily observations and this involves all Early Years staff. Alongside summative phonic and language screenings, teachers will make professional judgements about each child to enable them to inform the child's next steps. These observations will be shared with parents and carers. Teachers are supported with this holistic approach by using the GLF framework of assessment actions. This ensures we have the knowledge we need to make the right decisions for each and every child.