



Early Years Policy

Audience:	Parents School staff Local Governing Bodies Trustees Regional Boards Local Authorities
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REAch2 Early Years Policy



At REAch2, our actions and our intentions as school leaders are guided by our Touchstones:

- Integrity** We recognise that we lead by example and if we want children to grow up to behave appropriately and with integrity then we must model this behaviour
- Responsibility** We act judiciously with sensitivity and care. We don't make excuses, but mindfully answer for actions and continually seek to make improvements
- Inclusion** We acknowledge and celebrate that all people are different and can play a role in the REAch2 family whatever their background or learning style
- Enjoyment** Providing learning that is relevant, motivating and engaging releases a child's curiosity and fun, so that a task can be tackled and their goals achieved
- Inspiration** Inspiration breathes life into our schools. Introducing children to influential experiences of people and place, motivates them to live their lives to the full
- Learning** Children and adults will flourish in their learning and through learning discover a future that is worth pursuing
- Leadership** REAch2 aspires for high quality leadership by seeking out talent, developing potential and spotting the possible in people as well as the actual

Contents

	Page
POLICY OVERVIEW	
Overarching principles	3
Intended impact	6
Roles and responsibilities	6
How this relates to national guidance and requirements	7
Any key definitions	7
POLICY PRINCIPLES IN DETAIL	7

POLICY OVERVIEW

Overarching Principles

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential.” The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2021 (revised 2023)

At all REAch2 academies we want every child to be the best that they can be. We believe that this starts with a solid foundation and enjoyment of learning from the very beginning of a child’s school journey. We aim to provide the highest quality care and education for every child. We strive to create a welcoming, safe and happy environment and an enriching curriculum which both challenges and supports pupils to achieve their potential and to become independent, confident learners. The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021 (revised 2023) provides the structure for our curriculum and approach.

We use the four guiding principles to shape our practice:

- every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships;
- children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in Early Years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Approach

Lessons and activities are delivered in an interactive, stimulating environment, which is well equipped, organised, spacious and attractive. Staff ensure that the seven areas of the curriculum are planned for both inside and outside and that all children are able to learn through their play in a broad, cross-curricular approach. Children are taught to follow the school rules by being kind, safe and responsible. All adults are committed to enabling every child to become independent, enthusiastic learners with a range of skills that they can draw upon and develop throughout their schooling. We strive to enable every child to achieve or exceed the expected level of development by the end of Reception. While this may not be possible for some children, we ensure that all children make good or better progress.

Curriculum

Our school curriculum is based on the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021 (revised 2023) and supported by Development Matters 2020 (revised 2021). There are seven areas of learning.

Three prime areas, which are crucial and build children’s capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive;

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

And four specific areas through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied:

- Literacy
- Mathematics

- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Staff working in our Nurseries focus strongly on the development of the three prime areas as the foundation for the pupils learning, this also applies to pupils in Reception, but who are developmentally working at a Nursery level in one or more areas.

Staff in Reception settings focus on all seven areas of the curriculum, with emphasis on the development of the four specific areas, building upon the learning that has taken place in Nursery, as appropriate for each child.

Phonics

At REAch2 we value phonics as an essential tool for the development of pupils' literacy skills. In Early Years, staff are trained to deliver systematic high-quality phonics, using the Read Write Inc programme as a basis for planning and assessment. Children are taught in ability groups according to the phonics phase in which they are working. On entry to Reception, children are informally assessed to ascertain their prior learning and knowledge of phonics and put into an appropriate phonics group, which may be any of the phases. Phonics assessments continue at least once per term to ensure pupils are working at the most appropriate level for their ability. Phonics home learning, which is matched to the phase that children are working in, is typically sent home weekly. Teachers plan all phonics sessions for all groups.

Planning

Early Years' team members plan together and meet regularly to contribute ideas and suggest learning focuses for the next topic. Planning is thematic and based on children's interests. Staff use Development Matters 2020 (revised 2021) and the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021 (revised 2023) to devise learning questions for each area of development that are suitably challenging and developmentally appropriate. Questions are matched to pupils' levels of development, and next steps are personalised for each pupil. In Reception, this is evident throughout the children's learning journeys or journals, and occasionally in special books.

Observation and Assessment

All children are assessed on entry to Reception using the Reception Baseline Assessment, which is an age-appropriate assessment of early mathematics and literacy, communication and language. It is delivered in English and is administered within the first six weeks of a pupil starting Reception. The assessment has two components, each consisting of practical tasks using physical resources. There is an online scoring system for the practitioner to use as the pupil engages with the tasks. The RBA will be used to create school-level progress measures for primary schools, which will show the progress pupils in a school make from Reception until the end of Key Stage 2.

Observation of pupils is an essential tool in Early Years and contributes greatly to a practitioner's knowledge of a pupil's holistic development. Observations are made of each pupil frequently and recorded in their learning journals or on Tapestry. The information gathered in each pupil's learning journey allows staff to record and ascertain when specific milestones have been reached and enables staff to identify next steps for each pupil's development. Observations should be discreet and may not always be recorded. It is essential for pupil/practitioner dialogue to be at the forefront of every interaction and this should not be interrupted by the practitioner recording evidence. All staff should be able to confidently enter into a dialogue about their key children's progress. All progress should be recorded regularly on the school's assessment tracker.

Inclusion

In Early Years, we personalise the learning for all pupils, and we believe that every child has the right to an education and should be supported in order to achieve their full potential. Early intervention is crucial to children's learning and social development and we work closely with the Inclusion Manager to identify and support pupils with additional needs. We use Development Matters as a tool to enable us to provide developmentally appropriate learning for individuals and groups of pupils. We use our high ratio of staff to pupils to ensure that children have additional support where it is needed and to provide Speech and Language groups when necessary. We are developing close relationships with our feeder schools, pre-schools and Nurseries, to ensure that when a pupil starts at each academy we are aware of their needs and can plan for and support them appropriately.

Safeguarding and 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 2021 (revised 2023)

At each academy, the health, safety and well-being of the children in our care is paramount. We teach children to be safe, follow rules and respect boundaries. Through our curriculum and activities, children learn to make safe choices. All staff have Child Protection training on an annual basis, they know who the Designated Safeguarding Lead is and will refer to this person when it is appropriate to. Staff regularly take part in First Aid Training, and at least the minimum number of staff are trained in Paediatric First Aid and accompany all EYFS children on trips. Staff conduct risk assessments of the inside and outside areas on a daily basis and throughout the day. If and when an accident does occur, procedures are followed to ensure that children are well looked after, their injuries or ailments are treated and their parents are informed, in writing or by telephone call as necessary. All accidents are recorded and the accident book is reviewed to identify any recurring problems.

Within each Nursery there is always a minimum ratio of 1 adult for every 13 children, one of these adults is usually a qualified teacher, where the teacher is not present the ratio is 1 adult to 8 children for 3 year olds and 1 adult to four children for 2 year olds. In Reception there is 1 teacher per 30 pupils as per infant class size regulations. In addition to this Reception classes have the support of a nursery nurse each.

Key Workers

As required in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021 (revised 2023), every pupil in Early Years has a key worker. The key workers are the nursery nurses or teachers that work in Early Years. The key worker will:

- support their children with some activities
- monitor and record the children's progress in those activities
- deliver specific activities that will help those children develop and learn
- be able to discuss the child's learning needs and progress made with their parents and contribute to, or write, their report.

Home Learning In Early Years

We believe that home learning provides a link between the learning that takes place in school and that which takes place in children's homes. Home learning is differentiated for specific groups of pupils and is designed to enable parents to decide how much work is appropriate for their child. Spellings are sent home as part of the phonics homework when it is developmentally appropriate.

Home School Partnership

At REACh2 academies, we value the contribution that parents/carers make to their child's education. Parents are a child's first educators and thus the impact of a parent's influence on learning is

significant. In Early Years we embrace parents as partners in their child's learning. We positively welcome parents' contributions and value their input. We invite parents to meet with us at least termly to formally discuss their child's progress and we are available to meet with parents at other times as needed. We endeavour to arrange informal opportunities for parents to see what their child has been learning, such as shows and events. We also invite parents to reading sessions on a weekly basis; this is an excellent opportunity for parents to get involved, find out more about how to support their child with reading at home and to share high quality reading texts with their child.

Transition

Smooth transitions are essential for pupils to feel settled, secure and ready to learn. In Nursery, prospective parents are invited to an 'Open Day' where they have the opportunity to explore the Early Years' environment, ask questions and meet the staff. New children at the start of the academic year have a home visit as well as settling in visits with their parents/carers. Children who join part-way through a year may not have a home visit, but do have settling in visits, and more if they are needed. Parents and pupils are given information about school and a Welcome to Early Years booklet which describes a typical day in either Nursery or Reception. Staff make good use of any information that is shared by previous settings and spend time with the child and their parents to build trusting, positive relationships.

On entry to Reception, children may be visited in their pre-school setting where staff are able to have a dialogue with the child as well as their keyworker to ascertain the pupils needs, likes and interests. Pupils and their families are invited to a play visit to their new class and teacher in July before they start school in September. Staff also read and make effective use of the reports and information received from other settings. Prior to entry to school, parents are formally invited to attend a meeting to find out about school, meet the head teacher and class teachers, and to have a tour of the environment. At this meeting, parents are informed about uniform, procedures, routines and expectations. We understand that children settle differently, therefore we are flexible and personalise our approach during the settling in periods for Nursery and Reception.

The wider community

Children learn through hands-on experiences and we enrich the curriculum by taking part in a range of extra-curricular events. We make optimum use of the local environment, using the surrounding area as a tool to enhance learning opportunities for the pupils. We endeavour to organise trips and/or visitors to the school for each new topic. It is our aim to minimise the cost of school trips and we strive to fundraise or provide staggered payments where there may be a significant contribution required from parents.

Intended impact

Over time, consistently high quality Early Years' provision will lead to 'exceptional opportunities for learning'.

Roles & responsibilities

Pupils will: be offered, and engage fully with, experiences that promote self-esteem, independence, perseverance, self-discipline and a lifelong love of learning

Parents/carers will: support and work with the academy to ensure that learning is highly valued by them and their children; to ensure children develop into successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens

REAch2 schools will: enable all pupils to gain a core knowledge of literacy and numeracy; a specific knowledge of key concepts; the ability to apply learnt skills to new situations to continue their individual learning journeys, and a systematic approach to enquiry

REAch2 central staff will: support pupils, families and schools in achieving this, ensuring this is embedded and is sustainable

REAch2 non-executives will: hold central staff members to account for rigorous monitoring and quality assurance; evidencing increasing impact on high quality provision and pupil outcomes over time

How this relates to national guidance & requirements

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework 2021 (updated September 2023)

Development Matters 2020 (revised 2021)

Early Years Foundation Stage Assessment and Reporting Arrangements 2016

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook 2022

School Inspection Framework (Published 14 May 2019, Last updated 14 July 2023)

National Curriculum (Published 14 October 2013, Last updated 16 July 2014)

Teachers Standards (Published 1 July 2011, Last updated 13 December 2021)