



Belgrave Primary School

Early Years Policy

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Belgrave Primary School EYFS Policy

Settling In

At Belgrave Primary School, all children begin their Reception Year on a full-time basis following an initial half-day session, which includes lunch. This approach reflects current guidance from our Local Authority Early Years Team, and the previously extended staggered start has been significantly reduced in recent years.

The shorter settling-in period acknowledges the changing needs of families and children. Many parents and carers now work either part-time or full-time, and a large proportion of children have experienced childcare settings from an early age. **As a result, most children are already familiar with being cared for outside** of the home environment.

However, we recognise that every child is unique. Where a child has specific needs that may require a more gradual transition into full-time school, we are able to offer a flexible approach. Any such arrangements will be discussed and agreed with the Headteacher in consultation with parents and carers.

We support smooth transitions by working closely with families and early years providers, sharing information about each child's interests, routines, and needs. Transition support is personalised where needed, ensuring children feel secure and confident as they begin their Reception year.

EYFS Principles in Practice

Our Early Years provision is guided by the four overarching principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. These principles shape our practice and ensure that every child receives the best possible start in life.

1. A Unique Child

We recognise that every child is a unique individual who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured. We are committed to:

- Valuing and respecting each child's background, culture, and abilities.
- Promoting inclusive practice and providing appropriate support for children with additional needs.
- Ensuring children's safety, health, and emotional well-being are at the heart of our practice.

2. Positive Relationships

We believe that children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships. Therefore, we:

- Build strong, respectful, and trusting relationships with children and their families.
- Operate a key person system to support secure attachments and emotional development.
- Work in close partnership with parents and carers to share information, celebrate progress, and support home learning.

3. Enabling Environments

We provide safe, stimulating, and well-organised environments that support learning and development across all areas. We are committed to:

- Offering rich learning opportunities through play, exploration, and open-ended resources.
- Ensuring both indoor and outdoor environments are accessible and engaging.
- Using observations and assessments to inform planning that reflects children's interests, needs, and next steps.
- **Creating environments that promote risk-taking and problem-solving in a safe and supportive way, encouraging children's confidence and resilience.**

4. Learning and Development

We recognise that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. Our approach to learning and development:

- Delivers a broad and balanced curriculum based on the seven areas of learning.
- Encourages active learning through purposeful play and exploration.
- Is inclusive of all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), ensuring they can participate and thrive.
- Prioritises language development through high-quality interactions, intentional vocabulary teaching, and techniques such as sustained shared thinking and open-ended questioning to deepen children's communication and understanding.
- Fosters the three Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning — playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically — to support children's engagement, motivation, and resilience as learners.

Parents as Partners

At Belgrave Primary School, we recognise that parents and carers are children's first and most enduring educators. We are committed to working in close partnership with families to support each child's learning and development. We foster this partnership in a variety of ways:

- Home Visits – EYFS staff carry out a home visit prior to the child starting school to begin building positive relationships in a familiar environment.
- Stay and Play Sessions – These sessions offer children and parents the opportunity to become familiar with the setting, routines, and staff before the official start of school.
- Open Morning Routine – Class teachers are available each morning and after school to address any brief queries or concerns, ensuring ongoing communication and support.
- Class Dojo – This secure communication platform allows parents to receive regular updates on their child's learning journey and day-to-day experiences in school.
- Parent/Teacher Consultations – Two formal consultation meetings are offered each academic year to discuss children's progress and development.
- End-of-Year Report – Parents receive a comprehensive report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of the Reception year.
- Collaborative Events – We organise a variety of activities throughout the year to encourage parent engagement and shared experiences. An example would be Grounds Days, where children, parents, and staff work together on school maintenance and improvement projects.

We actively promote cultural capital by providing diverse experiences, resources, and opportunities that broaden children's horizons and support equal access to learning. This helps all children build knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to thrive both in school and beyond.

We also maintain strong links with local pre-school and nursery providers (usually between 5 – 10 different settings). EYFS staff liaise with key workers from these settings to ensure a smooth and informed transition for each child into our Reception class.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Planning and Observation

EYFS staff use regular observations as the foundation for effective, responsive planning. Practitioners are skilled in observing children to identify their achievements, interests, and next steps in learning.

These observations directly inform our planning process. Staff use both the children's current interests and their professional knowledge of early childhood development to create engaging, relevant themes. Weekly plans are developed with flexibility in mind, allowing for both structured and child-initiated learning.

In addition to planned activities, we implement 'in the moment' planning, which enables staff to respond immediately to spontaneous learning opportunities as they arise. For example, if a group of children shows interest in a spider found in the outdoor area, this may lead to a mini-topic on minibeasts, incorporating language development, counting, and creative activities. Similarly, a conversation about birthdays could spark role play, storytelling, and discussions about time and routines.

By following the children's interests in real time, we foster high levels of engagement and intrinsic motivation, supporting deeper, more meaningful learning experiences.

Assessment in the EYFS

Assessment is ongoing and integral to effective early years practice. It helps staff to understand where each child is in their learning and development, and to plan appropriately to support their progress.

- **EYFS Baseline Assessment (RBA):** Within the first six weeks of starting Reception, all children complete the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment. This is a short, interactive, practical assessment of early literacy, communication, language and mathematics. It provides a starting point for measuring progress through primary school but does not inform classroom planning.
- **Ongoing Observational Assessment:** Teachers and practitioners use formative assessment throughout the year, based on regular observations and interactions. These are used to track progress against the Early Learning Goals and to inform next steps in learning.
- **Good Level of Development (GLD):** At the end of the Reception year, children are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs). A child is deemed to have achieved a Good Level of Development if they meet the expected level in the prime areas of learning (Communication and Language, Physical Development, and Personal, Social and Emotional Development) and in the specific areas of Literacy and Mathematics.
- **Reporting to Parents:** Parents receive a written report at the end of the academic year, detailing their child's progress, attainment in relation to the ELGs, and whether they have achieved a Good Level of Development.
- **Ongoing Communication:** We maintain ongoing, open communication with parents about their child's development and next steps through informal discussions, learning journals, and digital platforms such as Class Dojo.

The Learning Environment

The Reception learning environment at Belgrave Primary School is carefully designed to enable children to explore, learn, and develop in a safe, secure, and stimulating setting. The classroom is organised into well-defined areas that support a range of learning experiences — including spaces for active play, quiet reflection, creativity, and investigation.

An adjacent indoor ‘workspace’ provides additional flexibility and can be opened up or enclosed using a sliding door, depending on the needs of the children and the activities taking place.

Reception also benefits from a dedicated outdoor classroom area, which is accessible throughout the day. Free-flow access between the indoor and outdoor environments is encouraged, as it has a positive impact on children’s development. Outdoor learning offers unique opportunities for children to engage with the world around them in different ways and on a larger scale than is possible indoors. It supports the development of physical skills, sensory exploration, risk-taking, and imaginative play.

In addition, staff have access to a range of intervention and quiet rooms, which are used for small-group or individual work. These spaces are particularly beneficial for targeted interventions, focused activities, or supporting children with additional needs in a calm and quiet environment.

Our learning environments - both indoors and out - are continually reviewed and adapted to reflect the needs, interests, and developmental stages of the children.

Learning and Development

In line with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2024), there are seven areas of learning and development that shape educational provision in the early years. All areas are important and interconnected, working together to support holistic development.

Prime Areas of Learning

The three prime areas are particularly crucial for laying the foundations for learning, igniting children’s curiosity, and helping them form positive relationships:

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

These areas are central to children's development in the early years and are key to enabling children to thrive in all aspects of life and learning.

Specific Areas of Learning

As children grow and develop, they build on their knowledge and skills in the four specific areas:

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

Our Approach to Teaching and Learning

Our curriculum and teaching methods are designed to promote curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. We place a strong emphasis on **play as the primary vehicle for learning**, recognising its value in supporting all areas of development.

- Children learn best when they are actively engaged, motivated, and having fun.
- Staff skilfully balance child-initiated activities with adult-led learning.
- The environment is set up to encourage exploration, investigation, and sustained involvement.
- Children are encouraged to take risks, make choices, and develop problem-solving skills in a supportive environment.
- Adults use high-quality interactions, rich language modelling, and intentional teaching to extend children's thinking and vocabulary.
- We embed the three Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning - playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically - throughout all activities and routines.

Inclusion and Equality

We are committed to ensuring that every child receives the support and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential. Our practice reflects the principles of inclusion, equality, and respect for diversity.

- We adapt activities, resources, and environments to meet individual needs.
- We work closely with families and external agencies to support children with SEND.
- We promote a culture of acceptance and celebrate differences.
- We challenge discrimination and prejudice in all its forms.
- Our recruitment, staffing, and partnership policies reflect our commitment to equal opportunities.

Staff Training and Professional Development

To maintain high-quality teaching and learning in EYFS, all practitioners participate in ongoing professional development.

- Staff receive regular training on child development, curriculum delivery, safeguarding, and inclusion.
- We keep abreast of the latest research and statutory guidance, including updates to the EYFS framework.
- Professional learning is reflective, collaborative, and tailored to individual and setting needs.
- Staff share best practice and learn from each other to continuously improve provision.

Safeguarding and Wellbeing

Children's safety, health, and wellbeing are paramount. We create a secure, nurturing environment where children feel safe to explore, take risks, and express themselves.

- All staff undergo safeguarding training and follow school safeguarding policies.
- Emotional wellbeing is supported through strong relationships, consistent routines, and responsive care.
- We recognise and respond promptly to any signs of concern.
- Health and safety procedures are rigorously implemented and monitored.

Outdoor Play Policy

At Belgrave Primary School, we are committed to providing children with regular access to high-quality outdoor play experiences. We recognise the vital role that outdoor learning plays in supporting children's physical health, emotional well-being, and all-round development.

Outdoor play offers a unique, open-ended environment that encourages exploration, creativity, and independence. It supports a range of learning styles and enhances all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum through its dynamic and sensory-rich nature.

Our outdoor spaces include:

- A dedicated, enclosed Reception playground
- The main school playgrounds
- A MUGA (multi-use games area)
- The school field and surrounding track
- A wooded area used for outdoor learning and Forest School

These areas are used as part of our integrated curriculum, and outdoor learning is carefully planned and facilitated by teaching staff to ensure it meets the developmental needs of all children.

Importantly, Reception children also benefit from weekly Forest School sessions, led by a qualified Forest School practitioner. These sessions provide opportunities for children to connect with nature, develop resilience, problem-solving skills, and a deeper understanding of the natural world, all within a supportive and risk-aware environment.

Aims of Outdoor Play

Our outdoor provision aims to:

- Integrate outdoor play as a core part of the curriculum
- Offer rich opportunities for interactive and cooperative play
- Encourage exploration of the natural world and seasonal changes
- Foster imagination, curiosity, and creativity
- Promote independence and freedom of choice in play
- Support the development of key physical skills such as coordination, balance, and spatial awareness
- Nurture confidence, resilience, and a sense of well-being

Outdoor learning at Belgrave Primary School is not an optional extra — it is an essential and valued part of our EYFS approach, helping children to develop the foundations they need to become confident, capable learners.

Equal Opportunities

At Belgrave Primary School, we are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring that every child in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has full access to all areas of the curriculum, regardless of their **gender, race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion or belief, socio-economic background, family structure, or ability.**

We celebrate the diversity of our school community and strive to create an inclusive, welcoming environment where all children feel **respected, valued, and supported.** We recognise that each child is unique and may bring with them different experiences, interests, and learning needs.

Our approach includes:

- Providing a **broad and balanced curriculum** that reflects and respects a wide range of cultural backgrounds and experiences.
- Ensuring that learning materials, displays, stories, and resources are free from bias and represent a diverse range of people, cultures, families, and lifestyles.

- Planning activities that are **differentiated and inclusive**, so that all children can access learning and reach their full potential, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Promoting **positive attitudes** and understanding of differences through discussion, play, and adult modelling.
- Challenging discrimination, stereotypes, or prejudice in any form.
- Working in **close partnership with families** to understand and support children's individual needs, backgrounds, and experiences.
- Ensuring that all **children feel safe, secure, and a sense of belonging**, regardless of their circumstances.

We are guided by the principles of the **Equality Act 2010**, the **SEND Code of Practice**, and the **Statutory Framework for the EYFS**, and we actively promote the British Values of **mutual respect, tolerance, individual liberty, democracy, and the rule of law** throughout our EYFS provision.

Our goal is to ensure that every child in our care is **equally supported and empowered** to thrive and achieve.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

At Belgrave Primary School, we are committed to providing an inclusive Early Years environment where **all children**, including those with identified **Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)**, are supported to access the full curriculum — including all indoor and **outdoor learning opportunities**.

We recognise that early identification and tailored support are key to ensuring children with additional needs are able to **thrive, make progress, and participate fully** in the life of the setting.

Our approach includes:

- Ensuring that children with SEND have **equitable access** to all learning environments, including the outdoor classroom, Forest School sessions, and wider school grounds.
- **Adapting provision on an individual basis**, with one-to-one or small group support where necessary, to meet each child's unique needs.
- Working closely with the **SEND Co**, EYFS staff, parents, and external professionals (e.g. speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, educational psychologists) to ensure that the right strategies and interventions are in place.
- Making **reasonable adjustments** to the physical environment and resources to remove barriers to learning and participation.
- Using **inclusive teaching strategies** and differentiated planning to ensure every child can access and engage with the curriculum at their level.

- Providing regular opportunities to review progress and adjust support through **individualised plans**, such as **SEND Support Plans** or **EHCPs** (Education, Health and Care Plans), where applicable.

All staff are trained to understand the importance of early intervention and are proactive in identifying and responding to any emerging needs. We also recognise and value the importance of working in **close partnership with families**, ensuring they are involved in all aspects of their child's support and progress.

Our commitment is to ensure that every child — regardless of their needs or abilities — **feels included, valued, and supported** throughout their EYFS journey.

Our Approach to Nutrition

At Belgrave Primary School, we are committed to providing healthy, balanced, and nutritious meals, snacks, and drinks to all children in our Reception class. This commitment aligns with the updated Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, effective from September 2025, which requires providers to "have regard to" the Department for Education's (DfE) nutrition guidance unless there is a good reason not to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundational-stage-2025).

We recognise that good nutrition is fundamental to children's health, development, and learning. Our approach includes:

- **Menu Planning:** We design menus that offer a variety of foods, ensuring children receive the necessary nutrients for their growth and development. Menus are reviewed regularly to incorporate seasonal produce and reflect children's preferences and dietary requirements.
- **Portion Sizes:** We provide age-appropriate portion sizes to encourage healthy eating habits and prevent overeating.
- **Allergies and Intolerances:** We have robust procedures in place to manage food allergies and intolerances. All staff are trained to understand and respond to children's specific dietary needs, and we work closely with parents and carers to ensure safety.
- **Cultural and Religious Dietary Requirements:** We respect and accommodate children's dietary needs related to cultural and religious beliefs. Menus are adapted as necessary to ensure inclusivity.
- **Food Safety and Hygiene:** We adhere to strict food safety and hygiene standards to prevent foodborne illnesses. This includes safe food storage, preparation, and handling practices.
- **Communication with Parents and Carers:** We maintain open communication with parents and carers regarding children's dietary needs and preferences. Parents are encouraged to provide feedback and are informed about menu changes and special dietary accommodations.

Promoting Healthy Eating Habits

We aim to foster positive attitudes towards food and healthy eating by:

- **Encouraging Variety:** Children are introduced to a wide range of foods, textures, and flavours to broaden their palates and encourage adventurous eating.
- **Modelling Healthy Choices:** Staff model healthy eating behaviours and engage children in discussions about the benefits of nutritious foods.
- **Involving Children in Food Activities:** Children participate in food-related activities, such as preparing simple snacks or growing food in the school garden, to develop an understanding of where food comes from and the importance of healthy eating.
- **Supporting Independence:** Children are encouraged to serve themselves and make choices about what they eat, promoting autonomy and decision-making skills.

Buddy System

At Belgrave Primary School, we operate a **Buddy System** designed to foster positive relationships across year groups and support the social and emotional development of our youngest children. Reception pupils are paired with older children from Year 6, who act as their buddies throughout the school year.

This initiative encourages meaningful interactions, where Year 6 buddies support Reception children in their learning and play. The older pupils help younger children feel welcomed and confident in the school environment, providing guidance, friendship, and encouragement during playtimes, special activities, and transition periods.

The Buddy System promotes a strong sense of community, responsibility, and empathy among the older pupils while offering Reception children positive role models. It also supports the development of communication skills, cooperation, and confidence for all participants.

By building these inter-age friendships, we create a nurturing and inclusive school culture that values peer support and collaboration as key elements of our children's growth and wellbeing.