

## Hillside Specialist School - Early Years

### Foundation Stage Policy

The following policy is intended to support our continuously developing understanding of learning and teaching in the Foundation Stage, providing advice and guidance to all members of our school community and also taking into account the changes to the revised EYFS curriculum (2025).

*"The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.*

*The EYFS seeks to provide:*

- Quality and consistency in all early years settings, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind*
- A secure foundation through planning for the learning and development of each individual child, and assessing and reviewing what they have learned regularly*
- Partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers*
- Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported."*

*(Department for Education, 2025)*

### Hillside Specialist School Early Years Mission Statement:

*We strive to create a happy, safe and caring environment, where all children feel secure and confident to achieve their full potential. Our EYFS curriculum has our children at the heart of it. Through careful planning we provide a balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities, which take into account children's specific interests, needs and different stages of development. Observation is key in identifying children's next steps for learning. All children's efforts and achievements are celebrated, and opportunities are provided for children to develop their self-esteem and*

*confidence through the development of positive relationships with others. We work continually to support children with their communication, sensory and behaviour needs in order that children grow to be confident and happy learners and are able to express themselves. Promoting independence and the development of self-care skills is crucial to support the health and well-being of our children in years to come.*

#### Curriculum Intent:

- To prepare our pupils for the start of their academic journey at school.
- To give pupils a secure foundation to their learning and to teach them the skills they will need to access the curriculum, grow, and achieve their full potential. For example, the first term is spent settling our children, developing relationships with them and establishing clear routines, expectations and boundaries. We teach our children how to follow simple instruction, sit for short periods of time and focus/engage briefly on tasks.
- To provide a broad and balanced curriculum, but one which is highly differentiated to meet our pupils' specific needs.
- Two areas of learning we have identified as areas of development for our pupils are communication and language and personal social and emotional development. We want our children to develop their communication and interaction skills in order that they can express themselves and communicate their needs and wishes and engage socially with others. We want to teach important self-care skills in order to promote our pupils' independence. Managing self and behaviour is also key in order that our pupils can access learning and progress to their full potential.
- To enable our pupils to make meaningful links with the world in which they live and to develop a sense of belonging, both at school and within the wider community.

#### Curriculum Implementation: Overview of our EYFS Curriculum at Hillside

- At Hillside Specialist school we aim to provide quality early years provision for nursery and reception aged children.
- Our EYFS practice is guided by the principles outlined in the EYFS guidance, but is differentiated to meet the needs of our pupils.

- In class one we follow a topic-based or themed approach, whereby activities are planned within the 7 areas of learning under half-termly topics, for example Minibeasts, In the Jungle, All about Me etc.
- The EYFS Framework identifies 3 prime areas of learning and development and 4 specific areas. The prime areas of learning are covered throughout each day, are fully embedded into our EYFS Curriculum at Hillside, and are reinforced through the four specific areas of learning, (ie literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design). All 7 areas of learning are imbedded through multi-sensory lessons, varied teaching approaches and individualised learning activities to ensure that all our pupils are engaged and make individual progress.
- We work hard to support our pupils to develop their self-care and independence and provide daily opportunities for our pupils to practice these life skills, for example getting changed for PE, managing their own clothing during toileting routines, brushing teeth, carrying their own school bags, learning to use cutlery or drink from an open cup etc.
- We work with the speech and language therapist to deliver personalised communication plans to support the development of our children's communication. We provide a Total Communication Approach.
- We support our pupils to better manage their sensory and behavioural needs. We create sensory diets and personalised behaviour support programmes to support our pupils in so that they are in a position where they can access the learning opportunities provided.

### **Overarching Principles**

Our EYFS practice in class at Hillside is at all times guided by the 4 overarching principles outlined in the EYFS guidance.

1. A Unique Child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
2. Positive Relationships - children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships
3. 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.
4. Learning and Development - children develop and learn at different rates

(Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage - 2025)

**A Unique Child:** Every child is different and unique. All children are competent learners from birth but they develop differently and at varying rates. Learning and teaching activities are differentiated according to children's individual needs to ensure all children make progress from their individual starting points.

**Positive Relationships:** We understand that secure relationships are important if children are to learn and grow to be strong, confident and independent. At Hillside School our classes are small and children quickly develop positive relationships with supporting adults through engaging in fun, challenging and meaningful activities. Adults play an important role in supporting and scaffolding children's learning through tapping into individual's interests and needs, and tailoring the support they give. In this way children build on learning over time.

We believe strong partner-school partnerships are crucial for children's development. We maintain and promote communication with our parents through daily updates in our home-school communications, regular parent's evenings, review meetings, frequent emails and phone updates etc. We also share information and photographs through half-termly newsletters, our school website and EFL.

**Enabling environments** are key to learning in EYFS. We provide continuous provision, and a range of stimulating and engaging focused and guided tasks in our class one classroom and across our outdoor area. Activities take into account children's interests and motivations, and are adapted and tailored to meet the needs and development of our children.

**Learning and development:** The EYFS Framework identifies 7 areas of learning, all of which are important and interconnected, and should shape the educational programmes delivered to our children. There are 3 prime areas of learning. These are communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. There are 4 specific areas. These are literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design.

As outlined previously teaching and learning activities are planned across each of the 7 areas of learning and development. Mathematics and Literacy are generally taught in the morning, with our afternoons focusing on Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Development. Communication and Language underpins all that we do, and learning opportunities are thus embedded across the day within all sessions. Opportunities for Personal, Social and Emotional Development also form a substantial part of our curriculum. Our children have

varying sensory needs and children access sensory diets. All children have behaviour strategy programmes and are supported by adults to manage their feelings and behaviour. We focus at all times on developing our children's self-confidence and a positive sense of self. Developing children's self-care and independence skills is another important focus in our Hillside curriculum and opportunities for practicing these skills are again embedded across the school day ie washing hands before dinner, getting changed for PE, brushing teeth and managing own clothing during nappy changes. Daily opportunities are planned for children to work on their fine and gross motor skills/Physical Development. For example, we have a weekly PE session in the hall on Tuesday mornings, children work on mark-making in daily Literacy sessions and children enjoy physical play daily in our lovely class outdoor area.

### **The characteristics of effective learning:**

- At the heart of our EYFS curriculum at Hillside are the characteristics of effective learning as identified in Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (2025). These are: Playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically.
- **Playing and exploring:** Children learn through play - they need to experience, explore and do things themselves.
- **Active learning:** It is important that children learn to work at tasks, they can engage and that they can persevere even if tasks are a little trickier. They should find enjoyment in their achievements.
- **Creating and thinking critically:** Finally, children should be encouraged to try things out, make connections between ideas and learn their own ways of doing things.

### **Assessment**

Assessment informs teaching and learning and is important in helping us to identify children's needs, recognise their progress and plan for future learning activities and support.

Within the first 6 weeks of a child starting reception we will undertake a baseline assessment. This is completed using an assessment programme called *B squared*. There is also a new *Reception Baseline Assessment*, although this may

not always be appropriate for all our children. Throughout the year we make regular assessments of children's learning based on careful observations, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects children's identified needs (formative assessment). At the end of reception children's progress is again measured using *B squared*, and also using the *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)*. Children's learning is assessed against the early learning goals, ie the levels of development children should be expected to have achieved by the end of the EYFS. At Hillside we also use a programme called *Evidence for Learning* to evidence, assess and monitor children's progress against targets in their personal learning plans (PLPs). At the end of every half term we also complete *Person Centred Assessments* across key areas of learning for each child. These give a snapshot of how a child is progressing at that point in the year.

### Curriculum Impact:

Our pupils will:

- Make good progress across the 7 areas of learning and development from their individual starting points.
- Learn to be strong and independent learners through forming positive relationships with key staff in the classroom.
- Make good progress towards their individual EHCP outcomes/PLP targets.
- Be given the best start to their time in school and this will prepare them for their transition to key stage 1.
- Have made progress with their self-care and independence skills, be better able to manage their sensory needs and behaviour with support as needed, and will have developed communication and interactions skills needed to get their needs met.
- Learn skills needed to access the curriculum as they progress through the school and begin their journey through to adulthood.

### Safeguarding and welfare requirements

At Hillside Specialist School we take all necessary measures to ensure that we keep all children in our care safe.

The requirements for early years providers, as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage, are as follows:

- To safeguard children
- To ensure the suitability of adults who have contact with children;
- To promote good health
- To manage behaviour;
- To maintain records, policies and procedures.

Please also refer to our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy on our school website.

**This policy should be read in conjunction with Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five (Published March 2021).**

*EYFS Policy last reviewed by Mark Howell 13 February 2026  
To be reviewed 13 February 2029*