

# EARLY YEARS POLICY

Updated September 2022

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## **Introduction**

The Early Years Foundation Stage at Shrewsbury High School represents the education and care of children in Reception. Early Years children are based on the Lower Ground Floor of the Junior School building. They are taught and cared for in a large indoor space and the outside balcony area. At break times, the children have the opportunity to integrate with the children from Year 1 to 6. Reception is taught by Mr King (Full Time) and Ms Davies (4 Days a Week). As well as this, we also have a Learning Assistant to support at various times throughout the week. All members of staff are fully qualified and experienced in the Early Years. The Head of Early Years oversees the EYFS at the school.

All children are supervised to ratio and must be within clear sight or hearing of adult supervision.

**Teacher to pupil ratio is 1:30 and TA is 1:8 until they are aged 5 then it changes to 1:13.**

We currently have a ratio of **1:2** within the indoor and outdoor Reception environment.

The Early Years team meet on a weekly basis to share practice, plan, assess, evaluate overall provision and resourcing, arrange joint events and to review marketing and recruitment for this phase of the school. Information and feedback from these meetings are shared with all staff involved. Staff also attend a whole school weekly briefing. Appropriate staff-pupil ratios for under-fives in independent settings are maintained. The Early Years staff plan and organise teaching, learning and resourcing of the curriculum.

In preparation for life in the Early Years, each child and their parents are invited to spend time in the Reception classroom, to ensure a smooth transition from their Nursery setting. We also hold monthly events for parents and toddlers to attend, so that they can become familiar with site as well as the staff and students. It is vital that staff communicate with parents and children to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible.

Reception takes children in an annual September intake. As per the rest of the school, we accept children at any time throughout the year. All children attend full time and remain in this year group for the full three terms.

We also have a EYFS booklet, which is shared with new parents at Open Day events as well as a welcome pack. Parents and children can look at and share the photographs within the booklet, to enable each child to become more familiar with our setting.

## **Mission Statement**

We consider the Early Years phase important, both in its own right and in preparing pupils for later schooling.

The Early Years builds upon the children's current and previous life experiences. We provide a stimulating multi-sensory learning environment to enable the children to develop their potential in all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (revised 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021) builds on other Early Years education. There are seven areas of learning within the curriculum and they are divided up into prime areas of learning and specific areas of learning.

The three prime areas are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language



# EARLY YEARS POLICY

Updated September 2022

---

- Physical Development

The four specific areas are:

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

Within the seven areas of learning the children will participate in activities that allow them to play and explore, to be active learners, to be creative and to think critically.

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum provides exciting, broad and balanced learning opportunities in a safe, secure, creative and happy environment for all children.

## **Aims**

- to provide a stimulating, enjoyable, warm, caring, and secure environment where pupils feel valued and develop respect for others;
- to provide a curriculum and a learning and teaching environment which is appropriate and meaningful, and which enable pupils to develop creative thinking and independent learning skills;
- to create a happy and caring community by fostering secure relationships and sensitivity towards others and their views and understand the importance of working in a team;
- to create an environment where pupils continue to be curious, inquisitive and creative learners;
- to create an environment where the pupils have opportunities to learn about other cultures and communities;
- to provide a broad and balanced curriculum where pupils have opportunities to consolidate their knowledge and understanding and to succeed in all areas of learning;
- to create an environment where effort and achievement are recognised and celebrated
- to foster pupils' increasing independence and sense of responsibility for their own belongings and for their learning;
- to celebrate achievement by praise and encouragement, promoting self-esteem and self-motivation;
- to assess continually what pupils already know and can do, then plan to build on this;
- to involve parents in their children's learning, by forming strong partnerships between home and school life;
- to provide staff with professional development to continue to support the needs of all of the children



# EARLY YEARS POLICY

Updated September 2022

---

## **Social, Emotional and Personal Development**

At Shrewsbury High School, we consider that the physical and emotional needs of children must be addressed if they are to learn effectively. We aim to provide a low-stress, but appropriately challenging environment. The aim is to develop children's emotional literacy and self-esteem through regular circle time activities, exploring emotions through stories, role-play and games. In the Early Years, fostering positive partnerships with parents is particularly important in order to achieve these aims.

## **Inclusion, Diversity and Equal Opportunities** (please see our Equals Opportunities Policy)

The aim is to meet the needs of all children, including those who are more able and those with special educational needs through planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experiences and interests by:

- using a range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- assessing using baseline assessments, including receptive language, phonics and number to inform teaching;
- providing a supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- developing and following support plans or their equivalent, where appropriate, that have short term focused objectives and which are reviewed regularly;
- using resources which portray positive images of specific and differing needs and diversity, and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- using festivals, cooking, stories and music to reflect, celebrate and extend awareness of diversity.

The Junior School SENCO takes responsibility for special educational needs within the Early Years in consultation with the Head of Early Years. The SENCO and Head of Early Years liaise with the Head, class teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies including the local authority. Furthermore, alongside the Head of Early Years, the SENCO ensures that all practitioners in the setting understand their responsibilities to children with SEN and the school's approach to identifying and meeting needs, as well as ensuring that parents are closely involved throughout and that their insights inform action taken by the setting.

(Please see separate SEN Policy for the Early Years and the school's SEN policy)

## **Learning, Teaching and the Curriculum**

Learning and teaching in the Early Years involves a balance of adult-directed, adult-led, child-led and child-initiated approaches to learning through the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. The EYFS provides a broad and balanced framework to meet the needs and interests of all children. A wide range of learning and teaching approaches are used in our setting. In Reception an increasing emphasis is placed on adult-directed learning in the final summer term before pupils enter Year One. The amount of emphasis depends on each child and their individual needs. The planning of teaching and learning seeks to accommodate the learning styles of all pupils and their interests. We take the children's interests to inform future planning, whilst ensuring that opportunities for all developmental skills, as set out in Birth to 5 Matters.

## **Long Term Planning for the Early Years**

There is a yearly long term plan available for potential topics, festivals and events.

## **Short Term - Weekly Planning**

The main focus for each 'weekly plan' is the seven areas of learning and possible activities that the children may participate in. It is based on potential topics and the children's interests and uses starting points to support teaching and learning intentions. It also specifies Early Learning Goals and suggested activities in each area of learning for each topic. These might also include visits, stories, books, festivals and artefacts.



# EARLY YEARS POLICY

Updated September 2022

---

Short Term Planning focuses on suggested activities for weekly and daily planning for all areas of learning. These allow for flexibility, modification and revision of learning activities that are informed by ongoing assessments and observations, as well as spontaneous events, children's interests and child initiated learning through creativity and independent learning. Regular planning sessions allow the children and staff who work in each Early Years class to share ideas and produce a shared plan for future activities. Planning is enhanced and adapted by reflection and evaluation on each day's teaching and learning. Time is provided for adults to listen to children and for observational assessment of this incidental learning, which contributes to pupil tracking, assessment for learning and further planning. This also helps to inform next steps in each child's learning and development.

Differentiation is provided through flexible groupings, outcome, support, children guiding an activity by an idea that they have initiated, resources (both open-ended and closed), problem-solving and thinking skills, and is guided by observations, both planned and unplanned.

Teaching and learning in the Early Years takes account of the spontaneous and integrated nature of children's learning. It acknowledges that such learning is not necessarily sequential and that young children need time and opportunities to consolidate and extend their learning in their own way.

## **The Indoor and Outdoor Learning Environment**

The learning environment in both classrooms reflects the need for physical space in children of this age and is arranged to meet the needs of individuals, groups and the curriculum. Additional resources are provided and the environment may be reorganised to enhance pupils' play and learning. Opportunities are provided for pupils to choose resources independently and to engage in extended periods of play. They also have the opportunity to choose whether they would like to play inside or outside. Use is made of the extensive opportunities offered by the whole school environment (including specialist rooms). Our outdoor provision further enhances outdoor learning, encompassing all areas of the curriculum.

## **Play and Creativity**

We consider that play is the means through which children make sense of the world, exploring and developing their learning experiences. We believe that young children do not distinguish between 'work' and 'play' and that play provides opportunities for children to think creatively, practise ideas, communicate with others, explore, experiment and understand the need for rules.

## **Continuity and Progression**

All members of the Junior School work together closely as one team. Weekly staff meetings provide the opportunity for staff to discuss policy, practice, pupils and performance. In the Early Years pupils are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their needs and to begin to think about their own learning and understanding, with adult support. Children learn and play together regularly throughout the year, during events such as charity fund raising events, creative days and weeks and performances for parents.

Continuity in Year One builds on pupils' progress in terms of their EYFS profiles and assessment scores. This information is provided in the Reception EYFS Records folder and on SIMS, all accessible on the shared area.

Early Years staff meet with parents three times a year for Parents' Evenings (one in the Autumn Term, Spring Term and Summer Term). Parents receive a report based on the Prime Areas, Literacy and Mathematics in the Autumn Term and a full report for all areas of learning at the end of the Summer Term.



# EARLY YEARS POLICY

Updated September 2022

---

## **Observations, Annotations and Assessment**

Continual assessment takes place using evidence from observations both planned and unplanned from all areas of learning, assessing attitudes, responses and learning. This informs future planning and provides an indication of progress. Written observations of progress contribute to regular updates of pupils' progress and 'next steps' are automatically identified. Parents play a valuable role in this process.

The EYFS records inform staff of how each child has progressed and their next steps in their all-round learning. In both Early Years classes, EYFS profiles are continually updated throughout the year, but formally once a term, alongside each child's Tapestry electronic observation log. In Reception other evidence can be found in the children's workbooks.

In Reception, the EYFS record accommodates pupils' learning beyond the Early Learning Goals and into Year One. It includes measures of progress in reading strategies, based on ongoing records, writing and number work. Reading assessments take place at the end of the spring and summer terms. Samples of annotated recorded work by pupils are evaluated and moderated on a regular basis. In Reception, CEM assessments take place at the start of the school year and in the final half term of the year. The initial baseline CEM assessments and observations, enable the Reception teachers to set individual targets for each child. The final assessments give a good indication of how much progress each child has made throughout the year. This information is used with the tracking scores to set individual targets in preparation for Year One, this information is shared at the YR/Y1 handover meeting. Test scores are collated, and the assessment information is then made available in the aforementioned assessment folder on the shared area. Children's progress is also tracked through termly checkpoints, using evidence to support judgements.

At the end of EYFS, the Reception teachers also complete a written summary for each child based on the characteristics of learning. This information is passed on to and discussed with the Year One teacher, at the handover meeting. It is also shared at parents' evening in July, along with the final EYFSP scores.

Staff in the Early Years use Tapestry, which is an online learning journal. The program is used to showcase 'wow' moments through observation, which enables staff to plan exciting and stimulating activities and also to set targets. Parents have access to their child's observations, where they also have the opportunity to upload observations from home.

All EYs children have a Home/School Diary. Parents can use the book to write about activities that have been completed out of school and for any other important messages. Staff use the diaries to write messages to parents, as appropriate and necessary. The diaries are checked and sent home daily.

The Reception children also have a Reading Record book which is used by both staff and parents to log the children's reading experiences. This gives parents and children the perfect opportunity to talk about the books they have enjoyed reading.

## **Home-School and Community Partnerships**

We value our parents' role in their children's learning and we are committed to work together. Apart from daily verbal communication, we communicate through the Reading Record books, Home/School Diaries and Tapestry.

Early Years parents are provided with the SHS parent handbook and other relevant information at New Parents' Evening. Annual presentations to parents provide essential information on children's learning and an opportunity for informal discussion with staff.



# EARLY YEARS POLICY

Updated September 2022

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## **Qualifications, Monitoring and Evaluating**

Early Years staff are well-qualified and experienced in this distinctive phase of learning. They are enthusiastic and reflective practitioners, whose continuing professional development and training needs are supported, respectively, through LEA courses, GSA, IAPS as well as those run by Girls' Day School Trust (GDST). All Early Years staff have up-to-date Paediatric First Aid qualifications.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Ext</b>	<b>Expires</b>
<b>Paediatric– 2 Day Course</b>			
Mr R. King	Head of Early Years		11/05/2024
Mrs T. Davies	Learning Assistant		11/05/2024

All Early Years staff take part in annual reviews allowing for reflection of practice and consideration of future training needs.

September 2022

**Ryan King**

**Head of Early Years**

