

**Outcomes
First
Group.**

Early Years Foundation Stage

Acorn Park School
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Headteacher:
Emma Willis
Adam Masterson

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1. Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life that meets every child's individual needs.

- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- A close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

2. Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the 2024 Department for Education statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

3. Structure of the EYFS

Acorn Park School are committed to providing a programme of activities which is appropriate to our pupil's educational needs in relation to personal, social, emotional and physical development and communication and language skills.

The delivery of the curriculum at Acorn Park School is personalised to meet the individual needs of our pupils. It has an emphasis on experiential and sensory learning across the curriculum, while providing access to a highly differentiated National Curriculum. We take Development Matters as the bedrock for the curriculum at Acorn Park, whilst using the non-statutory guidance from Birth to 5 matters to assess developmental stage learning for each individual child. The curriculum places an emphasis on addressing the core characteristics and challenges associated with autism by offering a comprehensive educational programme via their timetable, designed to promote social communication, language, literacy, problem-solving and self-management of behaviour and emotions.

4. Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2024 EYFS statutory framework.

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. 3 areas, known as the prime areas, are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- Communication and language

- Personal, social and emotional development

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

We also look at the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning (CoETL). This gives us time to reflect and explore how and at what rate the children learn. By doing this we can adjust the provision to ensure that all children are experiencing purposeful and appropriate experiences and interactions with adults.

These CoETL are:

- Playing and Exploring
- Active Learning
- Creating and Critical Thinking

4.1 Planning

Class teachers plan activities and experiences for children that enable children to develop and learn effectively. To do this, staff working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime areas.

Staff also consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care and use this information to plan an ambitious and enjoyable experience. Acorn Park School is a specialist provision and therefore, staff work collaboratively with the onsite clinicians to ensure that a sensory and communication rich and motivating curriculum that enables all children to thrive. Staff make consideration where specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

In planning and guiding children's activities, staff reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice.

Continuous provision and resources are carefully planned and selected to enrich the learning experience of each child, building on their understanding and exploration of each area of learning.

4.2 Teaching

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Staff respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. Children are also supported to progress towards outcomes as specified in their Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year 1.

Some children will, however, not be ready for more formal learning by the end of Reception. Pupils working below the standard of the Early Learning Goals and not yet ready for a KS1 National Curriculum - not engaged in subject-specific study by the end of Reception - will be supported to access the Engagement Model from Year 1 whilst continuing to work on progressing towards the standard of the Early Learning Goals and beyond.

5. Assessment

At Acorn Park School, ongoing assessment is an integral part of learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also consider observations shared by parents and/or carers.

Assessment is done via Evidence for learning. Baseline targets are set by class teachers at the start of each term to map progress towards pupils EHCP outcomes. Baseline levels are also set against birth to 5 matters developmental ranges and progress is mapped against these. Evidence for each area of learning and progress towards EHCP outcomes is uploaded daily by class teams. Class teachers review the targets termly and record the level of progress made by each child.

Acorn Park School have an exemption granted by the DfE from the EYFS profile. We are exempt from the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) learning and development requirements. Instead, we will continue to assess the learning and development of our pupils using Evidence for Learning against the birth to 5 matters non-statutory guidance.

6. Working with parents and carers

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development through a variety of methods. Teachers and class teams provide daily updates to parents via class dojo messages, highlighting any learning that has taken place that day. Teachers and class teams also share a whole class story weekly via class dojo referencing the weekly learning and sharing photos of the children engaged in different activities. Parent consultations take place throughout the year to discuss individual children's progress with their learning and any next steps, along with the annual review meeting of their EHCP outcomes and progress towards these.

Daily communication involves information about food, toileting, health and activities as well as photographs from the day and celebrations of achievement. Staff will always notify parents by telephone if there are any concerns about a child or their behaviour.

7. Safeguarding and welfare procedures

We promote good oral health, as well as good health in general, in the early years by teaching children about a range of healthy living concepts, including:

- The importance of eating a healthy, balanced diet.
- The importance of brushing your teeth.

The importance of washing your hands before eating and after messy play activities.

In line with the updated EYFS safeguarding requirements effective from 1 September 2026, the school operates robust vetting procedures for all staff and volunteers working within the EYFS. New employees will not commence employment until the required enhanced criminal records check has been received and all relevant pre-employment suitability checks have been satisfactorily completed.

Enhanced DBS checks are also required for volunteers, including those who are supervised. Where a volunteer's duties constitute regulated activity, the appropriate Children's Barred List check will also be obtained. The removal of the previous supervision exemption means that regular volunteers who teach, train, instruct, care for or supervise children may now be regarded as undertaking regulated activity even where they work under staff supervision.

All staff are required to disclose any relevant information or change in circumstances that may affect their suitability to work with children, and the school will respond promptly to any information that raises concerns regarding an individual's ongoing suitability.

Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy and child protection policy.

In line with statutory requirements all EYFS staff have supervisions regularly throughout the year.

8. Staff

8.1. Staff training

We will:

- Train all staff in safeguarding procedures in line with Annex C of the most recent EYFS framework and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance
- Support all staff to feel supported and confident in implementing our safeguarding policy and procedures
- Renew training every 2 years, or more often when it's needed to help maintain skills; keep up to date with any changes to our safeguarding procedures; or because of any safeguarding concerns

All staff will have training relevant to their role in supporting children's communication, emotional literacy and self-regulation. This will be led by the clinical team and include sessions on blank levels, talking mats, sign supported literacy and sensory circuits.

All staff will be trained in supporting children in their phonics knowledge using the Little Wandle phonics scheme. This will be revisited and refreshed annually.

8.2. Staffing ratios

At Acorn Park we make sure that the appropriate statutory staff: child ratios are maintained in our setting to meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety:

For children aged 3 and over:

- o Where there is a person with qualified teacher status, early years professional status, or early years teacher status, an instructor or another suitably qualified, overseas-trained teacher:
 - For classes where the majority of children will reach the age of 5 or older within the school year, we have at



- least 1 member of staff for every 30 children
- For all other classes, we have at least 1 member of staff for every 13 children
- At least 1 other member of staff holds an approved level 3 qualification, or has received approval to be included in the ratios at level 3 after attaining experience-based route status
- Where a person with the above qualifications is not working directly with the children, we have at least 1 member of staff for every 8 children
 - At least 1 member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification, or has received approval to be included in the ratios at level 3 after attaining experience-based route status
 - At least half of all other staff hold an approved level 2 qualification

Each child is assigned a key worker who will work closely with that child, measuring their progress and providing a safe, nurturing and predictable element to their school day. This key person will liaise with the class teacher to support communication with parents.

9. Paediatric first aid (PFA)

We have always at least 1 person with a current Paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate within the EYFS department and available when children are present, including on outings. This PFA certificate is renewed every 3 years as required.

10. Safer eating

While children are eating, there will always be at least 1 member of staff in the room with a valid Paediatric First Aid certificate (from a course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex A of the latest EYFS framework). All children will be within sight and hearing of a member of staff while eating and seated safely in an appropriate chair or highchair and, where possible, in a designated eating space.

Before a child joins our setting, we will get information on their:

- Dietary requirements and preferences
- Food allergies and intolerances
- Health requirements

We will share this information with all staff involved in food preparation and handling. At each mealtime and snack time it will be clear which staff member is responsible for checking that the food meets all the requirements for each child.

We will prepare food in a way that:

- Prevents choking
- Meets each child's individual developmental needs
- Is in line with the DfE's Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance

In the event of a choking incident that requires intervention, we will record details of the incident and make the child's parents/carers aware. We will review the records as a team to identify whether we can change anything in our practice to make eating safer, and then take action as appropriate

11. Allergies

We will make sure that all staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis; the differences between allergies and intolerances; and that children can develop allergies at any time.

- Create allergy action plans for their child – with the help of health professionals, where appropriate
- Discuss their child's eating at school, including progress with trying new foods.

We will keep this information up to date by liaising with parents **termly** regarding allergies for their child. This information will be shared with staff so that all staff are aware of allergies when supporting children.

Class teachers will be responsible for contacting parents to gather this information and sharing it with the EYFS lead.

12. Obtaining information about medicines

For new children starting at Acorn Park, we will:

- Send a form to all parents/carers after their placement has been confirmed, but before they first start, to confirm any medicine(s) their child may need. This will collect information about the specific medicine, frequency and time of administration.
- Where a pupil has a new diagnosis and/or has moved to the school mid-term, we will send a form and put arrangements in place within 2 weeks.
- Class teachers will liaise with parents/carers of all pupils within the EYFS phase termly regarding allergies and updates to these and/or medications. This will then be shared with the EYFS lead who will hold this information for all pupils within the phase.
- We ask that parents proactively inform us by either phone call to the school (01953888656) or via class dojo to the class team if their child's medical needs change during the school year.

13. Accident or injury

We keep a first aid box (which contains appropriate items for children) always accessible.

We keep a written record of accident or injuries, time, location and any first aid treatment given

We will inform parents or carers the same day as, or as soon as reasonably practicable after, of any:

- o Accident or injury sustained by the child
- o First aid treatment given

14. Safety of premises

We make sure that our premises, including overall floor space and outdoor space, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children we care for, and the activities provided on the premises. We comply with requirements of health and safety legislation, including fire safety and hygiene requirements.

15. Toileting and privacy

- o Enough toilets and hand basins available for the children
 - o Suitable and hygienic nappy changing facilities
 - o an adequate supply of necessary items such as nappies, wipes and spare clothes
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- o Separate toilet facilities for adults

During nappy changes and toileting, we will balance children's privacy with their safeguarding and support needs. We will work with parents, children and onsite clinical teams to develop independence with toileting, taking the child's lead when they are ready to transition to toilet training.

Please refer to the group intimate care policy.

16. Screen Use in the EYFS

Our approach

In accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework and the Department for Education's guidance on screen use in early years settings, the school takes a precautionary, purposeful and child-centred approach to the use of screens.

We recognise that young children learn most effectively through responsive relationships, communication, movement, sensory exploration, play and first-hand experiences. Screen-based activities must therefore enhance rather than replace these experiences.

For children aged 2–5, government guidance recommends limiting total screen time to no more than one hour per day, and less where possible. We recognise that this recommendation relates to a child's overall screen use and that children may also access screens outside school. We therefore do not regard one hour as a target or an entitlement within the school day. Non-assistive screen use in our EYFS provision is kept brief and purposeful.

As an independent specialist school, we also recognise the important distinction between discretionary screen use and screen-based assistive technology. The recommended screen-time limits do not apply to assistive technology used by children with SEND where it supports communication, access, participation, independence, wellbeing or quality of life. Decisions about assistive technology are made according to the individual child's needs, professional advice and, where appropriate, their EHCP, communication plan or individual learning programme.

Our practice is therefore based on the principle: screens are used when they add something necessary or valuable to the child's experience, not simply because they are available.

We use screens for: assistive and augmentative communication (AAC), including communication applications and devices; enabling children to make choices, express needs, communicate and participate more independently; individualised visual communication and learning supports where digital presentation is particularly helpful to the child; brief, targeted teaching activities where technology provides a clear benefit that cannot be achieved as effectively through practical resources; carefully selected photographs, video clips or other media to support understanding, recall, anticipation or discussion of real-life experiences; appropriately designed cause-and-effect or interactive activities where these form part of an identified learning programme; brief

use of interactive whiteboards or tablets as part of adult-led learning where there is a clear educational purpose; video communication with parents, carers or professionals where this is appropriate; and proportionate staff use of digital devices for assessment, recording and communication, while ensuring that this does not reduce meaningful interaction with children.

We do not use screens for: passive entertainment or prolonged viewing; filling time or routinely occupying children during transitions; keeping a child quiet or distracted; managing behaviour or using screen access as a routine reward; replacing adult support for co-regulation or teaching children how to regulate their emotions; replacing stories, songs, rhymes, conversation or shared attention with an adult; replacing physical play, sensory exploration, outdoor learning, practical experiences or interaction with peers; having television, videos or other screens playing in the background; use during mealtimes or, where relevant, within an hour of a planned sleep period; unrestricted access to video-sharing platforms, scrolling content, autoplay or algorithm-driven content; fast-paced, highly stimulating content involving frequent cuts, flashing images, complex sound or excessive visual movement; content containing advertising; independent or unsupervised internet or screen access; routine use of children's personal devices brought from home; or children's use of generative AI, AI-enabled applications or AI-enabled toys unless and until their use is supported by appropriate evidence and national guidance.

How screens are used safely and effectively

Any non-assistive screen activity must have a clear educational rationale. Practitioners consider whether the same objective could be achieved more effectively through direct interaction, practical resources, sensory experience, play or outdoor learning before choosing to use a screen.

Where a screen is used with a child, it is ordinarily used for a short, planned period with active adult co-engagement. Adults talk with children about what they are seeing or doing, model language, comment, narrate, ask appropriate questions, encourage prediction and response, and connect what appears on the screen to the child's wider experiences.

Digital content is checked by staff before use. Content selected for EYFS children should be age and developmentally appropriate, safe, preferably slow-paced, predictable and repetitive, and free from advertising, autoplay, scrolling and algorithmically generated recommendations.

Children are not routinely given a device and left to engage with it independently. Screens are positioned as a tool within an interaction, rather than as a substitute for interaction.

The school maintains environments and periods of the day in which children can engage fully in screen-free play, communication, physical activity, outdoor experiences, sensory exploration and relationships with adults and peers.

Specialist provision and reasonable adjustment

We recognise that some children within our specialist provision may have patterns of development, communication or access needs which mean that digital or screen-based technology has a different function for them than it does for their peers.

For example, an AAC device may be a child's voice, a visual communication system may support their understanding of what is happening next, or specialist technology may provide access to learning that would otherwise be inaccessible. Such use will not be withdrawn or unnecessarily restricted simply in order to reduce recorded screen time.

Where technology is being used as an identified assistive tool, staff will instead consider the quality, purpose and impact of its use, ensuring that it continues to promote communication, participation, interaction and increasing independence.

This does not mean that all screen use by a child with SEND is automatically considered assistive technology. Entertainment, video viewing and general applications remain subject to the same expectations for limited, intentional and supervised use unless there is a clearly identified individual need.

Partnership with parents and carers

We will explain our approach to screen use to parents and carers and work collaboratively with families to promote healthy and realistic approaches to technology.

We recognise the pressures experienced by families and will discuss screen use in a supportive and non-judgemental manner. Where a child relies on assistive technology, we will work with parents, carers and relevant professionals to promote consistency between home and school and to ensure that technology continues to support the child's communication, learning, wellbeing and independence.

Monitoring and review

Leaders will ensure that staff understand the EYFS screen-use guidance and the school's expectations. Screen use within the EYFS will be considered through curriculum monitoring, learning walks, supervision and safeguarding arrangements.

The school will review this approach in response to changes in statutory requirements, Department for Education guidance, emerging evidence and the individual needs of children within the provision.

16. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Headteacher/ EYFS lead annually.

At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

Appendix 1. List of statutory policies and procedures for the EYFS

- Safeguarding policy and procedures: See child protection and safeguarding policy
- Procedure for responding to illness: See health and safety policy
- Administering medicines policy: See supporting pupils with medical conditions policy
- Emergency evacuation procedure: See health and safety policy
- Procedure for checking the identity of visitors: See child protection and safeguarding policy
- Procedures for a parent failing to collect a child and for missing children: See child protection and safeguarding policy
- Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaint: See complaints policy
- Procedure for intimate care and toileting: See intimate care policy.