



# Abbey Primary School

## Early Years Policy

### Intent

*"All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality early learning provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential."*

*Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2024)*

At Abbey, all staff deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum through immersion in high quality teaching alongside an enriched environment. **We captivate young minds through our engaging delivery and a variety of approaches (Vision '25).** Our aim is to nurture every child's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, whilst developing both skills and resilience as they take their first steps on their own unique journey of lifelong learning. We work in partnership with our parents and families, recognising them as their child's first educator, to maximise opportunities for our children. **We have a thriving school community and strong partnerships with parents ensure they feel listened to, and their views respected (Vision '25).** Well-Being, defined as the state of being happy, healthy, or successful, is crucial to good mental health and underpins everything we do. A positive mental state is linked to self-confidence, a good degree of self-esteem and resilience, all factors which are crucial to supporting learning and development. **At Abbey our children are both respected and respectful. Relationships are founded on trust enabling children to flourish and be the best they can be (Vision '25).**

### Implementation

We work within the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021) and adhere to its four overarching principles which shape early years practice.

- A Unique Child; every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Positive Relationships; children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- Enabling Environments; 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, parents and carers.
- Learning and Development; children develop and learn in different ways. The framework covers education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

**Both inside and out, our environment enhances the physical and emotional needs of all. It promotes and celebrates learning and provides a welcoming, secure place for our children (Vision '25).**

## **Teaching and Learning**

At Abbey we have high expectations for all and work hard to ensure our children are interested and motivated to explore, question and experiment with materials in an enriched environment which will nurture their curiosity and foster a love of learning. **We develop and nurture young minds, creating memorable moments and events (Vision '25).** We provide a curriculum which is responsive to individual starting points, needs and interests. We encourage our children to take the lead in their own learning, developing confidence to explore new ideas, think about problems, take risks, make links and seek challenge. We believe high levels of engagement, curiosity, collaboration and cooperation are key elements to success. We support our children to become adept at managing their own behaviour in the classroom and in social situations. Our language rich environment supports children in being able to express themselves with confidence and in a meaningful way. Being ready to learn, respecting the opinions and values of themselves and others and demonstrating safe behaviours are fundamental to our practice and our school ethos. Details of this can be found in our Behaviour Policy.

Our Early Years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the latest version of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (January 2024). The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development which are of equal importance and are inter-connected.

The three areas known as the prime areas are 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
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

The four specific areas complete the curriculum, whilst delivering learning and development opportunities in these four areas the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The specific areas are:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

At Abbey, provision is underpinned by a complementary relationship between adult-led, adult-initiated and child-led learning.

In Nursery we have a weekly focus, this may be based on a book or a song, which provides a starting point for direct teaching. The learning environments are then planned for and set up to be stimulating and inviting, offering a variety of activities and resources for the children to engage in independently. 'Planning in the Moment' is the approach adopted by the adults and relies on them observing, capturing the moment of engagement and supporting and extending the children to deepen the learning experience. This occurs through modelling, scaffolding, questioning, discussions and shared sustained thinking. These 'teachable moments' give children autonomy over their learning choices, which in turn, motivates and supports their interest. This child-initiated approach to learning is proven to help children thrive and make accelerated progress.

In Reception we are ambitious in our approach using a continuous cycle of observation and assessment, planning and teaching, alongside structured and systematic lessons and guided group work. Children engage in three whole class teaching sessions a day, the focuses for which are literacy/theme, maths and phonics. We use the curriculum documents 'EYFS Development Matters' 2023 alongside 'Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised' and 'Mastering Number' to develop a carefully planned and sequential curriculum

which challenges, and is inclusive of, all learners. Short, focused group activities are purposefully planned for writing, reading and maths; these immediately follow class input sessions and are an opportunity for children to practise skills and consolidate understanding. In addition, children in Reception will still explore and learn through child-led activities which support current themes and learning focuses.

Across the early years indoor and outdoor resources are carefully selected to offer opportunities to consolidate prior learning and support new learning. Environments are thoughtfully set up with resources matched to the developmental needs of the children, while enhancing the potential for developing children's skills of playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically (the Characteristics of Effective Learning). The early years is a language rich environment where all adults are role models to the children, offering them exposure to a wealth of vocabulary and where developing language skills are championed.

## **Nursery Admissions and Ratios**

The earliest children usually start Nursery is the term after their third birthday. This allows us to claim the standard 15 or 30-hour funding. With children over the age of three the child/staff ratio of 13:1 is applied, this requires a qualified teacher to be within the setting. In addition, at least one other member of staff must hold a minimum of a level 3 qualification. If space allows children who are entitled to 2-year-old funding (15-hours funded childcare) can start Nursery at the beginning of the term in which they turn three. The child/staff ratio for Rising 3's is 5:1. In this case at least one member of staff must hold a level 3 qualification and half of any additional staff must be qualified to at least level 2.

## **Assessment**

At Abbey, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. All staff observe pupils to identify their achievements, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning and to develop next steps. Parents and/or carers are

able to add to their child's learning journey through Seesaw or by completing 'Wow Moments'.

Within the first 6 weeks of a child starting reception, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff complete the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile reflects ongoing observations, and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child. The profile is moderated internally within The Willow Learning Trust (referring to the Development Matters guidance). The Early Years Foundation Stage profile data is submitted to the local authority.

In addition, summative assessments are carried out for phonic development in line with the criteria detailed within the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds phonics program.

**Our families are valued and well informed (Vision '25).** Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development through regular updates on Seesaw, parent teacher meetings, drop-in sessions and end of year reports. These help to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

## **Impact**

At the end of their time in our Foundation Stage the children will be ready to enter Key Stage One to begin the next chapter of the educational journey. They will be equipped with a broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for future progress through school and life.

## **Monitoring and Review**

It is the responsibility of the teachers to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Early Years Foundation Stage Phase Leader is responsible for overseeing all practice. The senior leaders carry out monitoring of the Early Years Foundation Stage through observation and discussion as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

## **Safeguarding**

Through practitioner's day to day contact with children and direct work with families, all staff, students and volunteers at the setting have a crucial role to play in safeguarding our children. All concerns will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. **We respect and support each other, valuing our diverse community. We seek to care for and include everyone. We are safe, listened to and empowered to embrace challenges (Vision '25).**

## **Inclusion**

We are an inclusive setting who works hard to meet the needs of all of our children irrespective of their learning needs. We are always striving to find ways to allow our children to meet their individual potential and make the best progress possible.

**Lynn Skinner  
Early Years Phase Leader  
January 2025**