



UNICORN SCHOOL

EYFS POLICY

This policy applies to all children at Unicorn School in Red & Orange classes.

*The Head of EYFS is:
Hannah Langdon*

RESPONSIBILITY

Staff Member:	Hannah Langdon
Governors' Committee:	Education

Last Reviewed:	September 2024
Approved by Committee	May 2023

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five 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 together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”

Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At Unicorn all children join us in the mornings only at the beginning of the school year in which they turn four (Red Class). They begin attending school full time at the start of the school year in which they turn five (Orange Class).

The Statutory Framework for the EYFS explains that four overarching principles should shape practice in early years’ settings. These are:

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**;
- children learn and develop well in **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. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- Importance of **learning and development**. Children develop and learn at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years’ provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

A Unique Child

The ethos of Unicorn School recognises that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We realise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. We pride ourselves on our use of praise and encouragement, as well as celebration assemblies and rewards, to encourage a positive attitude towards learning.

Our aims in teaching in the EYFS are that all children will:

- learn and play alongside their peers in a caring, secure and properly supervised environment outside the home
- feel secure, valued and confident and develop a sense of achievement through learning which is a pleasurable and rewarding experience
- be as well prepared as possible for the expectations of compulsory schooling
- be encouraged to think and talk about their learning and to develop self-control and independence
- participate in a range of activities which take due account of their interests and their developing physical, intellectual, emotional and social abilities
- have firm foundations laid in all areas of the EYFS, to be built upon in subsequent stages of education

INCLUSION

We value the diversity of individuals and all children are treated fairly regardless of race, background, gender, religion or abilities. Being a parent-owned school, all children and their families are highly valued. In our nurturing environment, we give every child the opportunity to achieve their best, taking into account of their range of life experiences when planning for their learning. In the EYFS we have realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children, which are reflected in our planning to meet the needs of: boys and girls, children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), children who are able and talented, children

from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds (please refer to individual policies).

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- welcoming children whose home language is not English and supporting this in school as far as we can monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary;
- making regular observations of the children.

Safety within the School is a priority. We educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and help them understand why these exist. We involve children in controlling their own learning, giving them the opportunity to make choices and initiate activities. We consider this to be an important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. (Please refer to whole school policies)

WELFARE

"Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them."

Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021

Unicorn School is legally required to comply with the welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021.

We understand that we are required to:

- Promote the welfare of children.
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill. *(If your child is ill then it is the School's policy for them not to return until the risk of spreading the infection has passed. The School follows strictly the guidance laid out by the Health Protection Agency which details recovery timescales.)*
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- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Train all staff to understand our safeguarding policy and procedures, and ensure that all staff have up to date knowledge of safeguarding issues.
- Have regard to the Government's statutory guidance '*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*'. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Mr Gladstone.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

EYFS staff undertake a rolling programme of obtaining Paediatric First Aid Certificates. A practitioner with a current certificate is always on the premises or trips with EYFS children.

Food and Allergies

Snacks and lunches

Red and Orange Class children are given a healthy snack every day at around 10.00am and 2pm. This is provided by our chef and is accompanied each day by fresh fruit as well as milk or water to drink. Children have lunch in school, freshly cooked by our chef, Sergio.

Allergies

Information is gathered by Mrs Langdon about children who have allergies or other dietary requirements. These children wear a rainbow lanyard at lunchtime which specifies their needs.

The School is a nut free environment and any food that is brought into school, be it birthday cakes or packed lunches or any other food, must not contain nuts (namely almond, hazelnut, walnut, cashew, pecan nut, Brazil nut, pistachio nut and Macadamia nut (Queensland nut)) and products thereof, nor peanuts and products thereof.

Children will continue to participate in cooking sessions. Food ingredients may also be used for play e.g. spaghetti, playdough, cornflour. As stated above we maintain a nut-free and peanut-free environment but food may contain other allergens such as :

Cereals containing gluten namely wheat (including specific varieties like spelt and Khorasan), rye, barley, oats and their hybridised strains) and products thereof

Crustaceans and products thereof (for example prawns, lobster, crabs and crayfish)

Egg and products thereof

Fish and products thereof

Soybeans and products thereof

Milk and products thereof (including lactose)

Celery and products thereof

Mustard and products thereof

Sesame seeds and products thereof

Sulphur dioxide and sulphites at concentrations of more than 10mg/kg or 10mg/L in terms of the total SO₂ which are to be calculated for products as proposed ready for consumption or as reconstituted according to the instructions of the manufacturers
Lupin and products thereof
Molluscs and products thereof (for example clams, oysters, scallops, snails and squid)

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact the Bursar, Kevin Guy, either by email or by phone.

Positive Relationships

Children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

Parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make, particularly as a parent-owned school. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:

- talking to parents about their child before they start our school through the offer of home visits;
- giving children the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school;
- inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school to meet the staff and to become familiar with the setting;
- offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress in our Nursery and Reception classes, allowing free access to all the children's records, including the observations (to which they have continual access through Tapestry), and encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns.
- providing a formal meeting for parents in the Autumn and Spring terms at which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress.
- writing reports on their child's attainment and progress, with reference to Development Matters, Early Learning Goals and Characteristics of Effective Learning;
- providing a variety of opportunities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between children, school and parents. They help on a weekly basis with cooking, hearing readers, reading stories, helping with ICT and swimming. Throughout the year there are class assemblies, Sports Days, galas, parties, productions and trips, which parents are encouraged to support.
- access to Tapestry so parents can make comments or upload photos and so on relating to the children's achievements.

Staff involved with the EYFS develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them.

Staff and children from the EYFS are included in all relevant school events.

Key People

A key person is allocated to each child in Red and Orange Class, in accordance with statutory requirements. These are allocated at the beginning of each year and displayed in the Coach House throughout the year. The role of key people is explained to parents in the meeting at the beginning of the year.

Staff-pupil ratios

The Statutory Framework states that *'Children must usually be within sight and hearing of staff and always within sight or hearing. Whilst eating, children must be within sight and hearing of a member of staff.'*

It states that:

'For children aged three and over in independent schools (including in nursery classes in free schools and academies), where a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status or another approved level 6 qualification, an instructor, or another suitably qualified overseas trained teacher, is working directly with the children:

- for classes where the majority of children will reach the age of five or older within the school year, there must be at least one member of staff for every 30 children [Orange Class]*
- for all other classes there must be at least one member of staff for every 13 children [Red Class]*
- at least one other member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification*

Currently, the Red Class teacher, Mrs Langdon, holds Qualified Teacher Status and a level 7 qualification (Masters degree in Education with an Early Years pathway). The Orange Class teacher, Mrs Maher, has Qualified Teacher Status and a PCGE (level 6).

There is full-time TA presence in both classes. All Red Class TAs hold full and relevant level 3 qualifications and there are almost always two TAs as well as the Class Teacher.

Enabling Environments

At Unicorn School we recognise that our setting plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Our planning follows the Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021 and Medium Term Plans (MTPs), which we record on a cross-curricular topic web. These plans are used by the EYFS teacher as a guide for weekly planning; however the teacher may alter them in response to the needs (achievements and interests) of the children. This will be indicated on weekly planning which shows a breakdown of activities to be followed each day, with specific learning intentions. Planning is flexible and takes into account the children's interests and suggestions as well as any observations made by staff.

We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS primarily takes the form of observations, and this involves the EYFS practitioners, including specialist teachers, as well as input from other people who have significant contact with the children and can contribute towards a rounded picture of them, including parents, other relatives, carers, non-teaching members of staff. These observations are recorded in the online learning journal 'Tapestry'. Parents have access to written records about their children and we encourage their comments and contributions. We also keep information passed on from other settings and agencies. All staff are aware of the need to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

We maintain a regular two-way flow of information with parents and they receive a yearly Unicorn report on their child in Red and Orange class, which reflects our assessments and summarises their progress over the year. We also have two parents' evenings in October and February when parents come to discuss their children with the class teacher. Practitioner assessed tracking is completed three times a year in both Red and Orange Class. There are overview sheets for each class, filled in termly, which show (as percentages) how many children are working significantly below, below, in line with and above their 'typical' age and stage of development.

The Learning Environment

The EYFS classrooms are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The classrooms are organised in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. The EYFS classes have their own enclosed outdoor area. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales from when indoors. We encourage the children to explore, use their senses and be physically active. We plan activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that help them to develop in all seven areas of learning. In addition we have access to a large playground with climbing equipment and the children receive specialist P.E. and gym lessons.

Learning and Development

At Unicorn School we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected, which is reflected in our planning.

Teaching and Learning Style

We have a whole school policy on teaching and learning. We aim to make the transition into Key Stage 1 smooth and happy, through regular discussions, classroom observations and sharing of observations and assessments, including the Profile. The children have regular contact with other members of staff and the School community. Features that relate to the EYFS are:

- the partnership between practitioners and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- the understanding that practitioners have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;
- the range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication;
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards the Early Learning Goals throughout the EYFS;
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;
- the encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management;
- the support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- the identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are shared with parents;
- the good relationships between our school and other settings in the area, through our relationships with the borough Early Years Consultants and termly cluster meetings with other independent settings.

Playing and Exploring

Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. Practitioners need to decide what they want children in their setting to learn, and the most effective ways to teach it. Practitioners must stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and guiding their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning. **Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021**

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They can express fears or relive anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Active Learning

"Children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements." **Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021**

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. We encourage children to be independent and to take control over their learning by planning a balance of structured and self-initiated activities, providing appropriate resources and facilitating independent learning through questioning and scaffolding. As children develop their confidence they learn to make decisions and feel a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

Creating and thinking critically

"Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things." **Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021**

Children should be given opportunities to be creative within all areas of learning. Adults can support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

Areas of Learning

The EYFS is made up of seven areas of learning. There are three prime and four specific areas:

- Communication and Language
 - Physical Development
 - Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- } prime areas
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- Literacy
 - Mathematics
 - Understanding the World
 - Expressive Arts and Design
- } specific areas

In the EYFS none of these areas is delivered in isolation from the others as they are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. In each area there are development statements

and Early Learning Goals (ELGs) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

Characteristics of effective learning

“In planning and guiding children’s activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- **playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go’;
- **active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements; and
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.”

Statutory Framework for the EYFS, 2021

We record children’s achievements in these areas on Tapestry, and consider them in our planning.

Parents can access further information about the EYFS curriculum and requirements from class teachers or online at www.gov.uk

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to follow the principles stated in this policy. Subject coordinators as well as the Head of EYFS carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

Staff supervision

“Effective supervision provides support, coaching and training for the practitioner and promotes the interests of children. Supervision should foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork and continuous improvement which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues.” **Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021**

In addition to staff appraisals and meetings there is direct feedback in the classrooms, observation of and interaction with peers and colleagues and one-to-one coaching, as necessary. Supervision meetings are held twice a year (and on request) for teachers and teaching assistants in the EYFS and all staff who work with EYFS children are able to request a supervision meeting at any time. All new members of staff participate in the mentoring scheme.

Further information

- All policies and procedures are available on request from class teachers or the School Office; many of these are also freely available on the School’s website.
- In case of emergency, the School telephone number is 020 8948 3926.
- If you believe that the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements, please speak to Mrs Langdon or Mrs Fraley. You can also contact Ofsted. Details are available here: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

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