

The Ladies' College, Melrose and Pre-School Department

Early Years policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy document is to define the principles and aims of the Early Years at The Ladies' College Melrose and Pre-School Department, this includes the Peas, Beans and Lower-Preparatory year groups (Nursery, Kindergarten and Reception), and to provide a framework which:

- Promotes consistency in school planning and school practice.
- Facilitates development and change.
- Informs new staff, pupils, parents, governors and the wider community.

This policy is reviewed annually. Any changes will be added as appendices until discussion and incorporation at the next full review.

The Ladies' College Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is run in conjunction with The States of Guernsey Early Years Quality Standards Framework (EYQSF). These can be reviewed on the following link: <https://www.gov.gg/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=102597&p=0>

Principles

The Ladies' College Values, Vision and Aims:

Our Values:

Integrity, bravery and kindness

Our Vision:

Shaped by our values, we empower our community to do what is right come what may. Fais ce que dois advienne que pourra.

Our Aims:

To enable our girls to:

- Access an ambitious environment and curriculum that prepares them for a rapidly changing world
- Realise the power and value of their voice
- Value inclusion, authenticity and kindness

- Contribute to a culture of joy, play and exploration in which they can experiment, connect and learn

Aims of the policy

- To give an enthusiastic and positive start to their school life with growth mindset to establish solid foundations and a deep passion for learning.
- To provide an extensive range of adventures giving opportunities to experiment, explore and excite through individual experiences.
- To develop and foster an understanding of their emotions and strategies to use enabling high expectations socially, intellectually, emotionally and physically.
- To offer a positive learning environment with unlimited development opportunities.
- To develop individual independence in a friendly, secure and nurturing atmosphere.
- To support using the foundation of a growth mindset the celebration of their individual achievements, build relationships, recognise strengths, continue to persevere and strive to reach personal goals.

Curriculum

The EYFS is based upon four complementary but distinct themes which shape our practice:

- **A Unique Child**
- **Positive Relationships**
- **Enabling Environments**
- **Learning and Development**

Our Early-Years curriculum reflects these by:

- building on what our children already know and can do;
- ensuring that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
- offering a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the interests and needs of the girls, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- providing a rich and stimulating environment;
- acknowledging the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers and the benefits of sharing both successes and concerns with them.

Unique child

We recognise that each child is an individual who develops at their own rate and by our flexible approach to planning, including next-step planning, we will enhance each child to reach their full developmental potential.

This encourages children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Positive relationships

Children learn through building positive relationships with each other and the adults in our setting. We endeavour to develop a caring, respectful and positive mindset in all areas of life.

Enabling environments

Our Pre-School department and Lower Preparatory class are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. We offer and actively encourage our pupils to utilise all areas and so be, for example, active, imaginative and creative interests taking pride and ownership in the environment they are engaged with. Continuous provision is available in each area with enhancements being made daily to facilitate children's interests, needs and developmental stage whilst also recognising each child's emotional stage and needs.

Children have access to both the inside and the outside environment at various points in the day which is known to have a positive effect on the children's development. The Early Years Foundation Stage pupils have their own outdoor area with sand, water, climbing equipment, bikes, writing opportunities, mud kitchen, construction, forest area, woodland woodwork and role play. Spending time outdoors offers opportunities for exploring and learning things differently to when pupils are indoors and gives things a different perspective. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

Learning and development

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in the Early Years. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected, and none can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill. They require a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities for children to develop effectively and to give them the best chance of obtaining a good level of development at the end of the Foundation Stage. These areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The curriculum framework for the EYFS consists of seven areas of learning and development. These areas are further separated into *prime* areas which are integral to provide the foundations and support the *specific* areas.

Prime Areas of Learning and Development

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**
- **Communication and Language**
- **Physical Development**

The Specific Areas of Learning and Development

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

In Pre-School as well as Lower Preparatory the day follows a routine to encourage the children's independent learning skills. It combines phonics, Literacy and Maths teaching, free flow opportunities outside and inside using continuous provision and enhancements with children following and revisiting their own interests. In the afternoons, classrooms are set up for children with activities that range across the whole curriculum including creative, expressive arts, science, children's interests and seasonal events which will give a breadth of experiences. These are closely planned by all staff on a weekly basis.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- **Playing and exploring** - children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- **Active learning** - children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties and enjoy their achievements.
- **Creating and thinking critically** - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Planning

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum provides the basis for the planning throughout. The objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Development Matters Statements from the Early Years Foundation Stage document. The planning is based upon themes with discrete phonics, Maths and other-directed teaching, delivered through a variety of creative activities. Continuous staff observation and monitoring of the girls informs the further planning for individual developmental next steps.

Assessment

During the first term, the teacher assesses the ability of each child using observations and activities. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children. This first /baseline assessment also takes into account any other records we receive from previous preschool settings, parents and childminders. Most of our children have attended our Pre-School which helps to facilitate this process. The Foundation Stage Profile is the nationally

employed assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the pupils' Foundation Stage and to summarise their progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

We record each child's level of development against the 17 areas of learning as Emerging, Expected or Exceeding. Observations and assessment of each individual pupil is on-going with the information gained being used to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.

The Pre-School team work closely to enable and plan for each child and the ways adaptations can be made to the provision to address their learning and any needs identified. The children in the Pre-School department have key people within their year group who, with the Heads of Department, monitor each child's progress, so the curriculum can be delivered in the best way for each child.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, teacher and teacher assistant knowledge of the pupils including photographic evidence. Assessment is completed regularly and involves both the teacher and other adults, as appropriate. The collection of assessment data in the Foundation Stage Profile is a statutory requirement. Assessment data is recorded by the teachers in Lower Preparatory and Pre-School in Pupil progress, online learning journals and collating examples of each child's work. These books contain a wide range of evidence that we share with parents at each parental consultation meeting. We also download the child's online learning journeys for parents at the end of each half term.

At the end of the final term of a pupil's school year, we send a summary of the Early Years assessments to the child's next teacher. We share this information at parental consultation meetings too and in the end-of-year report. Parents receive an annual written report that offers comments on each child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child's strengths and developmental needs and gives details of the child's general progress. We complete these in the Summer Term and send them to parents before the end of the school year.

Transitions

We recognise that starting school and moving up classes has the potential to be a stressful time for both children and parents. To this end we have established a strong procedure for transitions to ensure that our children and parents are as confident and secure as they can be when facing the challenges of each year group.

Pre-School and Lower Preparatory hold a meeting at the very start of the Summer Term, before the children start school, to provide parents with key information, school expectations, knowledge on our curriculum and assessment and advice on how they can help their child. In the Summer term Pre-School and Lower Preparatory children have the opportunity to meet with their next teachers in their classroom on several occasions. Pre-School children are invited to join the team, and other peers at informal playdates prior to starting school, regardless of starting in the Pea or Bean year groups. This provides both the new pupil a time to explore the

new surroundings and meet the team, but also parents time to ask questions and share knowledge or any concerns they may have about their child. The Lower Preparatory team send a postcard to each of the new pupils over the summer holidays, with a photo of the team and a welcome message prior to starting school. They also offer 1:1 meetings at the beginning of the Michaelmas Term, enabling parents to have an informal discussion with the class teacher, and help the pupil to become accustomed again with the new environment.

At the end of each school year teachers have the opportunity to share each child's knowledge, understanding and achievements, including end-of-year assessment data, with their next class teacher to ensure that all teachers have a well-rounded picture of the children prior to the new school year.

During children's time in the Pre-School and Lower Preparatory a range of shared activities are planned for all classes to help develop children's confidence and to ensure continuity in experiences throughout the foundation stage. Children in both Pre-School and Lower Preparatory make use of the whole school facilities, such as the Hall, ICT suite, Library and playing field for appropriate activities to ensure that children are confident and well prepared for moving around the school and for mixing with older children when they start school. Throughout the school year, all children in the Early Years are gradually introduced to the rest of the school through joint/shared class activities, playground time and assemblies.

Safeguarding

Please see the College's Child Protection (Safeguarding) policy, available on the College website.

Resources and Facilities

The Pre-School Department and Lower Preparatory have the following available to pupils during the term:

- Mudpie kitchen
- Painting easels and aprons
- Small world resources
- Touchscreen computer / iPads
- Quiet area for reading
- Quiet room for activities
- Calm zones
- Block and construction resources
- Art and craft resources
- Fine manipulation resources
- Gross motor toys and climbing frame
- Sand, water and playdough
- Mathematics resources
- Role play area

- Outdoor area and equipment
- First aid kit
- Small kitchen for cooking activities and serving food
- Smart board
- Forest School area
- Woodland Woodwork
- Whole school grounds