

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-Prep 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.

Early Years provision at The Ladies' College follows the requirements of the States of Guernsey Early Years Quality Standards Framework (EYQSF). The guidance and principles of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are also used throughout the Pre-School and Lower Prep years where these align with local expectations. Where the States of Guernsey set specific requirements, the EYQSF takes precedence and guides our practice. At the end of the Lower Prep year, we submit our Early Years assessment data to the States of Guernsey as part of their annual collection of Foundation Stage information.

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 school life with a growth mindset, establishing 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 support an understanding of 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 the celebration of individual achievements, building relationships, recognising strengths, persevering and striving towards personal goals

In line with the EYFS 2025 and Guernsey EYQSF requirements, this policy ensures that learning and development in the Pre-School and Lower Prep is taught through a balanced mix of child-initiated and adult-guided experiences, with a focus on the Characteristics of Effective Learning. The Early Years team provide a nurturing environment that supports emotional well-being, developmental progress and the individual needs of each child.

Principles

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 pupils, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- providing a rich and stimulating environment;
- acknowledging the importance of a full partnership with parents and carers and the benefits of sharing both successes and concerns with them.

We also ensure that, for the Lower Prep year, practice aligns with the EYFS 2025 requirement that children are supported to develop broad foundational skills and knowledge ahead of transition into Key Stage 1.

Unique child

We recognise that each child is an individual who develops at their own rate. Through a flexible approach to planning, including next-step planning, we support each child to reach their full developmental potential. This encourages children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Where there are concerns about a child's progress, particularly in a prime area, practitioners discuss this with parents and put support in place, in accordance with EYFS 2025 and EYQSF requirements.

Positive relationships

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

Every child in the Early Years has a designated key person, as required by the EYFS 2025, to help ensure consistent care, build secure relationships and support communication with families.

Enabling environments

Our Pre-School department and Lower Prep 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 to respond to children's interests, needs and developmental need and emotional wellbeing.

Children have access to both the inside and the outside environment at various points in the day. The Early Years outdoor areas include access to sand, water, climbing equipment, bikes, writing opportunities, mud kitchen, construction, a 'forest' area, woodland, woodwork and role play. Time outdoors supports a wide range of developmental and exploratory learning.

Learning and development

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape educational provision in the Early Years. All areas of learning are important and inter-connected. Children experience a

balance of adult led and child-initiated activities to support their development and progression towards the Early Learning Goal.

The Prime Areas:

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

The Specific Areas:

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

Daily routines in Pre-School and Lower Prep incorporate phonics, literacy and maths teaching, free-flow opportunities, continuous provision, enhancements, and afternoon activities spanning creative, expressive, scientific and seasonal learning.

Teachers in the Lower Prep year ensure that learning builds on the statutory EYFS 2025 educational programmes and prepares children for the transition to Key Stage 1, while remaining developmentally appropriate and play-based.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning:

- **Playing and exploring** - children investigate, experience things and have a go.
- **Active learning** - children concentrate and keep trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.
- **Creating and thinking critically** - children 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 guidance. Planning is based on themes, with discrete phonics, literacy and maths teaching delivered through a range of creative activities.

Continuous staff observation and monitoring of the children informs further planning for individual developmental next steps. In line with the EYFS 2025, practitioners plan a balance

of child-initiated and adult-guided experiences, ensuring learning is responsive to children's needs, interests and stages of development.

Where planning identifies concerns in any prime area of learning, practitioners discuss this with parents and put appropriate support in place, in line with statutory expectations.

Assessment

Assessment in the Early Years is continuous and based on observations, interactions and professional knowledge of each child. During the first half term in Lower Prep, teachers complete a baseline assessment to establish clear starting points and to inform early planning. This baseline draws on previous records from Pre-School, information from parents and direct observations of each child.

Throughout Pre-School and Lower Prep, practitioners monitor children's progress across the prime and specific areas of learning using age-related developmental stages, described in Development Matters. These ongoing assessments help to identify next steps and ensure that planning responds to each child's individual needs.

Each team plans for the children within its own year group and identifies any adaptations needed to support learning or developmental needs. Every child has a designated key person who monitors progress, supports wellbeing and maintains communication with families.

Assessment information is shared with parents through consultation meetings, online learning journals and written reports. Online journals are downloaded and shared with parents at the end of each half term.

At the end of the Lower Prep year, we use our ongoing assessment information to make a final judgement for each child against the seventeen Early Learning Goals, recorded as Emerging, Expected or Exceeding, in line with Guernsey requirements. We then submit our Early Years assessment data to the States of Guernsey as part of their annual collection of Foundation Stage information. These final judgements are based on professional knowledge and do not require the collection of additional physical evidence.

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.

Lower Prep hold a meeting at the start of the Trinity Term, before the children start school, to provide parents with key information, school expectations, knowledge of our curriculum and assessment, and advice on how they can help their child prepare for 'big school'.

In the Trinity Term, children in the Pre-School and Lower Prep have the opportunity to meet with their next teachers in their new classrooms on several occasions.

New Pre-School children are invited to join the team and other peers at informal playdates prior to starting, regardless of whether they are joining the Pea or Bean year groups. These sessions provide the new child with time to explore the environment, meet the team, and allow parents a chance to ask questions and share information or concerns.

The Lower Prep team send a postcard to each of the new children over the summer holidays, with a photograph of the team and a welcome message prior to starting school. They also offer one-to-one meetings at the beginning of the Michaelmas Term before children start, enabling parents to have an informal discussion with the class teacher and helping the child become accustomed again to 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 information, with their next class teacher to ensure that the receiving teacher has a well-rounded picture of the child prior to the new school year.

Across the Pre-School and Lower Prep years, a range of shared activities are planned across all classes to help develop children's confidence and ensure continuity of experience throughout the Foundation Stage. Children in both Pre-School and Lower Prep make use of the whole school facilities, such as the Hall, Computing Room, Prep Library and playing field for appropriate activities, helping them become confident and familiar with the wider school environment.

Throughout the school year, all children in the Early Years are gradually introduced to the rest of the school through joint activities, shared sessions, playground time and assemblies.

Transition processes ensure continuity of learning, emotional security and clear communication with parents, supporting children as they move into Key Stage 1.

Safeguarding

The safety and welfare of every child in the Early Years is of the highest importance. All Early Years practice follows the College Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy, which sets out the procedures for reporting concerns, managing allegations, safer recruitment and the responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Person and Deputy Designated Safeguarding

Persons . All staff working with Early Years children follow the same safeguarding procedures as those set out for the whole College.

In the Early Years, safeguarding also encompasses the specific welfare requirements outlined in the EYFS Statutory Framework. These include ensuring children are kept safe, supervised appropriately and supported to thrive within a secure environment.

To meet the statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS 2025, the following apply:

- A designated key person is assigned to every child in Early Years to ensure consistent relationships, secure attachments and effective communication with families.
- Staffing ratios meet the statutory EYFS 2025 requirements. In accordance with paragraph 3.38 of the EYFS 2025, only staff who hold a full and relevant qualification and a current paediatric first aid certificate may be counted in the staff-to-child ratios. Staff who do not hold paediatric first aid may work in the Early Years but cannot be included in the statutory ratios.
- Staff are deployed effectively so that children are always within sight or within hearing and supervision is increased according to need or risk.
- At least one member of staff with a current paediatric first aid certificate is on the premises and available at all times when children are present and accompanies children on all outings. A paediatric first aider is also present during all mealtimes, in line with the EYFS safer eating requirements.
- Staff follow safer eating, food hygiene and allergy management procedures in accordance with the EYFS 2025 welfare requirements. These procedures are detailed in the Food and Nutrition Policy and the Eat Well Policy.
- Mobile phones and personal devices are not used in Early Years teaching areas. Photographs and video recordings are taken only on school-owned devices in Early Years, in line with whole-College safeguarding expectations.
- Staff follow the procedures for allegations against adults, whistleblowing and low-level concerns, as outlined in the College Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy.
- The environment, equipment and activities are risk assessed regularly. Staff take all reasonable steps to ensure the premises are safe, suitable and secure, and that hazards are minimised. This includes safety considerations for indoor and outdoor learning, toileting areas, changing facilities and spaces where children rest or sleep.
- Sleeping children are checked frequently, as required by EYFS 2025 welfare expectations.
- Intimate care is carried out sensitively and in line with the Intimate Care Policy, ensuring dignity, privacy and safeguarding responsibilities are upheld at all times.
- All Early Years colleagues receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role, including induction, annual updates, prevent awareness and specific training relating to Early Years welfare requirements.