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***'Supporting Children to Flourish, Respecting and Nurturing their Individuality and Developing Strengths in Preparations for their Unique Learning Journey.'***

Learning Environment and Activities Policy and Practice

Aim

To ensure that children’s opportunities and access to learning are stimulating, varied and promote the Characteristics of Effective Learning. We offer play activities and resources that incorporate the seven areas of Learning and Development in the EYFS. We give children a sense of ownership by offering choices, following their interests and preferences, and offering a balance of adult‑led and child‑initiated activity.

We operate outdoor learning opportunities all year round and welcome visitors to share their knowledge of a range of occupations. We also work with providers who deliver music, dance, drama and sports, and with specialists who bring in additional resources.

Structured Activities

Our weekly targeted adult‑led activity allows us to teach new skills and concepts based on children’s identified next steps and our curriculum moderation. We ensure a balance of child‑initiated and adult‑led activities. Our routines mirror those of our local primary school to support our school readiness programme.

We hold two weekly PE sessions, an orchard session based on forest school activities, disco dough, yoga sessions and a weekly gardening club. We deliver Letters and Sounds (Phase 1) as part of our curriculum plans and introduce children to Jolly Phonics. We focus on Read Write Inc. for literacy to offer familiarity when children start primary school. We also consider external enrichment such as Petite Pois (French), Eco Warriors (early science and conservation) and similar offers where appropriate.

ECaT – Every Child a Talker

WellComm Speech & Language Screening (Local Authority requirement)

We use the WellComm toolkit as required by the Local Authority to screen children’s speech, language and communication.

How we do this

• Timing: With parental consent, screening takes place within the first half‑term after start (or as soon as practicable) and again where needed to monitor progress.

• Who: Trained staff administer the assessment in a child‑friendly way, during play. Results are recorded securely.

• Traffic‑light outcomes:

 – Green: language is developing as expected. We continue to support through our curriculum and ECaT-rich practice.

 – Amber: targeted activities are put in place (drawn from the WellComm Big Book of Ideas and our language‑rich environment). Progress is reviewed.

 – Red: in addition to targeted activities, we discuss next steps with parents, which may include a referral to Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) and/or Early Help.

• Partnership with parents: We share results promptly and provide home activity ideas. We value family insights about language at home (including other languages).

• Data sharing and GDPR: Results are stored in the child’s record in line with UK GDPR/DPA 2018. Where the LA requests anonymised/summary data, or where a SALT referral is agreed, we share information with parental consent (or without consent where safeguarding law requires).

• Inclusion: Screening and follow‑up activities are adapted to be culturally and linguistically appropriate; bilingual children’s development is considered in both languages.

Every Child a Talker (ECaT) supports the development of early language through everyday, playful activities which reflect children’s interests. We use ECaT to help identify children who may be ‘at risk’ of language delay early and to support them as soon as possible. It also builds practitioner skill and helps parents understand communication development and how to support it at home.

The four ECaT areas we observe and track:

• Listening and attention• Understanding• Speaking• Social communication

We assess and track each child’s communication and language development throughout the year. Each term, results are placed on the ECaT tracking grid; parents/carers have regular access to their child’s tracker and can discuss progress with the key person at any time.

ECaT monitoring tool: https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2011/10/ECaT\_child\_monitoring\_tool1.pdf

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is an important part of our curriculum. Children have daily opportunities for fresh air and physical activity throughout the year. Outdoor activities take place in the secure play area at the front of the building, on the large field and in the community orchard at the rear.

Our outdoor areas are risk assessed and appropriate controls are in place. These include close supervision and higher staffing than indoors when needed. As a guide: a minimum of two adults with up to eight children; this rises to three adults when 12 children are outdoors. When more than 12 children are using the outdoor areas, we may move from free‑flow to planned group times. Free‑flow is subject to staffing and weather conditions. As indoors, our continuous provision outdoors reflects learning and development opportunities linked to the EYFS.

How we do this

• A member of staff remains in the indoor soft‑play/transition area to manage the flow between indoors and outdoors.• Daily pre‑use checks of the outdoor space and equipment are recorded; first‑aid and communication (radios/phone) go outdoors.• Clothing and hydration are monitored; shade and shelter are provided as needed (see Weather Conditions).

Clothing

Children bring a bag with a spare set of clothing each session. We hold wellingtons, waterproof trousers, jackets and hats for children to borrow; parents/carers are encouraged to supply suitable footwear and clothing for the weather. The transition area holds clothing and footwear that children can access independently, with staff support as needed. Appropriate clothing is required to participate in outdoor activities.

Activities and Equipment

• Water play – large equipment including guttering, tubes and pipes to promote investigative play with water.

• Building and constructing – large equipment inspiring physical problem‑solving and creativity (crates, ropes, tubes, trays, trolleys).

• Den play – den frames, poles and covers for children to create special places for play.

• Gardening – digging, planting and growing resources that support group play, mark‑making and observing change.

• Small‑world planters – creative and imaginative play outdoors.

• Literacy shed – opportunities for varied mark‑making, reading in cosy crates and developing fine‑motor skills.

• Digging pit – exploring size, weight, senses and gross motor skills.

• Play games – balls, hoops, beanbags and cones to support physical development.

• Role play – resource collections that feed imagination and allow exploration of familiar experiences.

• Investigating wind and movement – resources to explore air, wind and movement using outdoor space.

• Music‑making and exploration of natural materials and habitats.

Equipment is stored safely in secure containers and set out at the beginning of each session. Staff check that all equipment is clean and safe to use daily.

Staffing and Assessment

Staffing outdoors is dictated by the flow of children using the area and will always meet or exceed statutory ratios. Activities and equipment are subject to risk assessments that are regularly reviewed; staff are familiar with the control measures. Regular observations inform our evaluation of children’s learning and the suitability of resources. Staff carry first‑aid equipment outdoors.

How we do this

• The Supervisor checks daily ratio sheets (indoors/outdoors) and ensures a floating practitioner covers breaks.• Risk assessments name responsible persons and review dates; actions are followed up promptly.• Observations of the environment feed into weekly planning and continuous provision tweaks.

Weather Conditions

Children experience seasonal weather changes throughout the year. For safety, outdoor access is paused during weather that poses a risk (e.g., severe winds). Staff monitor effects of heat and cold and adjust time outdoors accordingly, including ‘warm‑ups’ and ‘cool‑downs’ in extreme temperatures. Shaded areas are used; drinking water is available outdoors; gazebos and parasols are used when appropriate. Parents/carers should apply sun cream before sessions and provide a sun hat; in colder months, hats and gloves are encouraged.

Equal Opportunities

As part of our inclusive approach, we maintain a small bank of outdoor clothing so that children are not excluded from outdoor activities.

Outings and Visits Procedures

We have agreed procedures for the safe conduct of outings. Parents sign general consent on registration for local outings as part of daily activities; for major outings, separate written consent is obtained and parents are given notice of planned events.

How we do this

• A risk assessment is completed before each outing; ratios are high (typically 1 adult to 3 children).• Children not accompanied by their parent/carer are assigned to a named staff member to ensure individual supervision and prevent loss/unauthorised access.• Outings are recorded in the Outings Record Book with date, venue, transport, staff-to-child allocations and the time of return.• Staff carry a mobile phone, wipes/tissues, spare clothing, mini first‑aid pack, snack and water (scaled to venue, group size and duration).• Vehicle records include named drivers and insurance checks. A minimum of two staff accompany children; a minimum of two remain with children on site.

Displays for the Learning Environment

We create a visually stimulating environment that gives purpose and value to children’s work and celebrates achievements. Displays promote positive affirmations, aesthetic awareness and a sense of ownership and pride in personal and peer achievements.

Methods (Displays)

• ‘Working wall’ approach: topic learning and displays that reflect the journey through new educational programmes.• Interactive elements that allow further enquiry, reflect different learning styles and extend knowledge beyond formal planning.• Behaviour/emotional literacy display (e.g., programmes such as ‘Monkey Bob’) exploring emotions, consequences and conflict resolution.

Linked Policies

Health & Safety • Staffing and Employment (ratios) • Behaviour Management • SEND/Local Offer • Outings/Trips • Safeguarding and Child Protection

Review Statement

Policy adopted October 2017; updated Sept 2018; updated August 2021; reviewed Sept 2022; updated Nov 2022; reviewed Sept 2023.This version updated September 2025. Next review due September 2026 (or sooner if guidance changes).