



Quarry Hill Academy

Early Years Policy

Reviewed: June 2026

The Governing Body is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and requires all staff and volunteers to demonstrate this commitment in every aspect of their work.

This document, revised in June 2026, sets out our basic philosophy and teaching aims in the Foundation Stage. It is intended for use by all Early Years practitioners at Quarry Hill Academy.

Our vision

We are committed to providing the very best opportunities to prepare children for their next steps in life and beyond; delivering a happy, safe, secure and healthy learning environment in which children develop independence, self-confidence, positive relationships and a love of learning.

Principles for Early Years Education

Children develop rapidly during the early years – physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. Therefore, at Quarry Hill Academy, we aim to support and extend knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence, and to help overcome any disadvantage.

- We will ensure that all children feel included, secure and valued.
- We will build on what children already know and can do.
- We will ensure that all children have equal opportunities and will not be excluded or disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability, gender or ability.
- We will work together with parents (see heading, 'Parents as partners').
- We will provide opportunities for children to engage in activities they plan and initiate themselves as well as activities planned by adults. Well planned, purposeful activity and appropriate intervention by adults will engage children in the learning process.
- We will work with children to develop positive relationships with both adults and peers to overcome possible barriers to learning and well-being.

Play

The principle which underlies the process of learning is the acknowledgement that **how** the children learn is just as important as **what** they learn. Play is the natural way in which children learn. Therefore, the curriculum is centred on play and first hand experiences. Through well-planned play, both indoors and outdoors, children will learn with enjoyment and feel challenged.

The practitioner plays a crucial role, organising the programme and making sensitive and selective interventions with the children in their play. Through play, children will learn and develop new skills in all areas of the Early Years curriculum (see revised EYFS documents 2021: Early Years statutory framework , Development Matters 2021 and Birth to Five Matters 2021).

Young children must play in order to learn. The unique child reaches out to relate to people and things through the **characteristics of effective learning**, which move through all areas of learning.

Characteristics of effective learning are:

- Playing and exploring
- Active learning
- Creating and thinking critically.

Aims

At Quarry Hill Academy, we aim to provide a well-planned and resourced curriculum to take the children's learning forward and provide opportunities for all children to succeed in reaching the Early Learning Goals in a positive, caring environment. As well as this, we plan carefully to support children in building positive contributions across the school and carefully organise and prepare transition opportunities, in readiness for their next stage of learning.

Areas of learning/Curriculum

The Early Year's curriculum is based on the Early Years Foundation Stage which starts at birth and continues until the end of the reception year.

The Early Years curriculum covers seven areas of learning, which are divided into prime and specific areas. The seven areas provide a framework for the Early Years' curriculum. These areas are cross-curricular and one activity may provide opportunities to develop skills and concepts across several areas of learning.

Prime areas are fundamental, work together, and move through to support development in all other areas.

The three prime areas are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, Social and Emotional development

Communication and language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. It gives children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations. Frequent reading and access to storytelling and role play engage children actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems. This is where opportunities to use and embed new vocabulary are provided.

Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand- eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy.

Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop important attachments that shape their social world. Building relationships that enable children to understand their own feelings and those of others. To be

supported in managing emotions, developing a sense of self, setting simple goals and having the confidence in their own abilities. With the support of adult modelling, they will be guided to learn how to look after their bodies; to make healthy eating choices and to look after their own personal needs. They will develop social skills and learn how to understand appropriate behaviour in groups.

Specific areas include essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society.

The four specific areas are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive art and design.

Literacy involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems and other written materials) to ignite their interest; learning both language comprehension and word reading. Understanding of spoken word will then move on to writing involving spelling, handwriting and composition.

Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, recognising some number bonds; and to describe shapes, spaces and measures. Children will be encouraged to look for patterns and relationships, spot connections and talk about what they notice, not being afraid to make mistakes.

Understanding the World involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places and the environment.

Expressive Arts and Design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role play, and design and technology.

Screen Time

The school recognises the importance of limiting screen use in the early years. In Nursery and Reception, digital technology will be used sparingly, taking into account DFE guidance, and only where it supports specific learning and development outcomes. Practitioners will prioritise play, communication, physical activity and hands-on experiences, with any screen-based activities being age-appropriate, purposeful and supported by adult interaction. The school will work in partnership with parents and carers to promote healthy screen habits and a balanced approach to technology use.

Transition into School

At Quarry Hill Academy we realise the importance of a smooth transition from home to school (see transition policy).

Key Person

Each child will be assigned a key person. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents/carers.

Parents as Partners

Parents (we use this term throughout this policy to include carers) are the child's first educators. We aim to build on what parents have already started. When parents and practitioners work together it has a positive impact on the child's development and learning. We recognise the importance of parents in young children's learning and thus we aim to develop an effective partnership with parents by:

- getting to know parents and children before they start in the Preschool, Nursery or Reception class
- seeking parental views of their child's development prior to their child starting Preschool/Nursery or Reception and listening to any concerns
- holding regular parent workshops (Reception)
- holding regular parent consultation meetings
- communication through termly newsletters
- inviting parents in to help with external visits
- ensuring that parents are kept informed about the curriculum and their child's development using our online learning platform – Tapestry
- communication through Tapestry
- staff being available at the beginning or end of the day/sessions
- mid-year reports (Reception)
- end of year reports

Special Educational Needs

In the Foundation Stage, we aim to plan for each child's individual learning requirements, including those children who need additional support or have particular needs or disabilities. We aim to remove barriers for children where these already exist and prevent learning difficulties from arising. We aim to work closely with parents to identify learning needs and respond quickly to any area of particular difficulty, developing an effective strategy to meet these needs, making good use of individual education plans. Wherever possible, we will work with other agencies to provide the best possible learning opportunities for individual children.

Learning Environment

Young children need to feel safe and secure, and they also need to be motivated. Children need to have access to a stimulating learning environment which will encourage them to explore, investigate and learn through first hand experiences. It is essential to view the outdoor and indoor area as one learning environment.

It is essential that all areas of provision are:

- inviting and stimulating
- clearly defined for both adults and children

- carefully planned for everyday
- monitored and evaluated
- maintained and replenished
- safe
- clean and tidy

Children need opportunities for uninterrupted play. Therefore, whole class activities should be planned towards the beginning and end of the session to minimise disruption to children's learning. We aim to organise our learning environment so that children can independently access and return resources. A wide selection of resources is made available at child level to encourage children to make independent choices to support their own learning.

Staff: Child Ratios

We ensure that staff are deployed to meet the needs of all children to ensure their safety.

All of our EYFS rooms are overseen by the EYFS lead. In Reception, there will always be a qualified teacher and at least two other members of staff with a relevant qualification. Our Nursery and Preschool rooms are led by practitioners with level 3 qualifications. There are also specialist practitioners that work across the setting.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing teacher assessment has always been an integral part of good practice. It is important to remember that the main reason for assessment is to enable the teacher to match the tasks set to the abilities and needs of the pupils as they progress.

In the Early Years setting, observation is the key to assessment. Sometimes it will be planned with specific learning objectives in mind. At other times it will occur spontaneously during a child's activity. Some observations will be recorded and can be used for *formative* assessment (to inform future planning), *summative* assessment (to share the child's development with parents and colleagues), *evaluative* (to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum) and *diagnostic* (to analyse learning difficulties so that appropriate support can be given). Evidence for assessment will be kept in the children's online 'Learning Journals' which will be used to inform parents as well as the local authority about children's development and attainment. The data will be recorded and used to inform planning, analyse progress and identify any areas for further development.

End of Year Assessment

In the final term of the Reception year, the EYFS Profile must be completed for each child. The profile provides parents, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding, abilities and characteristics of learning, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for year one. These assessments will form the basis of the end of year report for parents. A copy will put be on record for future teachers to access.

Equal Opportunities

At Quarry Hill Academy we provide a Foundation Stage curriculum with the opportunity for pupils to experience, understand and celebrate diversity, free from bias and stereotyping. We combat racial discrimination by promoting equality of opportunity and positive relationships between all different racial groups through our resources, teaching and being good role models.

Health and Safety

Practitioners are responsible for the health and safety of themselves and their pupils (see also Risk Assessments).

Equipment is checked regularly to ensure it is safe.

Pupils are encouraged to:

- collect and return tools and equipment safely
- follow clear instructions about the safe and correct use of tools and equipment both inside and outside
- keep the classrooms tidy
- take responsibility for their own hygiene.

There is access to first aid and parents are informed of accidents. A record is kept of children with special medical needs.

There are several trained paediatric first aiders in the EYFS setting (*see also safeguarding children policy*).

Snack time

Children are provided with a healthy, nutritious snack. The children are offered milk and fresh drinking water is available throughout the day. A list of children with allergies is displayed in each class.

Accident and injury

A first aid box will be accessible at all times (each reception class, Preschool and Nursery have a first aid box). A written record of accidents or injuries and first aid treatment is kept. Parents will be informed and asked to sign the accident book.

Lunch time injuries will be addressed by LSA's on lunch duty; these will be added to the class accident book to inform parents at the end of the day.

Toileting

It is an expectation for children to be toilet trained before they enter Nursery.

However, we understand that children may still have the occasional accident.

Therefore, we ask parents to ensure that their child has spare clothing in their bag, just in case. In the case of an accident children will be expected to change themselves under the supervision of an adult. However, we understand that in the Nursery the children may require assistance, for which we have in our intimate care policy. If a child has additional needs or a medical condition that leads to frequent accidents, the policy would be reviewed with the parent and EYFS leader, and if necessary, a personalised plan would be put in place.

Within our Preschool, we understand that some children may not be fully toilet trained when they start. However, it is our expectation that toilet training will begin at home and will be supported by the Preschool team. Once a child turns 3, we

would then expect them to be toilet trained and any toileting accidents would be managed, as previously mentioned. If there are any concerns regarding toileting, this can be discussed with the key person and the SENCo, where support and guidance can be shared.

Behaviour

The children are praised at every opportunity, and any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with quietly and sympathetically, in accordance with the school policy. (See Behaviour and Anti-bullying Policy.)

Sleep routines

When children begin in the Nursery, it is expected that they will no longer require a nap during the school day; however, cosy areas are still provided if children require rest and relaxation.

We are aware that some of our pupils under 3 may still require a nap during the school day, if attending for both a morning and afternoon session. If this is the case, the key person would discuss the current routine with the parent and make arrangements for during the session. Sleeping arrangements are carefully monitored and at Quarry Hill Academy, we ensure that guidance is carefully followed to ensure that safety steps are taken, in line with sleep guidance from the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, to ensure sleep safety at all times.

As children adapt to their new school routine, we would then work with parents to transition away from day time naps, in readiness to transition to Nursery expectations.