



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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This policy applies to all stakeholders within Ridgeway School

Introduction

This policy sets out the Ridgeway School approach to Early Years education, including the fundamental principles that underpin the curriculum in Early Years and Key Stage 1. This policy is based on requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework.

The purpose of this policy

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes the best possible progress.
- Close partnership working between practitioners, other professionals and with parents and/or carers
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice
- Inclusive, accessible and high-quality education.

The aims of EYFS at Ridgeway:

In the EYFS department at Ridgeway we aim to:

- Provide quality learning experiences for all the children. Learning will be through planned play and practical activities.
- Provide a dedicated space which is child friendly and includes rich learning opportunities through play and playful teaching. This is supported through stimulating resources and supported risk taking.
- Teach the foundations of future learning, these are: tolerance, communication skills, building relationships, problem solving, early maths and literacy, phonics, self-care and independence.
- Provide a child-initiated curriculum that takes account of developmental needs and allows progression, starting and ending with the child.
- Create motivated and effective learners by supporting children to engage with people and the environment by playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically.
- Work in partnership with families and wider professionals to support the progress and development of the children.

Transition into Ridgeway School

Before the children start at the school, a personalised admission process takes place which includes:

- A home visit with their new class teacher and family support worker.
- Visiting pupils in the current education setting and meeting with key workers and current teacher.
- Discussion between school and other professionals involved such as physiotherapists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational therapists and nurses.
- Meeting and discussion with school nursing team and on some occasions a home visit.
- A presentation for families about the school and systems such as ordering lunches and school uniform
- A transition booklet and individual risk assessment of needs.

- A flexible settling in programme to suit each child's individual needs.
- A meeting with family support worker, nursing team and early years teacher to share information prior to pupils starting.

All children are given the opportunity to attend for either a half day or full day according to their age and individual needs. The ultimate aim is for all children to attend full time unless there are exceptional reasons why this may not be possible.

Curriculum

We provide a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum which promotes children's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development within a safe, secure and stimulating environment. The curriculum in Early Years and Key Stage 1 is rooted in the 'learning through play' philosophy, see 'Approaches to Learning' section below.

Our curriculum is determined by the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework. In the Early Years department, we cover the prime and specific areas of learning as listed below:

Prime areas - 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.

- Personal, Emotional and Social Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Life and Living Skills

Specific areas - these include essential skills and knowledge and provide important contexts for learning.

- Literacy
- Maths
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Expressive Arts & Design

Approaches to Learning

Play is a fundamental part of the way that children learn. We believe that learning through play remains developmentally appropriate throughout Early Years, Key Stage 1 and beyond. Children develop their knowledge and understanding in both prime and specific areas by learning through play. Play opportunities are carefully planned and supported by skillful staff in order to support children's learning. Pupils' development is observed by staff and suitable scaffolding provided to take them towards their next step.

Executive function skills help children manage their thoughts, actions, and emotions. We support this development through:

- **Playing and exploring – developing mental flexibility**
Encouraging curiosity and imaginative play helps children adapt to new situations and try different ways of doing things.
- **Active learning – strengthening the ability to focus attention**
Helping children stay engaged and keep trying builds their ability to concentrate, ignore distractions,

and complete tasks.

- **Creating and thinking critically – building working memory**

Encouraging children to plan, make connections, and test ideas helps them remember and use information effectively.

By developing these skills, we support children to become independent, confident, and resilient learners.

In Early Years, a variety of teaching approaches and styles are used to support the children's learning and their developmental needs. During group Attention Autism sessions, the children are improving their focus, attention and turn taking skills. All sessions are highly engaging and exciting, offering the children an irresistible opportunity to learn. Intensive Interaction is a 1:1 session focusing on the Fundamentals of Communication, such as enjoying being with another person, using eye contact and taking turns in conversations.

Our continuous provision areas enable the children to access core resources that are interesting yet familiar to them in defined spaces such as the sensory tuff trays and reading corners.

In Early Years we teach pre-phonics and early reading skills through activities that build and develop each pupil's visual discrimination and memory. This process may take time and involves pupils engaging in multiple multisensory encounters in order to embed this knowledge and be ready to move onto formal phonics sessions. Once children have mastered these pre-reading and writing skills, they are assessed and then move on to accessing formal, synthetic phonics sessions.

Physical Development is also a big part of the day in Early Years which includes weekly access to Forest School sessions, PE sessions and regular access to physical activities both inside and outside the classroom. The outdoor space is used to take learning outside whenever possible and structured curriculum areas are set up outside on a daily basis.

If appropriate some pupils will have individualised timetables for using standers, walking frames, physiotherapy and hydrotherapy, working alongside physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

Planning, Recording and Assessment

Teachers ensure that planning is in place for each of the following areas:

- *Topic planning:* Topics are planned on a three-year rolling programme to ensure breadth of experience. However, planning remains flexible enough to take children's strengths, areas of need and interests into account.
- *Continuous provision:* Core provision that is available to every child daily and supports learning to continue in the classroom, including malleable area, sand and water, art/mark making area, book corner, small world, math's and literacy, heuristic play, role play and physical development.
- *Enhancements:* Additional resources or activities added to the continuous provision relating to the topic and considering children's interests. Enhancements will be carefully planned in order to engage pupils and provide opportunities for them to work toward their targets.
- *Teacher-led sessions:* Throughout the day there are 3 whole class / group teaching times followed by small group or 1:1 sessions planned and delivered by teachers (occasionally Nursery Nurses /

Level 3 TAs) and based on prior assessment.

Teachers conduct a baseline assessment against the Ridgeway curriculum within the first six weeks of joining Ridgeway School. We also complete the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) for pupils where it is appropriate; however, for some children, due to their individual needs, the assessment may not be relevant and they will be disapplied in line with statutory guidance. Assessment is then completed regularly and accurately for every child in their class using the framework. The platform Evidence for Learning is used to record pupils' learning and to collate assessment data. This is also used to record observations in relation to the Engagement Model, which supports effective teaching and learning for pupils with complex learning difficulties and disabilities. It allows teachers and leaders to focus on the pupil's engagement as a learner and create personalised learning pathways. All assessment is fed back into teachers' planning. Assessment information will be shared with parents at Annual Review meetings, and they will also have ongoing access to their child's 'learning journey', made up of learning observations recorded on Evidence for Learning. At the end of the Reception year, we complete the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile for each child, assessing their development against the Early Learning Goals (ELGs).

Pupils' development is also tracked through their progress towards their EHCP long term and short-term outcomes. These are decided upon at Annual Review meetings, in a collaborative process with teachers, senior leaders, parents/carers, other professionals and where appropriate, the pupils themselves.

Working with parents and carers

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents / carers. All staff work closely with parents / carers to ensure strategies are embedded both at school and at home. Key workers are assigned to every child in the EYFS with the teacher retaining oversight of all key workers. Parents / carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development through access to their child's learning journey, consultation evenings and EHCP meetings annually (or every six months when a pupil is under five years of age). In addition, teachers use Class Dojo to engage in two-way communication with parents and carers on a daily basis and to share what pupils will be learning in school. Families are invited into school to attend events such as coffee mornings and stay and open mornings. Teachers and key workers collaborate with other professionals (including, but not limited to, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists and physiotherapists) to ensure the best possible progress for all pupils in the EYFS departments.

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- Ensuring there is a comprehensive and rigorous policy in place to safeguard children.
- Ensuring there is a policy in place in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff (including supply staff) or a volunteer.
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all related policies.
- Ensuring that this policy does not discriminate on any grounds.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy, as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Holding the Headteacher accountable in the implementation of this policy.

The Executive Headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring the effective implementation of this policy.
- Supporting other staff members and leaders to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively in line with this policy.

All staff working within the Early Years setting are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with, and following, this policy.
- Familiarising themselves with, and following, school specific guidance regarding the day-to-day running of the EYFS setting
- Remaining alert to any issues of concern in children.

Legal framework & statutory guidance

This policy is based on requirements set out in the 2024 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Linked policies and procedures:

- Admissions policy
- Attendance policy
- Behaviour policy
- Collective worship policy
- Complaints procedure
- Educational visits policy
- Fire safety policy and procedures
- First aid policy
- Health and safety policy
- Intimate care policy
- Missing child and late collection procedure
- Positive handling policy
- Reading policy
- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions policy and procedures

Equalities and Inclusion

The policy coordinators will apply this policy with due regard to the Equalities Act 2010. The school will ensure that all Early Years and Key Stage 1 pupils are offered an equal opportunity to access the provision outlined in this policy with particular regard to the protected characteristics defined in the Equalities Act 2010. The effectiveness of this policy in relation to the protected characteristics will be monitored by the Early Years/Key Stage 1 Leader through data analysis of key groups, including those which relate to the protected characteristics.

Every pupil at Ridgeway has an EHCP; as a result, our setting is designed to support the needs of pupils with a wide range of different cognitive and physical disabilities. Pupils are taught in inclusive classes alongside peers of the same age. In addition, practitioners ensure pupils' individual needs are met, for example accessing individualised programmes in small groups or on a 1:1 basis.

Safeguarding implications

Good health and wellbeing are constantly promoted in Early Years. Some examples of how this is done:

- Constant promotion of positive behaviour and use of a Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) approach to support pupils and manage behaviour, with support available from the Wooden Hill PBS Lead

- It is a requirement to promote good oral health as part of the overall health promotion in early years settings. Healthy eating is encouraged through developing children’s knowledge and understanding of different foods and many children brush their teeth in school as part of their regular routine.
- Children are supervised within sight and hearing of an adult during mealtimes to promote safety and adequate supervision.
- At least one person who has a current paediatric first aid certificate is on the premises and available at all times when children are present and will accompany children on outings.
- Encouraging healthy lifestyles by regular opportunities for outdoor learning and physical play
- Risk assessments that are written by teachers and followed consistently by staff that protect children, but still encourage them to take age-appropriate and reasonable risks
- Working closely with Speech & Language Therapists to embed a total communication approach across the setting, enhanced by alternative and augmentative communication strategies specific to individual pupils
- The Key Worker system supporting children to build strong attachments with staff.
- Taking opportunities to support children to develop their emotional literacy.
- **Whistleblowing** - We make sure that all staff are aware of our whistleblowing procedures; feel able to raise concerns about any poor or unsafe practice; and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team. In the event that a member of staff feels that they need to blow the whistle on misconduct, they should report their concern to the Executive Headteacher or Head of School. If the concern is about the Executive Headteacher, the staff member should report their concern to the chair of the governing body. See our whistleblowing policy for details of our safer recruitment procedures and more detail on our procedures for handling whistleblowing.
- **Absence** - We’re required to promptly follow up on absences. If a child is absent for a prolonged time or if their parents/carers haven’t told us about the absence, we will attempt to contact the parents/carers and alternative emergency contacts. See our attendance policy for more on this, including our expectations of parents/carers to report child absences.
- **Safer recruitment** - When recruiting staff, we will follow the procedures set out in the latest EYFS framework guidance on checking the suitability of new recruits, including:
 - Obtaining a reference for any member of staff (including students and volunteers) before they are recruited
 - Recording information about staff qualifications and identity checks, vetting processes and references
 - See our safeguarding policy for details of our safer recruitment procedures

The safeguarding and Family Support Teams at Ridgeway work in partnership with relevant professionals from Children’s Services, such as the Children with Disabilities social care team and the Early Help team. Our staff working in Early Years and Key Stage 1 follow our Ridgeway Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, which sets out our whole-setting approach to safeguarding – including recognition of the additional barriers involved in safeguarding children with additional needs – and the training, systems and processes that Ridgeway has in place for safeguarding children effectively; this includes the implementation of the Prevent duty. Staff also follow the Ridgeway procedures for managing concerns and allegations regarding staff and other adults working within Ridgeway.

Sustainability implications

None