

# RIVERSIDE SCHOOL



## Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

APPROVED BY GOVERNORS

RESPONSIBLE PERSON – HEADTEACHER

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## **1. Introduction**

The Early Years are a fundamental part of every child's learning journey. At Riverside School we invite all our families to join us as we embark on this exciting journey together; making memories and building special relationships. Together, we plan for and provide an enriching, engaging and truly personalised curriculum for every child focussing on communication and the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

We are passionate about giving every one of our children a voice, a choice and every opportunity to Be All That They Can Be at Riverside School. We provide a safe, positive and enabling environment, where children are guided and supported by adults that they trust, allowing them to feel confident to explore the world around them, extend their interests and discover their passions.

At Riverside School, our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) will provide:

- Irresistible, engaging and memorable experiences for all our pupils. Exploration and learning will be through practical and play activities which are structured and personalised to the pupil and where appropriate these will relate to real world experiences;
- A profoundly personalised curriculum which takes account of, and responds to the pupil's developmental needs and allows them to make progress;
- Positive experiences of success at their own levels in order to give them confidence and motivation for learning in the future. this will offer support and trust allowing our pupils to "have a go" themselves and learn from their own experiences;
- Appropriate support so all pupils can achieve the five outcomes for Every Child Matters (ECM), staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being;
- A curriculum which enables every Early Years pupil to access the 7 areas of the Early Years curriculum, following the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (2023) and Development Matters (2023). Staff use these to promote the 'Early Learning Goals', using Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs) and building close relationships with families;
- A setting which has at its core the four key themes which underpin the EYFS guidance: a unique child, positive relationships, enabling environments and learning and development;
- A curriculum with equal learning and development opportunities for all pupils; and
- A partnership with families to support and enhance the development of the pupils in every aspect of their learning.

## **2. Our Early Years Curriculum**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) classes at Riverside School aim to provide pupils with a fun, creative and enticing start to their Riverside Journey.

Our curriculum enables pupils to learn and develop skills within the seven areas of learning outlined by the EYFS Framework. However, we also provide a profoundly personalised curriculum which reflects, measures and celebrates strengths, achievements and progress.

Please see the following Prime and Specific areas of learning.

The Prime areas are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED);
- Communication and Language (C&L); and
- Physical Development (PD).

The Specific areas are:

- Mathematics;
- Literacy;
- Understanding the World; and
- Expressive Art and Design.

Throughout the Early Years we plan activities to give pupils learning experiences and opportunities to work towards the Early Learning Goals as well as their Personalised Learning Plans. Teaching and Learning will take place within the classroom, in the outside areas, in the community and in our specialised facilities. Within these areas pupils will participate in a variety of activities, independently, with adults and with their peers.

We are acutely aware that our pupils learning is holistic and therefore ensure we have no missed opportunities. This extends to working closely with our therapists and families, regularly sharing achievements and expectations. Sometimes some of the most valuable assessments can come from independent child initiation at home and we value and promote information sharing between home and school.

### **3. Climate for Learning**

Practitioners:

- Understand and observe each pupil's development and learning, assess progress and plan for next steps.
- Support pupils to develop a positive sense of their own identity and culture.
- Identify any need for additional support.
- Keep pupils safe.
- Value and respect all pupils and families equally.

Positive relationships are:

- Warm and loving, and foster a sense of belonging.

- Sensitive and responsive to the pupil's needs.
- Supportive of the pupil's own efforts and independence.
- Consistent in setting clear boundaries.
- Stimulating.
- Value key support relationships.

Enabling Environments:

- Encourage spontaneous learning.
- Encourage independence.
- Offer support at every level of communication.
- Offer stimulating resources, relevant to all the pupil's cultures and communities.
- Provide rich learning opportunities through play and playful teaching.
- Support pupils to take risks and explore.

#### **4. Our Play Policy**

Playing and exploring is the first characteristic of effective learning outlined by the Early Years guidance. At Riverside School, we believe that play provides one of the most valuable contexts for our pupils to explore, grow and develop. We believe that play, both inside and outside the classroom, is the fundamental way in which our pupils learn. Play can be both enjoyable and challenging. When playing, our pupils may behave in different ways. Through independent and scaffolded play, our pupils will be developing skills across all the Prime and Specific areas of learning, working towards achieving the Early Learning Goals as well as working towards their Personalised Learning Plans. We ensure that the opportunities we offer and the way we support learning enables our pupils to be all that they can be.

In a secure environment with effective adult support, pupils will be able to:

- Explore, develop and represent learning experiences that help them make sense of the world.
- Practice and build concepts, ideas and skills.
- Learn how to control impulses and understand the need for rules.
- Be independent, be alongside others or co-operate as they communicate their feelings.
- Take risks and make mistakes.
- Think creatively and imaginatively.
- Interact and communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.
- Express fears to relieve anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Adults in the setting will support play by:

- Planning and resourcing a stimulating environment.
- Having in depth knowledge of Schema-Play and identifying pupils' dominant schemes, knowing how to use this information to seed the environment and

scaffold learning through play.

- Supporting pupils' learning through planned play.
- Extending and supporting pupils' spontaneous play.
- Extending and developing pupils' language and communication to the pupil's SCERTS partner stage by following the ShREC approach (see Appendix 1).
- Listening to all forms of pupils' communication and their ideas and taking these into account when developing play and planning.
- Narrating pupils' play.
- Asking questions about pupils' play.

## **5. Schema Play**

Schema Play is at the heart of our play curriculum. Schema Play identifies nine schemas that children may display when they are exploring the world around them, and are categorised into different actions that children will show from the first months of development until the end of the Early Years. The schemas are:

- Trajectory;
- Transporting;
- Rotational;
- Enclosing;
- Enveloping;
- Orientation;
- Connecting;
- Transforming; and
- Positioning.

The Early Years team's in-depth knowledge of Schema Play allows them to identify pupils' dominant play schemas and unique lines of enquiry. Staff then use this knowledge to seed the environment around them and plan engaging and motivating learning activities during free-flow and structured learning time.

## **6. Spontaneous Play vs Structured Play**

It is crucial that the adults appreciate the importance of play as a process and do not become overly focussed on end results. Whilst learning that may result from spontaneous play is likely to be incidental, we also encourage developing structured and purposeful play with the aim of promoting learning.

We support learning through play using an observational approach allowing pupils to maintain control of play while providing opportunities and ideas to develop their play further. Through scaffolding play we can enable our pupils to develop the skills they need to become successful learners.

Due to the complex needs of our pupils, we also need to ensure that we offer structured sessions to ensure progress in the specific areas of development which can be harder for

some pupils to evidence through play. We may need to teach our pupils to play before they can access learning through play. As well as having opportunities to learn through play, pupils are also enabled to self-regulate through the access to and use of larger free play areas, enhancing their learning throughout the day.

## **7. Planning, Recording, Assessment and Progress**

The Early Years follow the school's topic-based curriculum. In addition to free flow activities addressing all 7 areas of learning, we ensure we offer structured sessions such as Sensory Stories, Mathematics, PSED, Literacy and Expressive Arts. These allow pupils to be immersed in the topic whilst developing in all areas of the curriculum. At the same time, pupils will be working towards their Personalised Learning Plans and Education, Health and Care Plans.

Topic planning takes place on a half-termly basis. An Early Years plan is written and ensures that each of the seven areas of the curriculum are being taught through discrete sessions, as well as through free-flow play. Communication and Language activities are weaved into all areas of the pupil's day following the pupils preferred communication method. This ensures that all curriculum areas are covered. It also highlights opportunities throughout the day when natural learning may take place e.g., independence and communication during snack time. Our Early Years plans are created using Development Matters and the Engagement areas. They allow pupils to learn through repetition and focuses on staff using a reflection-based approach to learning, following the 'Assess, Plan, Do' review model. This ensures that appropriate adaptations are made to provide all pupils with suitable challenge and modifications, so that all pupils make progress in each curriculum area.

Adult focussed and independent activities are planned on a daily basis. Pupils have the opportunity to work in each of the learning areas within the classroom and outdoor area. Whole class, group and individual activities are used to develop skills in all areas of the curriculum, as appropriate.

Assessment is carried out daily using the app "Evidence Me". Each Early Years class has access to a number of iPods/ iPads and uses the app on these to take photos and virtual post it notes. The "Evidence Me" app provides an individual profile for each pupil which is automatically updated via Wi-Fi. Each pupil observation is linked to the Personal Learning Plan focus, Engagement Area and Learning Approach used. Each pupil has a Pupil Progress folder which contains SOLAR assessments for both Personalised Learning Plans, showing a baseline assessment, prediction of progress and the progress made. Evidence of progress includes pupil's Unique Profile, copies of Personalised Learning Plans and Happiness Passports.

At the end of the EYFS year, all adults will have identified an appropriate early intervention for each of the pupils. All adults will also understand the pupils preferred learning styles, dominant play schemas, their motivators and their preferred mode of communication and how they communicate with adults and their peers. All pupils will then be placed into

the right pathway group for them as they transition from the Early Years to Primary.

For pupils in an Early Years setting over the age of five, we still offer an Early Years curriculum; however, for these pupils, assessment on the "2buildaprofile" app is linked to the pupil's Personalised Learning Plans and R Levels, not the EYFS. Pupils in an Early Years class will have a Learning Journal regardless of their age as we ensure we are providing all our pupils with every possible experience to be all that they can be.

## **8. Engagement with Families**

At Riverside School we ensure that all our families are as involved as possible in their child's education, and value that they are our pupil's first educators. Personal Learning Plans are written and reviewed twice a year. Structured conversations are held each time a new Personal Learning Plan is written, and these are an opportunity for families to discuss their child's progress with the class team and discuss what is really important to the child and the family. These plans are also in line with each pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan, which are reviewed twice a year in pupil's Early Years reviews. During the reviews, a Progress Report is written, and family contributions and wishes are valued and included. Families can contact staff in writing, via email or by telephone, and all pupils have a home-school contact book to keep in regular contact. We ensure that we seek to understand each family's preferred communication method and use their preference to keep open lines of communication.

In addition to structured conversations, every term families will be invited to our 'Blossoms' session run jointly by school staff and the Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs). These sessions will be tailored to each class and the communication needs of its pupils, focussing on ways to support communication development both within the home and school environment.

They will include:

- Parent/ carer training presentation – delivered by SLTs
- Group session – in class for pupils and parents/ carers run jointly by the SLTs and school staff.
- Free flow – in class for school staff and SLTs to model communication supports including paper-based and electronic Augmentative and Alternative Communication
- Parent coffee mornings – where class teachers and SLTs will be available to answer any questions you may have.

Parents/ carers are invited to attend these groups in order to:

- Join in and have fun with their child while supporting their child individually to access the session to the best of their availability.
- Access support from school staff and SLTs.
- Discuss their child's communication and/ or anything they are unsure of with both

school staff and SLTs.

We understand the importance of the Early Years at Riverside School, therefore we have a very supportive transition process. We work closely with each family and education key workers for each pupil and ensure that a transition meeting has taken place as well as a stay and play opportunity so the pupils get to experience their new classroom environment. Every family will also be offered a home visit before they join the Riverside Family.

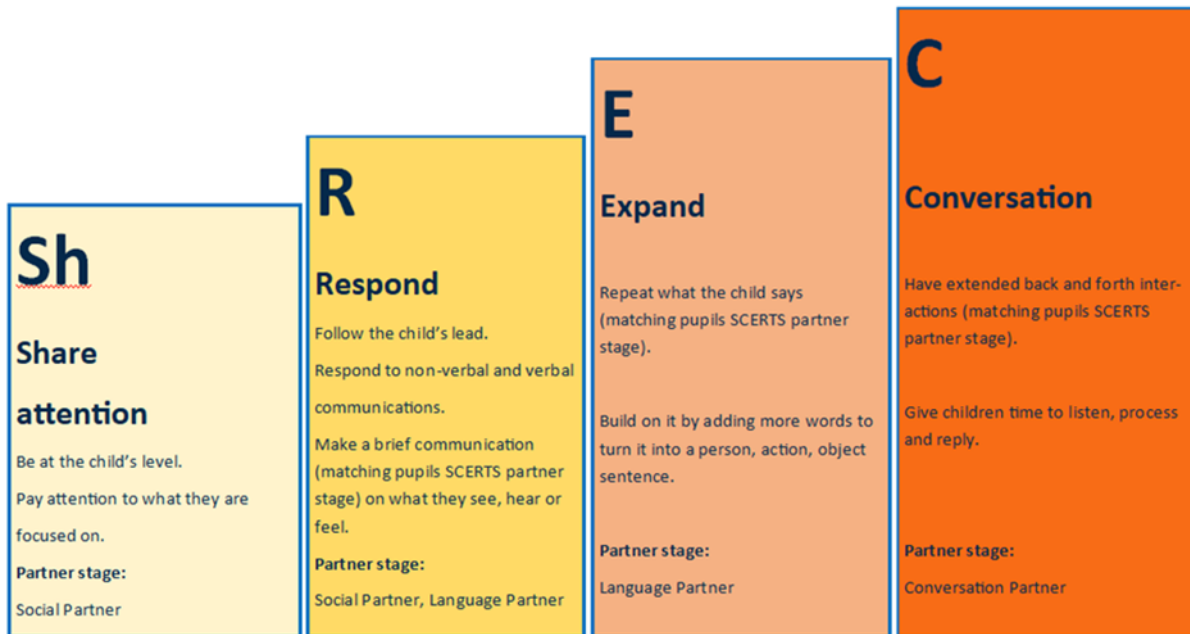
Pupils who join in Nursery will join Riverside Nursery on an assessment placement which will give us the opportunity to support families through the EHCP process. The class team will support the family and education key worker in writing the first outcomes.

Pupils joining in reception are invited to a "Teddy Bears Picnic" which gives the families an opportunity to meet the class team and the pupils a chance to explore their new early years class and make friends with some of their peers.

## Appendix 1 – The ShREC Model

Our staff understand the importance of high-quality play interactions, and in order to support our pupils' play skills we incorporate the ShREC model:

### HIGH QUALITY PLAY INTERACTIONS AT RIVERSIDE



This model enables supporting adults to share pupils play opportunities and match their responses based on their SCERTS partner stage. This means that pupils are always the leaders of their play and supporting adults are skilled in knowing when and how to interact with them in meaningful ways, extending their communication and reciprocal play skills.