



The Mall School

Early Years Policy

Overview

We believe all children should be inspired with a lifelong love of learning. Our mission is to create an environment that ignites the love of learning in children, through passion, joy, confidence and happiness. We will achieve this by providing a supportive community and place to grow, where everyone has a voice. A place where true potential can be developed, whether it is academic, sporting, musical, dramatic or artistic. We will guide all children to develop their natural curiosity and independence leading to happy confident individuals, with a lifelong love of learning.

Principles

This policy is based on the of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021) which establishes the standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to five.

1. We believe that the first five years of each child's life are uniquely important.
2. The readiness of each child to embrace the learning experience in school will depend on their primary learning opportunities at home. We believe that the EYFS curriculum should recognise that state of readiness and should build on from the child's existing skills, supporting and developing them in the ways most appropriate to that child. We aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that gives children the knowledge and skills needed for good progress through the school.
3. In the early years, the basis of learning is that of teaching, alongside structured play that accommodates and stimulates physical, social, intellectual and emotional development through as wide a range as possible of carefully formulated and supported activities. It is from exploring and investigating their environment and the web of social relationships that children take the first steps towards real learning.
4. We believe that Reception should offer each child the opportunity to build on their early experiences by providing a safe, caring, stimulating and orderly environment.
5. By the end of Reception we aim to produce confident children who are well prepared for the next stage in their schooling. We aim to ensure quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child is left behind.
6. We aim to ensure a close partnership between staff at the School and with parents.
7. We aim to ensure that every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti discriminatory practice.
8. We endeavour to provide the highest quality care and education to ensure that the children learn and develop well and are kept safe and healthy.

Structure and curriculum

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development that are equally important and interconnected – three prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children’s capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. The three prime areas are:

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

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through four specific areas:

- Literacy
 - Mathematics
 - Understanding the World
 - Expressive Arts and Design
- a) Communication and Language / Literacy development: children are helped towards competency in English through talking, listening and becoming readers and writers. We value linguistic diversity and the use of the home language, at the same time as making provision for those EAL pupils who would benefit from extra help to access the curriculum (see the School’s EAL policy).
- b) Physical Development: devoted to developing children’s co-ordination, strength balance and spacial awareness both indoors and outside. This includes learning to hold a pencil correctly, usually the tripod grip, and developing manipulation skills and hand strength by using a range of small tools.
- c) Personal, social and emotional development: children learn how to work, play, co-operate with others and function in a group beyond the family. It covers important issues concerning the development of social, moral and spiritual growth, including an understanding of personal values and self-worth. A positive attitude towards leading a healthy and active way of life is encouraged.
- d) Mathematics: children cover the basic aspects of mathematical understanding and provide the foundation for numeracy through practical tasks and understanding simple mathematical language.
- e) Understanding the World: centres on developing the children’s knowledge and understanding of their environment, other people and features of the natural and manufactured world. It provides a foundation for historical, geographical and scientific learning.
- f) Expressive Arts and Design: children are given the maximum opportunity to nourish and enrich their imaginative skills and to communicate their ideas and feelings in a creative way by exploring a widening range of multi-media resources.

Four guiding principles shape practice. These are:

- every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self assured;
- children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships;

- children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents;
- and children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

For each area of learning there are statutory Early Learning Goals which establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS. Each child will work at his own pace through the "stepping stones" of progress towards the Early Learning Goals of the EYFS and, when ready, will be introduced to the appropriate elements of The Mall curriculum at Year 1.

Each child needs and has the entitlement to an early childhood education enriched by a programme which develops the all round requirements of the child at four and five years old. We believe that our Early Years curriculum provides a structured and balanced programme of activities that recognises individual needs and that fosters the progression towards independence and readiness for Year 1 at The Mall.

Staffing and Resources

The Reception class has a full-time, fully qualified class teacher and an appropriately qualified teaching assistant (including a qualified paediatric first aider). It is the role of the Early Years staff to facilitate, structure and monitor the cross-curricular activities through a programme of specific learning goals that are appropriate at each level of the child's development. The curriculum is further enriched by access to outdoor play; sports hall; swimming pool; theatre; visits to centres of interest and learning; in-class interactive whiteboards; and stimulating classroom and whole school displays of work. Risk assessments, which follow guidelines on proper adult to pupil ratios, are carried out for visits and annually for the premises and resources.

Planning and Teaching

Teaching methods take account of three key strands in the planning and structure of our Early Years curriculum, i.e. the provision for the different starting points for each child; for experiences that match differing levels of ability and for planned; meaningful activities that maximise learning opportunities. Children should have access to learning through individual play and in groups; in partnership with their teachers and classroom assistants; in the classroom and outdoors; and in an environment that provides an enriched curriculum and that fosters mutual confidence and respect. In planning and guiding children's activities, staff reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice.

Activities for learning are available in the context of infant resourced classrooms and in such a way as to allow each child to experiment, discover and to experience a wide variety of activities; and to explore imaginative, structured role-play. Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult led and child-initiated activities.

Working with parents

We believe that in order to inform good teaching practice, it is essential to build and maintain positive partnerships with parents. This depends on giving parents access to a) what we are providing and b) information on how their children are learning and developing. At The Mall, parents are invited to share in a range of events and activities throughout the school year and are encouraged to maintain regular contact with the Reception staff on an informal basis.

There is a New Parents' Evening in the summer term immediately prior to the children's entry to the School and, in the year prior to entry, regular opportunity for the children to visit the school to spend time in their future classrooms. During the autumn term there is a Reception class meeting for all parents where the curriculum and general house-keeping matters are discussed. In addition, parents may attend two formal evening appointments per year for an individual review of their child's progress and receive a written 'settling in' report during the autumn term as well as a detailed written report in the summer term.

The summer term report includes a summary of pupils' progress against the Early Learning Goals. It also includes a written account of how a child has progressed in terms of the characteristics of effective learning. Parents are given the opportunity to discuss this report and the EYFS profile should they wish to do so.

Assessment

We recognise the importance of regular, systematic assessment in understanding the developmental progress of each child and its impact on our future planning. At The Mall School, our assessment and record-keeping incorporates profiling, daily informal observations and discussions and regular information gathering using the Early Learning Goals' criteria. Information from previous schools and nurseries may also be included and we see our pupil profiles as providing a useful basis for discussing each child's work with his parents and other teachers.

Within the first six weeks of starting Reception pupils will complete the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

At the end of the EYFS, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals, indicating whether they are:

- meeting expected levels of development or
- not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions with parents. The results of the profile are shared with parents at the end of the Reception year.

The Mall School
Autumn 2024
(Review Autumn 2025)