



## Early Years Policy

### Statement and Rationale

At Rowena we value the importance of providing children with the best start to their education. We believe that this is most successful when children are actively involved in, and take ownership of their learning through a balance of child initiated and adult led activities. We aim to provide indoor and outdoor learning environments which are safe, stimulating and inspirational to children as they explore and learn through their experiences. We endeavour to make children feel comfortable and confident within the setting to allow them to access all learning opportunities at their own level. We acknowledge the importance of the home school partnership and actively encourage collaboration with parents and carers to ensure that children receive high quality early learning, providing the right foundations for good progress throughout school and life.

As outlined in the EYFS *'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances.'*

This policy supports our school vision statement of 'hand in hand together we can'. It also supports our whole school ethos of developing a Rowena Person.



### Aims and Objectives

Our aims in the Foundation Stage are:

1. To provide a caring atmosphere and secure environment which is welcoming to both children and parents.
2. To create a rich and varied environment, stimulating curiosity and encouraging development of the whole child.
3. To actively promote the development of positive self-image within the children, so that they gain confidence and independence.
4. To establish and maintain positive relationships with parents.
5. To create a happy, educational climate in which all of our children, respectful of their individual background, gender, ethnicity, race and disability, if any, have the same opportunities for personal advancement.

6. To create a developmentally appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of each individual child.
7. To provide opportunities for children to experience their world, through a variety of first hand experiences and play situations.
8. To actively encourage parents to become involved in all aspects of their child's education.
9. To have full involvement with the local community.
10. To develop and maintain strong links with other agencies.

## **Admissions Policy Statement**

At Rowena we believe that it is crucial to provide a caring and cheerful atmosphere to welcome both the children and their parents to the academy. We want the children to begin their school career feeling calm, relaxed and above all happy. To enable this to happen, the academy has developed a gradual but structured entry programme into both Nursery and Reception to allow the staff to foster home school links and to get to know the children and parents on an individual basis. This we feel is vital in helping the children to settle easily and to create an environment where the child's home experiences are valued, so that parents and Nursery/ Reception staff can work together in partnership to help each child develop to his or her full potential.

### **Nursery Intake**

Parents of children due to attend Nursery are invited to attend meeting which is held at the beginning of July prior to the September start date to give parents an opportunity to meet the Nursery staff and look around the Nursery indoor and outdoor provision. At this meeting the parents are welcomed to the Academy and an information pack is given to parents which includes all of the relevant information that they need to know for when their child starts Nursery. At the beginning of September parents and children are invited to attend a stay and play session within Nursery in order to allow children and parents to familiarise themselves with the environment and to help children feel more comfortable and confident within the setting. The children are then divided into smaller groups and allocated start dates which are staggered to allow the children to familiarise themselves with the Nursery routines and staff.

### **Reception Transition**

Transitions are carefully planned for and time given to ensure continuity of learning. At any transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings, including nurseries and childminders. Children attend introductory sessions to Reception to develop familiarity with the setting and staff. For the children attending our Nursery regular visits to school take place to help introduce the children to the wider context of school beyond the Nursery. Older children visit Nursery to deliver messages or share their work and the Nursery children make regular visits across to school in return to help them become familiar with the school buildings and staff. These visits occur throughout the year and arise both formally, when the whole class visit for such occasions as hall times, Squiggle While you Wiggle or special assemblies and informally when occasion arises such as taking messages or collecting resources in school. In the Summer Term the Reception teachers visit the Nursery to play with and get to know the children and then invite the children to come and visit them in their own classrooms. These return visits are undertaken in small groups with a member of the Nursery staff so that the children can look around and join in where appropriate.

To involve the parents in the transition from Nursery to full time school, a meeting is held at the beginning of July to give parents an opportunity to meet the Reception teachers and look around the classrooms. At this meeting the programme of staggered start is explained in full and an information pack is given to parents. A series of booklets are available to parents to help them understand how the academy approaches the teaching of variety of subjects and how they can help their children at

home. During the last few weeks of the school year the children visit their new classrooms in their class groups for an activity session to help them become more familiar with their new surroundings and new teacher.

In the final term in Reception, the Year 1 teacher will meet with the Early Years staff and discuss each child's development against the Early Learning Goals in order to support a smooth transition to Year 1. This discussion helps the Year 1 teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children.

## **Reception Intake**

### **Staggered Start**

To help make the children's transition to full time school as easy as possible the Reception children follow a short staggered start programme at the beginning of the Autumn Term.

Each class is divided into two groups so that for the first week of term just half the class attend at any one time, allowing the teacher to get to know the children individually.

*Week 1-* The children attend for half a day alternating between mornings and afternoons but the morning session is extended by 30 minutes for each group at the end of the week to include a lunch.

*Week 2 -* All the children attend together for the full day.

### **Playtime**

During playtime, the Reception children play together in their own Outdoor Areas supervised by the Reception staff. At lunchtime, they share playtime with the older children on the school playground. The Reception staff remain outside with them for the first few weeks to provide reassurance where necessary. During lunchtimes, the Reception children also benefit from additional intervention clubs such as Number Jumpers, Launchpad Leapers and Phonics Flyers to provided extra support with early Mathematics and Literacy skills.

### **Physical Education**

The Reception children begin P.E during the first few weeks of the term. Initially the children just remove their shoes and socks for the lesson but as confidence increases they are then asked to get changed for P.E into their P.E kit (provided by the Academy).

### **Assemblies**

Initially the children have Class and Year Group Assemblies until staff feel that they are confident enough to attend whole school assemblies. The Reception staff stay in the assemblies for the first few times to provide stability and reassurance where necessary.

### **Parents as Partners and the Wider Context**

We strive to create and maintain partnership with parents and carers as we recognise that together, we can have a significant impact on a child's learning. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate confidently in their child's education and care in numerous ways.

Working with other services and organisations is integral to our practice in order to meet the needs of our children. At times we may need to share information with other professionals to provide the best support possible.

We draw on our links with the community to enrich children's experiences by taking them on School Visits and inviting members of the community into our setting.

### **Curriculum**

We adhere to the Statutory Framework of the EYFS and the four guiding principles that shape practice within Early Years settings:

- 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/or carers.
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.**

### Principles into Practice

As part of our practice we:

- Provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven areas of learning, using play as the vehicle for learning.
- Promote equality of opportunity and diversity. We provide early intervention for those children who require additional support.
- Work in partnership with parents and within the wider context.
- Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult-initiated and child-initiated, supported by the adult.
- Have a key person approach to develop close relationships with individual children.
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and out.

### Foundation Stage Curriculum

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests, and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve and exceed the early learning goals.

All the seven areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These three areas are the **prime** areas:

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

Children are also supported through the four **specific** areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The **specific** areas are:

- **Literacy**
- **Mathematics**

- **Understanding the World**
- **Expressive Arts and Design**

The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined by the EYFS when early years practitioners interact to stretch and challenge children further

***'Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities'***

### **Phonics in the Foundation Stage**

In Nursery phonics teaching is focused on Phase 1 of Letter and Sounds, developing children's speaking and listening skills with an emphasis on getting children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills. Children do this through listening for environmental and instrumental sounds, alliteration, rhyme and voice sounds. These activities will develop children's ability to segment words into sounds and to blend sounds into words (oral blending and segmenting) vital prerequisite skills for spelling and reading.

Staff use the Launchpad to Literacy materials to help children develop the skill they need to be successful in phonics and early reading. There are key skills in the Launchpad approach that significantly impact pupil's phonic development, these include developing a child's Visual Memory, their ability to identify and remember things and their Sequential Auditory Memory, their ability to remember things in the correct order. Staff also support children in developing their Auditory Blending skills by teaching children to blend compound words (e.g. toothbrush) and words with more than one syllable (e.g. elephant) as a prerequisite to blending sounds together to read words.

After Christmas children In Nursery are introduced to the sounds (phonemes) and the letters which make these sounds (graphemes). Teachers use the Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) materials when introducing these letters to children. Alongside the introduction of weekly graphemes staff teach 'Squiggle While You Wiggle' sessions to develop children's gross and fine motor skills.

In Reception teachers continue to use the ELS phonics programme. They start the year by teaching Phase 2 in which children focus on learning the most common graphemes and by the end of Phase 2 children should be able to read some vowel-consonant (VC) and consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words, and spell them out. They also learn some 'Harder to Read and Spell' (HRS) words.

There are 44 graphemes in all, some are made with two letters (digraph) and some are made with three letters (trigraphs). In Phase 3 children are introduced to phonemes mainly made up of two letters such as /ch/, /ar/, /ow/ and /ee/. Alongside this, children are taught to recognise more 'Harder to Read and Spell' (HRS) words. They learn the names of the letters, as well as the sounds they make. By the end of Phase 3, they should be able to say the sound made by most, or all, Phase 2 and 3 graphemes, blend and read words made up of these graphemes and read simple sentences containing them.

After Easter Reception children look at Phase 4, which teaches them to blend and segment longer words with adjacent consonants. Adjacent consonants are two or more consonants that are next to each other in a word. For example, in the word 'lost' the 's' and 't' are adjacent consonants. Children in Reception finish the year by learning 20 new Phase 5 graphemes and more HRS words. Children's progress is assessed and tracked carefully throughout their time in Reception and teachers use the ELS Intervention sessions and Launchpad to Literacy materials to help those children who may need it. Further to this, additional intervention clubs including Launchpad Leapers and Phonics Flyers, are delivered throughout the week during lunchtimes. These clubs offer carefully planned, additional small group teaching, with extra incentives to encourage and inspire further phonics progress.

## **Planning**

At Rowena, planning is a collaborative process between year group colleagues. Topics are changed half termly or termly and are planned for in advance of a new topic. New topics are introduced to the children and they are encouraged to share what their current understanding of the topic is and what they would like to find out more about. It is also an opportunity for the children to consider ways in which they would like to go about their learning suggesting activity ideas and possible lines of enquiry. This is then fed back into the next year group planning meeting to formulate the sequence of events.

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are adult led across both the indoor and outdoor provision. Children have whole group and small group times which increase as they progress through the EYFS with times for a daily phonics session using 'Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS)', teaching aspects of Mathematics and Literacy, including shared reading and writing.

## **Assessment**

At Rowena we believe that assessments should be built up throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, from ongoing teaching and learning. This includes many forms of assessment and a range of approaches to collecting evidence throughout the Foundation Stage, including:

- My Book - assessments devised by the Academy and completed at the beginning of Reception.
- Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) in Reception - standardised assessments.
- 'I can' statement cards.
- Target Folders.
- Launchpad to Literacy tracker.
- Formal assessments in Nursery of:
  - 'I can write my name....'
  - 'Picture of Me' etc
  -
- Formal assessments in Reception of:
  - Phonics.
  - Reading assessments.
  - Number recognition/ formations.
  - Letter recognition/ formation.
  - Graphemes recognition/ write.
  - Harder to Read and Spell Words (HRS).
  - Writing Developments.

Assessment against Development Matters/ Early Learning Goals is tracked where data is entered on a half-termly basis in order to closely monitor the children's progress across all areas of learning.

## **Target Setting**

### **Nursery**

In Nursery targets are set using 'I can' statements. The 'I can' statements are targets, in child friendly speak, that the children will be working towards in Nursery and cover all areas of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The targets are displayed in Nursery and are discussed with parents/ guardians at Open Evening. The teacher and parent/ guardian will agree the progress that the child has made in the first few weeks of Nursery and agree targets for future development. During the year the Nursery staff will track progress against the 'I can' statements. Towards the end of Nursery there is

an opportunity to meet with parents/ guardians to review their child's achievements against the 'I can' statements.

### **Reception**

In Reception all children have a 'Target Folder' in their drawer which contains their 'I can' target sheets and a set of 'Target Certificates.' The children colour in an 'I can' target when the teacher and child agree that a target has been met. Parents are given a copy of the 'I can' targets at the beginning of Reception and are discussed with parents at Open Evening. The 'Target Certificates' are used to regularly assess children on their own individual targets. When they have achieved a target the achievement is celebrated and the 'Target Certificate' is taken home so that parents are kept informed of their child's progress and can celebrate their achievements at home.

### **Records of Achievement**

At Rowena each individual child's Record of Achievement contains the following:

#### **Pupil Profile**

This is completed just before each child enters Nursery. It contains important information about emergency contacts, medical details and records involvement with any outside agencies. The information sheet should be made available at Open Evening for regular updates.

#### **Pre-school Profile**

This is distributed to parents at the Nursery meeting and returned to Nursery staff when it is completed.

#### **All About Me**

This is completed in partnership with the child and his or her parents on entry to the Nursery.

#### **'I can' targets**

The Nursery and Reception 'I can' targets are shared with parents and updated at regular intervals throughout the school year.

#### **My Book- Reception Baseline results**

All children complete a 'My Book' at the beginning of the Reception year. All results are recorded in Assessment Manager and these are used to measure progress and value added.

#### **RBA Baseline Results**

The data returned from the RBA baseline produces individual reports for each child's results.

#### **Annual Report**

Annual Reports are completed by the class teachers once a year and are sent out to parents in July.

#### **Monitoring and Review**

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum is monitored to ensure breadth, balance and relevance to individual pupils. This will be achieved by continual assessment of pupils against Development Matters and the EYFS Curriculum.

The delivery of the EYFS curriculum is monitored by the consultation of yearly planning grids, which give an overall picture of curriculum coverage. In addition the Head of Academy and EYFS Co-ordinator monitor the medium and weekly planning and observe and review EYFS lessons to ensure consistency of teaching and learning throughout the Academy.

The Senior Leadership Team meet regularly to discuss:

- implementation of the EYFS curriculum within the Academy.
- analysis of EYFS data.
- performance analysis in relation to the Academy Development Plan.
- outcomes in relation to development priorities and their impact upon teaching and learning.
- future developments in accordance with the Academy Development Plan.

AAB (Academy Advisory Body) members are also invited to monitor the effectiveness of the Academy through a variety of other activities including learning walks and classroom observation.

Staff are continuously developing their EYFS subject knowledge and the subject leader takes an active role in disseminating best practice, keeping staff informed of current developments in Early Years and making recommendations for staff training.

This policy was reviewed in September 2024 and will be reviewed again in September 2025.

Signed

*G. Cowlishaw*

Head of Academy