



EYFS Policy

Priestley Smith Specialist VI School

June 2023

Policy review date: June 2024

Policy status: Statutory

Responsible member of SLT: Louise Herbert Assistant Headteacher

Priestley Smith School is committed to the rights of the child as outlined in the UN Convention and is working towards Rights Respecting Schools Gold award. This belief influences everything the school does and impacts upon all our policies.

Article 3

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.

Article 23

A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and independence, and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to provide support to disabled children.

Article 29

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full.

1. AIMS

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- A close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

2. LEGISLATION

This policy is based on requirements set out in the [statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) that applies from September 2021](#).

3. INTRODUCTION

'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. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up' (Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework 2021)

4. STRUCTURE OF THE EYFS

The EYFS is based upon four key principles:

- A unique child
- Positive relationships
- Enabling environments
- Learning and developing

5. A UNIQUE CHILD

At Priestley Smith Specialist School we recognise that every child is a unique learner who develops in an individual way.

Children from two to five years old are cared for in our EYFS setting, where they are provided with a broad range of knowledge and skills. Children who's developmental delay is more significant may be offered an additional year as a supportive measure. Staff in the EYFS include a teacher, a Higher Level Teaching Assistant specialising in EYFS and a Teaching Assistant.

As they take their first steps into a full-time, school-based education system, pupils work within the EYFS framework with a curriculum that is flexible and designed to meet their personal needs. The curriculum is designed to build on each individual's strengths and interests building on pupil's own experiences as a foundation for new learning, with planning and assessment being in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.

Children are able to use their own knowledge of the world as a starting point on which to give meaning to their learning. The pupil's understanding is gradually extended through concrete, real life resources, activities and first-hand experiences within the school setting, local and wider community.

Our VI expertise and provision allow us to have play-based, tactile and experiential learning for all pupils, including those that respond better to structure, need support to explore or learn new play skills or need physical assistance. The importance of play is integral and can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts. These additional curriculum and educational opportunities are designed and contextualised specifically for the development of children with a VI and additional needs on an individual basis.

6. POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

At Priestley Smith Specialist School we recognise that children learn and develop well through strong and positive relationships. Children and their families often have many professionals involved and we believe it is important to develop a partnership between all agencies involved with each child, including health, education and social care.

6.1 Working with parents

We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Prior to children starting school in the EYFS we talk to parents about their child's needs, taking into account any additional professional advice. Children and their families are able to attend 'stay and play' sessions in order to ensure a smooth transition to the setting.

Parents / carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. The progress check and EYFS profile as well as EHCP reviews and parent/ carer meetings helps to provide parents / carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

Each child is assigned a key person who helps to ensure that their learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. The key person supports parents / carers in guiding their child's development at home. The key person also helps families to engage with appropriate specialist support.

As a specialist setting with many children using local authority transport, we appreciate that it is not always easy to meet staff on a more informal basis. Parents are invited to make contact with EYFS staff through email or telephone to discuss any concerns or queries.

A learning journal is kept throughout a child's time in EYFS recording a child's journey, including pictures. This documents the progress made throughout their time and is handed to parents as they move from EYFS.

Children in the EYFS will be assessed regularly against the Developmental Journal for babies and young children with a visual impairment framework (DJVI). This provides a holistic overview of each child and helps to plan next steps for general and visual (where appropriate) development. Activity ideas from the DJVI linked to individual targets will be shared with parents in order for skills to be promoted at home.

Transition into the EYFS setting

Almost all the children attending the EYFS setting have a EHCP when they arrive, although in a few cases the documentation is underway though not complete. The EHCP must state that the child's most significant barrier to learning is sight loss, although there may be additional needs included alongside this in the plan.

Some children will have attended a toddler group or nursery local to home while others may not have had this experience. In almost all cases, support from the child's local authority team for the visually impaired will have been offered to the child and the family, which is an important stepping-stone for the start to school. Staff in the EYFS will receive advice from the designated QTVI (Qualified Teacher of the Vision Impaired) before the child and family are invited into school and will therefore have some prior knowledge. The school will also have been issued with a copy of the child's EHCP prior to the visit.

Staff in the EYFS will make arrangements for the initial visit and any subsequent visits the family consider necessary before the child enters school. Taster sessions can be offered if the family feels this will ease the child into school more happily and a starter timetable can be discussed following this. Currently children under the age of 5 are not offered transport by the local authority, so this may play a part in determining what is practical and possible for the family.

The school is flexible and creative in offering the best start to children in their early years and their families.

Transition into KS1

Most children will make a transition into KS1 at the end of the Foundation Stage. This is dependent on the rate of progress the child has made but usually occurs after he/she is 5 years old. This means moving into a new classroom with new staff which will be an unfamiliar and sometimes bewildering experience. In order to allow the child to have some understanding of what a new setting means, a number of transitional arrangements are offered over the term before he/she moves on. These include shared whole group sessions, informal visits to the class base where staff will meet and greet the children, lunch-times in the dining hall where meals are taken for the children in KS1 and KS2, and more formal lesson times which may last for a whole morning or afternoon in which practical, hands-on activities are planned and carried out. The staff in KS1 will have prior knowledge about each child coming to them through dialogue with Foundation Stage staff and through the individual progress data kept by staff throughout the child's time in the nursery. Parents are kept informed of the transitional process in order to be a part of the move the child is about to make to the next Key Stage.

Start and finish times remain the same as in the nursery.

6.2 Safeguarding and Welfare Procedures

The school places great importance on independence from the beginning and for this reason basic health and wellbeing is promoted on entry into the nursery. Most children at this stage are not toilet-trained but this process is encouraged as soon as the child has some understanding and is able to co-operate. Parents are encouraged to play a part in this training at home to consolidate the learning.

Staff encourage healthy eating and will discuss diet and types of foods which promote a healthy life-style with families. This includes:

- The types of foods offered in school in snacks and at meal-times
- Healthy drinks and useful drinking cups/ mugs/flasks which the child can manage independently
- Suggestions for packed meals sent in from home
- Ways in which parents/carers may encourage a wider range of foods at home

We also promote good oral health, as well as good health in general, in the early years by asking the school nurse to talk about looking after teeth which includes:

- The effects of eating too many sweet things
- The importance of brushing your teeth

As part of our Independent Living Skills programme we support children to learn how to brush their teeth. We follow [statutory guidance](#) for safety around supervised tooth brushing.

We also talk with children about hand-washing after using the toilet, when they come in from outside, before and after meals and when playing with a variety of resources such as paint, dough, glue, sand etc

The rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy.

7. ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

At Priestley Smith Specialist School, we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development, particularly in children with Vision impairment. We aim to create a stimulating and consistent learning environment where children feel confident, secure and safe. Children with low vision are often more reluctant to explore their environments than their peers with full sight, so staff will endeavour to encourage exploration within the indoor and outdoor learning environment. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up to reflect the areas of learning and children's needs for a tactile approach to learning.

We also recognise that children with vision impairment require hands-on learning and real-life experiences and so we endeavour to maximise their learning experiences through off-site educational visits.

8. LEARNING AND DEVELOPING

THE FOUNDATION STAGE CURRICULUM

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the latest version of the EYFS statutory framework that applies from September 2021.

Foundation Stage students enter school from 2 years of age. They spend up to age 5 years in this group and the curriculum has been created in order to utilise the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile in planning and assessment.

Children’s learning is at a very early stage in this phase, which is further delayed by individual levels of vision and cognition. It is essential, therefore, that the curriculum offered takes account of children’s early experiences of the world and provides every opportunity for learning by doing.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of seven areas of learning and development. 3 Prime Areas and 4 Specific areas. Each area is divided into aspects.				
Personal, Social and Emotional development		Communication and Language		Physical Development
Making relationships, self-confidence and self-awareness		Listening and attention Understanding Speaking		Moving and Handling Health and self care
Literacy	Mathematics	Understanding the World		Expressive arts and design
Reading Writing	Numbers Shape, space and measure	People and Communities The World Technology		Exploring and using media and materials Being imaginative

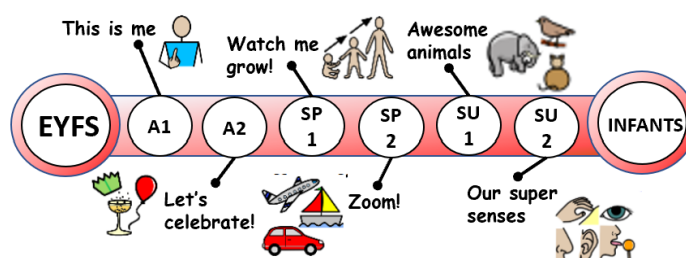
Children’s progress is tracked using the EYFS and the Development Matters profile as well as more detailed in-house assessment procedures which record more accurately emerging skills in the early years, at the pace of the individual child. Children are Baseline 6 weeks after entry to the Foundation Stage and are then assessed at the end of every term. In many cases the Development Matters descriptors are used to document progress, with a very small number of students achieving some areas of learning in the Early Learning Goals on completion of the phase, in preparation for entry to Key Stage 1.

8.1 Planning

The topic matrix for Foundation Stage shows a 1 year cycle with themes which allow for children to use their individual knowledge of the world as a starting point and to gradually extend understanding through planned visits, activities and first hand experiences. Some children will be in the EYFS for 2 to 3 years and although topics are repeated each year, individual lesson plans will take into account children’s prior learning and extend it through questioning and experiences. Children with limited vision have to experience something many more times to learn compared to a child with full sight who learns incidentally through watching, so experiencing similar themes year on year will help to scaffold their learning.

Staff plan activities and experiences for children that enable them to develop and learn effectively. In order to do this, staff working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime areas.

Staff also take into account the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience. The DJVI will be used to generate targets to support children’s holistic development. Specialist support is provided with a focus on the development of tactile discrimination and the development of independence and links with relevant, for example Speech and Language therapy, physiotherapy, where appropriate. In planning and guiding children’s activities, staff reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice



Staff will also plan activities to support the Curriculum Framework for children and young people with a visual impairment (CFVI), which supports specialist skill development that is considered essential for children with a visual impairment. This will closely link to the development of skills and targets generated by the DJVI. The teaching areas in the CFVI are as follows:

- Facilitating an inclusive world
- Sensory development
- Communication
- Literacy
- Habilitation: orientation and mobility
- Habilitation: independent living skills
- Accessing information
- Technology
- Health: social, emotional, mental and physical wellbeing
- Social, sports and leisure
- Preparing for adulthood

8.2 Teaching

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Due to the need to enrich concept development, there is an emphasis on adult-led activities in the learning process. Experiences for exploration are limited in children with vision impairment in comparison to sighted peers as it is difficult to independently explore what can't be seen. Learning experiences need to be scaffolded and supported in order to support risk-taking and finding out about new things.

Staff respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. The use of tactile resources and support to develop independence are integral to children's learning.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for **KS1**.

8.3 Characteristics of Effective Learning

'In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners must reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately.'

Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- **Playing and exploring** – children investigate and experience things and 'have a go'.
- **Active learning** – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements.
- **Creating and thinking critically** – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

(Taken from the EYFS framework 2021)

Playing and exploring

Experiential learning is vital for children with vision impairments. All activities are planned to enable children to develop learning through tactile and non-visual means, providing a safe environment to explore and investigate.

Active learning

Fostering resilience is vital for children with vision impairment. Children will be taught to develop concentration through the careful planning of activities which foster individual interests. Achievements and overcoming difficulties will be celebrated through reward systems and assemblies.

Creating and thinking critically

Children with vision impairments do not always learn incidentally in the same way as their sighted peers. Hands-on learning experiences through the formal curriculum and specialist VI curriculum will enable them to make links between different areas of their learning and life in the 'real world'.

8.4 Engagement model

On rare occasions students admitted to the nursery are so significantly developmentally delayed that an alternative approach to their learning needs to be considered. These pupils will typically be delayed in all areas of learning and will be working below the standards of national curriculum assessments. The Engagement Model replaces P scales 1 to 4 and is used by teachers where pupils are not engaged in subject-specific study at Key Stages 1 and 2. It is also recommended for pupils from 3 upwards who have profound learning difficulties or cognition impairments.

The Engagement Model looks at how pupils engage in their learning and is fundamentally a pupil-centred approach. Its focus is on the child's abilities rather than disabilities. The model assesses 5 areas of engagement. These are Exploration, Realisation, Anticipation, Persistence and Initiation. The delivery of this specialist curriculum has become statutory from 2021/22 where pupils fit the criteria described here.

It is unlikely that pupils requiring this level of teaching and assessment would be appropriately placed in the school long term.

8.4 Assessment

At Priestley Smith Specialist School ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

When a child is **aged between 2 and 3**, staff review their progress and provide parents / carers with a written summary of the child's development in the 3 prime areas. This 'progress check' highlights the areas in which a child is progressing well and the areas in which additional support is needed, taking into account any visual and cognition difficulties. This information may be useful to share with other professionals, such as health visitors (who can use it as part of children's' health and development reviews).

Within the first 6 weeks that a child **starts reception**, if appropriate staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). These are adapted resources for children's individual VI needs

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
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile reflects ongoing observations, and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child.

The profile is moderated internally (referring to the [Development Matters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)) and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.

Throughout their time in the EYFS, children will be assessed against the Development Journal for babies and young children with a visual impairment framework. This is a non-statutory document but will help staff working with the children to set targets and view areas for development specific to young children with a visual impairment. Targets and activity ideas will be shared with parents to consolidate at home. Although the DJVI does not directly link to the EYFS framework and Early learning goals, it will help to facilitate general development in order for children to make progress against these.

APPENDIX 1. LIST OF STATUTORY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE EYFS

Statutory policy or procedure for the EYFS	Where can it be found?
Safeguarding policy and procedures	See safeguarding policy
Procedure for responding to illness	See health and safety policy
Administering medicines policy	See Medical needs and medication policy
Emergency evacuation procedure	See health and safety policy
Procedure for checking the identity of visitors	See safeguarding policy
Procedures for a parent failing to collect a child and for missing children	See safeguarding policy
Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints	See complaints policy