



Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

PURPOSE

This policy outlines Ark Schools’ ethos and approach to EYFS provision across the network, in-line with all statutory requirements.

Date of last review:	March 2021	Author:	Lydia Cuddy-Gibbs
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Policy Review Summary

Review Date	Changes made	By whom
May 2013	EYFS Policy created	
September 2013	EYFS Policy Updated	Daniel Upfield
October 2014	EYFS Model created	Daniel Upfield
September 2015	EYFS Model updated	Lydia Cuddy-Gibbs
December 2015	EYFS Model reviewed and updated following consultation with Principals at Principals Meeting 20/11/15.	Lydia Cuddy-Gibbs
April 2016	EYFS Policy Updated (to be read alongside the EYFS guidance handbook: 'The Ark EYFS Model')	Lydia Cuddy-Gibbs
April 2019	EYFS Policy Updated to reflect assessment using EExAT	Lydia Cuddy-Gibbs
March 2021	EYFS Policy Updated in light of Statutory changes coming into force September 2021	Lydia Cuddy-Gibbs

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1. Introduction to EYFS

The period of time from birth until a child is 5 years old is described as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). As its name suggests, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in ARK settings provides the foundation for all future learning. At Ark, we know excellent education in the early years is crucial to achieving our mission. Regrettably, gaps in development between disadvantaged children and their peers appear well before school age. We are committed to closing this gap and ensuring equal life chances for all right from the start.

Early year's providers currently have a legal requirement to meet the standards set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. This framework sets out:

- The legal welfare requirements that everyone registered to look after children must follow to keep children safe and promote their welfare.
- The areas of learning and development which must shape activities and experiences (educational programmes) for children in all early years settings.
- Assessment arrangements which include requirements for measuring progress and reporting to parents formally and in ongoing conversation.
- The early learning goals that all settings must help children to work towards by the end of the Reception year.

There are four principles which underpin the EYFS and shape practice:

- A. Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- B. Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships;
- C. Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults;
- D. Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in EYFS including children with special educational needs and disabilities. Ark schools have a SEND Policy which is dedicated to supporting children throughout their time in Ark Education and there is a graduated response tool for the Early Years.

We are convinced that an early years curriculum which prioritises the 'Prime Areas' of learning can best prepare children for success throughout their life at school and beyond.

We have developed a specific early years curriculum which combines the development of all 7 areas of learning including opportunities for child initiated learning and daily mathematics, phonics, literacy and project sessions.

This policy is designed to be read alongside the Ark EYFS 'How to...' guidance documents and curriculum examples available on the Ark Library. Support to EYFS settings, vision setting, planning and development of teaching and learning across the Ark Schools' network is provided by Ark Start.

Ofsted inspects and regulates children's services in the UK. Inspection of EYFS settings in schools are supported by the school inspection handbook, while separate EYFS settings are inspected according to the early years inspection handbook.

2. Aims

We aim to meet each child's needs by:

- i. understanding that each child is unique and so providing for the whole child, their health, both physical and mental, their feelings, thinking and spiritual development through excellent safeguarding and the prioritization of the prime areas of learning
- ii. ensuring close communication and work with parents/careers to develop complete understanding of each child and to communicate progress and next steps with families clearly and effectively
- iii. ensuring each child has the opportunity to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding to achieve success and to build a thirst for lifelong learning
- iv. teaching the foundations of reading, writing and mathematics that will develop basic skills and also enable access to the wider curriculum
- v. providing a stimulating environment, indoors and out, providing many opportunities for children to be curious, ask questions and to be eager to discover and learn
- vi. providing opportunities and time for children to pursue their own interests and time to interact and share with others
- vii. providing opportunities for each child to make choices and decisions to develop their independence
- viii. providing a multitude of experiences for children. Some experiences will be familiar and reflect children's home learning environments so that they can see themselves reflected positively in their learning. Other experiences will be new to children in order to enable them to experience the awe and wonder of the world in which they live. Provision will include resources and stories which reflect different cultures and viewpoints and through teaching that is conscious of and promotes fundamental British values
- ix. creating a joyful and purposeful atmosphere, where teachers can focus on teaching and pupils on learning

3. What Children Learn

The curriculum comprises seven main areas of learning and development.

3.1 Three **Prime** Areas:

- a. **Communication and Language** – children develop skills and confidence in speaking and listening in a range of situations.
- b. **Physical Development** – children develop their co-ordination, control, and movement through being active.
- c. **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – within clear boundaries children form positive relationships, develop social skills and respect for others and understand appropriate behaviour.

3.2 Four **Specific** Areas

- a. **Literacy** – through the daily phonics lesson children link sounds and letters and begin to read and write. In addition there is a daily literacy lesson and planned opportunities for guided reading. Fine motor skills development and handwriting are also formally taught and practised.
- b. **Mathematics** – through the daily maths lesson, this includes short chunks of whole class teaching and focused maths experiences, and maths meetings

which include conversations about number, ‘everyday’ maths and oral rehearsal of number sequences and patterns.

- c. **Understanding the World** – finding out about the past and present, people, culture and communities and the natural world through exploration of a variety of artifacts and texts and through firsthand experiences, observing the world around them.
- d. **Expressive Arts and Design** – exploring a wide range of media and sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

4. How Children Learn

4.1 We promote the characteristics of effective learning and support children to learn through:

- a. Playing and exploring.
- b. Learning actively.
- c. Creating and thinking critically.

Where appropriate we link these skills to the school values.

4.2 Teachers make professional judgments about the balance between activities led or guided by adults and those initiated by children. This balance shifts towards more whole class teaching opportunities as children move towards Year 1.

- a. **Adult directed activities** are those which are directed by the adult and can be useful in the teaching of specific skills such as demonstrating how to use tools or equipment. In ARK Reception classes, daily teaching of literacy and maths starts from the outset and is a key part of our curriculum.
- b. **Adult guided activities** are those which the adult initiates. These activities are often playful or experiential. They are open ended and should motivate a keen interest in learning.
- c. **Pupil-initiated experiences** take place within an environment the adult has set up and planned but will be wholly decided upon by the child, based on the child’s own motivation and remains under the child’s control. That which a child can do independently and consistently in such an environment is key to accurate teacher assessment in the EYFS.

5. Enabling Environments

Children have daily access to well-planned stimulating learning environments, indoors and outdoors. These environments give children opportunities to be active and physical and also quiet and reflective.

5.1 The Early Years environment – inside and outside is viewed as a whole, providing different areas where resources, materials and activities are freely and easily accessible.

5.2 The areas of learning in the environment should include:

Area	Example
Role play	This is a centre piece, extravagant, topic related and language rich, children should be encouraged to make things to add to this.

Creative Writing	Including mark making and word work tools and display.
Workshop	Construction and DT, playdough and clay and other fine motor tools/equipment e.g. threading are used here too according to objective.
Small world	Near construction and topic appropriate.
Art Studio	Selection of tools and materials are available depending on objective.
Maths	Selection of tools and materials are available depending on objective.
Sensory area	This need not always be sand/water. Foam, jelly etc can be used.
Gross motor	Large blocks, trikes, climbing etc used according to planning.
Project explore and discover area	An investigative area linked to project e.g. a nature table for Autumn with instruments to make autumn sounds and any creations e.g. a clay hedgehog that have contributed to learning, books about autumn and notes and photos of children experiencing autumn outside with family and school, magnifying glasses and note paper to study and record observations and comparisons of leaves, conkers, seed cases etc.
Reading area	Library and topic related books are distinct, book baskets for key taught stories are here or in the performance area depending on objective.
Performance area	Instruments, appropriate costume, masks, book baskets, puppet theatre, props, dancing ribbons are available depending on objective.

It is important to develop learning opportunities outside because outdoor learning provides opportunities for: the acquisition of gross motor skills, taking risks, fostering a love of nature and the environment, large play which is not possible indoors, learning experiences suited to the outdoor environment and physical fitness.

- 5.3 Every child must have a named key person. We call this person a ‘play partner.’ Alongside careful planning for the physical environment, staff must work to create positive relationships with and between children and families. The emotional environment is as important as the physical. As such, we promote the role of the key person. In Reception classes this is usually the class teacher but in Nursery settings each child may have a different named educator as the key person. The key person is an anchor point for the child and his/her family. Every play partner has responsibility for the child’s developmental records alongside the class teacher, is responsible for building strong links with relevant families and co-ordinates appropriate information sharing about a child’s development between settings where necessary, with child-minders and with the child’s family/carers.
- 5.4 EYFS culture must be developed intentionally to create the optimum climate for learning.

6. Target Setting

Ark believes that progress and attainment matters. Teachers need to know what children's starting points are and should have a clear idea of where pupils need to be by the end of the year.

6.1 Ensuring high expectations

We expect that children will leave each Ark nursery working at or above their age-related developmental milestones and be on track to leave reception at least at the Early Learning Goal (ELG). We align school readiness with these age-related expectations and expect nurseries and schools to have supported children and their carers to be prepared for starting school. We recognise the unique place of the reception year in this process and ensure that current and prospective teachers work together within and across settings to support transition of children at any key moment in their early years' experience. This work may include home visits, supporting families to arrange playdates, access local libraries and activities and provide home learning experience throughout the EYFS to ensure that children continue to make progress at home, in nursery and at school.

6.2 Recording and reporting

Regular communication and reporting to parents is important. This goes hand in hand with the work both formal and informal that happens to create a relationship with parents. Parent will be encouraged to review and interact with each child's learning journal which charts their learning and development submitting their own observations regularly. At the end of each academic year parents will receive a formal report charting their child's development. This includes the progress check at age 2 and the completion of the EYFS profile at the end of reception including reporting on the 'Characteristics of effective teaching and learning.' Data from EExAT and phonics progress may also be reported and discussed with parents usually at a bespoke parent meeting.

It is also useful for EYFS practitioners to link with Health Visitors and in the least (especially with regard to those 2 years old and under) to request for parents to share the NHS Personal Child Health Record of development with school.

7. Assessment

7.1 Assessment plays an important part in helping teachers recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. EExAT is an online observation and assessment platform which enables teachers to compile, track progress and share records of children's achievements with parents. Whenever we assess children we consider the Leuven Scales of Wellbeing and Involvement, the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning and the 7 Areas of Learning as outlined in the EYFS Framework.

7.2 Assessment is based on ongoing observation which records the progress each child is making from a baseline on entry. All staff contribute to the observations and an individual child profile is built up over the years a child learns at Ark which informs the EYFS Profile - the statutory assessment at the end of the reception year.

7.3 Reception Assessment

The class teacher (alongside each child's play partner) makes regular summative assessments throughout the Reception Year across all aspects of learning and

development and tracks children’s progress in each aspect of the three prime areas and each aspect of the specific areas. The teacher uses the following tools:

- a. Statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) – to be completed within a child’s first 6 weeks of starting Reception.
- b. **Teacher assessment baseline** – to be completed on EExAT once each child is showing high levels of Involvement and Wellbeing and by the close of the first Autumn Half Term.
- c. **Term one** – end of Autumn Term summary.
- d. **Term two** – end of Spring Term summary.
- e. **Term three** – Early Years Foundation Stage Profile to be completed by end of Summer Term/in line with local authority requirements against the ELGs set out in the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage 2021. This information should be shared with parents and Yr 1 teachers.

8. Moderation

8.1 Internal Moderation

It is expected that the planning, assessment and moderation cycle be given adequate time and attention. Once assessments are gathered, they should be discussed within the year group team and then internally moderated. This means meeting with all EYFS teachers, KS1 lead/Year 1 teachers and members of SLT at the end of each of the 3 terms. Children of differing attainment bands should be discussed across the 7 areas of learning to ensure that the assessment is accurate including Leuven and COEL in discussion. This is not a test but instead an opportunity for teachers to discuss openly their considerations and present evidence for their judgement. This is a time for teachers to interrogate and challenge the assessment decisions and better understanding the learning needs of children across ages, stages and classes – guidance for this is within the EYFS handbook.

8.2 External Moderation

We encourage all Ark schools to participate fully in any opportunity for external moderation and agreement trialling within the local authority when this is offered. It is appropriate for schools to make relationships with other schools within and outside the network in order to moderate judgements.

In addition, the Head of Early Years will organise regional and whole network moderation meetings and conduct moderation visits so that all judgements are validated. Children’s data follows them throughout nursery and school.

9. Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

- 9.1 The level of progress children are expected to attain by the end of the Reception Year is defined by 17 early learning goals.
- 9.2 Each child’s level of development is assessed against each early learning goal (ELG). Teachers indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are exceeding expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels (‘emerging’).

Assessment Rating	EYFS Judgement
1	Emerging (anything below ELG)

2	Expected (attaining best fit ELG)
A	Not assessed <i>Long absence, late arrival in summer term etc.</i>

9.3 **Proposed measure for ‘good level of development’:**

Children will be defined as having reached a good level of development at the end of the EYFS if they achieve at least the ‘expected’ (i.e. a score of ‘2’) in the ELGs for:

- a. All three prime areas (PSED, PD and Communication and Language) – there are eight ELGs across the three prime areas.
 - b. The specific areas of Literacy and Mathematics.
- 9.4 This is the EYFS Profile. Year 1 teachers are given a copy of the Profile report together with a short commentary on each child’s skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning. These inform a dialogue between Reception and Year 1 teachers about each child’s stage of development and learning needs to assist with the planning of activities in Year 1.

10. Health, Safety and Wellbeing

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework has clear guidance on the health and safety requirements including ratio and capacity arrangements for EYFS. In addition, the Ark has produced example policies to support schools and settings to ensure that whole school policies in place meet EYFS requirements.

Some considerations for schools and nurseries include:

- Safeguarding and intimate care
- Health and safety
- Allergies and medical
- Accidents
- SEND
- Self evaluation
- Employment and staffing
- Admissions
- Complaints
- ICT and technology (including staff use of photographs and mobile devices)
- E-safety
- Trips
- Whistle blowing
- No smoking/vaping
- Food and drink
- Confidentiality, data protection and information sharing
- Looked after children

- Late collection
- Home visit policy

11. Equality Impact Statement

We will do all we can to ensure that this policy does not discriminate, directly or indirectly. We shall do this through regular monitoring and evaluation of our policies. On review we shall assess and consult relevant stakeholders on the likely impact of our policies on the promotion of all aspects of equality, as laid down in the Equality Act (2010). This will include, but not necessarily be limited to: race; gender; sexual orientation; disability; ethnicity; religion; cultural beliefs and pregnancy/maternity. We will use an appropriate Equality Impact Assessment to monitor the impact of all our policies and the policy may be amended as a result of this assessment.