

GLYNE GAP SCHOOL

Curriculum Guidelines 11 (CG11) Early Years Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy relates to the children in the Early Years. It outlines the purpose, nature and management of early learning in our school.

The key formative years of childhood are short – the quality of learning experience is therefore of major importance. The skills, concepts and attitudes formed in these early years will be the foundations upon which later learning will build.

This policy outlines how we will, for our unique setting, ensure the best outcomes for children in the early years, and ensure all statutory duties as outlined in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years are adhered to.

The policy reflects the commitment of the whole staff and has the agreement and support of the governing body and of parents who are working in partnership with us.

2. The Importance of Early Years Education

At this stage the children are developing a framework for learning and for life;

- Young children are beginning on a journey of discovery – the end of which cannot be pre-determined
- In their earliest years, children are acquiring key attitudes to learning and exploring learning processes, as well as beginning to build a core of knowledge
- Young children will develop socially and emotionally
- Communication skills will be developing and at a critical stage
- Motor development is at an important stage

3. Our Curriculum Intent

We Believe:

- Each child should be valued unconditionally
- Each child is unique, with specific needs and strengths
- Children learn most effectively by doing, using all their senses and through powerful interaction with their environment
- Children learn best when they are having fun and involved in stimulating activities that take account of their key interests.
- Play is a natural vehicle for learning, and all children should have the opportunity, time and space to choose the direction of their play.
- Children need to work at their own pace, in relation to their stage of development, and learning should be personalised, offering an appropriate level of challenge
- Development of the whole child is essential
- Parents are a child's first and life-long teacher

Therefore the major aims of our curriculum for every child in the Early Years are:

- For children to feel happy safe and secure, with a high sense of self-worth & self-esteem
- For children to develop positive attitudes to and enjoy learning
- For children’s individuality to be celebrated
- For children to have fun and begin to develop the skills they need for learning – confidence, curiosity, engagement, perseverance & resilience
- For children to build positive relationships, encouraging co-operation and mutual respect
- For children to be supported to lay the foundations for all future development in the critical areas of Communication and Personal Social and Emotional Development.
- For parents to engage and feel empowered to be active participants in their child’s learning working in partnership with EY practitioners.
- To enable parent & child to feel secure in starting their school education through:
 - BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIP
 - Recognising and advocating EVERY CHILD IS A LEARNER & celebrating personal success with families
 - Setting small steps with parents to support child moving on in their learning and enable each child to reach their full potential.

We believe every child is unique and the Early Years curriculum enables us to teach the whole child and develop their Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural understanding. We aim to enrich and expand the lives of our pupils, giving them the tools they need to lay the foundations for all their future learning, while developing their values, attitudes and beliefs in preparation for life in modern Britain. The foundations of pupils’ Spiritual Development are established through Glyne Gap Early Years learning which is full of fun opportunities to learn through exploration and for children to be active and adventurous learners.

4. Implementation of the Early Years Curriculum

The curriculum is focused on the needs of our pupils, while being aligned to the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. It relates specifically to work done within the Nursery and Reception year groups, preparing pupils for Key Stage 1. However year 1 & 2 pupils will continue to learn using the guiding principles of the EYFS in line with the whole school 5-16 curriculum. (See CG1 Teaching & Learning policy)

We aim to deliver a curriculum that is:-

- **BROAD** – offering a wide range experience in all seven areas of learning
- **BALANCED** – making full use of the inter-relationships and interdependence of curriculum areas
- **RELEVANT** – ensuring that each child’s experience has meaning and purpose
- **PROGRESSIVE** – allowing for progression in an individuals’ understanding, skills and knowledge
- **DIFFERENTIATED** – matched to each child’s needs and stage of development

ENTITLEMENT

All children have equal access to the curriculum and all children are encouraged to participate fully and take an active part in their learning.

All staff are highly skilled and given opportunities for continued training to support the individual needs of our children with SEN in the early years.

Whilst all staff are highly skilled and trained to support the needs of all pupils, all children have a key person who is responsible for their learning and ensuring parents are well informed and supported to facilitate this at home. This will usually be the Class/Nursery teacher, but may for individuals be an Assistant teacher/Teaching Assistant who has strong relationship with a particular family. All key workers are chosen based on who is best equipped to support the individual child.

Safeguarding is of extremely high importance and all requirements of the EYFS framework are adhered to, with monitoring and reporting systems followed in line with whole school safeguarding procedures. (See CG2 Safeguarding Child Protection)

EARLY YEARS CURRICULUM DESIGN & DELIVERY

The child is at the centre of all our planning and individual needs are met through Individual Education Plans and termly goals, which are set in partnership with parents. (See CG1 Teaching & Learning policy)

While the development of skills and concepts are directly catered for through goals and IEPs, there is also an emphasis placed on the value of exploration and discovery and the Early Years Curriculum allows for learning through experience at all levels of development.

Individual subjects may not always be taught discreetly, but each will be an integral part of a rich and motivating Early Years experience, planned to give each child the best possible start to their school life.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Physical Development are priorities in our curriculum and are reflected in our major aims. (For more information see CG1 Teaching & Learning; CG5 Supporting the Development of Communication & Language; CG6 PSHE; and CG7 Supporting Positive Attitudes and Good Behaviour).

i) Below is the Nursery Curriculum Model:

(Tier 1) Essential Skills (allied to Prime Areas of Learning)

All areas taught according to individual skills need through Topic Plans covering all 7 areas of learning. Assessment arrangements: IEPs, annual reports, Glyne Gap Assessments

Breadth of learning areas (Tier 2)			Subjects included		Assessment arrangements
LITERACY	PSED Self-Regulation; Managing Self; Building Relationships; (GGA Personal Autonomy & Personal Care), & SMSC	PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT Gross and Fine Motor Skills (GGA Essential Physical Skills for Learning and Life)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension • Word Reading • Writing 	COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE Listening, Attention and Understanding: Speaking (GGA Receptive & Expressive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluated IEPs • Observations in zigzag books
MATHEMATICS			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers • Numerical Patterns 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluated IEPs • Observations in zigzag books
EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating with materials • Performing 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluated termly topic plans • Observations in zigzag books
UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past and Present • People Communities and Cultures • The Natural World • SMSC 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluated termly topic plans • Observations in zigzag books
All of the above is taught through the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing and Exploring • Active Learning • Creating and Thinking Critically 					

Definitions:

TIER 1: Essential skills (allied to Prime Areas of Learning)

These are the two most important areas of the curriculum for our Early Years pupils:

- **Communication and Language** which includes Listening, Attention and Understanding; and Speaking;
- **Personal, Social & Emotional Development**, which includes Self-Regulation; Managing Self; Building Relationships; and SMSC.

The skills that are taught are incisively relevant in addressing all individual pupils' needs. For each pupil the skills and knowledge addressed will impact directly on their quality of life, independence and happiness both now and in the future. They are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for building a capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

In Reception, pupils would move to using the Glyne Gap Essential Skills Areas for their Tier 1 learning and the whole school curriculum model, to prepare them for their transition into Yr1 and their future schooling, however would still be taught through the principles of the Early Years Curriculum. (See CG1 Teaching & Learning)

- **Physical Development (Tier 1)**

This is an additional crucial area of the curriculum for pupils in the Early Years. The aim is to develop gross and fine motor skills in order to achieve greater levels of independence and autonomy, so enabling access to a wider range of opportunities in everyday life. The motor skills that are targeted will be specific to individual pupils aiming towards functional ability rather than a sequence of development.

TIER 2: Breadth of learning

The Tier 2 curriculum provide breadth, balance and enjoyment of learning experience through the following areas of:

- Literacy (including Early Reading)
- Mathematics
- Expressive Arts and Design
- Understanding the World
- SMSC

Knowledge built is desirable (rather than essential) and is delivered in highly motivating and interesting ways. We recognise that because of the development needs of our pupils, they will need a stronger focus on the 3 prime areas for longer in order to build the skills and capacities they need to develop and learn effectively. Tier 2 can provide a context or vehicle for this Tier 1 learning. The outdoor learning environment is utilised and links are made in many topics to the local environment.

The Nursery Curriculum is organised into 9 Themes which are arranged into a three year rolling programme with 3 blocks per year. In Reception, pupils may follow the Nursery themes, or the Infant themes in line with the Whole School Curriculum depending on the peer group within which they are working. Each theme (from both the nursery and school topic map,) is a mechanism through which all 7 areas of learning are delivered. Our Themes indicate areas of focus but do not suggest that other areas will be disregarded – they merely give a starting point for a wide range of opportunities and experiences for all.

ii) Planning for Individual Learning

Each child will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), written termly, which will cover all areas of their essential learning, planned specifically according to individual needs.

In Nursery, IEPs comprise of Termly goals identifies as “Next Steps” focussing on the 3 priority areas of learning and activities to support learning at home to enable parents to become active participants in their child’s learning are included as well as identified home learning goals where appropriate. In addition, pupils may have Individual Pupil Arrangements (IPAs) e.g. for supporting positive behaviour for learning to support specific aspects of priority learning for an individual child which are written on collaboration with home. Additional Essential Learning covering aspects of the 7 areas of learning and opportunities to develop the characteristic of effective learning are identified and planned within weekly nursery planning, or the Termly Tier2 Nursery plan.

In Reception, pupils follow the same focus for IEPs, but these are extended further to expand pupils’ opportunities and prepare them for the next steps in line with the whole school curriculum. (See GC1 T&L). All termly goals are discussed with parents and planned and worked on in collaboration with families, with specific home learning interventions implemented as appropriate such as Implementing PECS at Home. Tier2 Class planning includes opportunities for a richness of experience within all 7 areas of learning and further opportunities to develop the characteristic of effective learning.

All pupils learning in Communication is prioritised with the termly planning and evaluation of individual Communication Goals. The Schools Communication team work with Early Years Teachers to ensure specialist support is implemented for pupils around their communication needs. Nursery pupils are further supported through the implementation of Enhanced Communication Planning meetings (termly X3per yr), where the Nursery Teacher meets with The Head of Nursery to discuss pupils progress and plan for their next steps in relation to their Communication and Language development. (See CG5 Communication & Language Policy).

Links with outside agencies and professionals allow for specialist support when appropriate, and recommendations from other professionals may be incorporated into a child’s IEP.

iii) The Characteristics of Effective Learning

In planning and guiding activities, staff reflect on the different ways our children learn and support them as individuals.

In the early years, play is essential for children’s development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, think about problems and relate to others. Children are building the foundations for all future development and a big part of this is how to be an effective learner. Staff create rich and varied play opportunities for children to explore and make sense of the world both in child and adult led scenarios.

Staff consider the Characteristics of Effective learning and endeavour to provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to:

- **Play and Explore**
- **Be Active Learners**
- **Be Creative and Think Critically**

For our children with a significant level of SEN, repeated exposure to new experiences is critical to build on their understanding and develop these skills for learning. Opportunities to repeat and practice skills are essential for our children's development. The following areas may be used to demonstrate pupil's progress towards learning a new skill and supporting planning for the next steps in line with the use of the Engagement Model:

- **Exploration-** (identify what activities, stimuli interest, motivate)
- **Realisation-** (keeps excitement, motivation, prevents routine)
- **Anticipation** –(understanding cause and effect, memory ,sequencing)
- **Persistence-** (applying skills to achieve desired outcome)
- **Initiation-**(developing independence)

Through reflecting on the characteristics of effective learning as part of the planning and assessment cycle, staff ensure that all pupils, no matter what their developmental stage, are facilitated to be independent, confident, self-motivated learners.

iv) **The Learning Environment**

The learning environment is organised to allow children to have experiences across all seven areas of the EYFS and nursery and reception teachers will establish their own environments to suit the needs of their current pupils and capture children's individual interests. Young children need active exploration and opportunities for investigation and discovery in a wide range of environments. The environment is carefully planned for to allow children to make choices and discoveries for themselves, as well as having a particular focus on facilitating pupils' communication development. Because of the particular needs of the pupils in our setting, we are aware that pupils may not naturally engage and explore their environment therefore adults provide additional support to facilitate the exploration of a wider range of experiences.

A range of dynamic, accessible resources are available to engage children's interest and develop their curiosity. Very specialist facilities exist to support work in creative, imaginative and adventurous play and in sensory and physical development. Facilities, staff and time are used imaginatively to maximise learning opportunities.

The outdoor environment is of high importance and pupils have the opportunity for free flow exploration of outside classrooms, along with planned opportunities to explore the wider school grounds. The outdoor environment is an extension of the indoors, offering additional experiences to develop understanding within the 7 areas of learning.

In addition, pupils have regular opportunities for community learning with all classes accessing the community as appropriate, to support pupils' priority learning and develop greater understanding of the world. We recognise that for our pupils, learning about concepts without concrete real life experience is meaningless, therefore it is essential we provide these opportunities as part of our core offer.

5. Measuring the Impact of the EY Curriculum

ASSESSMENT, RECORDING AND REPORTING

This is an on-going cycle and through the setting of termly goals, parents and carers are able to take an active part. (For full guidance on Assessment, recording & reporting procedures see GD10 whole school AR&R policy).

When forming a judgement about an individual's level of development, teachers draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement. IEPs are evaluated termly and the information from these is used to inform future planning. Observations of learning are made throughout the day and Wow moments are recorded in zig-zag books, with reference made to the 7 areas of learning and characteristics of effective learning, which informs next steps.

When assessing the development of our pupils it can be difficult to measure progress against the Early Years profile as the statement in the ages and stages are too broad to demonstrate the small steps learning of our pupils. Pupils are tracked annually using the EY profile and Developmental Learning Journal Steps as a summative record of their learning, however in addition, pupils are assessed against the Glyne Gap Assessment Levels, to support practitioners' in planning for the next steps small steps in their learning.

Progress and achievements are recorded in Zig Zag Books (Learning Journeys) and in individual assessment files, from which a detailed annual report is produced with parents having the opportunity to share and discuss this at Annual Review meetings. Pupils progress is evaluated and tracked through liaison meetings and Pupil Progress Indicators as outlined in CG10 AR&R policy. For Nursery pupils, these meetings take place with the Head of Nursery and have specific nursery proformas to ensure pupils needs are met and they have the correct learning opportunities for their stage of development. For Reception pupils, Reception Class Teachers meet with the Assistant Head for Early Years or Head Teacher, and follow the whole school

proformas, to support the incisive reflection on progress and planning for their next steps.

MODERATION

The EYFS framework in 2021, removed the requirement for external moderation as a statutory duty for Early Years providers.

However, in order to ensure we offer the best learning opportunities for our pupils, we have systematic approach to internal moderation throughout the year of our assessment instruments and of the quality of the judgments (See CG10 whole school AR&R policy).

In addition, we are outward looking working with the East Sussex Special Schools Alliance, to ensure we are robust in our assessments and offer the best early years education possible, through professional dialogue and collaborative working, and shared moderation opportunities.

LEGISLATION

As a school we ensure that we keep up to date with all current legislation. We fulfil all requirements as outlined in the EYFS framework 2021, including reporting on all our statutory duties for assessments.

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA), introduced in September 2021, is completed within the first 6 weeks of Reception in line with statutory guidance.

Often, due to the degree of our pupils' learning disabilities, the RBA will be inaccessible to some pupils in our setting. In this case, disapplication may be considered by the Head teacher, in discussion with parents, and teachers. (In line with Statutory Guidance for RBA point 17)

All pupils' outcomes against the Early Learning Goals, are reported at the end of pupils Reception year in line with statutory guidance.

6. ORGANISATION & MANAGEMENT

The nursery offers places for 12 children, (staffing ratio 1:2 pupils, unless additional support stated as part of EHCP/ health care plan).

Our Nursery children attend for five sessions a week. Children are not grouped by ability but by possible and developing friendships, allowing them to meet familiar faces each time they come to Nursery. Any parent can visit the nursery, prior to an EHCP being in place if they feel their child would benefit from a nursery place.

Nursery Admissions meetings are held termly with the Head Teacher, Head of Nursery, and colleagues from East Sussex Early Years ISEND to discuss all children who would benefit from a nursery place and places offered accordingly prioritising the pupils with the greatest need first.

The Nursery is accommodated in purpose-built premises adjacent to the main school. The Nursery works in partnership with the Early Years Nursery from Bexhill College, so all children are sharing an inclusive Early Years education.

The school operates an open-door policy. Parents who believe their child may benefit from the education provided at Glyne Gap School can contact school directly and make an appointment with the Head Teacher. Formal referrals for pupils are made via East Sussex Children's Authority, through a completed Education, Health and Care Plan. Places are allocated by the local authority again, prioritising pupils with the greatest level of need.

There are 2 classes which cater for the Reception pupils in the main school building, and pupils are grouped in these according to their learning needs. Some pupils may choose to remain in the nursery setting to begin their Reception year to enable an extended transition period. This would be discussed and agreed jointly with parents, teachers and Head Teacher based on what is in the best interest of the individual child to support their needs.

7. PARENTS AND CARERS AS PARTNERS

To us, families are critical partners in their child's learning and the best learning can only take place when all stakeholders are involved. We believe that supporting families to feel secure in their child attending school, know what learning looks like for their child and to develop the right expectation for their child's learning, are of equal importance to supporting a child's learning in school. We encourage all parents and carers to be fully involved in their child's early school years and to work in partnership with staff to help their child reach their full potential. (See CG3 Working with Families)

Staff ensure daily contact through home/school books and an 'open door' policy is encouraged. Teachers engage in shared goal setting allowing ideas and achievements to be shared and celebrated both at home and at school.

In the Nursery, parents will meet with staff to set goals jointly as much of the learning will take place at home. Nursery teachers offer home learning support where they can visit pupils and families in the home setting to support with specific learning such as around mealtimes, bedtimes or accessing the community.

Parents of pupils new to Reception are invited to attend a New to school parents evening to discuss their child's school arrangements and learning opportunities. All parents are invited in for a bi-annual parents evening to ask questions about their child's learning (in addition to the EHCP annual review meeting)

Support for the EHCP Assessment Process

The EHCP assessment process is no doubt a daunting one for many parents. It is also an essential process for children who may need the special support of a school such as ours. For parents within our Nursery, we offer support for them within this process, with an Introduction to EHCPs coffee morning, attended by our iSEND Early Years colleagues in the September prior to their child starting school, and regular

liaison with parents to explain each stage of the process as they proceed through it throughout the year.

The Nursery submits evidence based on their knowledge of working with the child to support the assessment process. Should a child reach the stage of an EHCP being issued, Nursery staff may attend the co-production meeting if appropriate, to support parents in ensuring the document reflects the needs of their child.

PORTAGE OFFER

~~Our Portage Partnership is a home visiting educational service for pre-school children from birth. We offer advice, information and support to families of children with profound / severe learning disabilities who may have other additional needs, i.e. physical, medical, sensory and Autistic Spectrum Conditions.~~

~~A referral can be made by either parents, carers or other professionals. Following this we will meet with each family and child to discuss whether our Portage service is right for them. Once a service has been agreed we work with families to build a partnership which will be personalised to meet the needs of the individual child. We also work in conjunction with ESCC ISEND Support Service to identify families who would benefit from support from this service.~~

The impact of COVID measures has no doubt impacted our ability to offer a comprehensive service in this area as much of our work with families in the home had to stop whilst restrictions were in place. As a school we are using this enforced pause in our service as an opportunity to review our Portage offer. Currently we are not offering an extensive service, but we do provide bespoke support if and when a family requires such support.

The school has been working to build its support for families and currently offers specific initiatives to support Families in the Early Years including Parent Workshops lead by the Communication Team and home learning courses including Implementing PECS at home. (See CG5 Communication Policy for further information).

In the 2023/24 academic year a significant review took place to consider what opportunities we could offer to our youngest pupils and what would best support families and 2024/25 School development plan explored opportunities to further develop the home learning offer to families. Unfortunately at this time, Nursery provision is currently at full capacity and cannot extend its home work further. As such, this development work has been paused and will be revisited as part of the 26/27 Whole School Development plan. The school remain fully committed to its ambition to develop this offer for families and ensure families of our youngest pupils are well equipped to support learning at home.

LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

The Early Years helps our pupils take their first educational steps positively and to go into the wider world of school with confidence. It is the role of the school leaders to ensure we offer rich, varied experiences and personalised learning opportunities,

which will capture and sustain young children's interest and help them to become motivated learners who want to go on learning.

The Assistant Headteacher for Early Years is responsible for the strategic development of the Early Years provision in the school, maintaining policy and standards, and disseminating knowledge and developing teaching in this area. The AHT sits alongside the SLT and it is her role alongside the other Heads of School to oversee the learning for all pupils in the Early Years and ensures they are being offered all the opportunities they need to learn to the best of their ability.

Reception class teachers are well established practitioners, on UPS and have overall responsible for the learning of their pupils and required to report directly to their Head of School. Teachers meet with their Head of School 3 times a year for formal multidisciplinary liaison meetings and in addition a minimum of once per term to support developing their teaching. They continue to access support for updates regarding EYFS policy and practice via regular termly meetings with the Early Years AHT.

The Nursery teacher is responsible for the organisation, management and delivery of the learning for the nursery pupils and ensure that parents are involved and supported to understand their child's learning needs and deliver this learning at home. One of the Senior Reception Class teachers also holds the position as Head of Nursery and carries overall responsibility for the learning of nursery pupils, reporting directly to the Early Years AHT/Head Teacher on this. The Nursery teacher meets weekly with Head of Nursery to discuss pupils learning and identify the next steps for individual pupils.

The AHT for Early Years reports directly to the Head teacher about all pupils in the Early Years overall progress and progress against School Development Plans for the Early Years, which is then shared with Governors.

Early Years Nursery Partners

The Nursery Building is maintained by Bexhill College and Glyne Gap Nursery share its premises and works in partnership with Bexhill College Early Years Nursery staff. Head of Nursery, Nursery Teachers and Early Years Nursery staff work closely and plan in collaboration to ensure all pupils have rich and varied learning experiences and can share an inclusive Early Years education. Nursery teachers from both settings meet weekly to discuss the organisation and delivery of learning. Leaders of both nurseries work closely to ensure collaborative opportunities for teaching and development as well as any wider changes in Early Years Education. Designated Safeguarding Leads from both settings work co-operatively and share appropriate information to ensure all pupils are well safeguarded.

Role of School Governors

The governing body plays a key role in supporting developments and monitoring provision and resources. All information about the organisation, achievements and progress of the Nursery and Reception pupils and developments of the Early Years are shared through the termly reports to governors and in the Teaching & Learning Governors meetings.

Updated: September 2025

Next Steps/ Developments for Early Years

- **To Develop a clear home/school offer for our youngest pupils and their families**
(identified to be included in Whole School Development plan 2026/27)

Links to Other Policies

CG1 – Curriculum at Glyne Gap

CG2 - Safeguarding and Child Protection

CG5 - Supporting the Development of Communication and Language

CG7 - Supporting Positive Attitudes and Good Behaviour

CG9 - Developing the Whole Child (SMSC)