THE GORDON CHILDREN'S ACADEMY

2025-2027

Gordon Children's Academy

Part of Thinking School's Academy Trust

Date of determination: April 2021

THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST

CHILD FIRST – ASPIRE – CHALLENGE - ACHIEVE

The Gordon Children's Academy – Early Years Policy

Introduction

This policy outlines the purpose, nature, provision and management of the early years that we offer to all pupils attending The Gordon's Children's Academy. The Foundation Stage has its own statutory framework, which applies to all pupils from birth to the end of the reception year.

'All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years 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 provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential'.

Statutory framework for the early years' foundation stage - Department for Education 2025

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. At Gordon Children's Academy, children are admitted to the Reception year in the September following their fourth birthday.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Gordon we greatly value the significance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. We also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life linking to our school values '*At Gordon, we transform life chances by supporting children to become Gordon Greats – ambitious learners, brave thinkers, confident in themselves, kind friends, and proud of what they achieve together*'. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

Aims and objectives

It is our aim that children settle into school calmly with eagerness and enjoyment that develops their love of learning.

We aim to provide a place where learning is nurtured and encouraged so that everyone is treated equally and respectfully. We believe that all children thrive when a reception class is well organised and managed by adults, but led by the children. We are committed to all children

becoming independent and collaborative learners in a happy, caring and fun environment that allows them to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually.

At Gordon Children's Academy, we will:

- Offer a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable all children to achieve their full potential.
- Provide a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging programme of learning and development.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will support further learning and development into Key Stage 1, enabling choice and decision making whilst promoting independence and self-confidence.
- Value what each child can do by assessing their individual needs regularly and helping them to progress.
- Develop relationships with parents and carers and build a strong partnership to ensure positive outcomes when working together to support children.
- Provide a caring and inclusive learning environment that allows all children equal opportunities and which is sensitive to the requirements of the individual child including those who have additional needs.
- Assess, develop and where appropriate provide intervention for children's executive functioning skills.

Our Early Years Foundation Stage provision is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do;
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
- It offers opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment;

- It recognises the importance of a partnership with parents and carers.

Transition

At Gordon we believe that we should be prepared for the pupils entering each stage of learning. We see learning as a continuum and aim for a smooth transition from home to Nursery to School. We carefully plan to support children with transition and to ensure that each child starts school positively and settles into their new class quickly and happily.

Starting Reception

Parents of all children starting in the next academic year will be invited to a Welcome meeting in the summer term to learn more about the reception curriculum. This is an opportunity for staff to

- Go through the school handbook
- Explain about uniform, PE kit and universal school meals
- Explain about holidays and absences
- Explain the Foundation stage curriculum and how parents can support children at home.

Stay & Play sessions - The children are offered 1 stay & play session with parents in the summer term, prior to them joining. In the Autumn term parents are offered 1 stay & play session with parents and then a further 2 stay & play session without parents

given two opportunities to come into school to meet their new class teacher and other children in their class. Parents are welcome to stay in these sessions or can leave their child. This means that before they join their new class the reception environment is already a familiar place to them.

Arrangements are also made for Foundation Stage staff to visit them in their current nursery setting and at home.

Starting in Key Stage 1 (Year 1)

Throughout the Reception year, each child's involvement in whole school life will have been built upon; many of the teaching and support staff will already be familiar people to them. They

will have taken part in Key Stage and whole school assemblies as well as sharing Lunchtimes with the Key Stage 1 children.

Children will have the opportunity to meet their new class teacher and spend time in their new class during the summer term.

Summer homework is given to support the expectations of Year 1.

Parents will be invited to attend a Phonics workshops to explain how to support at home, along with the expectations of the Phonics Screening Check that will take place in the summer term.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework:

The curriculum framework that we use in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the Birth to 5 Matters non-statutory guidance. This supports staff to deepen their understanding of child development with guidance on how they can support children's progress throughout the year. There are four principles that underpin this guidance and work together for all children.

1. A Unique Child:
2. Positive Relationships:
3. Enabling Environments:
4. Learning and Development:

A Unique Child

Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. At Gordon, we value the diversity of the children within our school and believe that every child matters. All children at The Gordon Children's Academy are treated fairly regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion or disability. All families are welcomed and valued within our school community.

Inclusion

- We give our children every opportunity to achieve their personal best and planning is reviewed regularly and adapted to meet the needs of all.
- We set realistic and challenging learning opportunities to support and extend the needs of all our children.

- We use a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs.
- We offer a safe and supportive learning environment that can be accessed by all learners.
- We use resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.
- We monitor children's progress regularly and take action to provide support where necessary (such as referrals to school nurse, speech therapy etc).
- We work closely with parents, carers, other outside agencies to ensure all children's needs are met, and that they have full access to the curriculum and make good progress from their starting points.

Positive Relationships

Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships. At Gordon, we aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with all of our children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents/carers are children's first educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education through:

- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts school at our stay and play sessions in the summer term and carrying out home visits.
- Arranging, visits by the EYFS staff to see children joining us in their childcare provision prior to their starting school.
- Working with the local PVI providers (Private, voluntary and independent sector) to outline cohorts' profile of need.
- Outlining the school's expectations in the Home-School agreement.

- Holding a parent consultation early in the academic year to establish how a child is settling into the school environment.
- Operating an open-door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns to approach our staff.
- School newsletters, curriculum newsletters and website.
- Publishing a sway termly to inform parents about focuses for learning.
- Inviting parents to attend workshops about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics.
- Offering parent/teacher consultation meetings throughout the year where progress is discussed.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress mid-point of the academic year and a summary report at the end of the year.
- Parents are invited to a range of activities throughout the school year such as assemblies, workshops, Christmas productions and sports day etc.
- Tapestry, an online Learning Journal that parents can access to see their child's current learning. They can also comment and make contributions.

Staff

All staff in the Foundation Stage will develop good relationships with all children ensuring that their individual needs are met. Throughout each day they will continue to interact positively with all children, being a positive play partner and taking time to listen to them.

Enabling Environments

Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and carers. At Gordon, we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's learning and development. We aim to provide an environment where the children feel confident, secure and challenged.

Environment

At Gordon we will offer rich learning opportunities through stimulating resources that support children to take risks and explore safely by:

- Allowing all children to have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment with planned continuous provision set up alongside discrete learning opportunities.
- Providing play-based learning where children have opportunities to direct their own learning alongside planned opportunities provided by staff.
- Ensuring learning environments are planned for both indoors and outdoors, that will encourage a positive attitude to learning and reflect the children's interests, passions and abilities.
- Providing materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world.
- Providing opportunities that challenge thinking and encourage independent learning.
- Ensuring that resources and spaces are safe to use and checked regularly.
- Allowing all children to use the environment in all types of weather (parents will be asked to provide a waterproof coat, wellington boots and sun hat as well as PE kits and plimsolls).

Learning and Developing

All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. We recognise that all children develop and learn in different ways and at different times. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early year's provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Our Foundation Stage curriculum reflects the areas of learning identified in the Statutory framework for the early years' foundation stage.

There are seven areas of learning and development

Three Prime Areas:

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

Four Specific Areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Prime areas are fundamental to support development in all other areas. Specific areas include essential skills and knowledge for pupils to participate successfully in society. These are both interconnected with 'The Characteristics of Effective Learning' that look at the ways in which pupils interact with other people and their environment.

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities to ensure that all children make progress from their starting points. Through play and practical experiences, pupils learn about the world and their place in it. They learn through first hand experiences, talk, books and equipment. We set realistic yet challenging expectations that meet the needs of all our pupils.

Children's development levels are assessed as the year progresses.

If a child's progress in any of the prime areas or is related to literacy or maths learning gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the SENCo and the child's parents/carers and agree on how further support can be offered to the child.

Reception pupils also participate in a daily phonics session, following the guidance from 'Little Wandle' our phonics programme and in line with the school's phonics policy (within the English policy).

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The Characteristics of Effective Learning and the Prime and Specific areas of Learning and Development are all inter-connected. We recognise that children's learning is not compartmentalised and many of these elements may be in action at the same time whilst children interact with people and things. We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning and ensure that these underpin learning and development across all areas whilst supporting children to approach opportunities with curiosity, energy and enthusiasm whilst allowing them to remain an effective and motivated learner.

- Playing and exploring - children will have opportunities to find out and explore through investigation, playing with what they know and experience things whilst being willing to 'have a go'.

- Active learning- children will have time and space to be involved and concentrate on their learning whilst persisting when they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements through what they set out to do.

- Creating and thinking critically - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for approaching things in different ways.

Planning

Planning is based upon themes with discrete directed teaching for phonics, maths, reading and writing. Although planning is based upon a different theme each term; these can and will be focused within the key texts provided and may change direction in response to the children's needs and interests. Our medium-term planning identifies next steps for children working towards the Early Learning Goals and beyond.

Teaching

Each area of learning and development is guided through planned, purposeful play opportunities. These will happen through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. All staff will respond to the needs and interests of the children and support them through their development of skills and knowledge across all areas of learning.

Assessment

As each pupil enters the Foundation Stage we will carry out a baseline assessment we then use this information alongside the information from home and nursery visits to allow us to ensure an accurate starting point for each child.

The baseline assessments will happen within the first 6 weeks of a child starting school and will be recorded as 'On Track' or 'Not On Track' towards the Early Learning Goals aligned with the Development Matters non-statutory guidance for the early years' foundation stage.

Ongoing assessment takes the form of both formal and informal observations, photographic, written work and focussed planned activities. Assessment is completed regularly and involves all staff as well as parents' views, as appropriate.

These assessments will allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, and plan for the environments accordingly in order to ensure that the resources reflect the opportunities for development of skills for all groups of children.

Formative Assessment

Throughout the year children's learning is observed and observations are recorded on their development and progress within age ranges. This helps us to understand children's needs and allows us to plan for opportunities that help strengthen and develop skills and knowledge. Progress is recorded by using formal and informal observations as well as information gathered on Tapestry.

Tapestry is an online tool that allows us to build up a learning journey for each child in reception. Photographs, videos and comments can be made by the staff and the parents which supports us with creating a holistic picture of each child.

Parents will have the opportunity to come in and discuss their pupil's progress at least twice a year. Their input will be used to help inform planning for their children's future learning and development.

Summative Data

A data capture is taken at the end of each term, this information will be taken to pupil progress meetings to ensure that children are progressing and those requiring support or extension are identified and have their needs met appropriately.

The class teacher keeps progress records, workbooks and records examples of each child's achievements within Tapestry. These are shared with parents regularly and child voice plays a key role within their ongoing assessment.

Tracking grids are updated at the end of each term. Pupil progress meetings termly ensure gap analysis takes place and that all children are supported and extended.

At the end of the Reception year, all pupils will be assessed against the Early Learning Goals. Parents will be informed whether their child has met or not yet expected levels of development. A copy of this will be given to Year 1 teachers as well as being submitted to the Local Authority as requested.

We will share this information throughout the year at parental consultation meetings and also in the end-of-year report.

Safeguarding & Welfare

At Gordon Children's academy, we understand that children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure and when their individual needs are being met. Legally we are required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage. These requirements will include:

- Having a named Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Providing training to all staff to ensure they understand the safeguarding policy and procedures
- Ensuring that all adults who look after the children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so
- Providing induction training so that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities
- Ensuring at least one member of staff holds a current paediatric first aid certificate and is available and present at all times that children are present

- Ensuring that there is a first aid box visible and accessible at all times with guidance on keeping it well stocked and up to date.
- Ensuring that all children have a named Key worker assigned to them
- Ensuring that staffing arrangements meet the needs of all children to ensure their safety
- A setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence
- Promoting good health of all children attending the setting
- Adhering to the school's policy and procedures for administering medication
- Providing healthy snacks and encouraging parents/carers to support this by also sending in healthy snacks
- Managing behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs
- Ensuring that all furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for
- Ensuring that fire regulations and guidance are displayed and that all staff understand and know the procedures in place for evacuating children safely
- Ensuring that children have access to the outdoor play area daily
- Ensuring risks are managed and risk assessments in place where necessary
- Ensuring children with special educational needs (SEN) have specific arrangements in place and are these are reviewed with parents and children three times a year or sooner if needed due to statutory requirements
- Maintaining records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children and our statutory requirements.

Keeping Safe

We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits. We follow the school's behaviour systems and policies. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. We encourage children to take risks and highlight the importance of keeping themselves safe by teaching them how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children.

Good Health

All children are provided with a healthy snack each day. Milk is offered free of charge. They have access to water at all times. Parents are given a free water bottle at the start of the Reception year and are asked to bring it in daily with water. We encourage children to bring in water only.

Intimate Care

"Intimate" care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children are able to carry out themselves. However, depending on a child's age and stage of development, they may need some support, for example dressing, wiping their bottom after using the toilet and changing underwear following an accident. Any child identified as having specific needs will have an Intimate care plan which will be shared with and agreed with parents/carers.

Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child. Intimate care can be provided with permission from the parent or guardian. If a child has an accident, staff will provide help to change the child (gloves will be worn at all times). If the child cannot be cleaned to an acceptable standard, parents will be called to assist.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of those working within the EYFS to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Headteacher and SLT will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule along with Curriculum leads.