



Early Years Policy

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1. Statement of Intent

QEGSMAT (the Trust and its schools) believe every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their full potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances.

A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.

QEGSMAT greatly values the importance of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in providing a secure foundation for future learning and development.

2. Curriculum Intent

We will nurture and enrich each individual child, enabling them to access a play-based curriculum. Through rich experiential learning children will gain knowledge and vocabulary which will help them to develop a deeper understanding and challenge perspectives.

3. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Childcare Act 2006
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- DfE (2024) 'Statutory framework for the EYFS'
- DfE (2023) 'EYFS profile: 2023 handbook'
- DfE (2023) 'Development Matters'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023'
- DfE (2023) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE (2024) 'The Prevent duty'
- Early Education (2021) 'Birth to 5 Matters'
- UK Council for Internet Safety (2020) 'Education for a Connected World'

This policy has been impact assessed in light of the Equality Act 2010.

This policy operates in conjunction with Trust policies which can be accessed via the website and also each school's localised procedures.

4. Aims

Through the implementation of this policy, we aim to:

- Give each child a happy and positive start to their school life in which they can establish a solid foundation for a love of learning.
- Enable each child to develop socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- Encourage children to develop independence within a secure and friendly atmosphere.
- Support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing.
- Use strong **pedagogy** and **curriculum** design to secure strong outcomes (**impact**). A breakdown of these areas are listed in Appendix 1 for school use.

The Trust will seek to provide:

Quality and consistency, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind with challenging learning experiences, based on individual needs, which are informed by observation and assessment.

A secure foundation through learning and development opportunities which are planned around the needs and interests of each child and are assessed and reviewed regularly.

Partnership working between practitioners and parents. Each child should be assigned a key person to ensure that each child’s learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. The key person will work to engage and support parents and/or carers in guiding their child’s development.

Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

5. Learning and Development

Our early years settings follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape our curriculum. These are split into two important and interconnected sections – prime and specific:

The ‘prime’ areas of learning and development are:

Communication and language	Listening, attention & understanding Speaking
Physical development	Gross motor skills Fine motor skills
Personal, social and emotional development	Self-regulation Managing self Building relationships

The ‘specific’ areas of learning and development are:

Literacy	Comprehension Word reading Writing
Mathematics	Numbers Numerical patterns
Understanding the world	Past and present People, culture and communities The natural world
Expressive arts and design	Creating with materials Being imaginative and expressive

In organising and implementing the curriculum our schools ensure that a broad range of activities and experiences are planned, having regard to the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning in the EYFS:

Playing and exploring – children investigate and experience things; use what they know in their play and are willing to try new things.

Active learning – children concentrate, keep on trying if they encounter difficulties and enjoy their achievements.

Creating and thinking critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

6. Assessment

Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Practitioners observe children to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are then used to inform future planning. Observations and assessments are recorded on children’s online learning journeys which parents can access.

The EYFS setting undertakes a summative assessment of the level of each child’s development at certain stages. These are:

- Reception Baseline Assessment – a short assessment which is taken within the first six weeks of a child starting Reception.
- The EYFS Profile – a comprehensive assessment completed at the end of the EYFS to provide a well-rounded picture of a child’s knowledge, understanding, abilities and attainment against the early learning goals (ELGs), and their readiness for Year 1.

Children’s development levels are assessed as the year progresses. If a child’s progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, practitioners will discuss this with the child’s parents/carers and agree how to support the child.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to the assessment process for children with SEND as appropriate.

Contributions to the assessments

Accurate assessment will depend on contributions from a range of perspectives, including those of the child. Practitioners will involve children fully in their own assessment by encouraging them to communicate about and review their own learning. Assessment will build on the insights of all adults who have significant interactions with the child. Adults with different roles will be able to make varying contributions. Accurate assessment requires a two-way flow of information between school and home.

7. Inclusion

At QEGSMAT we have a positive approach to the inclusion of all children as stated in all of our policies. All children are valued and given the opportunity to achieve their full potential regardless of gender, ability, disability, SEND, ethnicity and cultural or social background. We aim to overcome any barriers that might exist and provide for particular needs and disabilities. The Equality Policy ensures that the needs of all children are met, regardless of any protected characteristics they have.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy ensures all children receive the support they need and are given the best learning experience possible. SEND in the EYFS setting will be monitored and managed by the school's SENCO.

8. Safeguarding and Welfare

All necessary steps are taken to keep the children in our care safe and well. Any safeguarding or welfare issues will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

All members of staff will receive safeguarding training that enables them to understand the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures, have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, and recognise signs of potential abuse and neglect in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

EYFS Lead:

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL):

The DSL is responsible for safeguarding children and liaising with local children's services as appropriate. The DDSL will undertake the duties of the DSL in their absence.

9. Staffing

A robust Safer Recruitment Policy is in place, which aims to ensure that members of staff employed in the EYFS are suitable and trained to a recognised level.

Upon employment, all EYFS staff receive induction training to ensure that they understand their roles and responsibilities, including information about emergency evacuation procedures, safeguarding, child protection and health and safety.

Staff will be supported to undertake the appropriate training and professional development to ensure children receive the best quality learning experience.

There will be at least one member of staff who has a current pediatric first aid (PFA) certificate on the school premises at all times and will accompany children on any school outings.

Any member of staff who has sole responsibility for looking after a group of children will hold a PFA certificate. All newly qualified staff with a Level 2 or 3 qualification will be PFA trained. The school will organise PFA training to be renewed every three years.

Staffing ratios are detailed in Appendix 1 for school staff.

10. Information sharing

Information is stored in line with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, and with regard to the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

Appendix 1 – for school use

Aims

As quoted in the statutory framework for the early year's foundation stage (effective from September 2021) each school should use the below overarching principles to shape their practice:

- Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and we will work toward them being as resilient, capable, confident and self-assured as they can be.
- Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- 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 the school and parents.
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

Pedagogy

- Caring;
- Starting with the unique child;
- Play based;
- Experiential;
- Knowledge based (understand how children learn and develop);
- Vocabulary and language rich.

Curriculum

- Understand, know and plan for each child based on their stages of development and interests.
- Ensure a balanced coverage of all the EYFS areas of learning.
- Termly/annual themes/topics which are language/text rich to develop the child's knowledge, vocabulary and understanding through studies such as the seasons, cultural celebrations and the child's interests.

Impact

- We will work to have happy children who are kind and confident.
- Learning opportunities widen children's knowledge and understanding of the world, setting ambitious expectations for all children.
- The curriculum celebrates diversity and supports the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- All children are supported appropriately, allowing them to be successful.
- Children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe.
- Teaching and learning ensure children's readiness for the next stage of their education, and children are given a broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

The children joining our school come from a variety of backgrounds and have already learnt a great deal. The education we offer our children in the Foundation Stage aims to:

- Build on what children already know and can do.
- Ensure that no child is excluded or disadvantaged.
- Ensure that all children feel valued, included and secure.
- Offer a carefully structured curriculum which includes a range of starting points to develop and extend children's learning and activities which match the individual needs of our young children.

Staffing

The school aims to adopt the following staffing ratios:

For children aged two:

- There is one member of staff for every four children.
- At least one staff member holds a full and relevant Level 3 qualification.
- At least half of the other staff members hold full and relevant Level 2 qualifications.

For children aged three and over:

- Where a staff member with qualified teacher status (QTS), early years professional status, or another suitable Level 6 qualification is working directly with the children, there is one member of staff for every 13 children, and at least one other member of staff holds a full and relevant Level 3 qualification.
- Where a staff member with QTS, early years professional status, or another suitable Level 6 qualification is not working directly with the children, there is one member of staff for every eight children, and at least one other member of staff holds a full and relevant Level 3 qualification.

For children in Reception classes:

- Class sizes will be limited to 30 children per teacher.