The Olympus Academy Trust
Early Years and Foundation Stage Principles

Document Summary

Document Owner:	Director of Primary
Version:	4.1
Document Status:	**Approved**
Date Last Approved:	26th September 2024
Date of Next Review:	26th September 2026
Review Frequency:	Bi-yearly
Owner: (Olympus or School)	Olympus
Governing Committee:	Olympus Trust Improvement Committee
Statutory or Optional policy:	Statutory
Appendices:	None
On Trust Website?	Yes
On School Websites?	Yes

Amendment History

Version	Amendment Date	Author	Amendment Summary
v2.1	February 2022	Primary Heads	● Policy rewrite
v2.2	May 2022	Kate Sheldon	● Spelling mistakes corrected and consistency around terminology
v3.0	May 2022	Policy Coordinator	● Policy approved (by TIC)
v4.0	September 2024	Director of Primary	● Policy updated as per tracked changes
V4.1	26th September 2024	Policy Coordinator	● Policy approved by TIC on 26th September 2024

1. Rationale

1.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage extends from birth to the end of the reception stage. Entry into Olympus Academy Trust primary schools is usually at the beginning of the school year in which the learners turn five (although compulsory schooling does not begin until the start of the term after a learner's fifth birthday), unless at Charborough road Nursey.

1.2 The Olympus Academy Trust recognises that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education. For a **partnership** to work well, it must be built on trust, transparency and responsibility from all parties involved.

1.3 As a Trust we believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life and that it is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

1.4 This policy needs to read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding
- Administration of medicine
- First Aid

2. Aims and Principles

2.1 Within the Olympus Academy Trust, we embark on a play-based curriculum offering a mix of learner-initiated and adult-led learning opportunities – but always taking into account the interests and needs of the learners.

2.2 This is in response to a number of aims and principles:

- As part of our EYFS provision we seek to provide quality and consistency, a secure foundation, partnership working and equality of opportunity across all primary schools within the trust.

- A desire to enable learners to engage in free-flow play and ambitious learning.

- A desire to develop learners with independent learning skills; help learners develop feelings of self-respect, self-esteem, mutual respect, confidence, tolerance and empathy for themselves and others.

- A desire to create life-long learners with the intrinsic motivation, critical and creative thinking skills to engage in learning opportunities; to have an equal chance of success.

- A desire to create systems that accurately assess the acquired knowledge, skills and concepts of our learners so that planning can reflect the individualised learning needs and styles of the learners.

- Inclusive practice that helps every individual learner to meet their learning potential regardless of gender, belief system, culture or language.

2.3 The curriculum across the EYFS is based on the overarching principles from the DFE

Four guiding principles should shape practice in early years. These are:

• Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured.
• 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 practitioners and parents and/or carers.
• Importance of **learning and development**. Children develop and learn at different rates. (See "the characteristics of effective teaching and learning" at paragraph 1.18). The framework covers the education and care of all children, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Olympus also uses Development Matters - Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage (publishing.service.gov.uk) identifying the Seven key features of effective practice:

1. The best for every child
2. High-quality care
3. The curriculum: what we want children to learn
4. Pedagogy: helping children to learn
5. Assessment: checking children have learnt
6. Self-regulation and executive function
7. Partnership with parents

2.4 Our ultimate aim is outstanding progress and outcomes for all of our learners.

2.5 **"**All children develop in different ways and development is not a linear or automatic

process. It depends on each unique child having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments that encourage their engagement and recognise their strengths. All children have agency and curiosity to learn and will interact with other people and the world around them in different ways. Understanding these different ways of knowing about the world is central to understanding who children are and how best to support their development.***" - EYFS Development Matters 2021***

3. Statutory Documentation

3.1 As part of our practice at the Olympus Academy Trust we adhere to the Statutory Framework of the EYFS which reference prime and specific areas.

3.2 Three prime areas are particularly important for learning and forming relationships. They build a foundation for children to thrive and provide the basis for learning in all areas. ***StatutoryFramework for the EYFS, 2023***

3.3 The **prime areas** are:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

3.4 We also support learners' development in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

3.5 The **specific areas** are:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

3.6 Learners have discrete whole group and small group sessions which increase as they progress through the EYFS with times for daily phonics sessions, through SoundsWrite, following an aligned approach, teaching aspects of Mathematics and Literacy and exploring the Olympus Academy Trust's Curious Curriculum.

3.7 In planning and guiding learners' activities we reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice.

3.8 The three **characteristics of effective 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.
- Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

3.9 Learners are provided with a range of rich, meaningful firsthand experiences in which children explore, think creatively and are active. We aim to develop and foster positive

attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

4. Learning Environment in EYFS

4.1 *"Children learn well 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 learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers."* ***- Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2023***

4.2 At Olympus we believe that children learn best in a rich multi-sensory environment that is highly organised, inclusive and reflects the needs of our learners. As well as being welcoming, the environments in our schools are a learning tool, a way of engaging learners, building relationships and enabling independent learning. Our classrooms reflect the Reggio Emilia Approach Reggio Children - Reggio Emilia Approach

4.3 which focuses on relationships, values, respect for self and others and promotes curiosity. The environment is a key component of the Reggio philosophy and is spoken of as 'the third teacher'. Strong-Wilson, T., & Ellis, J. (2007). Children and Place: Reggio Emilia's Environment As Third Teacher. *Theory Into Practice*, *46*(1), 40–47. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840709336547

4.4 We design our environments to facilitate and support children's learning: we use natural materials and fabrics to provide learning areas which provoke curiosity and wonder. Space, light and colour are used creatively to provide learning spaces where learner's work can be celebrated as the main focus and take centre stage. Colours used in our classrooms are chosen from a natural palette to make the space feel open and calm. They also enable the resources and most importantly the people using the space feel more relaxed, at ease and able to concentrate

4.5 The resources that we provide in our learning environments are carefully considered and selected for their aesthetics, beauty and relevance in order to provoke curiosity and stimulate learning. Natural and open-ended resources are available both inside and outside for learners to select and use which provide opportunities for creativity, discovery and problem solving. We value the outside and inside learning environments equally and acknowledge that they offer unique learning opportunities and experiences for our learners. Opportunities to connect with the natural world promote a sense of wellbeing, freedom and the time to relax whilst working alone or alongside others.

4.6 Based on research from Elizabeth Jarman ELIZABETH JARMAN we organise our environments to provide communication friendly spaces in and around our schools to allow learners the opportunity to interact with others and develop linguistic and critical thinking skills. Weplan the environment to ensure that learners can make choices about their learning, are engaged and have access to a range of pedagogical styles in a range of spaces that are conducive to high levels of engagement and therefore high-quality learning.

4.7 Displays in our classrooms document children's learning and are often accompanied by the learner's voice and photographs to show the journey of achievement. Displays help to promote a sense of ownership and represent the learners working there. They are interactive and are supported with provocations to evoke questions and a sense of wonder. We reflect and celebrate our learners' achievements in displays to promote self-esteem, confidence and a sense of pride.

4.8 Children are at the heart of planning our learning environments and their needs and interests are reflected through the range of resources and experiences that are made available for them. Teachers use ongoing observations to assess the learning needs and interests of the learners and then create and plan environments that will facilitate high engagement and rich and relevant learning experiences. Following gaps and strengths analysis these are changed and enhanced regularly to meet the needs of learners and support them in their learning of new skills, attitudes and knowledge.

4.9 In order to ensure that learners can be independent in learning when not working with an adult we ensure that resources are organised according to learner's developmental needs and are available for child-initiated learning.

- Our classroom environments are organised to enable learners to independently access a wide range of resources during their play; this is called 'continuous provision' – the **continuous provision** allows children's learning to continue when they are working without a practitioner's support.

- Practitioners within our settings observe learner's interests and learning behaviours. They use this knowledge to add enhancements and provocations to the continuous provision, creating ***'enhanced provision'***.

- Each day, learners have extended periods of time where they can follow their own agenda with free flow – playing, exploring and learning through a carefully resourced and planned learning environment; inside and out.

5. Inclusion

5.1 We value all our learners, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender.

5.2 All learners are encouraged to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. Assessments take into account contributions from a range of perspectives to ensure that any learners with potential special educational needs are identified at the earliest possible opportunity. Early identification of special needs is crucial to enable practitioners to support the development of each learner. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage and the school's SENCo is called upon for further information and advice, with outside agencies and professionals consulted if necessary.

5.3 We meet the needs of all our learners through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend the learner's knowledge, experiences and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence.
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs.
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support learners and to help them to learn effectively.
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all learner's is valued.
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.
- Planning challenging and appropriate activities for learners.
- Monitoring learners' progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

6. Observation, Assessment and Planning

6.1 Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise learners' progress, understand their needs and to plan activities andsupport. Practitioners are skilled in their understanding of stages of development andare clear about what they want learners to know and be able to do.

6.2 The main method of assessment in the EYFS is through practitioner's observations of learners. On-going assessment, also known as formative assessment, is an integral part of the learning and development process. It informs practitioners of the learner's abilities, needs, interests, play schemas and learning styles.

6.3 Practitioners observe learners, with care and attentiveness, on a daily basis - both formally and informally. Some observations will be recorded in a child's online learning journal, Seesaw, and assessed using our online assessment tool, Insight. The recording of observations and interactions does not entail prolonged breaks from learners; the main focus of the practitioner is always the learner.

7. Summative Assessment

7.1 At least three times a year, practitioners will carry out a summative assessment of their cohort. This will be in response to the information that has been collected as part of ongoing formative assessment. This data will be used to inform planning through a gaps and strengths analysis, including of the environment, and next steps.

8. Planning

8.1 Practitioners use the knowledge of the individual needs, interests and development stages of the learners in their cohorts to plan challenging and stimulating experiences in all areas of learning and development. The provision that learner's access during their child-initiated play is carefully planned for and considered and informed by assessment. Practitioner-guided learning is planned to ensure a depth of learning.

8.2 In the EYFS, our entire space is informed by assessment; the space bears a direct relationship to the strengths and areas for development identified through regular assessment. Assessments inform the focus for provision and next steps in learning.

8.3 As well as using formative assessment to adapt and enhance the environment, following every summative assessment, practitioners create a Gap and Strength Analysis (GSA) to identify the biggest areas of strength and gaps within a cohort.

8.4 This information is used to create an appropriate learning environment that directly reflects the needs that have been identified.

9. Progress

9.1 Parents and carers are kept up to date with their learner's progress and development.

9.2 Practitioners will address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents and/or carers, and or any relevant professionals.

9.3 If at any point a learner's progress in any prime area gives causes for concern, practitioners will discuss with the learner's parents/carers and agree how to support the child.

10. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)

10.1 On entry into each phase of the EYFS, a baseline assessment will be carried out to assess the needs and ability of every learner.

10.2 In the final term of the reception phase, the EYFS Profile will be completed for each learner. Each learner's level of development will be assessed against the17 early learning goals (ELGs.) The results of a learner's EYSP will be shared with parents and/or carers and the learner's next teacher.

11. Transition

11.1 In order to ensure a successful start to a learner's school career, a thorough, well-planned period of transition, involving all agencies (family, preschool/nursery, and other agencies) and addressing the needs of the whole child is essential.

11.2 Transition must be personalised for each learner and where necessary, tailored and adapted to individual requirements.

12. Nursery/Preschool-School Transition

12.1 The transition from Nursery/Preschool to school must ensure that the individual needs of the whole child are addressed, planned and provided for.

12.2 The teacher will make every effort to make links with EYFS settings to gather information and develop relationships with the learners they will be receiving by:

- Contacting all local preschool/nursery settings from where they receive children to gather initial information about each learner.
- Attend South Gloucestershire and Bristol preschool liaison meeting to discuss individual needs and receive learner profiles.
- Visit all local preschool/nursery settings to gain a deeper understanding of the needs of each individual learner.
- Visit all local preschool/nursery settings to meet the learners in their own setting to begin developing relationships by engaging in play and reading stories.

13. Home-EYFS Transition

13.1 The transition from home to EYFS allows the receiving teacher to gain deeper understanding of the whole child and to begin establishing the essential relationship with their parents.

13.2 Practitioners will make every effort to make links with parents to gather information and develop relationships with the learner's families by:

- Inviting all families to an information event during term 5 or 6 to welcome them to the school and present key information regarding the induction period, school day etc.
- Providing a pack of essential information for each family detailing all they will need to know about the school.
- Inviting all learners into school to visit the setting and experience life in school.
- Offering the opportunity for the teachers to visit learners in their home setting to begin developing a relationship with the learners they will be receiving and their families.

14. Starting school

14.1 When the learners start school in September, they will be offered a phased start to school so relationships can be built between families and school, learners andteachers and learners and learners in a purposeful and supportive way that gives learners the smoothest transition possible. The majority of learners will quickly move to a full-time day.

14.2 Enhanced transitions will be offered to learners who have significant special educational needs.

14.3 Enhanced transitions will allow the learners to develop a grounded relationship with all practitioners who they will work with and ensure the school has made all necessary arrangements and adaptations required to meet any additional needs of the learner.

14.4 Additional meetings will be held with the learner's family, previous setting and SEND bodies to ensure the high levels of information sharing required to meet the needs of the whole child.

14.5 Where necessary, an extended transition period may be offered.