



## The Gem Federation

### Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

*'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five 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 together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.'*

(Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage - March 2014) Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

### Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. Children, at The Gem Federation, join Reception in the year that they turn five years old. In partnership with parents and carers we enable children to begin the process of becoming active and successful learners for life. Early Years consists of 3 Reception Classes with space for 30 children per class and two nursery classes offering both 15 hour and 30 hour places.

Aims, objectives and expectations

- To explain the Early Years Foundation Stage principles
- To explain how children learn in Early Years
- To define the role of Staff / Governors in Early Years
- To define how we reward children
- To explain how we support families
- To explain how transition to year 1 works

### Early Years Foundation Stage Principles

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

**A Unique child** - Each child develops in their own individual way. Each child is a capable, competent learner who will thrive in a safe, secure setting which allows them to be self-assured and confident learners. At The Gem Federation we recognise that children are individuals, with individual needs that to be nurtured, and that children learn at varying rates. Children's dispositions and attitudes to learning are influenced by the feedback of others; we use positive praise and encouragement, as well as rewards assemblies to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

**Positive relationships** – At The Gem Federation we recognise that role modelling and creating positive, secure relationships between; children, children and teachers, teachers and school and parents is key to children becoming confident, independent individuals. At



The Gem Federation we view parents as partners. We aim to develop strong, secure relationships with parents that will support your child throughout their Gem Federation school journey. With your support we aim to focus on developing the whole child in a safe and secure environment whereby children feel empowered, strong and independent learners.

**Enabling Environments** – We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the child’s development. We aim to create an attractive, stimulating and interactive learning environment that is rich in purposeful resources. Through observations, focus activities, communication through home school learning diaries, workshops, parent forums, parent representative meetings, and parent/teacher meetings we gain a greater understanding of your child’s needs, interests and stages of development. This informs our planning which allows us to plan challenging but achievable activities whereby children extend their learning both indoor and outdoor.

**Learning and Development** –There are seven areas of learning and development of which three are ‘prime areas’, and four ‘specific areas.’

#### **The Prime Areas**

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

#### **The Specific Areas**

- Literacy
- Maths
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive arts and design

Through careful assessments and observations, including information provided by parents and other settings, children’s development levels are assessed. The Prime areas of learning are the fundamental building blocks that need to be secure before children are able to progress in the specific areas of learning. The prime areas reflect a child’s disposition to learning, their physical capacity to learn and their ability to express their knowledge and understanding, needs, wants verbally. Until a child is secure in those areas they are limited in being able to progress in the specific areas of learning such as reading, writing and number. Therefore, we place a great emphasis on the prime areas in the first term to ensure children feel secure, confident and ready to learn their specific areas. If a child’s progress in any prime area gives us cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child’s parents/carers and a programme of support will be established.

#### **How Children Learn in Early Years: The Characteristics of Effective Learning**

The characteristics of effective learning are the way in which children engage with those around them and their environment; playing and exploring, active learning, creating and thinking critically. Children use all 3 characteristics of effective learning when playing and



investigating. However they tend to use one more than another and through observing children using their environment, responding to challenges and engaging with peers and adults we understand a little more about how they learn. This then allows us to plan activities which incorporate their preferred learning styles to extend learning.

### **Learning through Play**

Early Years focuses on learning through context and play. At The Gem Federation we tailor our activities to topics, books or current celebrations. We plan a range of activities that reflect the EYFS principles to support your child to reach their Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception in each of the areas of learning. We always aim to make activities varied, challenging and fun. We are able to access a large resource rich indoor and outdoor learning space that allows us to fulfil this objective daily.

### **Observation, Assessment and Planning**

Planning that responds to children's needs and interests is effective planning. Effective planning means effective learning as it builds and extends on what children already know and can do. As a team, Early Years plan exciting and challenging activities informed by observations of children we have made during carpet sessions, independent challenges and play, small group focus activities, parent input and one to one time. All staff in Early Years contribute to the planning process whether it is for outdoor or indoor learning. In doing so, we consider topics, individual interests, group interests and this ensures that all the staff are aware of objectives we aim to achieve across the Early Years Unit.

Early Years plan on a weekly basis; however this may change depending on whether we need to reflect children's interests or spontaneous events that may occur. In being flexible we give learning a context and real meaning.

Assessment of each child is done daily in Early Years in the form of short incidental observations, photographs, focused group work, independent challenges and long observations. These observations form the basis of planning next steps for individual children. They are also kept as a record in each child's Learning Journey to inform parents, senior leadership team and Ofsted of how we assess children's learning. Parents and Carers are given the opportunity to meet with their class teacher in the autumn and spring term and they are given a summative report in the summer term.

### **The Role of Staff and Governors**

#### **The Head of School's Role:**

- Line manager to the Head of Early Years.
- Reports end of year results to the Local Authority and Governing Body.
- Designated person for Safeguarding Issues

#### **Assistant Head of Early Years:**

- Line Manager to Teachers and Support staff in Early Years.



- Provides INSET training to Teachers and Support Staff.
- Organises external training for Early Years Staff.
- Reports termly progress and end of year results to the Head of School.
- Coordinates interventions for children with SEN alongside the SENCo.
- Provides practical workshops for parents and carers; how to use home school learning diaries, phonics, maths and reading.

### **Teachers**

- Observe, assess and plan on a daily and weekly basis.
- Contribute to individual learning journeys for each child in their class.
- Provide next steps for each individual child's learning.
- Meet parents twice yearly to discuss individual children's progress.
- Report assessments each term to the Head of Early Years.
- Report end of year achievements, levels and next steps to parents and Head of Early Years.
- Report SEN, emotional or social issues to the Head of Early Years and SENCo.
- Involve parents as partners in everyday school life.

### **Rewards and Celebrations**

- Treasure Chests
- Bessie Bear
- Star of the Week
- Writer of the Week
- Mathematician of the Week
- Scientist of the Week

At The Gem Federation we reward positive behaviour and dispositions to learning every day. Each class in Early Years follow the 'Golden Rules' (see behaviour policy). The posters can be seen in each classroom. When children are seen to be behaving or demonstrating any of the Golden Rules they will be rewarded with a treasure chest for the whole class. The treasure chests will accumulate over the week. On Friday at the end of the week children have a reward assembly whereby each class has their total number of treasure chests counted out and the class with the most treasure chests wins Bessie Bear to stay in their class for the following week.

In addition to this, children who have shown exceptional individual 'star' behaviour will also be awarded with a 'Star of the Week, as will children who have shown great learning in maths, writing and science.

In the summer term, as part of preparing the children for their transition to Year 1, Reception classes adopt a behaviour plan which is more similar to that of the whole school.

### **Parents as Partners**

- Introduction meeting



- Weekly newsletter
- Home School Diary Workshops
- Phonics Workshop
- Maths Workshop
- Reading Workshop
- Celebration Days
- Parent/Teacher meetings
- Parents as volunteers

Every child and parent is given the opportunity to come and meet with their class teacher in the summer term prior to starting Reception. Children and parents can get a feel of life in a Reception class and discuss any concerns or issues with the class teacher before formally starting school.

We feel it is paramount that we share as much information with parents as possible. To achieve this we send home weekly newsletters about what we have been learning in class, what topics we have coming up, workshops that are happening or any current affairs that parents and carers may be interested in. The letter can at times also have attached to it worksheets or challenges that children can try at home to reflect what we have been learning in class. Homework is by no means compulsory and teachers do not take it in to be marked, it is more of an indicator to parents of what we have been focusing on in class.

In the first term there are also a number of workshops that demonstrate to parents the expectations for children by the end of the year and how we support children at school. Parents receive a resource pack, strategies and next steps in these workshops which allow parents to feel more confident in supporting their child at home.

Parents will also be invited in once a term. A chance for your child to show you around their learning environment and share their learning journeys with parents. Also it is an opportunity for parents to see their child happy, relaxed and flourishing in a productive learning environment.

We are also keen to invite parents in to volunteer for special occasions such as; Diwali, Eid or other special times. Parents are also welcome to show case their skills and come in to volunteer during term time to offer children experiences such as; drumming, arts and crafts, science experiments, drama, music sessions or simply story telling.

### **Transition to Year 1**

At The Gem Federation we have put measures in place to ensure a smooth transition from Early Years to Key Stage 1. To do this we have very specialised teachers who have a solid knowledge and understanding of Early Years education and how this looks in year 1 to maximise learning. Teachers are experienced in both Early Years and Year 1. The key stage leaders have also worked together to produce a transition policy that manages children's abilities alongside teachers expectations to provide a daily programme that extends learning in a fun, active and engaging way.



## **Hot Weather**

Every adult in Early Years is permitted to support your child in applying sun cream on very hot days. During such times letters will be sent out asking parents to provide their child with sun cream, a cap and bottle of water to keep their child hydrated. We will also monitor access to outdoor areas to keep children safe. If you do not want an adult to apply sun cream please write a letter to the class teacher requesting this.

## **Handwriting in the Foundation Stage**

Good handwriting relies on secure motor control and hand-eye coordination. Children in the Foundation Stage should learn handwriting through movement with the actual writing of letters and words that are legible as the ultimate aim.

In the early stages of handwriting development, children are introduced to activities to establish fine motor skills. Multi- sensory experiences ensure that the techniques are not only fun to learn, but that the skill is learnt effectively by pupils with a variety of learning styles.

Children will: -

- Engage in activities requiring hand-eye coordination
- Use one-handed tools and equipment
- Draw lines and circles using gross motor movement
- Manipulate objects with increasing control
- Begin to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines
- Begin to form recognisable letters
- Use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.
- Individual letter formation - Word formation based on letter groups

Throughout the Foundation Stage, children need lots of opportunities to develop: - Physical control through large-scale movement such as outdoor play. Balancing, climbing, marching and moving to music. - Manipulative skills such as using tools, cooking utensils and scissors. - Fine motor control and hand-eye coordination, through activities such as jigsaws, threading, cutting and manipulating 'small world' equipment.

Effective teaching of letter formation can only be achieved through modelling. Teachers must demonstrate letter formation and children must practice by carefully copying and repeating. It is important to observe children writing to ensure they are forming letters correctly.

A non-cursive script is taught in Reception moving on to a cursive script in the Summer term, for those children who are able to demonstrate effective fine motor skills.