



# Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

## St Margaret's Academy



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## **1. Aims**

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- A close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

## **2. Legislation**

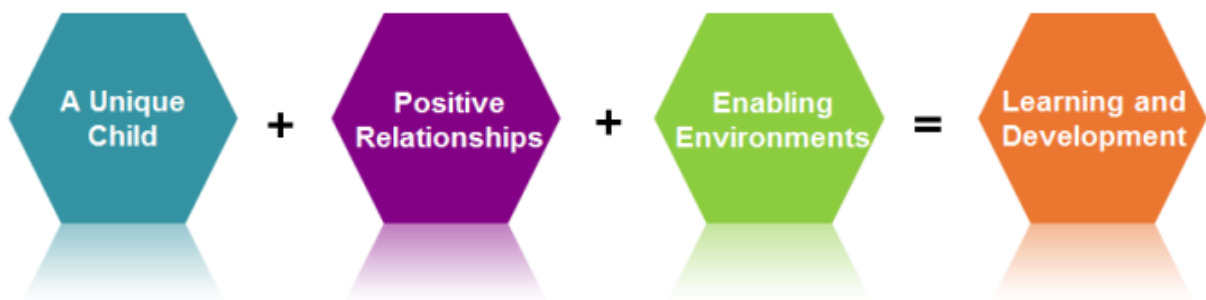
This policy is based on requirements set out in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for 2023.

## **3. Structure of the EYFS**

At St Margaret's Academy, children are eligible to join our Acorn's Reception Class full-time from the September of the year in which they turn five. It is parental choice as to whether they take up a full-time place at this point. However, in compliance with local authority admissions policy all children will be in school full time the term after which they turn five. Reception admissions are managed in accordance with the school admission policy. Some adjustments to this may be required for individual children who have special educational needs and need a gentle staggered introduction. Within the EYFS, 'daily routines' take account of children's developing personal and social skills and will change as they progress through the school. Participation in whole school experiences are gradually built up so that when the children move into Year One, they feel happy and confident within the wider school environment.

## 4. Principles for Early Years Education

The statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021 (referred to as the EYFS) guides the work of all practitioners working in the EYFS. Four guiding principles shape the practice: a unique child, positive relationships, enabling environments and learning and development. At St Margaret's Academy, the principles below are carefully considered in all aspects of the organisation and learning and teaching within the EYFS.



**A Unique Child** recognises each child as a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. At St Margaret's Academy, we know and understand:

- All children develop in individual ways and at varying rates
- The diversity of individuals is valued and respected. No child shall be excluded or disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, special education needs, disability, gender or ability
- Children will develop resilience when their physical and psychological well-being is protected by adults, when they feel safe
- Children's health is integral to their well-being

**Positive Relationships** recognise that children learn best from secure and loving relationships with parents, carers and key adults. At St Margaret's Academy, we know and understand:

- The quality of all relationships is a major influence on a child's learning and development
- Parents and practitioners need to work together in partnership
- Children learn more effectively when a trusting relationship with knowledgeable adults exists

**Enabling Environments** play a part in supporting and extending children's learning. At St Margaret's Academy:

- Children have access to a relevant learning environment and practitioners who understand and can observe, assess and plan effectively to support the needs of every child
- Well planned, purposeful activities that includes challenge but are achievable, and appropriate intervention and responses will engage pupils in their learning
- Processes that are carefully planned to include; induction, transition, liaison with multi agencies and continuity, are key to ensuring the support and extension of children's learning
- A rich and varied environment enables children to explore and learn in safe, secure, yet challenging indoor and outdoor spaces

**Learning and Development** takes place where the unique child is recognised, positive relationships are formed, and an enabling environment is provided. At St Margaret's Academy, we know and understand that:

- Children learn through play and exploration that reflects their varied interests, both by themselves and playing with others
- Children learn best when they are actively engaged. Experiences build on what children already know and can do
- The EYFS curriculum is carefully structured to provide stimulating experiences and allows opportunities for children to engage in both planned activities and those they initiate themselves

## 5. Our Curriculum

At St Margaret's Academy, we provide our youngest children with strong foundations for learning in order that they may develop the skills, knowledge and characteristics to become lifelong learners and active members of society. We work in close partnership with parents to ensure every child meets their potential, wherever their individual starting point.

Our curriculum is based upon the learning and development requirements as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework 2023 and offers to both challenge and engage our children. This framework includes seven areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. Three areas, known as the Prime Areas, are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. The prime areas of learning are strengthened and applied through four Specific Areas of Learning.

**The Prime Areas of Learning:**

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

**The Specific Areas of Learning:**

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

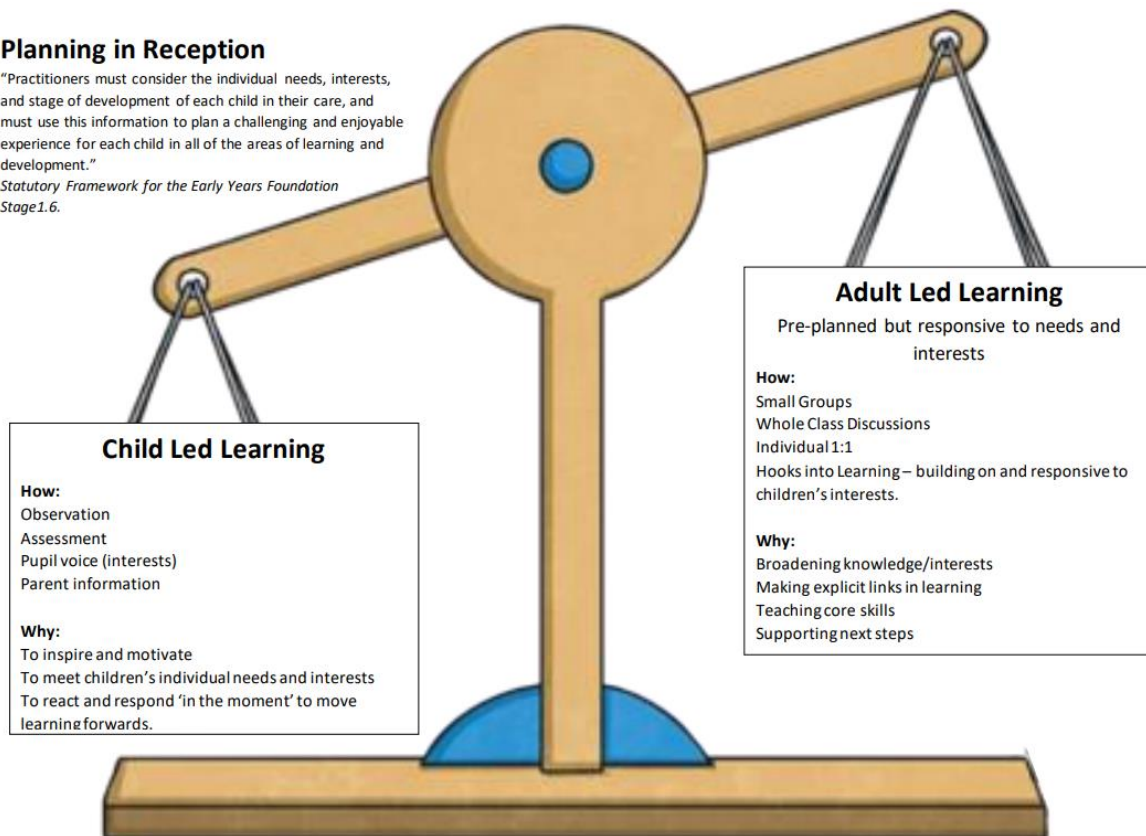
Our curriculum in Acorns is delivered through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated experiences; where experiences are planned, the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child are taken into account.

A heavy emphasis is placed upon the Prime Areas of Learning as children begin Acorns, ensuring that the key skills which underpin all learning and development are well established as they embark upon developing their skills and knowledge in the Specific Areas. We use topics as a tool to introduce new concepts in a child-friendly way and to broaden children's knowledge and experiences whilst also enabling children to steer their learning according to their own particular interests. Our planned topics for learning may therefore change and adapt in response to our current cohort of children.

## Planning in Reception

"Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development."

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 1.6.



St Margaret's Academy, EYFS Curriculum Rationale

## 6. Learning in Acorns

We believe that play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals, and solve problems. Our children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play and learning that is guided by adults. It is the role of our Acorns staff to stimulate the children's interests, respond to each child's emerging needs and guide their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning.

Our approach to learning in Acorns is inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach and the work of Loris Malaguzzi (1920-94), an Italian educator and pedagogue.

***"The Reggio Emilia Approach® is an educational philosophy based on the image of a child with strong potentialities for development and a subject with rights, who learns through the hundred languages belonging to all human beings, and grows in relations with others."***

Using this approach, children are encouraged to be creative and autonomous as they explore and learn in our Acorns environment. They will choose their own fields of interest and in this way, we help them to develop critical thinking skills, logical reasoning and verbal communication.

***“Our image of a child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and most of all connected to adults and other children.” Loris Malaguzzi***

Through building strong and trusting relationships with the children, the staff are able to support each child on their own individual learning journey and to help them to reflect on the experiences they have had to construct their knowledge and understanding of the world.

***“The Reggio Emilia approach believes that children have a hundred languages which here means that children are capable of endless possibilities. They have a hundred ways of doing things, a hundred thoughts, a hundred ways of solving a problem, expressing, and a lot more.”***

In Acorns, we aim to discover and tap into these verbal and non-verbal languages to better understand our children and their unique creations.

*the 100  
Languages*

No Way.  
The Hundred is there.  
The Child  
Is made of one hundred.  
The child has  
A hundred languages  
A hundred hands  
A hundred thoughts  
A hundred ways of thinking  
Of playing, of speaking.  
A hundred always a hundred  
Ways of listening  
Of marveling, of loving  
A hundred joys  
For singing and understanding  
A hundred worlds  
To discover  
A hundred worlds  
To invent  
A hundred worlds  
To dream.  
The child has  
A hundred languages  
(and a hundred hundred  
hundred more)  
But they steal ninety-nine.  
The school and the culture  
Separate the head from the  
body.  
They tell the child:  
To think without hands

To do without head  
To listen and not to speak  
To understand without joy  
To love and to marvel.  
They tell the child:  
To discover the world already  
there  
And of the hundred  
They steal ninety-nine.  
They tell the child:  
That work and play  
Reality and fantasy  
Science and imagination  
Sky and earth  
Reason and dream  
Are things  
That do not belong together.  
And thus they tell the child  
That the hundred is not there.  
The child says:  
No way. The hundred is there.

*Loris Malaguzzi, Founder  
of the Reggio Emilia  
Approach*

The right side of the image shows a photograph of a child wearing a large, colorful, hand-drawn mask. The mask is primarily red with yellow and green accents, including a wide, smiling mouth and triangular eyes. The child is holding the mask in front of their face. The background is a plain wall.

Alongside the role of the child and the teacher in the learning process, our Acorns environment plays an equally important role in child development. Our children freely and independently explore in our warm and inviting classrooms and garden area throughout their school day, and resources are carefully selected and displayed in order that children will be motivated and able to lead their own learning across each of the seven areas as defined in our curriculum. This provision is continuously available in order that children may develop and build upon previous learning experiences.

***“The environment should act as an aquarium which reflects the ideas, ethics, attitudes, and culture of the people who live in it.” Loris Malaguzzi***

Malaguzzi defined the learning environment as ‘The Third Teacher’ which is flexible and responsive to the need for teachers and children to create learning together. Adults closely observe the children in play, weaving in opportunities for deepening and extending their learning. Enhancements to this continuous provision are frequently added to inspire new ideas and learning or broaden the children’s experiences. Teachers closely watch how children play, their interests and abilities, and respond to this by making changes to support development.

Alongside the child-led learning, new concepts and skills are introduced through carefully planned adult led sessions which are offered at different points during the school day. As the year progresses, the frequency and length of these sessions adapts in line with the progress of the children.

For the development of early reading and writing, phonics is recognised as the prime approach. At St Margaret’s Academy, we use the scheme Read Write Inc. to develop children’s phonic knowledge. Our children receive a daily phonics session, taught in small groups according to their current reading level. Through playful experiences and links to our topics for learning, children are invited to practise applying their growing phonic knowledge to read and write in purposeful ways. We aim to provide children with a love of reading and use quality texts, both fiction and non-fiction, to develop the children’s vocabulary, imagination, knowledge of the world and comprehension skills. Children are provided with reading materials for home learning including picture books which they choose independently from our ‘Book to Share’ library, Read Write Inc. ditties, books and online links to the Read Write Inc. portal for phonic videos.

We develop Mathematical knowledge and skills through a daily adult led session which is followed by opportunities to practise and deepen new learning through playful experiences within the continuous provision. At St Margaret’s, we use the scheme ‘Mastering Number’ for mathematical development which ensures progression and coverage throughout the year.

## 6. Assessment

At St Margaret's Academy, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. Staff observe pupils both in their independent play and within adult led activity, to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning and provision. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and carers of their children. Throughout the year, staff use the 'Development Matters' tool as a guide to making best-fit summative judgements about whether a child is showing typical development, may be at risk of delay or is ahead for their age. This information is shared with parents and carers both informally and at parent consultations each term. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, the Early Years SENCo will work in close partnership with the child's parents or carers and staff in order to plan appropriate provision, make adaptations to the learning or environment and to liaise with outside supporting agencies as appropriate.

Within the first 6 weeks of starting school, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) for every child. During the Autumn term all children in Acorns are also assessed using the Language and Speech Link programmes and interventions are then planned for targeted children. This entry information collectively provides a starting point for every child, and enables us to closely monitor the progress they make as they move through school.

At the end of the Reception year, staff complete the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile for every child, which assesses them against the 17 Early Learning Goals. This builds a comprehensive picture of what each child knows and can do as they complete Reception and provides useful information for their Year One teach as they transition into Key Stage One and the National Curriculum. Teacher judgements are based on the observations gathered throughout the year and are moderated both internally within the school and anonymously within local schools. When the children are assessed, they are recorded as either 'meeting expected levels of development' or 'working towards expected levels of development'. The results of the Early Years Foundation Stage profile are shared with parents in their end of year academic report and parents can request a consultation with their child's teacher at this point also. Early Years Foundation Stage profile data is also submitted to the local authority.



## 7. Working with parents and carers

At St Margaret's Academy, the role that parents play in their child's learning is seen as fundamental in ensuring that their child achieves their full potential and we recognise that children learn and develop well when there's a strong partnership between staff and parents or carers.

To build this strong relationship, we offer the following:

- Starting School – we offer every child and family a home visit prior to starting school in September, an invitation to our EYFS family picnic, our induction presentation for parents and a taster session in September where parents and carers may join their child for a couple of hours in school.
- Operating an open-door policy for parents and carers with any queries or concerns.
- Our Acorns Newsletter where we can share information about the curriculum, children's current learning and ideas and support for practising or reinforcing learning at home.
- Inviting parents to a range of activities throughout the school year such as curriculum activities, class trips, Christmas crafts and shows, Sports Day etc.
- Information specific to Acorns is available on our school website. This includes our Reception Handbook, our Planning and Collectables and Learning Prompt videos.
- Written contact with regards to reading progress through pupils' Reading Diaries.
- Offering parent consultation meetings to discuss pupils' progress and their next steps.
- Inviting parents to attend workshops about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics or reading.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in Reception.

Parents and carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. The progress check and EYFS profile helps to provide parents and carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities. Each child in Acorns is assigned a key person who helps to ensure that their learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. The key person supports parents and carers in guiding their child's development at home. The key person also helps families to engage with more specialist support, if appropriate.

## 8. Safeguarding and welfare procedures

We recognise that children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We follow safeguarding and welfare requirements to provide a welcoming, safe and stimulating environment where children are able to enjoy learning and grow in confidence.

We make sure that the appropriate statutory staff to pupil ratios are maintained in our setting to meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. We comply with infant class size legislation and have at least 1 teacher per 30 pupils. We have at least 1 person with a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate on the premises and available at all times when children are present, including on outings. This PFA certificate is renewed every 3 years as required.

We promote good oral health, as well as good health in general, in Acorns through our planned curriculum learning.

The rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our school's child protection policy. This policy will be reviewed every year. At every review, the policy will be shared with, and approved by the academy Trustees.

### Appendix 1. List of statutory policies and procedures for the EYFS

Statutory policy or procedure for the EYFS	Where can it be found?
Safeguarding policy and procedures	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Procedure for responding to illness	First Aid Policy
Administering medicines policy	Health and Safety Policy Supporting Children with Medical Conditions Policy
Emergency evacuation procedure	Health and Safety Policy Bomb Threat, Dynamic Lock Down and Evacuation procedures. Fire Evacuation Plan.
Procedure for checking the identity of visitors	Visitor Policy and Contractors Policy
Procedures for a parent failing to collect a child and for missing children	St Margaret's Academy Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy on our website
Procedure for dealing with concerns or complaints	The Complaints Policy on our website