

# Early Years Policy

# Briarwood Infants



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## 1. Vision, Values and Aims

“Enjoy, Engage, Learn”

We believe that Briarwood is a safe, happy and stimulating school that supports pupil’s individual needs. The staff and the wider school community work hard to ensure that a nurturing approach supports all pupils through their education, providing a bespoke approach to each child depending on their current needs. At Briarwood all aspects of school life are designed to inspire and engage pupils, through delivery of a high-quality meaningful SEND curriculum adopting creative approaches and promoting essential life skills. The roles of communication and engagement are key to all we do and underpin our approach to learning. Our Early Years department believes that early educational experiences should be filled with playful and inspiring opportunities allowing children to explore and experiment with the world around them. Through these opportunities children will make discoveries and acquire new skills and knowledge about their world.

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 or better progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good or better progress and no child gets left behind
- A close working partnership between staff and parents/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) published Oct 2024:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/670fa42a30536cb92748328f/EYFS\\_statutory\\_framework\\_for\\_group\\_and\\_school\\_-\\_based\\_providers.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/670fa42a30536cb92748328f/EYFS_statutory_framework_for_group_and_school_-_based_providers.pdf)

### Structure of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Children at Briarwood Infants have a range of educational needs including physical disabilities, severe and profound learning difficulties, sensory impairments, Autism or a combination of some or all of these. Briarwood has created an adapted Early Years curriculum and assessment system that meets the unique needs of our youngest pupils. Children aged 3-6 (Nursery – Year 2) are welcomed to our Infants department and must have an Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) when they join us. We are guided by the overarching principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).



We meet the statutory requirements as set out in the EYFS Framework:

- The Safeguarding and welfare requirements which ensure children are kept safe and their welfare promoted.
- The learning and development requirements which shape the activities and experiences that Early Years providers offer children.
- The assessment requirements which detail how EYFS providers monitor and plan for children's progress
- The Early Learning Goals (ELGs) that providers must help children work towards (the knowledge, skills and understanding children should have at the end of academic year in which they turn five).  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

### 3. Briarwood Early Years Stages (BEYS) Curriculum

#### Intent

At Briarwood Infants we understand the impact of our children coming from very different starting places and with very different experiences. The first priority is to make them feel safe and secure at school. Some children join at nursery age, others at reception and some have experienced mainstream school settings before it is established that specialist provision will best meet their needs. It is recognised how important it is to establish a strong foundation stage of learning for each unique child due these diverse learning and life experiences, as well as their wide range of individual needs, that sets no limits on what they can achieve.

Our infants school provides an Early Years curriculum for the foundation stage of each child's learning journey and the introduction of the new statutory EYFS has seen as an excellent opportunity to create a bespoke curriculum for our children that removes barriers to learning and progress, allows all children to demonstrate progress that is significant and meaningful to them, and is sequenced through the stages to reflect how our children develop and learn. It also aims to align more closely to EHCP targets for a more holistic approach. This is known as the Briarwood Early Years Stages (BEYS). Using the new Birth to 5 Matters as a starting point, we have incorporated tried and tested outcomes from Bristol's nationally recognised Differentiated Early Years Outcomes (DEYO). This is further enhanced with the latest research and best practice, to create a 17 strand curriculum that leads to the end goal of the statutory Prime and Specific Early Learning Goals. We have worked with other SEND specialists across the Bristol SEND Early Years Leaders Network and attended area wide training through South West Association for Leaders in Special Schools to inform our bespoke approach.

Prioritising Communication and Language is central to each strand, and the BEYS has been carefully designed to make sure that there isn't repetition across the areas that may incur an unnecessary block to measuring progress in more than one strand. High quality texts are a focus point for teaching and learning to inspire a love of reading and opportunities for practising early phonics skills are identified throughout the provision.

Characteristics of effective learning continue to be at the heart of the play-based learning that offers the children opportunity to experience awe and wonder, follow their interests and consolidate the skills and knowledge they experience through teacher led learning. Quality interactions to scaffold play and promote independence along with how continuous provision is provided, particularly outside, remains a priority for the Infants team.

#### Implementation

'What is the benefit for the children?' is the key question behind every step of implementation of the BEYS curriculum. To understand the starting points and cultural capital our children begin with, a holistic transition model has been established. In term 6, staff visit all the previous settings to meet with keyworkers and join any multi-disciplinary team meetings that occur during this time. Stay and plays are arranged for children and their parents/carers to begin to build a relationship with the school and a parent/carer meeting introduces the principles behind the curriculum approach. An introductory film is available on the website and transition books are given to the current settings and given to each family to support the children making connections with their new school. Home visits in September strengthen new relationships further and give staff a chance to understand the context of each family.

The teachers plan baseline assessments for the new children starting Briarwood Infants each academic year that reflect what they need to know to deliver the curriculum at the right starting point for all children. Each class team acts as a joint keyworker for the children in their group. Led by the teacher they use a whole team approach to share each practitioner's knowledge of the children. Staff consider interactions and observations and moderate their judgements together to build a clear individual and class picture. Using videos and sharing detailed observations, the whole staff team are committed to building a thorough knowledge of each child, with less time recording evidence and more time spent focussed on scaffolding and direct interactions. The timetable allows for staff teams to discuss observational assessments and plan forward after school daily. In addition, the Head of School and Lead Teacher facilitate department meetings to share best practice for focus children.

A curriculum handbook is being created to ensure coverage of all areas of the BEYS and updated regularly with examples of good practice, inspirations and exemplifications to ensure that a coherent approach of highly effective teaching and learning experiences are offered to the children. 'Wow' moments and evidence of progress are captured with photographs and videos and shared with parents with annotations via the online platform 'Seesaw' to encourage parental involvement. These will also be used to support teacher judgements in pupil progress and moderation meetings.

Early parent meetings are held in Term 2 to share exactly where the children are in their learning, support that is in place (Optimum Learning Maps, risk assessments etc.) and how parents can help at home. This is also an opportunity for parents to share motivators and achievements at home and encourages a closer collaboration between home and school. Regular communication is encouraged and the school team are highly accessible to families via Seesaw, email and phone which is particularly vital for the families who use transport to get their children to school.

We are committed to improving best practice in Early Years/SEND for our whole staff team to improve outcomes for our children. Teaching pedagogy, informed by research, is part of continuous development, particularly through maths and phonics, to encourage a cross-curricular approach in which all staff see the learning opportunities in every situation and environment. All staff are encouraged to develop their area of interest/expertise with specific responsibilities for keeping up to date and sharing research and best practice allocated to teachers and Higher-Level Teaching Assistants.

A whole team approach is also adopted to promote a love of reading for example reading 'round robins' have been introduced so children can benefit from hearing stories from all the staff. Online stories read by staff are shared with families and the use of a moving library and inviting reading spaces that meet our children's unique needs are continually being reviewed. Parents are informed about the importance of story sharing along with strategies to support families to overcome barriers, and a home-school book share system has been created.

We are committed to a challenging and inclusive curriculum that gives our children a breadth of experiences such as introducing a real-world woodwork station. Enrichment activities are particularly important for many of our families who find it difficult to access the wider community, and children at Infants visit the local area through learning walks and visits as often as possible. We recognise the value of external enrichment providers for our children's learning and work regularly with organisations such as 'Imagine and Move' who provide dance and movement sessions, and Children's Kitchen for growing, cooking and tasting healthy food.

## Impact

Staff have reflected on the value of the home visits and recognise that relationships with the families have been established much more quickly, and that parents are more confident to approach them with questions and comments. They have a better knowledge of barriers to communication with school such as distance to travel and English as an Additional Language and can accommodate this sensitively. Support with filling in paperwork and accessing Seesaw has been offered more promptly. Staff have experience of how the children are when they are feeling at their safest and relationships were initiated with children to make them feel safer in their transition to school and more quickly able to respond to their new learning environment securely. Staff have a clearer picture of the cultural capital children arrive at school with and how to plan for meaningful opportunities to expand their experiences. Parents have also reported that they appreciated the meetings.

Assessment against the BEYS indicates that the new curriculum has been adapted effectively to meet the needs of our children. Professional moderation demonstrates that the bespoke framework overcomes many of the barriers that other settings encounter using more widely available models alone. All children will make expected or better progress and this will continue to be monitored through data drops, formal and informal pupil progress meetings and EHCP annual reviews, with responsive planning and interventions put in place to address barriers to learning.

Appraisal and performance management meetings, supported by supervision meetings, give a spotlight measure of impact on focus targets linked to the BEYS and provide continuous action planning for improvements. All staff have clear targets and understand their role in the implementation of the BEYS. All parents have the information about their child’s progress and attainment, how their child’s needs are being met at school and how they can help at home.

At Briarwood we continue the Early Years curriculum across the infants stage until the end of Year 2. Although the majority of our pupils do not reach the Early Learning Goals at the end of their reception year we remain ambitious in our curriculum and believe it is the appropriate developmental approach to continue building the foundation level for our children in their Early Years.

The Statutory Prime Areas Early Learning Goals			
Communication and Language	Physical Development	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	
<b>Briarwood Stages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listening, Attention and Understanding</li> <li>Speaking/Expression</li> </ul>	<b>Briarwood Stages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gross Motor Skills</li> <li>Fine Motor Skills</li> </ul>	<b>Briarwood Stages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-regulation</li> <li>Managing Self– self-awareness</li> <li>Managing Self – self-care</li> <li>Building Relationships</li> </ul>	
The Statutory Specific Areas Early Learning Goals			
Literacy	Maths	Understanding the World	Expressive Arts and Design
<b>Briarwood Stages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading</li> <li>Writing</li> </ul>	<b>Briarwood Stages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number</li> <li>Numerical and Mathematical Patterns</li> </ul>	<b>Briarwood Stages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Social World</li> <li>The Natural World</li> <li>Technology</li> </ul>	<b>Briarwood Stages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creative with Materials</li> <li>Creative Expression</li> </ul>



A pupils EHCP is reviewed each year and the outcomes are incorporated into their learning maps. If an outcome sits outside these areas contained in the learning map, it is incorporated alongside the curriculum subjects or, if required, addressed as a discreet target.

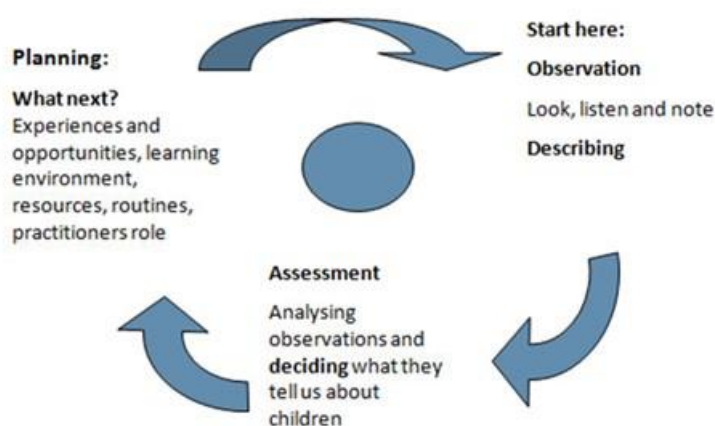
As well as considering what opportunities we are providing for the pupils, we observe the skills and qualities that pupils need to support them to become successful learners throughout life. We use the characteristics of effective learning to examine the overall development of the pupils, using the Bristol Characteristics of Effective Learning guidance which puts emphasis on the emotional well-being of a child and how this affects them as a learner.

## 4. Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Briarwood Infants benefits from a highly qualified and experienced staff team who strive continually to develop and improve their practice. Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Staff respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. Staff use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experiences. In planning and guiding children's activities, staff reflect on the different ways that children learn, their characteristics of effective learning, and include these in their practice. We have adopted a total communication approach - staff use speech, signing and symbols to encourage and develop communication during the day.

At Infants learning through play, both indoors and outdoors, is an important part of all children's development. It is an integral part of the early years provision and we believe this should be available to all pupils who attend regardless of their complexities of their learning or physical difficulties. Equipment and activities to stimulate and attract play are available and time for staff to follow these interests to develop learning opportunities has been made available.

### Planning for learning cycle



Our teaching team understand the importance of the ongoing assessment cycle as an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also consider observations shared by families.

Teachers carefully monitor as a pupil makes progress through each stage and data is then collected on the Onwards and Upwards system so an electronic version of this tracking is available. This supports discussions with teachers in pupil progress meetings and informs planning to address gaps and barriers to learning. This is supported by evidence in the form of teacher knowledge, written observations, photos, videos and work samples which record successes and wow moments for staff to plan from and for parents to support learning at home. Evidence of learning is moderated internally and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority at the end of the reception year.

All staff in the Early Years department are suitably trained and qualified but also take a vital role in identifying their own professional needs in line with the school's policy on professional development. All staff have three performance management/appraisal meetings in the school year. Teachers have two observations from the Senior Leadership Team and a peer reflection activity each year in addition to their own performance management.

In 2024 we successfully completed our second-year cycle of The Bristol Standard, a quality improvement framework that covers 10 areas or 'dimensions' of Early years practice through which the whole team reflect on what is working well and set our own targets for what we would like to improve for our children and families in our provision. We are proud of our reward and the ongoing commitment to provident the very best for our children that it demonstrates.



<https://www.bristolearlyyears.org.uk/the-bristol-standard/>

Briarwood Infants is part of an Early Years Cluster group for Bristol specialist Early Years settings. A meeting of this group takes place each term and makes visits to different settings. This enables best practice to be shared and celebrated ensuring the Early Years department is constantly enabled to explore and embrace new ideas.

The children in the Early Years at Briarwood have regular access to, and monitoring by, community professionals to ensure their unique needs are met. A Speech and Language Therapist oversees each child and works with class teams to develop programmes and targets for pupils to undertake each day. They provide CPD for staff and offer support sessions for parents. Depending on needs of the child other professionals may include; Children's Disability Nursing Team, School Nursing Service, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Teacher of the Deaf or Visually Impaired and Educational Psychologists. The Early Years team have opportunities to work alongside and learn expertise from support services to deliver the specific programs devised by them. It is our belief that by providing a shared informed and co-ordinated approach to each child's unique needs, we can support the child and their family in the most effective way.

Parents will be kept informed of their child's progress at set points through the year and can request to meet with their child's teacher in addition to this at any point in the year.

## 5. Parents, Carers and the Community

Briarwood Infants values the role of families and actively encourages parents and carers to be partners in education to support their child's learning and progress. When joining the school, we ask parents and carers to sign the home school agreement to reflect our partnership working. Home school diaries are written in daily, telephone calls, appointments with teachers, coffee mornings and a welcoming ethos combine to ensure this partnership is effective. The Bristol Standard maintains a sharp focus on reflecting on partnership with parents.

Each year a review of the EHCP is held with the class teacher, a member of the Senior Leadership Team and with the input of any other professionals involved with that child. Parents also have the opportunity to make appointments to visit school and talk to staff at any point in the school year.

All pupils are encouraged to meet the wider community through visits. Previous visits have included Bristol Zoo, Bristol Aquarium and local garden centres. We also take advantage of our more immediate community with visits to our local park and using the surrounding road crossings to explore road safety.

If appropriate and in discussion with parents some pupils in the Early Years have had opportunity to visit the nursery or reception classes in Barton Hill Academy, with whom we share a site. There is a possibility for children to be supported in mainstream placements and jointly funded places are possible for pupils who may transition in mainstream. This is through discussion with the local authority SEND team.

Children who are entering Year 3 move to Briarwood Juniors in Fishponds. There are opportunities for pupils to visit this site for whole school events throughout the year. Children will be visited by their new teacher in the summer term and information is shared between the teachers and class staff during scheduled transition meetings. Early Years and Key Stage 1 share the use of the Onwards and Upwards online assessment tool including the Briarwood fine levels to monitor progress from fully supported to independence in learning skills.

Parents are given opportunity to speak about the transition process with the Heads of Schools and can visit the juniors site in the summer term. Transition books with photographs of site and staff are available for pupils to prepare for transition over the summer break.

Parent voice is highly valued and a parent survey is conducted annually to capture what families feel is working well and what might be even better. The Head of School shares the feedback with the Early Years governor and staff to develop a response and shares with the families how the department is responding to the suggestions through an action plan. In the most recent survey 30 parents took part and the comments were overwhelmingly positive including: *'Communication between teachers and parents, process things work well, there are regularly very fast responses from the Seesaw app, and Head of School is very approachable.'*

## 6. Safeguarding

Keeping children safe is the number one priority at Briarwood, please see appendix 1 for our detailed Safeguarding policy. The Head of School is a Deputy Designated Safeguarding lead and regular training and supervision sessions ensures all staff are kept up to date and knowledge is refreshed within all areas of

Safeguarding to protect our children. We ensure we have more than the statutory requirement for first aid trained staff.

We promote good general health encouraging children to understand the need for a range of foods through cooking and sensory experiences and we work with parents to develop limited diets. We promote oral health by, for example, by talking to children about:

- The effects of eating too many sweet things
- The importance of brushing your teeth

The Early Years Department at Briarwood recognises the importance of pupils Emotional, Social, Mental Health and Wellbeing in school. Our Early Years curriculum gives an emphasis to Personal, Social and Emotional Development as a prime area in our curriculum and this is further supported using the Emotional Wellbeing characteristic of learning strand. We aim to provide children with a consistent daily routine and clear boundaries that enable our pupils to feel safe and secure.

We keep clear and honest lines of communication open with parents to ensure we are working together to effectively meet the needs of their child, and keep careful records of the conversations, meetings and agreed resolutions or actions that we share. This may include seeking advice and guidance from external agencies if it is in the best interests for the child and family to do so. Records are kept on our electronic systems Arbor and CPOMs and adhere fully to GDPR legislation.

We follow whole school Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) approach for supporting and monitoring behaviour and implementing interventions as appropriate. The Head of School is trained in leading the department in PBS. Each child has an Optimal Learning Map to ensure all adults know how to support them and avoid them escalating to behaviours of concern. All staff are trained in positive handling through Team Teach and adhere to the Behaviour and Pastoral Policy (see website).

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

All relevant policies and procedures can be found on the Briarwood website:

<https://www.briarwoodschool.org.uk/page/?title=Policies%2C+Procedures%2C+Reports+and+Documents&pid=20>

This includes both statutory and recommended policies including the Briarwood Safeguarding Policy and the Briarwood Complaints Procedure.