

COGNITA



Alleyne's Regent's Park School

Early Years Policy

September 2026

UK and UK Curriculum Schools

1 Terminology

- 1.1 The Early Years age group defines children aged from birth until the 31st August following their fifth birthday who go to an Early Years setting that delivers the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Age 3 – 4 years Pre-Reception (from September 2026)
 - Age 4 – 5 years Reception
- 1.2 EYFS refers to Early Years Foundation Stage.

2 Aim

- 2.1 We aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all of our children, thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent learners. We value the individual child and work alongside parents and others to meet their needs in order for children to make good progress.

3 Statutory Framework

- 3.1 We adhere to the EYFS Statutory Framework and the four guiding principles that shape practice within Early Years settings:
- 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.
- 3.2 This policy reflects the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective from 1 September 2026.

4 Principles into Practice

- 4.1 As part of our practice we:
- Provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven areas of learning, using play as the vehicle for learning.
 - Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. We provide early intervention for those children who require additional support;
 - Work in partnership with parents and within the wider context;
 - Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation, assessment and the child's interest;
 - Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult-initiated and child-initiated, supported by the adult;
 - Have a key person approach to develop close relationships with individual children; and
 - Provide a secure and safe learning environment, indoors and out.

5 The Early Years Curriculum

- 5.1 We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve and exceed the Early Learning Goals.
- 5.2 All of the seven areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. The Prime Areas of Learning are the essential foundations for children to work with and master before progressing to the Specific Areas of Learning.

Prime Areas of Learning		
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Physical Development	Communication and Language
		

Specific Areas of Learning			
Literacy	Mathematics	Understanding the World	Expressive Arts and Design
			

- 5.3 Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which they explore, think creatively and are active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication, and physical development.
- 5.4 In the Early Years, long term and medium-term planning is completed using the EYFS, based on a series of topics, each of which offers experiences in all seven areas. This is reflected both inside the classrooms and at the outside learning areas. We also follow the children's interests where appropriate. Please see plans for more details. The planning then informs our short-term weekly planning, alongside our observations, which remain flexible for unplanned circumstances or children's responses.
- 5.5 Practitioners working with the youngest children will focus strongly on the three prime areas, which are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively and become ready for school. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as the children move through the Early Years and grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.
- 5.6 Children have whole group and small group teaching and learning times which increase as they progress through the EYFS, including a daily phonics session using 'Read, Write Inc' (from September 2026) prompts and formation, teaching aspects of Mathematics and Literacy, including shared reading and writing. Aspects of Mathematics and Literacy, including shared writing are also taught in an age-appropriate way. Early Years classrooms are also used so that subjects can be accessed at all times by pupils i.e. role play corner, book corner, maths station and continuous provision. The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach, as outlined by the EYFS. Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are planned by the adults. During children's play, Early Years practitioners interact to stretch and challenge children further and develop their language skills for communicating.

- 5.7 In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and build these into our practice. We create a stimulating environment to encourage children to free-flow between inside and outside.

6 Regulatory Requirements

- 6.1 We ensure that we implement the new Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (September 2025) and meet the associated regulatory requirements. Early Years Leaders will attend training in the regulatory requirements.
- 6.2 We have procedures to ensure that only suitable individuals are recruited. At least one written reference is obtained before a member of staff, student or volunteer is recruited. The school verifies identity, qualifications, experience and suitability and completes all required vetting checks. Employees and relevant volunteers must not begin work until the school has received the required enhanced criminal records and barred-list checks.
- 6.3 Staff and prospective staff must disclose any information that may affect their suitability to work with children, including relevant arrests, charges, convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings, whether arising before or during their employment.

7 Safeguarding in EYFS

- 7.1 Our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection. Our Deputy DSL for Early Years takes a lead in safeguarding all children in Reception and Pre-Reception (from September 2026). Safeguarding training for staff will be regularly updated. Safeguarding training is effective and enables practitioners to understand safeguarding responsibilities and implement procedures in practice. The DDSL for EYFS will ensure practitioners are supported to apply safeguarding knowledge and procedures effectively within daily practice.
- 7.2 We maintain an attendance policy shared with parents/carers explaining procedures for reporting absences and actions taken where a child is absent without explanation. We follow up unexplained absences promptly. If a child is absent without notification, every attempt will be made to contact parents/carers and emergency contacts.
- 7.3 Children's privacy during toileting will be respected and balanced with safeguarding considerations and children's support needs. Staff will support children appropriately whilst maintaining dignity, privacy and safety during intimate care routines. If staff do support a child during toileting, they will report in line with our Intimate Care Policy.
- 7.4 Staff included in statutory ratios will hold a valid paediatric first aid qualification where required by the EYFS framework. Students and trainees may only be included in ratios where they meet EYFS paediatric first aid and supervision requirements.
- 7.5 We will obtain more than two emergency contact for each child. Emergency contact information will be readily accessible in the event a parent/carer cannot be contacted.
- 7.6 Appropriate whistleblowing procedures are in place for all staff, students and volunteers. Staff are able to raise concerns regarding poor or unsafe safeguarding practice and understand how concerns may be escalated externally where necessary, in line with school policy.
- 7.7 Low-Level Concerns (including Self-Reports) must be reported in writing using the relevant form to the DSL or to the Headteacher only as soon as reasonably possible, on the same day as the incident (where the concern relates to a particular incident).

- 7.8 Children are taught how to use technology safely and appropriately through an age-appropriate curriculum. The school has regard to the DfE guidance on children's screen use in early years settings and ensures that screen use is purposeful, appropriately supervised and balanced with play, physical activity, interaction and rest. Further information is available in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Online Safety Policy.
- 7.9 The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure that children are protected from risks associated with the use of mobile phones, cameras, smart watches and other devices capable of recording or transmitting images, audio or data (see Early Years - Use of Mobile Phones and Devices policy).
- 7.10 The school has robust procedures in place to safeguard children in the event that a child goes missing or is not collected by an authorised adult. Staff are familiar with these procedures and act promptly to ensure children's safety and wellbeing. Further guidance is available in Pupil Supervision and Lost & Missing Children Policy.

8 Safety

- 8.1 Children's safety and welfare is paramount. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We have stringent policies, procedures and documents in place to ensure children's safety.
- 8.2 We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways, including the provision of nutritious food, and following set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.
- 8.3 We take all reasonable steps to ensure food and drink are provided safely and children are adequately supervised whilst eating. We consider risks relating to choking, allergies, food preparation and appropriate supervision during mealtimes. Allergy and dietary information is obtained before admission, shared with all food handlers and allergy action plans are developed with parents, when necessary. Children sit down and eat together at snack times, monitored by staff who are paediatric first aid trained. Lunchtimes are closely monitored in the hall with at least two members of staff present.
- 8.4 Where an EYFS child sleeps or rests at school, suitable arrangements are made according to the child's age and needs. Sleeping children remain within sight and hearing of staff and are checked frequently. Any equipment and bedding used are safe, clean and appropriate.
- 8.5 The school works closely with parents to support children's medical conditions, allergies and medical needs. The School Nurse oversees medical information and healthcare plans where required, and staff are informed of children's needs. Further guidance is available in the First Aid Policy.
- 8.6 Banned dog breeds, including the XL Bully type, must not be kept or present on premises used to provide EYFS childcare.
- 8.7 Staff must be fit to care for children and must not be impaired by alcohol, medication or any other substance. Smoking and vaping are not permitted in the EYFS environment. Medication is stored securely and out of children's reach (e.g. in the nurse's office).
- 8.8 We ensure staffing arrangements always meet EYFS qualification and ratio requirements. Only staff who meet qualification and suitability requirements may be counted within statutory staffing ratios. Students and trainees may only be included in ratios where they meet EYFS paediatric first aid and supervision requirements.

9 Physical Contact and Reasonable Force

- 9.1 Appropriate physical contact is a normal part of caring for and supporting young children. Staff respond sensitively to children's individual needs while maintaining their dignity and following safeguarding procedures.
- 9.2 Reasonable force may be used only when necessary to prevent a child from harming themselves or others or causing serious damage. Any significant intervention will be proportionate, recorded and shared with parents in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

10 Inclusion

- 10.1 We value all our children as individuals, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and supports them at their own pace so that most of our children achieve and even exceed the Early Learning Goals. We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents and outside agencies. See our separate policies on Equal Opportunities and Learning Support.

11 Partners

- 11.1 We strive to create and maintain partnerships with parents and carers as we recognise that together we can have a significant impact on a child's learning. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate confidently in their child's education and care in numerous ways.
- 11.2 Working with other services and organisations is integral to our practice in order to meet the needs of our children. At times we may need to share information with other professionals to provide the best support possible.
- 11.3 We draw on our links with the community to enrich children's experiences by taking them on visits and inviting members of the community into our setting.

12 Observation and Assessment

- 12.1 As part of daily practice, children's development is observed and assessed through an online platform (Tapestry). This online system allows Early Years staff to observe, track and monitor children's progress and achievements, and is evidenced in their individual profiles. Staff observe each of the seven areas of development, helping to work towards Early Learning Goals, as well as highlighting any areas for extra support that may be needed. This platform is also accessible to parents, allowing them to see their child's progress and add observations and information of their own. This also helps to build a well-rounded profile and supports our strong parent partnership.
- 12.2 The school's assessment process for the Early Years is based on observations and teachers' professional judgement using guidance from Development Matters for children aged 2-5 years. Children's progress is logged on an assessment highlighting document, which has been tailor made to suit all UK Cognita schools, within the Early Years, to identify children's age and stage of development and to create a strong basis for assessment.
- 12.3 In the final term of Reception, each child's development is assessed against the Early Learning Goals as expected or emerging. The completed EYFS Profile is shared with parents, who are given an opportunity to discuss it with the Reception teacher. This information also supports the child's transition into Year One.

13 Transitions

- 13.1 Transitions are carefully planned for, and time is given to ensure continuity of learning. At any transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings, including nurseries and childminders. Children attend introductory sessions to each of their year groups classes to develop familiarity with the setting and new teachers/practitioners.
- 13.2 In the final term of Reception, the Year One teacher will meet with the Early Years staff and discuss each child's development against the Early Learning Goals to support a smooth transition to Year One. This discussion helps the Year One teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children.

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Document author	Mrs Karen Nicholson, Headteacher, Education Advisor
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Audience	EYFS staff, parents/carers, school leaders and governors

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England	Yes
Wales	Yes
Spain	Yes

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Related documentation	
Related documentation	Admissions Policy Health and Safety Policy Equal Opportunities Policy SEND Policy Behaviour Policy First Aid Policy Early Years – Use of Mobile Phone Policy Intimate Care Policy Whistleblowing Policy Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Pupil Supervision and Lost & Missing Children Policy Safer Recruitment Policy

