

Inspire - Enable - Achieve




The Vale Federation EYFS Rationale

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Signed:

 Principal

Date 23rd January 2026

David J Pearce Chair of Governors Date 23rd January 2026

EYFS Rationale

The early years curriculum at Booker Park School focusses on the individual learning needs of all pupils. The EYFS prepares our children for the next stage of their learning, where they will follow the most appropriate pathway for them, either pre-formal or semi-formal.

There are three classes in early years: Woodpecker, Sparrow & Wagtail classes. They cater for EYFS children from 2.5 years to 5 years of age with a range of needs. Each class has up to 8 children. Some EYFS children who have complex needs are placed in Wren class.

SCERTS (Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, and Transactional Supports) is an approach which is used for the children in Woodpecker class, Sparrow class and Wagtail class. It supports the children to develop their communication skills and the ability to get their bodies into a 'just right' state for learning.

The curriculum in the EYFS is modified to meet the needs of the individual pupils. Much of the curriculum is based on repetition and over learning in order for children to progress, achieve and experience success. Our play based and sensory curriculum for Early Years Foundation Stage Learners supports pupils:

- to develop a love of learning and exploration
- to learn how to communicate with others
- to begin to recognise their thoughts and feelings and regulation
- to promote early skills, e.g. early reading, writing, and mathematical concepts

We use the Birth to 5 Matters curriculum and have a substantial focus on the 3 prime areas of learning and development (communication and language; personal, social, emotional development; and physical development). The 4 specific areas of literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design are incorporated throughout the termly topics.

The areas of learning and development are taught through the 3 characteristics of learning and an added characteristic: regulation. For the children at Booker Park this may include:

1. Playing and exploring

- Repeated play experiences
- Over learning
- Structured play opportunities
- Child initiated play
- Sensory play

2. Active learning

- An environment with limited visual distraction
- The use of small areas for focused learning opportunities
- An outdoor curriculum area
- Adults to provide support (at varying levels)

- Highly motivating toys and resources

3. Creative and critical thinking- led by adults who can-

- Provide opportunities for choice making
- Step back and allow children to make mistakes
- Step back to allow independence in play
- Intervention at the right moment to ensure play develops and is purposeful

4. Self-regulation

- Being ready to learn and engage
- Learning how to self-regulate arousal levels

Children working in Early Years have regular access to:

Children in early years have opportunities throughout the day for one-to-one, small group and whole class learning. Each class has a room base and there are also other learning environments within the early years department, playground, grass area, the workroom, the playroom and a regulation room. The children also have access to the wider school environment, soft play, PE hall, dark room, computer room and other outside areas.

Each class has a timetable which incorporates focused learning. Due to the complex needs of the children in the EYFS there is greater emphasis on adult led play than child led. This is to allow for specific work teaching the children early play skills as outlined in their EHCPs, as well as implementing individually written programs with involvement from other professionals.

Focused learning that may take place across the early years department are:

- **Learning through play** - These are structured play sessions where children are given a choice between a small number of activities which are planned to specifically teach early play skills. The adults lead and model the play, although there are opportunities for child-led independent play within this session. The plans for these sessions change termly.
- **1:1 learning** - These sessions may focus on communication, attention, fine motor, play skills or any other specific focus, these sessions are often planned by the teacher and an occupational therapist or speech and language therapist.
- **Look and Learn** - These ability-based groups aim to develop the children's visual and auditory attention. Children are encouraged to develop their ability to sit and focus, to follow adult led activities, turn taking, and sharing of joint attention. Look and Learn helps them to learn meaningful language in context.
- **Music** - The focus is on communication, social communication, listening, attending, anticipation, turn taking, repetition, joint attention, vocabulary development and key words. It also incorporates aspects of expressive arts and design, such as enjoying music, rhythm and playing instruments.
- **PE** - Sessions are planned to address the physical and sensory needs of individual or small groups. Where relevant includes input from the physiotherapists. There are

opportunities for outdoor PE sessions although for some children it may be more challenging to learn new skills in this open environment. Each term has a different focus, these are: apparatus, dance and ball skills.

- **OT groups** - These sessions are planned and occasionally in part delivered by the OT. They focus specifically on fine motor skills and hand function. The activities in these sessions give children the opportunity to practice a range of activities to strengthen their hands in order to develop self help and physical skills. For some groups there is an additional focus on body awareness and achieving a state “just right for learning.”
- **Learning through stories** - Focuses on (communication) language. The children are encouraged to develop skills in attending (visual and auditory stimuli), waiting, turn taking and joint attention. Key words and vocabulary extension is an important element along with becoming familiar with and recognising stories. Where possible the children are encouraged to join in with repeated elements of the story at a level that is appropriate to them. The session also incorporates stimulation of the senses, exploration and physical skills, such as holding, crossing the midline and in some cases using tools e.g. spoons to mix.
- **Learning through technology** - This session incorporates elements of PSHE, physical development, communication and understanding of the world. The session teaches children specific skills, such as, turn taking, choice making, attention, focus, ability to follow instructions/ sequence, and how to operate a variety of ICT related equipment. It also enables the children to extend their receptive and expressive use of key vocabulary.
- **Soft play** - An opportunity to develop physical skills, PSHE and communication, in particular social communication. Where relevant includes input from the physiotherapists.
- **Sensory circuits** - Addresses children’s sensory systems and motor planning skills to enable a “just right” state for learning.
- **Quiet time** - A daily class-based session where the children have the opportunity to quietly look at books, listen to calming music or learn about body awareness through brushing or body songs or they take part in relaxation or yoga type poses.
- **Hello time (registration)** -This daily session focuses on communication, social communication, listening, attending, anticipation, turn taking, repetition, joint attention, vocabulary development and key words.
- **Assembly** - The children in early years have a weekly assembly either in their classroom or when ready collectively in the school hall. Assembly encompasses the school’s vision to inspire, enable, and achieve through an activity, celebration of achievements and birthdays and a prayer.
- **Snack** - A session with lots of opportunities for learning. There are opportunities for communication, social communication, turn taking and developing life skills.

The curriculum **may** also include additional activities in order to meet the needs of individual children. There is a clear rationale for children who attend these activities:

- **Hydrotherapy** - a session run by the physiotherapists that work in school and takes place in the school pool. Children who have been identified by the physiotherapist attend for blocks of sessions on a rotational basis and is an alternative to dry land physiotherapy.

- **Sensory integration OT sessions** - These are 1-1 sessions where a child is identified to have specific sensory/motor needs and is offered a block of treatment or a one-off assessment of their motor/sensory needs. These have traditionally been carried out in the swing room, but this year many sessions have successfully been carried out in the new regulation room within early years. Often these sessions will be accompanied by a full sensory processing assessment where the class teacher and the parents fill out a detailed questionnaire to get a full picture of the child's sensitivities and preferences.
- **Food group OT sessions** - These are therapy sessions designed for selective eaters, where there is a risk of the child reducing the range of foods they eat as they get older. Early intervention is important as children become more reluctant to try new foods after the age of 7. These sessions are based on a research-based method called SOS feeding. The children are either seen in small groups, or individually. Occasionally OT have run whole class sessions where there is the need throughout the class. Where appropriate there is also training offered to parents to help them to have the skills to try 'therapy' meals at home.

Assessment

Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the EYFS approach at Booker Park School. Staff observe children formally and informally throughout the day to identify what they can do, what they are interested in and how they learn best. These observations are used to inform future planning, and to make judgments of pupil progress.

The children in EYFS are assessed formatively using the non-statutory guidance 'Birth to 5 matters' and against their ILP (individual learning plan) targets.

At the discretion of the class teacher and EYFS lead children may be assessed using the statutory reception baseline assessment during the first 6 weeks of attendance and the information submitted via the online portal by the Head of School. Children have an online learning journey (Evidence for Learning) which includes observations, photos and video clips as well as input from home and or extended care/ respite providers. The information collected on EFL creates an online learning journey and is used to provide evidence for:

- TPP (Termly Provision and Progress) document
- EYFSP (Early Year's Foundation Stage Profile)
- Progress towards EHCP outcomes

At Booker Park School we understand that our children learn at different rates, and all have different starting points. We realise that regulation is key to children being able to attend, focus and learn. Due to the levels the children are working at, the EYFSP does not show progress adequately. The children's specific learning difficulties mean that they will not achieve the expected level of development at the end of their reception year. Many children will make progress within a developmental band but not from band to band. We celebrate all the progress children make, whether it's with their communication, learning, social, physical or independent skills. There are opportunities throughout the school year to share progress with parents and carers, through EFL, termly parents' evenings, TPP documents, end of year reports and annual review meetings.