

Viking Academy Trust



Early Years Policy

Approved by the Trust: Term 1 2024

Reviewed annually

Last review date: Term 1 2024

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob', is written over a faint rectangular box.

Chair of Trust

EARLY YEARS POLICY

The Viking Academy Trust

Schools in the Viking Academy Trust (VAT)

Chilton Primary School

Ramsgate Arts Primary School

Upton Junior School

This 'Early Years' policy is specifically for **Chilton Primary School**.

Introduction

At Chilton Primary School we believe that every child deserves the best possible start in life and we aim to give them 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 5 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 2021).

As children commence their journey at Chilton, we begin to develop and nurture strong, positive attitudes to learning through our school values. We aim to ensure children are ready for the next stage of their education by aspiring for all children to reach at least an expected level in all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum, unless a specific need has been identified. We aim for our provision to meet the specific and individual needs of all children in our care and to ensure this provision makes an outstanding contribution to the children's physical and emotional health, safety and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

At Chilton we have a team of highly qualified, dedicated, professional and caring Early Years teachers and teaching assistants who plan and work closely together to provide a high quality curriculum. Each reception class has 1 teacher and 2 teaching assistants. Every practitioner is aware of the individual needs, interests and next steps for each child and will use this information to plan challenging and enjoyable experiences for each child in all areas of learning. Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned purposeful play and through a mix of adult led and child led activities. Practitioners have been trained to respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm positive interactions, encouraging independence at all stages. The indoor and outdoor environment, including activities and resources provided, are reflected upon and modified daily. This ensures children remain highly motivated and consistently demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning with high levels of curiosity, imagination and concentration.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

The EYFS principles which guide the effective work of all practitioners at Chilton are grouped into four distinct but complementary themes:



- Every child is a unique child
- Positive Relationships - children learn to be strong and independent through these
- Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults
- Learning and Development - 3 prime and 4 specific areas of learning and development.

The 'Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2024' and 'Development Matters' have been used as a planning framework to structure objectives progressively throughout the Reception year at Chilton. From this, teachers will design medium term plans, which will guide the children's learning journey throughout the year. When planning teachers will take into account their knowledge of the children, their interests and their next steps. Skeletal medium term plans have been created by the EYFS team at Chilton however, as young children's learning is often driven by their interests, plans will remain extremely flexible. In doing this, we aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that has been well thought out, allowing for the children to sequentially build up the component knowledge and skills they need, and also make room for spontaneous learning led by the child's own wants, needs and interests.

We want our young learners to settle happily into school life and to develop curious and enquiring minds as they begin their learning journey.

Our Curriculum has 5 main 'aims':

- To ensure that all children maximise their potential
- To ensure our values are a cornerstone of our curriculum and community
- To ensure every child is a speaker
- To instil a love of reading
- To develop confident, independent and curious learners

Our curriculum is planned to prioritise developing language skills so that our children become confident communicators; leaving the Early Years with a love of language that supports them in becoming enthusiastic learners. Developing a love of reading is at the heart of our curriculum. Listening to stories and sharing books encourages our children to start a lifelong interest in reading. Our curriculum also helps children to understand our school values of 'Respect, Equality, Courage and Kindness' and how they apply to the children's day to day lives. We use our values to support the children to develop an understanding of the own emotions and an awareness of how they should treat others.

Areas of Learning

There are seven areas of learning and development, which shape the education and experiences for children in Reception.

The first three, known as prime areas, are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm and learning, forming relationships and thriving.

Communication and Language

The development of spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning in the EYFS. The importance of language development is widely acknowledged and is a key indicator of future success in life, academically, emotionally and socially. It is vitally important that we provide children with a language rich environment, in which they can develop their listening and attention, receptive and expressive language skills. We also recognise that it is vital that we provide early intervention for any children entering reception with any speech and language delay. At Chilton, we provide a language rich enabling environment in a number of ways. Firstly, our environment is word and book rich, we read with and to the children frequently. We engage them in stories, rhymes, poems, songs, non-fiction and we set up our environment in a way that gives them opportunity to embed these new words in a variety of contexts. Secondly, we have highly skilled staff in our classrooms. Our Reception team consists of staff trained in both the Nuffield Early Language Intervention and Talk Boost and both are used to support our children's language development. Our staff also receive regular training to ensure high quality interactions and conversations happen, with adults commenting and echoing back what children are doing reinforcing and adding new vocabulary. Additionally, we run daily 'Time to talk' activities. These are carefully planned games and activities led by our experienced staff to give children opportunities to practise the speaking and listening skills they need. Finally, we run an extremely effective early intervention program. All children are screened by our specially trained speech and language Teaching Assistant, using the Language Link Screener. This identifies those children with a speech or language delay. Depending on their need children will then receive, 1 to 1 or small group support using the language program that is best suited to them. In doing all of the above, we aim to ensure children leave Reception with the confidence and ability to use a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)

Children's personal, social and emotional development is crucial for them to lead happy and healthy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. At Chilton we have a values led curriculum, through which children learn to build and manage healthy relationships, understand and regulate their emotions, develop a sense of what makes them unique and celebrate the similarities and differences between us all. Each term will begin with a week of values based learning. The school's values are Respect, Equality, Courage and Kindness. Throughout the year we will use stories, circle time and learning about people from our past to explore these values and how they relate to ourselves and our own lives. We have three 'Healthy Relationship' weeks during which we explore friendship and kindness and what to do if a relationship is becoming unhealthy. We also have projects that children will take part in over the year to help them understand the school's core values. In term three, we have our 'Champions of Courage' project. Each year group will learn about a significant, courageous person from the past and explore why their courageousness was so important. Throughout term five, the children engage in the 'Be you, be here, belong' project. In this, we explore our likes, dislikes and abilities. We learn about our classmates and their families and celebrate what makes each of us unique. In order to help children understand their emotions and begin to be able to regulate them, we use the 'Zones of Regulation' framework. This teaches children to be aware of their emotions and internal state and supports them in developing strategies to regulate them. In doing this we teach children about their own well-being and introduce them to mindful activities such as yoga and peer massage to help them feel relaxed and positive. At Chilton, all staff are trained to use the Leuven scales to monitor children's involvement and well-being. This means we can track the well-being of all our pupils and provide support quickly and effectively if needed.

Physical Development



Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. We have teacher-led gross motor and fine motor time daily, gross and fine motor activities available during child-initiated play as well as weekly Physical Education sessions planned by our specialist sports teachers. Throughout the year, children will also learn about healthy lifestyle choices and the effect staying active and making healthy choices can have of their well-being.

Literacy

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. At Chilton, we pride ourselves on having a book rich environment, within which children are read stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction regularly. Each classroom has an inviting book corner where adults and children spend time together sharing books. In addition, we set up our environment to encourage children to mark make in their play both inside and outside. Alongside, fostering a love and will to read and write, our staff use the Read, Write Inc program to give children the phonic skills they need to become confident readers and writers. During the first two terms, we will teach children their set one sounds. They will play oral blending games and begin to learn to form their letters. Children will begin to be able to read and write simple words. Moving forwards, children will learn their set two digraphs and will move onto reading and writing short sentences. We offer a keep up, not catch up approach, meaning we conduct regular assessment of children's phonic skills and offer immediate intervention where needed. We aim to ensure that no child is left behind. To complement our phonics program, we use engaging and exciting 'Power of reading' pictures books to lead our topic learning in the afternoon. During these times, children will learn to discuss texts, predict endings, act out and sequence stories and discuss the characters and settings from the stories. They will also get the opportunity to write creatively during this time.

Mathematics

Developing a strong grounding in number, shape and measure is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. In reception, we use our environment to aim to develop positive attitudes and interest in mathematics. We provide natural and engaging resources and activities to encourage counting, comparison of quantities, exploration of patterns, space and shape and most of all discussion between pupils and adults surrounding mathematical concepts and using mathematical vocabulary. With the support of the Primary Advantage Maths program, we provide a carefully planned out curriculum that offers children with the opportunities they need to develop a deep, long term, secure and adaptable understanding of the subject. New concepts are taught in small steps and pupils are given opportunities to apply their newly acquired knowledge and vocabulary through play. Staff know each child's next steps and are trained to extend pupils knowledge and vocabulary during child initiated play. Pupils who are finding it hard to understand new concepts are offered quick and effective interventions in order to ensure no child is left behind.

Understanding of the world

Understanding of the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and community. Our afternoon curriculum is Topic based. We plan our Topics based on what the children are interested in. Each Topic will have an entry and exit point and during these, we aim to provide the children with a wide range of personal experiences that increases their knowledge of the world around them. These include exploring our local parks and beaches, meeting important people from our local community, for example, fire-fighters and nurses, having hands on experiences with wildlife, including visits from minibeasts and farm animals and



planting and growing our own plants and food. We learn about past events from our own and others' lives, as well as learning about what life is like in other parts of the world. The children love to learn about other cultures and religions, studying Topics, such as Lunar New Year, Diwali and Easter around the world. Through this they learn to truly value what diversity across the world brings. Carefully planned activities during child-initiated play also allows children to explore the environment around them.

Expressive Arts and Design

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. Through our curriculum we offer children opportunities to explore and play with a variety of media, materials, tools and model a range of techniques. We encourage them to experiment with colour, design and texture and to go back to what they have created to see if they can improve it. The children will have one dedicated music session a week, led by a specialist teacher. This will be followed up in class with opportunities to create dance sequences, compositions and perform songs and rhymes. Role-play plays a huge part in supporting children's' creative, language and social development. Children are provided with props and materials to encourage and support role-play both inside and outside of the classroom. Adults know when to join in and when to stand back in order to allow the play to develop naturally.

Formative Assessment

At Chilton we hold the individual child at the centre of our planning. The adults in our team respond quickly and effectively to children's individual interests and needs to help each child build upon their learning over time. In line with this, adults at Chilton will be making informal formative assessments and acting on these continuously throughout each day. Our staff are highly skilled and have a deep understanding of child development. They use their formative assessments to provide opportunities, resources and activities to move each child's learning forwards. Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know. It is not about collecting lots of written evidence. In line with this, assessment does not take our skilled practitioners away from the children for long periods of time.

Class practitioners meet regularly to discuss the children's progress based on these formative assessments. These professional discussions will be used to inform planning and changes to the environment. Any concerns about pupils not making progress will also be discussed and appropriate support can be put into place, ensuring a 'keep up, not catch up' approach.

Summative assessment

-Baseline

At Chilton all pupils will complete the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) within the first 6 weeks of starting school.

It is essential for practitioners to know each child's starting point in order to support them appropriately. During these first 6 weeks of school our highly skilled practitioners will also use a series of games and activities to make assessments about what the children do and do not yet know.

After their first 6 weeks of school practitioners will meet to discuss which pupils are on track and those who are below and significantly below in each area of learning and the support that will be put in place accordingly.

-Tracking

Evidence of children's learning is kept using photographs, records of observations and samples of children's recorded learning in a learning journey. Information from parents is also included in this. In October, February and July practitioners will use their knowledge of the child and the evidence collected to establish those children that are on track, below and significantly below in each area of learning. This information feeds into the pupil progress meetings that take place three times per year to discuss the progress and needs of all children with senior management. All practitioners will discuss how each child has progressed, any gaps in knowledge and the progress and attainment of vulnerable groups.

-EYFS Profile

In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, Chilton completes the EYFS profile for each child. The profile provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a clear picture of a child's development, knowledge, understanding and abilities, as well as their progress against expected levels. It furthermore prepares Year 1 teachers for individual children's readiness, needs and next steps. The profile will reflect upon the schools on-going observation and relevant records.

The teacher will determine whether the child is meeting or is below expected levels of development against each Early Learning Goal (ELG). The teacher will also make a specific statement about each child's characteristics of effective learning.

-Moderation

Within our assessment and tracking system moderation is key to ensure assessment data is accurate and robust. Whenever summative data is submitted a number of moderation meetings will have taken place. Firstly, between class teachers, then with a member of SLT and finally with other local Ramsgate schools.

In addition to this, EYFS practitioners meet bi-weekly to discuss ongoing assessments, children's progress and next steps.

Supervision, monitoring and CPD

At Chilton we have a highly successful and well documented drive to improve achievement. In line with this the training and development of staff is highly focused and aims to have significant impact on improving outcomes for all children. We foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork and continuous improvement. Each week all EYFS practitioners are paid to stay for one hour after school to all meet together. During these meetings the EYFS coordinator will deliver training or coaching where we feel it is needed, as well as inviting outside experts in to cover certain training. This ensures all practitioners are up to date with current and relevant educational developments. During part of this meeting the practitioners from each class will meet to discuss any issues concerning children's development and wellbeing. This allows us to identify solutions to issues as they arrive and to ensure all practitioners are aware of the needs and next steps for all children.

A smooth and happy transition into and out of reception is vital to a child's development. The process of starting at Chilton School is carefully planned, in order to enable a smooth, anxiety free entry to school life for both the children involved and their parents.

Once the child has a place at the school there will be a new intake meeting. At these meetings the parents will meet the Foundation Stage Leader, class practitioners and other relevant staff. They find out about activities, routines and are given the opportunity to ask any questions. All parents are given a copy of the EYFS policy and a photo book of the staff and setting to share with their child.

All children are invited to spend time in school with their prospective teacher and TAs during the term before they start at Chilton. A member of the Foundation Stage team will visit pupils at their pre-school setting.

These occasions enable the children to gain familiarity with their teacher/TA, classroom and outdoor area, and also provide an opportunity for parents to be informed of school procedures and for individual queries to be dealt with by school staff.

At the beginning of term, there is a very short part-time period before the children begin full time. The reception children have their own playtimes and assemblies until the class teacher feels it is appropriate for gradual introduction to activities involving Key Stage 1 children and ultimately the whole school.

Transition from Reception to year 1

A similar carefully planned transition occurs between reception and year 1. The year one teachers attend moderation throughout the year and so are aware of the reception children. Throughout the final term the year one teachers will come and spend a day with the class that will be going up to them. This allows them to see the daily routines and attainment levels of the children first hand. We will do regular story time swaps with the year one teachers. The Reception children will spend a full day with their new teacher in their year 1 classroom in July. We run a 'Fun in the Sun' afternoon, where parents and children come to meet their child's new teacher on the top field with a bouncy castle and fun activities. Any children for whom transition may be a problem can spend more sessions in their new classroom with a teaching assistant to accompany them. The reception teachers meet with year one teachers in July to discuss each individual child in depth. In addition, in July the parents will have a chance to visit their child's new class with their child in order to meet their year 1 teacher.

Parents as partners

Chilton School recognises that children's experiences at home are highly significant to achievement and it is our policy to develop effective partnerships between home and school. We acknowledge the role parents have already played in the early education of their child and encourage their continued involvement.

Once the child has a place at the school there will be a new intake meeting. At these meetings the parents will meet the Foundation Stage Leader and other relevant staff, they find out about activities, routines and are given the opportunity to ask any questions. All parents are given a copy of the EYFS policy and a photo book of the staff and setting to share with their child. This enables the parents to become familiar with the Chilton approach to teaching and learning. At this meeting parents will be given the dates of important workshops (see below) that they can attend during their child's first term of schooling.

Work shops

During the first term we run a series of workshops for parents to attend and also invite parents in to spend a day at school with their child. These workshops centre on the importance of play, speech and language and supporting your child at home. We then continue to run workshops throughout the year on subjects such as phonics and supporting with Maths at home.

Once pupils have started, parents are welcome to discuss any concerns at any time, should the need arise and we hold an open door policy. Regular (seasonal) 10 minute meetings are arranged between parent and teacher, discussing individual achievements and next steps.

Sharing our knowledge

We value the expertise which parents can offer to enhance the learning opportunities provided in the classroom. Weekly newsletters are sent home, informing parents of the learning that has taken place in school and suggestions of ways to follow this up at home. Twice a term, a family task is suggested which can be recorded in a special 'Love to Learn' book sent home with each pupil. Parents are encouraged to complete 'I can' sheets, to inform teachers of progress made at home by their children. In response, school sends home 'Well done or Happy notes', which indicate how the parent can help to further develop their child's development. Parents are also welcomed into class on a weekly basis to learn and read with their children. Parental help is welcomed in class once the children are fully settled into school life.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

The school takes its child protection responsibilities very seriously. In the EYFS, we adhere to all Chilton Primary School safeguarding policies and procedures. The following policies can be found on the Chilton Primary School website:

- o Anti-bullying
- o Attendance
- o Behaviour, including behaviour management
- o Child Protection Policy
- o Complaints
- o Confidentiality
- o Data protection and information sharing
- o Emergency procedures such as evacuations and lockdowns
- o Health and safety
- o First aid and accidents, including medication and managing illness, allergies, health, and infection
- o Image use
- o Intimate Care
- o Managing allegations against staff
- o Mobile and smart technology
- o Online safety
- o Personal and intimate care
- o Relationship, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)
- o Risk assessments, such as school trips, use of technology, school re-opening
- o Safer recruitment
- o Social media
- o Staff behaviour policy/code of conduct, including Acceptable Use of Technology Policies (AUP)
- o Whistleblowing

EQUALITIES and DISABILITIES

All pupils in this school are entitled to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum regardless of ability, gender, race and social circumstances. All children's needs are considered and the curriculum adapted to suit all levels of ability. We have a full Equality and Diversity and Equal Opportunities policy available at school.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Care is taken to assess the needs of each child. Should a child have any special need the parent will be informed at an early stage. Group and individual help is provided within the school where possible. We have links with various agencies and when necessary their involvement may be required to support certain children. Parents/Carers will always be informed if an outside agency is assisting us to support their child. We have a full Special Educational Needs (S.E.N) policy available at school.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

We have a Health and Safety policy which all staff and students are familiar with and we have designated people responsible for first aid in school. At least 1 Foundation Stage staff member in each class has had paediatric first aid training. Children are taught the safe and appropriate use of equipment and materials. Children are taught to be mindful when moving around the school and are aware of safety issues. Risk assessments are undertaken before after school activities take place and before we embark on school outings. A full Health and Safety Policy is available in school.

ALLERGIES

Parents/carers are asked to inform us of any foods their children are allergic to or any foods they do not wish their child to eat. A note of this is kept in the kitchen area and all adults involved are informed.

MEDICAL NEEDS

We keep a note of any medical needs, allergies, children who need inhalers, piriton, epi-pens in the school office and in the class area so everyone is aware of the individual needs. 2 EYFS staff are trained in paediatric first aid.

INTIMATE CARE

For details on Intimate Care, please see the Viking Academy Trust Intimate Care Policy.