



EARLY YEARS POLICY

Policy reviewed: January 2020

Next review: January 2021

This document will remain valid until the end of the academic year 2020-21

Background information:

Palmers Green High School was established in 1905. It is an independent day school for around 300 girls aged 3 to 16. The school motto, 'By Love, Serve One Another' was carefully chosen by the founder, Miss Alice Hum, and it still epitomises a special ethos where throughout the School each individual is nurtured, successes are celebrated and contribution to the community is greatly valued. The School is made up of 4 departments: the Nursery is the School's Pre-Prep Department; the Prep Department (Reception, Year 1 and 2); the Junior Department (Years 3 to 6) and the Senior Department (Year 7 to 11).

At Palmers Green High School, in the Early Years we follow the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2014. Ultimately, we work towards the 17 Early Learning Goals and each child's Profile is completed by the end of the Reception year before they move into Key Stage 1. Pupils are encouraged to learn through play. It is recognised that we are developing the 'whole' child: we aim to meet each individual's learning needs, as well as nurturing their personal, social and emotional development. We aim to encourage a positive attitude to learning and we offer a broad and balanced curriculum appropriate to the children's age and stage of development. We recognise that children develop 'at their own rates, and in their own ways.' ('Development Matters' 2012). Staff in the Foundation Stage at Palmers Green High School work closely together to ensure continuity and progression for each child.

Structure of the EYFS

The Nursery and the Reception Class make up the EYFS at Palmers Green High School. The Nursery is based at 85 Wellington Road, Bush Hill Park EN1 2PL, while the Reception Class is based at the main school site at 104 Hoppers Road, London N21 3LJ.

Organisation of the EYFS

Girls join the Nursery when they are three years old. They generally attend for between 3 or 5 terms before the majority of them transfer into the Reception Class. The Nursery has a maximum of 24 pupils and there are three members of staff (a teacher and two

teaching assistants: one full-time and one part-time). Girls can be full-time (8:45 until 3:45) every week day; part-time 8:45 until 12:45, including lunch, every day, or a mixture of every morning and some afternoons. We recommend that part-time girls do stay for some afternoons a week the term before they go into Reception to ease their transition to full time.

Girls attend the Reception Class full time in the academic year they turn 5. The Reception Class has a maximum of 24 pupils and is staffed with a teacher and a teaching assistant. The school day begins at 8:30 and finishes at 3.00. There are two breaks: a short morning break and a longer break after lunch has been eaten.

Nursery pupils bring a packed lunch to eat, which is nut and seed free and has suitably healthy foods that the children enjoy. They consume their lunches in the Nursery classroom. Reception Class pupils can bring their own packed lunch or have hot or cold food from the School caterers and eat in the dining room with Year 1 and 2 pupils. Reception Class pupils also bring a fruit or vegetable snack to eat at first break, while at Nursery the girls are offered water or milk and a simple snack, such as toast or fruit.

In the Reception Class, the pupils have specialist teachers for Drama, Music and PE (Games, Gymnastics and Dance). They also visit the school library once a week where they choose a book under the guidance of a trained librarian.

Staffing arrangements for Early Years children is organised in accordance with the 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage' (effective September 2014), to provide for the needs of all the children and ensure their safety. Both the Nursery and Reception classes are led by qualified teachers, who work closely with the Teaching Assistants, who are all Level 3 or NNEB qualified. On trips out of school, a ratio of one adult to two Nursery children will be upheld, while groups of 4 Reception children will be accompanied by an adult or if on a local walk there will be one adult to every two children.

Making sure the pupils are kept safe at all times is of utmost importance in the Foundation Stage at Palmers Green High School. We aim to create a safe and secure environment and encourage our pupils to play safely. We follow the EYFS Statutory Framework and Keeping Children Safe In Education. We also follow set procedures when children become ill or have an accident. Any visitors who come to talk to the classes (for example parents speaking about how they celebrate Chinese New Year) are closely vetted beforehand and a log of visitors is kept.

Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum Overview

At the Nursery and in the Reception Class at Palmers Green High School, we follow the Statutory EYFS Framework. This framework is mandatory for all early years' providers.

It includes four guiding themes and seven areas of learning. The School believes that young children learn best through first hand experiences. Our knowledge of the girls is based on on-going observations and assessments, as well as valued parental input.

There are four guiding themes of the EYFS:

A Unique Child:

At the Nursery and in the Reception Class of Palmers Green High School we believe that each child is an individual who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

Positive Relationships:

These allow children to learn to be strong and independent. Such relationships should be warm and foster a sense of belonging; take on board the child's needs, feelings and interests; be supportive of a child's efforts and independence; set clear boundaries; be stimulating and built on key person relationships. At Nursery, each adult is a keyworker to a group of girls and in the Reception Class, the teacher is the keyworker.

Enabling Environments:

We believe that strong partnerships between early year's practitioners and parents/ carers help create a situation where there is an enabling environment and children can learn and develop well. All people and learning are valued. Stimulating resources, rich learning opportunities through play and teaching give children the confidence to take risks and explore the learning environments both inside and out.

Development and Learning:

In our Early Years department we believe that children develop and learn in different ways. We are committed to supporting each individual, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, to learn and develop across the seven areas of learning. Children are taught with challenging activities involving play across the prime and specific areas of learning and development which foster the characteristics of effective learning.

The Seven Areas of Learning and Development:

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is made up of seven areas of learning, which are all important and underpin all future learning.

The areas of learning have been divided into two groups: Prime Areas and Specific Areas. Children should mainly develop the Prime Areas of learning first as they support development in all other areas of learning. The Specific Areas include essential skills and knowledge that children need to acquire in order to participate successfully in society.

The Prime Areas:

- Communication and Language

- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

The Specific Areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Communication and Language:

This area of the curriculum gives children opportunities to speak and listen in a range of situations and to develop their confidence and skills at expressing themselves.

Physical Development:

Children are given opportunities to be active and interactive, and to develop their co-ordination, control and movement. They are helped to understand the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

Personal, Social and Emotional development:

Children are encouraged to develop a positive sense of themselves and others, to form positive relationships and develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups and to have confidence in their own abilities.

Literacy:

Children are encouraged to link sounds and letters, leading to beginning to read and write. Access is given to a wide range of reading materials to encourage their interest.

Mathematics:

Opportunities are given to practise and develop children's skills in counting numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems and to describe shapes, spaces and measures.

Understanding the World:

This area guides children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

Expressive Arts and Design:

Children are encouraged to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role play and design & technology.

At Palmers Green High School, we aspire that our girls will reach 'expected' or 'exceeding' standards in all the EYFS Early Learning Goals at the end of the Reception Class and that they will be prepared for achieving well in Key Stage 1.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning:

The Characteristics of Effective Learning represent how a child engages with other people and their environment. They epitomise the strategies that a child adopts in order to access their learning and comprises the following:

- playing and exploring
- active learning
- creating and thinking critically

They underpin learning and development across all areas and aim to support the child to stay an effective and motivated learner.

Playing and exploring (engagement) involves a child finding out and exploring; playing with what they know and being willing to have a go.

Active learning (motivation) means being involved and concentrating; keeping trying and enjoying achieving what they set out to do.

Creating and thinking critically (thinking) is a child having their own ideas; making links in their learning and choosing different ways to do things.

Curriculum Planning

The Early Years Staff plan activities weekly based on the girls' interests and needs, also with reference to our observations of them and with regard to the 'Development Matters' document, which outlines children's expected development in stages from birth to five years. We teach through activities based on topics. Popular topics include 'People who help us', 'All about me', 'Festivals and Celebrations' and 'Animals' and will incorporate the 4 themes and 7 areas of learning.

The Nursery and Reception Class pupils also prepare foods as part of their curriculum. For example, they might make sandwiches or porridge; bake biscuits or cakes; maybe create healthy fruit salads or soups. These foods might be eaten in the classroom or taken home to show parents. Staff are aware of any allergies a pupil may have and will review ingredients carefully as part of their planning.

In the Nursery and Reception Class at Palmers Green High School, we use a variety of approaches to learning to read, including the 'Letter and Sounds' synthetic phonics scheme and the 'Jolly Phonics' scheme actions. Weekly homework is sent home in the Reception Class. As soon as a girl has shown the ability to read, she is given a reading book to take home to practise her reading at home.

Assessment for Learning

Assessment is on an ongoing basis. When any girl joins the Nursery or Reception Class, a baseline assessment and observations are undertaken in order to establish her next steps for learning. During adult-directed activities, Staff monitor the girls' skills, knowledge and understanding. The learning and development of each child takes place through regular formal and informal observations. At the Nursery, Learning Journals are kept for each child as evidence of their learning or experiences and sent home at the end of each academic year. These might include photographs, pictures or writing and the child's own comments about her learning are included. There are regular opportunities for parents to see these journals and add their 'voice' to the contents. In the Reception Class, the teacher and TA use 'Tapestry', an on-line Learning Journal to collect observations for each child to monitor their progress, which are recorded on a tablet. The observations comprise digital photographs or videos and text. The observations are made available regularly for each parent to see their child's learning and parents are invited to participate in the process by making a comment or adding their own photographs of their child. New observations are downloaded for parents to access every couple of weeks. Parents can download a paper copy, if they wish. The teacher can also print out a paper copy for the parents if they cannot do so themselves.

Parents as Partners

At Palmers Green High School, we aim to create and maintain good relationships with parents and carers, as we realise the importance of this partnership to each child's learning. Parents are also welcome to be adult helpers on trips, attend School events and be involved in their child's learning and development.

Parents also have opportunities to attend Parents' Evenings to talk to Early Years Staff about their daughter's progress. If a parent has a concern at any time, they are invited to make an appointment at a mutually convenient time to discuss their concern with Staff. At the end of the Foundation Stage (towards the end of the summer term), the EYFS Profile is completed and each child has a description of 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding' placed against 17 Early Learning Goals. This information is shared with parents and the Year 1 teacher. A written report is sent home from the Nursery and the Reception Class at the end of the summer term.

Sometimes children can experience on-going difficulties. The Early Years Staff will consult with parents and also the Palmers Green High School Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator to identify if additional support is required or if advice needs to be sought from an external agency or service.

Transitions

Transitions from the Nursery to the Reception Class and Reception Class to Year 1 are carefully planned for. Girls new to the Nursery are invited to a 'stay and play' session at the Nursery with their parents before the September starting date and have a home visit at the beginning of the Autumn Term. In the Summer Term, the Reception teacher comes

to the Nursery to get to know the girls who will be transferring to the main school and they are invited to see their new classroom with their parents. At the end of the Foundation Stage, the Reception pupils spend some time with the Year 1 teacher in their new classroom. There are meetings between the Nursery and Reception staff, as well as Reception and Year 1 staff to discuss end of year assessments and to ensure a smooth transition.