

GOTHIC MEDE ACADEMY

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY (2026)



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

This Policy reflects the requirements of the EYFS Statutory Framework 2026

Philosophy

- We believe that each child is unique and should be valued and respected as such, regardless of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, special educational needs, gender or ability.
- We believe in the promotion of each child's intellectual, personal, physical and spiritual development: the development of knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and skills through a broad and balanced range of experiences, activities and opportunities.
- We believe our setting will provide all children with a sound preparation for the rest of their life, a chance to socialise and integrate with other children and adults and to develop independence, motivation, self discipline and a desire and enjoyment of learning.
- In partnership with the family and carers we enable them to begin the process of becoming active learners for life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

1. Aims

We aim to:

- Enable children to make an effective and happy transition from home, pre-school or nursery to school through effective liaison.
- Ensure equal access and opportunity.
- Provide a safe, secure, challenging and stimulating environment where all children feel valued and respected.
- Provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum where all children have the opportunity to develop through directed and spontaneous play, structured activities and direct teaching both indoors and outside.
- Work in partnership with parents in an atmosphere of mutual respect and keep parents informed about the curriculum and their child's progress.
- Build on what individuals already know and understand and encourage a positive attitude and disposition to learn.
- Enable choice and decision-making, fostering independence and self-confidence



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- Provide a solid foundation in the three prime areas and four specific areas of learning through well planned activities so that every child can develop emotionally, socially, physically, creatively, intellectually, spiritually and morally.

2. General Information

Nursery

Nursery aged children can take their 15 funded hours from the September in one of the following ways:

Option A:

Monday 8.50am – 3.20pm
Tuesday 8.50am – 3.20pm
Wednesday 8.50am – 10.50am

Option B:

Wednesday 1.20pm – 3.20pm
Thursday 8.50am – 3.20pm
Friday 8.50am – 3.20pm

Acorn Class also works in partnership with BEST Nurseries where children may be taking up more hours on top of their 15 funded hours.

We have 32 spaces in our Nursery class and can accommodate up to 16 children in any one session. Nursery is staffed by the Room Lead and Early Years practitioners who are Qualified to Level 3 or above at the correct ratio for the number of children in the room as specified in the EYFS Statutory Framework. Nursery is managed and overseen by the Early Years Lead.

Reception

We can accommodate up to 60 children in Reception who are then split into two classes each with a designated teacher(s). However, staff work in partnership and all staff support all children.

We currently have three fully qualified teachers (two of which share a class) and the equivalent of two Teaching Assistants at any one time. All children start full time in September, unless there is specific need and it has been agreed with the SENDCo and Principal.

3. Planning and Implementation

Effective practice in the EYFS is built on the following principles: -

- 🎬 A unique child
- 🎬 Positive relationships
- 🎬 Enabling environments
- 🎬 Learning and development



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A Unique child

All children should be treated as individuals but they should have equal access to the EYFS curriculum. We help them do this by planning to meet the needs of both boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children from different ethnic groups, and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We strongly believe that early identification of special needs is crucial in enabling staff to support the development of each child and fully meet their needs. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage in an open, honest and sensitive manner and we will always seek their support and involvement.

The school's SENDCo is responsible for providing additional information and advice to practitioners and parents, and for arranging external intervention and support where necessary.

Positive Relationships

At GMA we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent and form secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families. We recognise that parents/guardians are the child's first and most enduring educators. When parents/guardians and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. We feel a successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise and so we aim to provide a variety of opportunities to support this.

Enabling Environments

At GMA we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Activities are planned for both the inside and outside environment. Children have the opportunity to use the indoor and outdoor classroom throughout the day to provide challenge across the three prime areas and four specific areas of learning.

Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Observations of individuals and groups of children ensure that practitioners are aware of children's needs and progress. These are recorded and influence future planning and provision.

There are three stages of planning the curriculum:

Long Term Planning

In Nursery and Reception, we currently organise the curriculum through agreed half termly topics over the period of the academic year. Topics have been planned that are broad, open, interesting and stimulating to children and based on their own experiences. These are reviewed regularly and are subject to change as appropriate. They enable us to ensure we deliver a balanced curriculum with



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clear progression of skills and allow us to take into account the needs of children who come to us from other settings. Some areas are taught discreetly. These include Maths, Phonics, Handwriting, PE, Music and elements of PSED.

Medium Term Planning

We address particular aspects of the curriculum in more detail for each term. Assessment opportunities, activities and experiences for each area of learning and development are identified. We plan stimulating activities using the Early Years Outcomes and the Early Learning Goals as a basis.

Short Term Planning

Detailed weekly and daily plans are used to ensure that learning outcomes are covered thoroughly and demonstrate clear progression. Objectives for structured activities and direct teaching are laid out clearly. Evaluation is ongoing and is used to inform future plans and improve what we do. The weekly plan is also informed through ongoing observation of child initiated or spontaneous activity and planned play opportunities (indoors and outdoors). This allows for flexibility in response to individual children's needs and interests and for revision and modification of plans. There will be opportunities for children to engage in activities planned by adults and also to initiate their own learning.

Reception children use the school hall and playground for P.E, they visit the school library and Forest School once a fortnight. Acorn children regularly use the school hall for P.E and visit the school library once a week. Reception and Nursery children all have access to separate enclosed indoor and outdoor areas which are used to develop all areas of learning throughout the year.

Learning and Development

We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development and understand that they are interconnected.

Effective learning and teaching is supported through:

- The partnership between staff and parents that helps our children to feel secure at school and to develop a sense of wellbeing and achievement;
- The understanding that staff have knowledge of how children develop and learn, and how this must be reflected in their teaching;
- The range of approaches that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions, and extend and develop the children's play, talk or other means of communication;
- The carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage;
- The provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests, and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;



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- The encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management;
- The support for learning, with appropriate and accessible space, facilities and equipment, both indoors and outdoors, including the effective use of ICT;
- The identification, through observations, of children's progress and future learning needs.

Areas of Learning and Development

The EYFS is made up of the three prime areas:

Communication and Language

Physical Development

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

and four specific areas of learning:

Literacy

Mathematical Development

Understanding of the World

Expressive Arts and Design

While these areas provide a framework for the Early Years curriculum, young children's learning does not easily divide up into distinct areas. A particular experience may develop learning over several of the areas at any one time. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELG's) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

There are opportunities for the children to learn through the three Characteristics of Effective Learning:

Playing and exploring – engagement

Active learning – motivation

Creating and thinking critically - thinking

Play and Exploration

At GMA we are aware that children need time to become engrossed in activities and often do not make a distinction between work and play. We support children's learning through planned play activities, through observation of child-initiated or adult-led play activities and then provide the most effective learning opportunities. We believe that it is important for adults to support children's learning through play, by getting involved in the play themselves and modeling by example.

4. Assessment, Recording and Reporting



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Assessments will be made on each child's progress and development in relation to the Early Years Outcomes. The children will be assessed against the age bands throughout Nursery and Reception and then against the Early Learning Goals at the end of the Reception Year.

All children in Reception will undertake the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) within the first six weeks in which they start Reception.

Assessment *for* learning (formative) and assessment *of* learning (summative) will both play an important part in creating a record of children's progress, attainment and learning needs. All practitioners who interact with the child contribute to the assessment process. Assessment *for* learning will inform planning and will provide information on what is the next step to promote every child's achievement and progress. It may take the form of anecdotal and focused narrative observations, other targeted assessments, annotated examples of work, photographs, and information from parents. We use Tapestry, an online learning journal, to record our observations of children and to show how the adult has moved the child's learning on. In addition to this, we keep a folder for each child which contains work they have produced in class.

Assessment *of* learning will enable us to measure attainment and help us raise important questions to improve our own performance as well as going towards creating a summary for the Foundation Stage Profile at the end of the Reception Year. The profile is a nationally employed assessment tool. It is informed by the formative assessments undertaken and makes statements about the child's achievements against seventeen early learning goals. It summarises children's progress towards these goals and the children will be assessed as 'emerging' or 'expected' against each of the seventeen Early Learning Goals at the end of the Reception year. The Foundation Stage Profile provides important information for Year 1 teachers. During the year, Nursery and Reception teachers use Insight to assess the children against the age bands every half term. This enables them to monitor progress of groups of learners. This information is discussed every half term at a 'Pupil Progress' meeting with members of the SLT.

Parents will receive a written report of their child's attainment twice a year, in January and July. The report highlights the child's strengths and development needs and gives details of the child's general progress. In Reception, the summer term reports also includes the children's EYFSP results. In the autumn and spring terms parents have the opportunity to discuss children's progress at Parent Consultations. We also have an 'open door' policy and encourage parents to discuss any concerns they may have about their child's progress.

Moderation



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The Nursery and Reception teams meet regularly to moderate the children's learning profiles. Children who are under achieving are highlighted as well as those who are working above the expected standard in most areas of development. It is also a time for teachers to see where they are lacking evidence and observations in certain areas and for certain children, and are therefore able to adapt their planning accordingly.

The Principal and School Assessment Lead examine the EYFS Profile data and the Foundation Stage Leader notes any trends or areas of success or development. The findings are then used to help to inform the next year's development plan.

Each year, EYFS staff attend moderation opportunities, with other schools, to check consistency of leveling.

Nursery and Reception teachers are also members of a local cluster group where Early Years teachers from other local lower schools meet regularly to moderate our assessments of children. Nursery and Reception teachers are also part of an Early Years Cluster group in Arlesey where all Early Years Settings in Arlesey meet once a term.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Early Years Leader will write a yearly action plan which is incorporated into the school improvement plan outlining areas of need and development.

The Early Years Leader identifies any training needs and either delivers in house training, seeks support from SLEs or finds external training.

The Early Years Leader will keep all members of staff up to date on educational matters and relevant training and courses as they become available.

A member of SLT and/or the Foundation Stage Leader carry out learning walks and drop in observations.

The Early Years Leader regularly evaluates the effectiveness of the quality of observations in the children's learning journals, including how staff have moved the children's learning on.

6. Safeguarding

The safeguarding and welfare of children is of paramount importance and the school takes all necessary steps to keep children safe and well. In order to fulfil its duties and responsibilities, BEST Academies and Gothic Mede Academy have a range of policies in place. These include the specific



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requirement as set out in the EYFS Framework. Gothic Mede Academy has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in the EYFS setting and details can be found here:

- Name: Mrs S Smith
- Email Address: ssmith@bestacademies.org.uk
- Telephone Number: 01462 732002

Gothic Mede Academy implements policies and procedures in line with the guidance and procedures of the Local Safeguarding Board, setting out:

- the action to be taken where there are safeguarding concerns about a child;
- the action to be taken in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff;
- the use of mobile phones, cameras and other technology in School;
- the role of the DSL.

Whistleblowing

Where there are concerns about the way that safeguarding is carried out in the academy/nursery, staff should refer to the Whistle-blowing Policy. A whistleblowing disclosure must be about something that affects the general public such as:

- A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed
- A legal obligation has been breached
- There has been a miscarriage of justice
- The health or safety of any individual has been endangered
- The environment has been damaged
- Information about any of the above has been concealed.

The NSPCC runs a whistleblowing helpline on behalf of the government, the number is 0808 800 5000.

Intimate Care

Meeting a pupil's intimate care needs is one aspect of safeguarding. All staff responsible for the intimate care of pupils will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times. It is acknowledged that these adults are in a position of great trust. The pupil's welfare and dignity is of paramount importance.

Intimate care can be defined as any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out a procedure to intimate personal areas which most people usually carry out themselves but some pupils are unable to do because of their young age, physical difficulties or other special needs. It may also include invasive or non-invasive medical procedures. It also includes supervision of pupils involved in intimate self-care.



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BEST staff who provide intimate care are trained to do so. This includes training in child protection, health and safety, and training in moving and handling, and are fully aware of best practice regarding infection control.

There is careful communication with each child who needs help with intimate care to discuss their needs and preferences, aiming for as much independence as possible. Where the child is of an appropriate age and level of understanding permission should be sought before starting an intimate procedure.

It is generally best practice for two people to undertake personal care of a young person, however, it is not always practical for two members of staff to assist with an intimate procedure and also this does not take account of the pupil's privacy. A member of staff will inform another adult when they are going to assist a child with intimate care.

It is best if there is a rota of carers known to the child who will take turns in providing care. This will ensure, as far as possible, that over-familiar relationships are discouraged from developing.

Intimate care involves risks for pupils and adults as it may involve staff touching intimate areas on a pupil's body. It may be unrealistic to expect to eliminate these risks completely but best practice will be promoted and all adults will be encouraged to be vigilant at all times.

A written record will be kept in an agreed format every time a child requires assistance with intimate care, including date, times and any comments such as changes in the pupil's behaviour. It should be clear who was present. These records will be kept in the pupil's file and available to parents/carers on request.

7. Health and Safety

Gothic Mede Academy implements policies and procedures relating to:

- safety, security and suitability of premises and facilities, including environment, equipment, fire and emergencies and risk assessments;
- First Aid and First Aiders, including dealing with accidents, injury and medication;
- Educational trips and visits. GMA has trained First Aiders and access to First Aid kits appropriate for use with the age range of children in School.

The School keeps a written record of any accident/injury/first aid treatment. The School informs parents/carers of any accident or injury on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable after, and of any first aid treatment given. Details of the GMA paediatric-trained First Aiders can be obtained from the School Office, upon request.

8. Food and Nutrition



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At Gothic Mede Academy we believe that it is important to build a partnership with all our parents and carers to provide nutritionally valuable food for our children's lunches and that snack and lunch times are safe and hazard free. Parents and Carers are required to inform us of any dietary requirements and food allergies their child may have. This information is recorded and acted upon.

Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks in school, these are healthy, balanced and nutritious. Water is always available for children to drink. We participate in the free fruit and milk for under-fives scheme. We request that children bring in a healthy snack to eat during the morning. When a family chooses to send their child with a packed lunch, we request that this is healthy and nutritious. Snacks or packed lunches should not contain;

- Nuts, including packaging that states 'may contain nuts'
- Popcorn
- Chocolate
- Cake
- Biscuits
- Sweets
- Sweet and savoury pastries
- Squash/fizzy drinks/smoothies

Whilst children are eating there will always be a member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate present observing the children.

Food Safety and Choking Prevention

Any food provided for snack time or in a lunchbox should be cut up; especially cherry tomatoes, grapes, strawberries etc. (cut into quarters lengthways). They should never contain and nuts or products containing nuts. Nuts are a common allergy in children and can be fatal. Occasionally we may ask for other food items to be removed from lunchboxes if there is a child with a life threatening allergy.

We are unable to refrigerate snacks or lunchboxes and strongly recommend that parents pack foods that will remain safe at ambient temperatures or pack an icepack in the lunchbox.

Celebrations

There is no expectation that children bring in something for the children on their birthday, however, we do ask that no food is sent in, this avoids issues with allergies and sugar intake.

9. Screentime



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In Nursery and Reception, we recognise that technology can support children's learning when used purposefully and appropriately. In line with the EYFS statutory framework, we have regard to children's screen use and ensure that it is limited, carefully considered and appropriately supervised. Children will have no more than one hour of purposeful screen use during the school day, with full adult engagement and supervision. This time will be broken into shorter, manageable periods throughout the day, rather than being used for one extended period. Where screens are used, they enhance learning experiences rather than replace hands-on play, physical activity, communication, social interaction or opportunities to explore the real world. Staff ensure children experience a healthy balance of screen-based and non-screen activities throughout the day.

10. Safer Sleep

While most of our 3-to-5-year-olds no longer nap during the day, children can occasionally fall asleep during a session due to illness, growth spurts, or late nights. Under the **EYFS Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements**, our statutory duty of care remains active even when a child is resting. If an Acorn or Reception child falls asleep, the following steps will be followed:

- **Move to a Safe Rest Area:** Carefully guide or move the child to a quiet area. They should rest on a clean, flat floor mat or cushions. Never allow a child to sleep sitting upright at a table, in a reading corner beanbag, or in an awkward position that could restrict their airway.
- **Maintain Constant Supervision:** The sleeping child **must remain within your direct sight and hearing** at all times. Do not leave the room or rely on sound monitors.
- **Conduct Regular Physical Checks:** Check on the child frequently. Visually confirm they are breathing comfortably and that their face remains completely uncovered by blankets or clothing.
- **Ensure Proper Ventilation:** Keep the rest area well-ventilated and comfortable (ideally between 16°C and 20°C).
- **Log and Communicate:** Note down the time the child fell asleep and woke up. Information will be shared with parents at handover so they are aware.

If this is out of character for the child or staff have any concerns at all, these will be shared with the class teacher/ room lead who will make contact with the parent.

11. Involving Parents and Carers

The Early Years team strongly believe that developing an effective working partnership with parents/carers has a positive impact on children's development and learning. We value parents/carers by:

- Showing respect and understanding for the role of parents/carers as children's first and most enduring educator;



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- Encouraging parents/carers to share accounts of their child's development and any concerns they may have and take action to support where appropriate;
- Providing a welcoming environment by being approachable and friendly;
- Establishing an atmosphere of trust and confidence;
- By offering home visits to all families before they start in Reception;
- Inviting parents/carers to regular planned events such as Open Evening to share information about our school;
- By being available at the beginning and end of the day to talk to parents/carers on an informal basis. If further time is needed to discuss particular issues an appointment can be arranged at a mutually convenient time;
- Sharing information about the curriculum through meetings e.g. Phonics & Maths Workshops for parent/carers, sending newsletters/leaflets home about topics, displays, Tapestry and the school website and Facebook page;
- Inviting parents in for half termly opportunities where they can observe part of a lesson to see methods and strategies we use to teach children;
- Parent consultations take place in the autumn and spring terms to share children's achievements and together discuss next steps for development;
- Parents are able to view their child's learning journal on Tapestry and are actively encouraged to contribute, noting achievements their child has made at home;
- Encouraging home school links through support with the home school reading programme and fortnightly Literacy and Maths homework in Reception;
- Inviting parents/carers into the classroom to share expertise/interests and time to work with and help the children and staff in a variety of ways;
- Providing opportunities for parents/carers to attend social events with children and staff e.g. Summer fayre, Mother's Day breakfast, Father's Day breakfast;
- Invitations to assemblies and other whole school events;
- Inviting them to become involved in the parent/carer/staff group called the "Parents and Friends of Gothic Mede" (PFGM) which supports the school in fund raising and organises social events for adults and children.

12. Transition

Teachers work very closely with parents and feeder settings / parents to provide opportunities to ensure a seamless transition for children into Nursery and Reception. These include:

Transition into Nursery



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- Whole school Open Evening;
- Transfer forms are passed on from the child's previous Nursery / Pre-School which informs the teacher's knowledge of each child's strengths and areas for development;
- Meet and Play sessions which enable staff to get to know the child and speak to the parents / carers about their child's strengths, areas for development and individual needs;
- Opportunities for the children to visit Nursery for a taster session before they start;
- Meetings for parents at the start of the year to find out about routines etc.

Transition into Reception

- Whole school Open Evening;
- Information for parents before their child start school to find out about the transition process etc;
- Teachers visiting the children at their Nursery / Pre-School the term before they start school;
- Discussions with the children's keyworker at their Nursery / Pre-School to find out about each child's strengths and areas for development;
- Opportunities for the children to visit school for two mornings / afternoons, including a lunch on one occasion, the term before they start school;
- Questionnaires for parents to complete which helps us to find out more about each child's family situation, interests, strengths, areas for development and any other important information;
- A task to complete over the summer holiday in preparation for starting school;
- By offering home visits to all families before they start in Reception;
- A 'Meet the Teacher' session in early September to inform parents about routines and expectations.

Author and Date; Written by: Kate Lewis 2025

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