A statement of the aims, principles and strategies within the Belmont Infants Early Years Foundation Stage

Our Mission Statement

Each child is special and each day is important. Every child, regardless of physical ability, race, religion, gender or current level of attainment, will be given the opportunity to develop their personal interests and friendships alongside the development of life skills and academic knowledge and understanding. We aim to provide rich learning opportunities which enable every child to achieve in all areas of learning, to develop curiosity, thinking skills, perseverance and a love of learning. We celebrate the fact that our children come from a community rich in cultural and ethnic diversity. We feel privileged to work in partnership with the Vale School.

Overarching Principles of the EYFS Curriculum

The EYFS contains four stated principles in the statutory documentation, which is intended to guide the ethos of all early years setting:

- Every child should be viewed as a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Practitioners have a responsibility to nurture **positive relationships**
- Children learn and develop well in an **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.
- Children develop and learn in **different ways and at different rates**

How we approach these principles at Belmont Infant School:

The Curriculum

At Belmont we teach using a thematic approach. This ensures that the children are able to make links within meaningful contexts. This way of teaching also enables us to ensure that all areas of learning are being developed and opens our children up to new experiences and the world around them.

Our current themes are outlined below:

Belmont Infants Curriculum Overview

Nursery					
I can sing a rainbow	Getting to know you	Can I have a tiger as a pet?	Colour & pattern	How does your garden grow?	Journeys & Adventures
Reception					
Tell me a story	Who am I?	Walking with dinosaurs	Bookshops, bakers and candlestick makers!	Do all heroes wear capes?	Out and about in the garden

We have carefully developed a curriculum which celebrates the importance of the arts and creativity. We strongly believe that this supports children with their expression and creative thinking across all areas of learning.

Planning and Teaching Through Play

At Belmont Infant School we recognise the power and importance of the learning that takes place during purposeful play. We strongly believe that a play-based curriculum in the Early Years develops the skills needed to be a successful learner. These include curiosity, independence, resilience, social skills, the ability to problem solve and negotiate and the development of communication and language. We engage in high quality interactions with our children to ensure that their play moves their learning forward.

We embrace a creative, challenging and broad curriculum. Staff actively seek opportunities to enhance their practice, for example by participating in Local Authority projects and visiting other settings for inspiration.

We apply the Ofsted definition of teaching ('Early years inspection handbook', 2022) to our daily practice. It states:

> 'Teaching is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities, communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment that adults provide and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and to monitor their progress.'

Teaching

Examples of this in practice include:

- Practitioners are active learning partners; we facilitate the development of ideas and sensitively intervene to support learning in both planned and spontaneous contexts.
- We support and value the characteristics of effective learning which continue across our school and beyond: playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically. These characteristics underpin all future learning and enable children to become **life-long learners**.
- We have high expectations of **all** children and encourage a positive attitude towards learning and new challenges. We encourage our children to develop a 'Growth Mindset' through regular discussions and circle times about the importance of making mistakes and keeping on trying.
- We use positive behaviour management strategies and respond thoughtfully and with understanding when supporting children to express and manage their emotions.
- Many children prefer to spend their time outdoors where their learning can take place on a larger scale. As such, our children will have the freedom to choose their preferred learning environment- indoors or outdoors- for large portions of the school day.
- We engage with children through high quality interactions to model and scaffold language and vocabulary that the children need to access the curriculum as well as to build their cultural capital.

- Practitioners engage fully with both indoor and outdoor teaching and consider them to hold equal value. We meet every Thursday as a team to plan for our outdoor learning environment, including specific adult led activities.
- We pay close attention to the current interests of our children and, wherever possible, use these to engage them with all areas of learning.
- We use 'carpet sessions' to set routines and to teach specific knowledge and skills. We ensure a balance of coverage across the areas of learning during these sessions, but also recognise that Literacy and Mathematical skills require a particular focus in order to build on children's prior knowledge and move learning forward.

Planning

Examples of this in practice include:

- Practitioners ensure that learning environments are inviting, challenging and well-resourcedto ensure maximum engagement from children (see Learning Environments).
- At Belmont we aspire to develop a creative, engaging curriculum. This includes opportunities for children to regularly engage in a range of creative activities such as drama, art and music. For example, in our topic 'Do All Heroes Wear Capes?' we role-play a range of super hero scenarios and set comic strips to music.
- We make explicit links between areas of learning in our planning, and ensure that learning is grounded in a familiar context so that every child can access the curriculum. Making links to previous experiences and other areas of learning support children to deepen their understanding. For example, in our topic 'Bookshops, Bakers and Candlestick Makers' we explore using money in a real life context by going on a trip to the local shops.
- On a weekly basis, all seven areas of learning in the EYFS are carefully planned for in the learning environments (inside and out). This ensures that children have access to a broad, balanced curriculum.
- Practitioners plan for individual, group and whole-class learning moments through the day, including daily circle and story times in Nursery. This is one way of ensuring equality of opportunity for all children to access a breadth of experiences.
- Adult-directed tasks are motivating, hands-on, purposeful and contextual. This includes weekly cooking sessions.
- To support motivation for learning and the progress of individual children, our staff teams plan activities and experiences based on the children's interests and their next steps in learning (see Assessment and Focus Children).
- Staff ensure that children have ample time to consolidate their learning through repetition and reflection.

Learning environments and the importance of outdoor learning

Both the indoor and outdoor learning environments are of equal importance in the EYFS and both offer learning opportunities across the entire EYFS curriculum (see Teaching). At Belmont we believe that it is essential for our children to experience the variety of textures, sights, sounds and changes over time that an outdoor learning environment offers.

Our team includes a qualified Forest School teacher, specialising in developing self-confidence and 'can do', challenge-seeking attitudes in the great outdoors (see useful links and key documents). Our children participate in regular Forest School sessions, learning how to use tools safely, foraging and creating sculptures from natural materials and much more.

We support our children to develop pride in their environment, to take care of resources and, where appropriate, to access them independently.

Examples of this in practice include:

- The provision of stimulating, safe and secure learning environments which are planned for, prepared and organised with the developmental needs of young children in mind.
- Resources throughout the EYFS are clearly labelled for self-access and organisation, including outdoors in our storage sheds. This helps our children to develop a sense of pride and responsibility for their learning environment.
- Through activities, displays and the layout of learning spaces, our environments reflect the individual needs and interests of the children we teach. There are spaces for quiet reflection and conversation.
- We continually review our provision in order to improve the teaching and learning opportunities in our setting. The EYFS team meet weekly to ensure that our setting promotes the development of the **characteristics of effective learning**: playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically.
- We ensure that our environment is suitably challenging and supports children to take risks safely. For example, in 2018/19 we helped to lead a project in the borough to introduce woodwork in our setting and other schools across Haringey.

Parental Partnerships

We recognise, value, and support parental partnerships at Belmont Infant School. We work collaboratively with families to ensure the progress and development of our children.

Important dates are available on our school website and through our regular newsletter.

Examples of this in practice include:

- Practitioners make themselves available at drop-off and pick up times where possible. Where a more in-depth conversation is needed, or if a member of staff is unavailable to talk at these times, we will organise a suitable meeting time with parents and carers.
- Scheduled parent meetings take place throughout the year. These are an opportunity for families to discuss their child's progress, to ask questions and to share information from home.
- Dates for parent workshops and specific meetings are scheduled throughout the year e.g. phonics, early reading
- 'Topic Letters' are sent home each half term to keep parents and carers informed about what their child will be learning.
- Parents and carers are welcome to share stories with their child's class, support a cooking session or offer to support the occasional small group. Dates can be arranged with class teachers and an up to date police check may be required.
- Parents and carers are invited in to celebrate the children's learning and enhance the topic, for example to share sculptures the children have made or to host a tea party to celebrate Mother's and Father's Days in Nursery.
- Parents are encouraged to contribute experiences from home through our 'Focus Child' cycleand the use of the 'Tapestry' programme (see Assessment).

Trips and Visitors

We recognise that taking our children on trips within the local area and beyond offers them a unique opportunity to learn in multiple contexts beyond the classroom.

As such, staff teams in both Nursery and Reception plan engaging and exciting trips linked to current topics. For example, in Reception as part of our 'Walking with Dinosaurs' topic the children visit the Natural History Museum.

We also welcome a range of visitors into our classrooms to share their ideas and expertise, such as story tellers from the local library in Wood Green.

Assessment

Accurate, informative assessment is essential to identifying next steps for our children and helping them to move on in their learning. In the EYFS we use ongoing, formative assessments based on our interactions with children throughout the day as well as their participation in activities planned by staff. Using assessment information and knowledge of our children, the staff actively seek out projects and partnerships with other schools and external providers to ensure our teaching and provision is up to date with current research, as well as tailored to our children's need. For example, noticing a gap in children's understanding of story structure, and then with writing as they move through the school, in 2022/2023 we are taking part in a project to introduce Tales Toolkits to our Nursery and Reception children.

Examples of this in practice include:

- Practitioners monitor the progress of each child in each area of learning
- Practitioners support children to share their ideas and make links. We make careful observations in order to understand the learning development of individuals and use this information to plan for next steps.
- Staff teams discuss assessments to ensure accuracy and share ideas.
- We operate a focus child system, honing in on the interests, progress, learning and next steps of 5 children per week across a 6 week cycle in Reception and 6 children a week across a 7 week cycle in Nursery. It is also an opportunity for the children to reflect on their own learning and for contributions and observations to be made from home.
- We use the online 'Tapestry' programme to document significant learning moments and plan for next steps. Parents and carers are able to access photos of their child's learning alongside comments from practitioners. Parents are encouraged to share learning from home and practitioners use this information to support future planning for individual children.

Useful links and key documents which guide and influence our practice

- **'Early years foundation stage profile'**
  Available at
  https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1109972/Early_Years_Foundation_Stage_profile_2023_handbook.pdf
- **'Development Matters'**
  Available
  athttps://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1007446/6.7534_DfE_Development_Matters_Report_and_illustrations_web__2_.pdf
- **Forest School Association**
  https://www.forestschoolassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/
- **'Tapestry' information**
  https://www.tapestry.info/