



Elstree School

Early Years Policy

To be read in conjunction with the Pre-Prep Parents' Handbook

Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. The Themes of Early Years Education	2
2. Characteristics of Effective Learning.....	3
3. Learning and Development	3
4. Communication and Language.....	3
5. Physical Development.....	4
6. Personal, Social and Emotional Development.....	4
7. Literacy	4
8. Mathematics.....	5
9. Understanding the World	5
10. Expressive Arts and Design.....	5
11. Early Learning Goals	6
12. Progress check at age two.....	6
13. Assessment	6
14. Welfare Requirements	7

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Elstree School is a Company Limited by Guarantee No 690450 (England)

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I. Introduction

The aim of our Pre-Pre department is to provide a secure, stimulating and happy environment where the children can begin their education. We aim for the children to leave Elstree Pre-Prep inspired and enthused. We want their first encounters of learning to be full of excitement and joy, framing their approach to education for the years ahead. Our dedicated team of teachers plan learning experiences for the children so that they can learn, without necessarily realising they are doing so. We encourage each child to be excited to learn, to ask questions and to seek to find out more. We have high expectations for each child and aim to ensure that appropriate challenges across a wide curriculum base are set and reached. We aim to work closely with parents so that together we can develop in full each individual child's particular aptitudes and potential. It is our wish to establish confident, independent learners who see challenges as excitements. All of our teaching at Elstree Pre-Prep is underpinned by a strong Christian ethos.

Our Early Years department consists of a Nursery and Reception. We value the importance of child-led learning. Our expert teachers plan and set up a range of learning experiences to cater for the children's interests, helping to enthuse and excite the children to play, explore, talk and to experience new things.

At Elstree Pre-Prep, we follow the themes and guidance of the Development Matters Document.

2. The Themes of Early Years Education

A Unique Child

At Elstree Pre-Prep we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. Our commitments are focused around development; inclusion; safety; and health and well-being.

Positive Relationships

Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and other key people. Our commitments at Elstree Pre-Prep are focused around respect, partnership with parents, supporting learning, actively promoting British values and the role of the teacher and classroom assistant.

Enabling Environment

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning. At Elstree Pre-Prep our commitments are focused around observation, assessment and planning, support for every child, the learning environment and the wider context – transitions, continuity and multi-agency working.

Learning and Development

We recognize that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, and that all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.

3. Characteristics of Effective Learning

In planning and guiding children's activities, we as practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practices. Three characteristics of effective learning and teaching are:

- **Playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- **Active learning** – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- **Creating and thinking critically** – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

4. Learning and Development

The Nursery and Reception classes follow the Early Years Statutory Framework and Development Matters document. There are three Prime Areas and four Specific Areas of learning. All areas of learning are important and interconnected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. The three prime areas are:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through the specific areas which are:

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

The prime areas form the main focus for teaching and learning in the Nursery. The children are increasingly introduced to the specific areas as they move through Nursery and into Reception.

5. Communication and Language

We give children opportunities to experience a rich language using both the indoor and outdoor environments.

- To develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves.
- To speak and listen in a range of situations.
- To encourage children to ask and respond to questions to develop their understanding.
- To provide, initiate and join in with imaginative play and role play.

6. Physical Development

Physical development in the foundation stage involves helping children to be active and interactive and to develop their coordination, control, and movement. Physical development helps children gain confidence in what they can do and enables them to feel and understand the positive benefits of being healthy and active. Children are taught the importance of making healthy choices in relation to food.

We offer appropriate physical challenges.

- We use available space indoors and outdoors to set up relevant activities.
- We give sufficient time for children to use a range of equipment.
- We use resources that can be used in a variety of ways or to support specific skills.
- We introduce the language of movement, alongside children's actions.

7. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Successful personal, social and emotional development is critical for very young children in all aspects of their lives and gives them the best opportunity for success in all other areas of learning:

- We help children to establish constructive relationships with other children and adults.
- We give positive encouragement to children and act as positive role models.
- We ensure that there is time and space for children to focus on activities and experiences and develop their own interests.
- We support and encourage the children to have a positive sense of themselves and others and to have confidence in their abilities.
- We promote emotional, moral, spiritual and social development alongside intellectual development.
- Our activities help children develop autonomy and the disposition to learn.
- We challenge children's thinking and help them embrace differences in all aspects of life; gender, ethnicity, religion, special educational needs and disabilities.

8. Literacy

This area of learning includes encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write.

- A wide variety of rhyming games are introduced and played with the children both at school and at home.
- We share and enjoy a wide range of rhymes, music, songs, poetry, stories and non-fiction books.
- The children have access to story sacks that give opportunities to read and write, retell, predict, enact and discuss stories and non-fiction books.

- We link language with physical movement in action songs and rhymes, role-play and practical experience.
- Our environment reflects the importance of language through signs, labelling, notices, posters, books and magazines.
- The children see adults writing. They experiment with writing for themselves through making marks, personal writing symbols and conventional scripts.

9. Mathematics

Mathematics depends on becoming confident and competent in learning and using key skills. This area of learning includes counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces and measures:

- We provide many different activities, to encourage children to observe numbers and patterns in the environment and daily routines.
- We provide practical activities to encourage children's developing communication skills.
- We provide activities that are imaginative and enjoyable.

10. Understanding the World

In this area of learning, children are developing the crucial knowledge, skills and understanding that helps them to make sense of their physical world and their community. This forms the foundation for later work in science, design and technology, history, geography, and information and communication technology (ICT):

- Our activities are based on guiding the children through first-hand experiences that encourage exploration, observation, problem solving, prediction, critical thinking, decision making and discussion.
- We enjoy a wide range of activities indoors and outdoors that stimulate children's interests and curiosity.

11. Expressive Arts and Design

Creativity is fundamental to successful learning. Being creative enables children to make connections between one area of learning and another and so extend their understanding. This area of learning includes art, music, movement, role-play, imaginative play and design and technology:

- We provide a stimulating environment in which creativity, originality and expressiveness are valued.
- Children are provided with a wide range of media and materials to explore and play with.
- We enjoy a wide range of activities that children can respond to using different senses.
- We give children time to explore, develop ideas and finish working at their ideas.

- Children have opportunities to express their ideas through a wide range of types of expression.

12. Early Learning Goals (ELG)

At Elstree Pre-Prep we are continuously planning and assessing, considering the individual needs, interests and stage of development for each child in our care. This is reflected in a child's individual learning pathway shown online on their 'Arc Pathway'. Individual's progress is mapped, highlighting areas of strength as well as suggested next steps. At the end of Reception, we will complete children's Foundation Stage Profile. With discussion with parents/carers and any other outside professionals that may have been in contact with the child throughout the year, we are able to provide a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels and their readiness for Year 1. We recognise that the children will work through these goals at their own pace. A report is written and a Parents' Evening held with regard to each of the ELG's and Characteristics of Effective Learning, giving the parents the opportunity to discuss their child's attainment against the ELG's. This is also passed on to the child's Year 1 teacher.

13. Progress check at age two

Most children that join Elstree Pre-Prep are already 3 and on the exceptions that a child joins aged 2 they have often come from another nursery. If this is the case then we request the 2 year check that will have either been completed by the previous setting or the child's health visitor. On the occasion that this has not been done we will complete the progress check ensuring that we have identified the child's strengths and any areas where the child's progress is less than expected. If there are significant emerging concerns, or an identified special educational need or disability, we will develop a targeted plan to support the child's future learning and development involving parents and/or carers and other professionals as appropriate and with the parent/carers approval. This form will prioritise the prime areas but will give a brief note regarding the specific areas if appropriate to the individual child. Parents are encouraged to meet to discuss the child's development and to add to the check ensuring a complete picture of the whole child.

14. Assessment

EYFS – Nursery and Reception

The children in the Foundation Stage at Elstree Pre-Prep are continuously assessed based on the observations by teachers and classroom assistants during the children's day-to-day activities. The observations are systematic and are used to identify learning priorities and plan next steps for each child.

We use Arc Pathway, an online assessment platform, to track children's achievements and to plan next steps. This is closely linked to the Development Matters document. A child's arcs are shared with parents during parents' evenings, meetings or on request. Next steps are created for each child and these are used to inform our planning. These are also shared with parents (each term) so that they can focus on these areas at home with their children too.

During the last term in Reception, the children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals and their Early Years Profile is completed. The results of these are sent to the child's

parents, to the West Berkshire Education Authority and also passed onto the Year 1 teachers to inform their groupings and planning.

15. Welfare Requirements

At Elstree Pre-Prep we understand that it is our legal requirement to meet the welfare standards laid out in the enclosed statutory framework. We know that “children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.” Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021)

We are also aware of the need to actively promote British values and ensure that this is an integral part of everyday life at Elstree Pre-Prep.