



The Growth Learning Collective – Early Years Policy

Contents

Our approach

Structure of the EYFS

The Curriculum

Assessment

Parental Involvement

Transition

Safeguarding and Welfare

Our Approach

Vision and Beliefs

At The Growth Learning Collective, we believe that the Early Years are the crucial building blocks for a child's future success. Our vision is to provide every child with a rich, stimulating, and supportive learning environment where they feel valued, confident, and excited about learning. We understand that these formative years are pivotal in shaping a child's intellectual, social, and emotional development, and we are committed to laying the foundations for a lifelong love of learning.

We offer a broad and balanced curriculum, one that is both creative and challenging, ensuring that all children, regardless of their background, have access to a wealth of learning opportunities. This curriculum is not just focused on academic achievement but also nurtures the whole child—encouraging curiosity, resilience, and a sense of belonging. By providing a variety of enriching activities, both inside and outside the classroom, we aim to foster a love of exploration, build confidence in new skills, and develop children's critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Recognising that many of our children come from diverse, and often disadvantaged, backgrounds, we work to remove barriers to learning and ensure that every child has the support and encouragement they need to thrive. Through high-quality teaching, collaborative partnerships with parents, and a nurturing approach, we aim to empower all our children to reach their full potential, both now and in the future.

By laying a strong foundation in these early years, we are helping to shape confident, compassionate, and capable individuals who will grow to be lifelong learners and active, engaged citizens in an ever-changing world.

Aims

The aims of our approach to the Early Years are to:

- Provide a strong foundation for future learning
- Offer a broad and balanced curriculum
- Foster emotional and social development
- Promote individualised learning
- Encourage active exploration and curiosity
- Embrace diversity and inclusion
- Support communication and language development
- Build strong partnerships with parents and carers
- Encourage physical development and well-being
- Support the transition to Key Stage 1
- Foster a lifelong love of learning
- Ensure high-quality teaching and learning

Purpose of the policy

This policy aims to ensure that:

- All leadership, staff and parents involved in the Early Years have a secure understanding of our vision, approach and processes.

Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the [statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#), effective from 1 September 2025.

Structure of the EYFS

Newington Green: At Newington Green, the Early Years consists of a 2-year-olds provision, Nursery provision and a 2-form entry Reception.

Rotherfield: At Rotherfield Primary, the Early Years consists of a Nursery provision and a 1-form entry Reception.

2-year-old provision includes free childcare for disadvantaged families and at Newington Green, eligible parents can receive 15 hours per week of free government-funded childcare the term after their second birthday. It is not currently possible for parents to pay for additional hours.

At both schools, the Nurseries provide free government-funded childcare for 15 hours per week the term after a child's third birthday. Some families may be eligible for an additional 15 hours through Free Childcare for Working Parents legislation. More details on this can be found here: [Free Childcare for Working Parents: Check if you're eligible - GOV.UK](#) Additionally, children may be eligible for an additional 15 hours through the Priority Early Learning scheme. More details on this can be found here: [Bright Start Priority Early Learning | Islington Council](#). Please speak to the Early Years' Leader if you feel you may be eligible and they can make an application for you.

Children who are 4 years or older by August 31st will transition into Reception. An application to the local authority must be made by the January prior to starting and key dates for this can be found here: [School admissions: How to apply - GOV.UK](#)

For the Early Years, the following ratios of child to staff member apply:

	2 years olds	Nursery	Reception
Ratio	1:5	1:13*	1:30

*when a class is led by a qualified class teacher, the ratio increases from 1:8 to 1:13.

At The Growth Learning Collective, we ensure that, while the above statutory ratios apply, risk assessments are completed to determine if more supervision is needed for children with SEND, disabilities or additional needs.

The Curriculum

Our curriculum in the Early Years is informed by the Early Years Framework and Development Matters (link docs). The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development that are important and interconnected:

- **Communication and language.**
- **Personal, social and emotional development.**
- **Physical development.**
- Literacy.
- Mathematics.
- Understanding the world.
- Expressive arts and design.

The first three areas in the list above, known as the prime areas, are especially important in sparking curiosity and a love of learning, as well as in developing children's ability to learn, build relationships, and flourish. In line with guidance from the EYFS framework and Development Matters, we see Communication and Language as integral to every area of learning; this is incredibly important for our federation because of the diverse community we serve.

The Growth Learning Collective curriculum is based around cross-curricular themes. Each topic planned is included in the curriculum for specific reasons and we want to ensure that all children leave the Reception Year ready to start the KS1 curriculum. Within the curriculum, there are opportunities for teachers to adapt the amount of time spent on different themes based on children's emerging interests. Themes are introduced using engaging storybooks or age-appropriate non-fiction texts. This approach helps children recognise that books and reading are essential to their learning and understanding of the world. Throughout a half term, all areas of learning are linked back to the overarching theme and activities in continuous provision, inside and out, reflect this.

Please see an overview of our overarching themes for each year group below:

	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
2 year olds (NG only) and Nursery	All about me Ourselves People who help us	Space Light and Dark Colour	Traditional tales Animals	Monsters Dinosaurs	Plants Lifecycles Mini beasts	The Sea Transport All around the world
Reception	All about me People Who Help Us Senses	Space	Superheroes Traditional Tales	Weather Habitats	Minibeasts Growth	Pirates Under the Sea

Alongside this thematic approach, we have systematic approaches to both the teaching of early reading and maths. For more information about our approach to these, please see our Reading and Maths policies attached below:

[RF Phonics and Early Reading Policy.docx](#)

[RF Reading Policy January 2025.docx](#)

[RF Writing Policy November 2024.docx](#)

Teaching and Learning

Alongside these key areas of learning mentioned above, within our teaching, we embed the Characteristics of Effective Learning which are the key behaviours and attitudes that enable children to engage fully in their educational journey. Please see below a summary of these different areas from the statutory EY framework:

- 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.

In addition to the principles set out in our Teaching and Learning policy, the following approaches are integral to high quality provision in our early years settings:

High quality adult interactions

High quality adult and child interactions in the Early Years are nurturing, attentive and developmentally appropriate. Practitioners actively listen to children, respond sensitively to their needs and interests, and use open-ended questions to extend thinking and language. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children’s language effectively.

Adults model positive behaviour, encourage curiosity, and create a safe, nurturing environment where children feel valued and confident to explore. These interactions are underpinned by a deep understanding of child development and are embedded in everyday routines and play, ensuring that every moment is a potential learning opportunity.

Enabling Environments

The Growth Learning Collective recognise that children learn and develop well in enabling environments. Staff work closely with parents and carers to observe the children’s interests, learning and development and use the information gathered to plan challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children’s learning.

In the Early Years, language rich classrooms immerse children in meaningful opportunities to listen, speak, and interact. They include a variety of high-quality texts, print-rich displays, and resources that encourage curiosity and conversation. Practitioners model rich vocabulary and extend children's language through purposeful dialogue, questioning, and storytelling. By creating spaces that value communication, such as role-play areas, small-group discussions, and shared reading, children develop confidence, comprehension, and a love of language, laying the foundation for lifelong learning.

Learning Environments

The Early Years learning environments, both inside and out, are carefully organised into learning areas, where children are enabled to find and locate equipment and resources independently. Each class has access to an outdoor space, which is an essential part of the EYFS curriculum and has a significantly positive impact on children's learning and development. Children have the opportunity to be outside in all weathers. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active. Well planned play, both indoors and outdoors, provides key opportunities for young children to learn with enjoyment and challenge. We recognise the importance of adult support and a secure environment in ensuring effective high quality, purposeful play.

Continuous Provision

Continuous provision refers to the carefully planned environment and resources that are consistently available to children throughout the day. These areas—such as construction, role play, small world, creative, reading, and outdoor spaces—are designed to promote independent learning, exploration, and sustained play.

In our setting, continuous provision is underpinned by the principles of the EYFS and reflects our belief in child-led learning. It enables children to revisit and deepen their understanding through repeated experiences, fostering autonomy, resilience, and creativity. Staff observe and interact sensitively to scaffold learning, extend thinking, and support next steps.

Enhanced Provision

Enhanced provision builds upon the foundations of continuous provision by introducing additional resources, provocations, or adult-led inputs that respond to children's emerging interests, needs, or curriculum focus. It is dynamic and responsive, designed to spark curiosity, deepen learning, and introduce new concepts or skills.

Enhancements may include:

- Thematic resources linked to current learning (e.g. seasonal changes, cultural celebrations, or storybooks).
- Targeted materials to support specific areas of development (e.g. fine motor tools, number games, or vocabulary prompts).
- Adult-initiated challenges or questions to provoke thinking and exploration.

At the Growth Learning Collective enhanced provision is planned weekly in response to observations, assessments, and children's voices. It ensures that learning remains purposeful, relevant, and engaging, while supporting progression across all areas of the EYFS.

EYFS Statutory Framework

The Growth Learning Collective Curriculum is ambitious and designed to equip all children with the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve the seventeen Early Learning Goals outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage. We employ a variety of teaching methods, including child-initiated learning, whole-class instruction, group work, collaborative investigations, problem-solving, and independent tasks. While the majority of activities are play-based, we also incorporate teacher-led sessions to ensure children acquire key knowledge and skills. All activities are carefully modelled, with children provided ample time, support, and resources to practice and reinforce their learning.

Our environments, inside and out, are key to ensuring children are supported to explore, discover, and develop. They include well-organised spaces, that encourage independent learning, creativity, and problem-solving. The environments are flexible, allowing for different types of learning and supporting children's individual needs and interests. They also involve adults who observe, scaffold, and extend children's learning through interactions and carefully planned resources. They provide the foundations for effective continuous provision.

Continuous provision refers to the range of resources, activities, and learning opportunities that are consistently available to children, allowing them to revisit and build on skills over time. It includes areas such as imaginative play, construction, literacy, and maths, where children can engage independently or with peers. These provisions are carefully planned to support a child's ongoing development and learning, providing a stable and reliable foundation for them to develop confidence, independence, and resilience.

For more information about our school-wide approach to Teaching and Learning, which is underpinned by Rosenshine's Principles, please see our Teaching and Learning Policy.

Timings of the Day

In both schools, we have a balance of teacher-led carpet sessions and opportunities for children to engage in continuous and enhanced (linked to learning from carpet sessions) provision throughout the day. The teacher led sessions consist of: 1x 25-minute phonics session, 1 x 10-minute Mastery Number Session, 1 x 25-minute Maths session, 1 x 25-minute Literacy session and a story book at the end of the day. At both schools, children eat their lunch around 12.00pm

Assessment

Formative Assessment

In the Early Years teachers assess children on a day-to-day basis in several different ways to assess whether they have grasped key concepts. These forms of assessment include:

- Questioning within a carpet session
- Short observations during child-initiated activities
- Adult focus tasks
- Input from parents

Recording

Formative assessment is recorded in a number of different ways:

	Evidence Me	Achievement Books	Floor Books	Literacy Books	Maths Books
2 year olds (NG only)	✓	✓	✓		
Nursery	✓	✓ (NG only)	✓		
Reception	✓		✓	✓	✓

Evidence Me

Evidence Me is an online platform and mobile app for schools that Newington Green and Rotherfield use to create an online learning journal for children, capturing observations, photos and videos to track their development and share progress with parents. It allows teachers to monitor learning, identify support needs and generate reports while parents can view observations, contribute their own and provide feedback.

- Each observation made will have notes or a verbal dialogue to explain the context of the observation.
- There will be a variety of observations across all areas of the curriculum.
- In each observation, staff will identify statement for Development Matters that a child has achieved and select a maximum of 3 next step objectives.
- Short observations will be equal in number across **all** areas of learning with a minimum of 1 per child, per area of learning for every half term.
- On joining the school, parents/carers will be sent a link inviting them to join the platform. Once joined, parents will have access to the observations teachers have made and they will be able to upload their own.
- Teachers will share at least 2 observations with parents per half term.
- Observations that capture multiple children will not be shared with parents due to GDPR.

Achievement Books

- Achievement books will be used in Nursery and 2 yr olds to evidence special pieces of work, for example, EAD work, UW work, photos and parental input.
- At least 1 piece of work should be stuck in each week and discussed with the child. The discussion should focus on the piece of work and there should be evidence of extended questioning to allow the child to progress. The second piece of work could be paperwork (painting, writing), a photograph that captures learning taking place that week, a certificate received in assembly or work from home.
- 2YO provision to have a profile book with 4 photographs over a monthly basis to capture development and engagement in different areas over time.
- Each piece of work in the book should be labelled AF, CI or I so that progress in learning can be monitored.

Floor Books

- A class floor book will be used to capture whole class learning linked to the following areas: Understanding the World; Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Expressive Arts and Design.
- It will comprise of a mixture of photographs and children's work evidencing school trips, special events and theme-based learning linked to the above areas throughout the year.

Literacy and Maths Books

- All children in Reception will have a Literacy and a Maths book. SEND children may have a SEND profile book to replace these – this will be discussed with the SENDCO.
- There will be at least 1 piece per week per subject in these books to show progress over time and provide an opportunity for children to practise skills they have learnt over the week.
- Each piece of work should be marked by an adult and the level of independence indicated using the following codes: WS – with support, I – independent.
- In addition, staff may also make notes to capture the context, a child's understanding or their next steps.

Teachers use above collated evidence to inform planning, focus groups and interventions. These all contribute to a comprehensive picture of a child's attainment, and teacher use these assessments to inform termly summative judgements.

Summative Assessment

At the end of Reception, children are assessed against the Good Level of Development which is a statutory government assessment which judges whether a child is meeting age related expectations for the end of Early Years. We also have an in-school system of termly summative assessment to make judgements around children's attainment and progress; these informs next steps. For more details on our approach to assessment and assessment in the Early Years, please see our assessment policy.

Monitoring

The Early Years Lead monitors the above evidence and summative judgements termly to ensure staff are accurately assessing children and identifying their next steps.

Intervention

Interventions in Early Years are designed to provide targeted support in areas where children may need extra help, without removing them entirely from the play-based, inclusive ethos of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

In Reception staff use baseline assessments, ongoing observations, and progress tracking (e.g. Development Matters, EYFS profile) to identify children needing support.

Common areas for intervention include:

- Speech, language & communication
- Early phonics and literacy
- Early numeracy
- Social and emotional development
- Fine and gross motor skills

Interventions are usually brief (10–20 minutes), engaging, and delivered regularly (daily or several times a week). Depending on need, interventions can be done in small groups (2–4 children) or one-to-one and where possible, they are playful and developmentally appropriate to maintain engagement and relevance.

Examples of common interventions used include: -

- WellComm - a speech and language toolkit designed to assess and support children's language development
- Funky Fingers/Dough Disco – to develop fine motor control and handwriting readiness.
- Early phonics catch-up groups – revisiting ELS/Little Wandle.
- Number sense games – simple, fun maths-based games to reinforce early numeracy

Parental Involvement

We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first educators, and we highly value building a positive, collaborative relationship with them in supporting their child's education. This is achieved through:

- Engaging with parents/carers before their child starts school via parent tours, parent meetings, home visits, liaisons with previous settings and nursery visits.
- Hosting phonics and reading workshops and parents mornings to show parents how their children will begin learning and how they can support them at home.
- Maintaining an open-door policy for parents/carers to address any queries or concerns. Similarly, if EYFS staff have concerns about a child's progress, they will proactively approach parents/carers to discuss them.
- Keeping parents informed through written communication, including reading records and weekly newsletters.
- Sharing updates, photos, and 'wow moments' through Evidence Me, our online communication and home learning platform.
- Offering three parent-teacher consultation meetings per year to discuss a child's progress and well-being.
- Sending a written report at the end of Reception outlining the child's attainment, progress, and attitude.
- Requesting parental consent for visits, food-tasting, photographs, and other activities via a generic permission form.
- Inviting parents to participate in a range of activities throughout the year, such as special events, workshops, Christmas productions, and sports day.
- Providing opportunities for parents and carers to volunteer in the classroom, assisting with activities like hearing readers or supporting other aspects of children's learning.

Transition

Starting school can be an unsettling time for young children, so we plan this transition carefully to ensure it is as smooth and supportive as possible. Our goal is to help each child settle into their new class quickly and happily.

To support them, we do a number of different things including:

- home visits in the Summer before children begin in September
- nursery visits where possible so that teachers can see the child in the current setting
- communicating with previous settings to get a handover from children's key workers
- organising a 'stay-and-play' in the summer term so children can familiarise themselves their new classroom with a parent/carer present
- social stories for children with Special Educational Needs which include photos of their new teachers and classrooms

When transitioning into Year 1, children's Reception teachers meet their Year 1 teachers for an extensive handover. In this handover, they discuss each child's needs, strengths and areas for development. They also take part in a transition session in July where children spend time in their new classroom with their new teacher, so they are familiar with their adult and setting in September.

Safeguarding and welfare procedures

We recognise 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. We follow safeguarding and welfare requirements to provide a welcoming, safe and stimulating environment where children can enjoy learning and grow in confidence. For more information on safeguarding, please see our safeguarding policy here:

Early Years Specific Safeguarding Procedures

Paediatric first aid (PFA) We have always at least 1 person with a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate in each class and available when children are present, including on outings. This PFA certificate is renewed every 3 years as required.

Safer eating

While children are eating, there will always be at least 1 member of staff in the room with a valid Paediatric First Aid certificate (from a course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex A of the latest EYFS framework). All children will be within sight and hearing of a member of staff while eating, and seated safely in an appropriate chair and, where possible, in a designated eating space.

Before a child joins our setting, we will get information on their:

- Dietary requirements and preferences
- Food allergies and intolerances
- Health requirements

We will share this information with all staff involved in food preparation and handling. At each mealtime and snack time it will be clear which staff member is responsible for checking that the food meets all the requirements for each child.

We will make sure that all staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis; the differences between allergies and intolerances; and that children can develop allergies at any time, especially during the introduction of solid foods.

We will consult with parents/carers to:

- Create allergy action plans for their child – with the help of health professionals, where appropriate
- We will also keep this information up to date and share it with all staff

- Discuss their child's progress with solid foods
- Work with them to move on to the next stage at a pace that's right for their child

We will prepare food in a way that:

- Prevents choking
- Meets each child's individual developmental needs
- Is in line with the DfE's Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance

In the event of a choking incident that requires intervention, we will record details of the incident and make the child's parents/carers aware. We will periodically review the records to identify whether we can change anything in our practice to make eating safer and then act as appropriate.

Accident or injury

We keep a first aid box (which contains appropriate items for children) always accessible.

We keep a written record of accident or injuries and any first aid treatment.

We will inform parents or carers the same day as, or as soon as reasonably practicable after, of any:

- Accident or injury sustained by the child
- First aid treatment given

We will notify the relevant authority of any serious accident, illness, or injury of any child while in our care and inform them of the action taken, as soon as reasonably practicable.

Online safety

In line with current guidance from LgFL around online safety in Early Years, the school is working with the local authority to implement the Islington Early Years Online Safety Policy.

Safety of premises

We make sure that our premises, including overall floor space and outdoor space, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children we care for and the activities provided on the premises.

We comply with requirements of health and safety legislation, including fire safety and hygiene requirements.

Toileting and privacy

We make sure that there are:

- Enough toilets and hand basins available for the children
- Suitable and hygienic nappy changing facilities
- An adequate supply of necessary items such as clean bedding, towels and spare clothes
- Separate toilet facilities for adults

During nappy changes and toileting, we will balance children's privacy with their safeguarding and support needs.