**Green Lane School**



**Early Years Foundation Stage Policy**

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**Introduction**

Green Lane School is a community special school, providing highly individualised education for up to 202 pupils aged 4 - 19 years with moderate, severe or complex learning difficulties, including Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

The majority of pupils educated at Green Lane School have significant global developmental delay, varying communication difficulties and varying social interaction difficulties. Some may have additional disabilities such as cerebral palsy, sensory impairment, visual impairment, autism and/or complex needs including challenging behaviour.

Green Lane’s mission statement is ‘**to help our children become responsible citizens who can make a positive contribution to society**.’

The school’s vision is for ‘**Staff at Green Lane to work together with our children to encourage them to become as independent as possible, to achieve a range of qualifications / awards / certificates and be prepared for transfer to the next phase of their lives.**

**The Early Years**

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with an EHCP. We take children from the age of 4 years and all pupils will stay in the EYFS classroom for their first year of school before moving to other pathways in school. All the children follow the Early Years curriculum, focusing on learning through play. We help them to settle into the school environment, school routines and we assess their individual learning needs. We use a Total Communication system and work very closely with various health professionals, including occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, visual impairment support and hearing support who give us advice and individual therapy plans which are then incorporated into our day. All planning is based around the “Development Matters Framework 2021” where appropriate.

The Early Years Foundation Stage sets the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five, and describes the curriculum used in the early years’ classes. It states that-

‘Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfill their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and the child’s experiences between birth and five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.’(EYFS  Statutory Framework)

**Aims**

In the early years at Green Lane our aim is for all of our pupils to develop a positive foundation for lifelong learning. We achieve this by supporting the four guiding principles in the EYFS statutory framework, as follows;

1.     **Unique learners-** every child is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

2.     **Positive relationships –** Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships with their family and key workers.

3.     **Enabling environments -** Children learn and develop well when the experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between staff and parents and /or carers.

4. **Learning and development** – Recognising the importance of learning and development and acknowledging that children learn and develop and different rates.

To deliver the principles we will:

·        Provide a safe and secure learning environment for the children where individual needs are met.

·        Provide a secure foundation, by planning fun and practical learning opportunities based around the needs and interests of each individual.

·        Promote a safe, challenging, rich and varied learning environment both indoors and outdoors.

·        Promote independence skills; also promote basic self-help and self-care skills.

·        Provide each child with an appropriate communication system that will work for them as they progress through school.

·        Ensure all seven areas of learning and development, as detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are given appropriate coverage, providing an appropriate balance between adult led and child led activities, and that planning is based on observations of the children, their interests and their next steps in learning.

·        Recognise that parents/ carers are partners in their child’s learning.

·        Ensure that all children have equal opportunities, so that every child is supported and included.

·        Ensure that learning through play underpins the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

**Teaching and Learning.**

All teaching and learning is based on a comprehensive knowledge of the early years. Priority is given to the three prime areas of learning and development. These are:

·        Personal, social and emotional development (including behavioural, sensory and social skills)

·        Physical development

·       Communication and language (using a Total Communication approach whenever possible- symbols, PECS, visual clues and Makaton)

Planning opportunities build upon and extend children’s knowledge, experience and interests to develop self-esteem and confidence, whilst monitoring their progress and taking action to support and extend where necessary. Children’s learning will also be supported by an individual education plan with the early year’s characteristics of learning. These are:

·       **Playing and exploring**- we encourage children to engage in investigating and experiencing things and to ‘have a go’.

·       **Active learning**- We motivate children to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.

·       **Creating and thinking critically**- we encourage children to have and develop their own ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Due to the individual needs of the children, classrooms will have appropriate areas. In each classroom we have an area for circle time and there is a table for group activities, role play area and a soft sensory area where the children can sit quietly, relax, sleep or follow a therapy program. There are also matching cards around the room for various activities e.g. snack, play, choose, book etc. This is to help direct pupils that follow an individual schedule and use a workstation based on the TEACCH approach. (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children). In the classrooms where there are children with a visual impairment object of reference and talking tins are used in addition to the symbols.

**Play**

Play underpins the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage. A welcoming, accessible and inclusive play provision is provided both indoors and outdoors where children learn with enjoyment and challenge.

Play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development. Through play experiences children develop their knowledge, skills, self-confidence, understanding of self as an individual, ability to make choices, coping with disputes and overcoming fears.

**Independent learning**

We encourage children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop independent self-help skills depending on their level of ability. The more able children will be given less prompts whilst undertaking an activity or they may start to take the register to the office with less help. Where appropriate, children on the autistic spectrum will spend time developing independent skills through the TEACCH principles, this includes independent learning routines using a workstation, where he or she will work through three or more tasks. The child will work independently with an adult overseeing the work and providing support as necessary.

**Curriculum**

The Early Years Curriculum is organised into seven areas of learning, comprising of three prime areas and four specific areas.

The prime areas of learning are as follows:

**Personal, social and emotional development.**

This area is very important to the children at Green Lane due to the children’s special needs. This area helps children to form a positive sense of self; form positive relationships with others; develop social skills; learn how to manage their feelings; understand appropriate behaviour and develop confidence in themselves.

**Communication and language**

This area is equally important due to the children’s learning difficulties. Regular support and advice is given by the speech and language therapist and children will receive support from the speech therapy assistant at regular intervals. This area involves children experiencing a rich language environment; developing their listening skills and their confidence and skills to express themselves using their preferred mode of communication in a range of situations. The children will have access to a total communication system which includes the use of PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), signing, use of visual clues (objects) and symbols. Intensive interaction and developing communication through parallel play may also be used as part of play to help children develop their language skills. Children will also be offered choices and they will indicate their choice either reaching or taking their preferred choice symbol from a PECS book or choosing board.

**Physical development**

This provides opportunities for children at Green Lane to be active and interactive; to develop their coordination, control and movement and begin to have some understanding of the importance of physical exercise and making healthy food choices. Children with profound and multiple learning difficulties will have a Physiotherapy and an Occupational therapy plan that will be followed on a daily basis alongside play-based learning. Children with physical difficulties and sensory needs will also benefit from TAC PAC (Tactile Approach to Communication). The children will also access music and movement lessons with a community coach from the Warrington Wolves Foundation. Our children working within the Early Years Foundation stage will begin to access a tooth brushing programme in school from Autumn term 2022.

**The specific areas of learning.**

**Literacy**

In this area we encourage children to link sounds and letters using sensory objects and ICT. We also develop their reading skills using the Phonics scheme, Essential letters and sounds. We also read other favourite stories and develop their writing skills through messy play, mark making using various media and overwriting patterns and words. When appropriate, children begin to access Reading Eggs and are able to use this at home as well as in school.

**Mathematics**

Children have opportunities to develop their counting, understanding and number recognition. They explore shape, space and measures through play-based activities. We sing number and action songs using visual cues. We also focus on time through awareness of routines, and we explore money through shop role play.

**Understanding of the world.**

This area of the curriculum is very topic based. We will look at ourselves, seasonal celebrations, animals, the environment, people who help us, the seaside and the seasons. We will also go for walks in the local community and visit shops, cafes and other attractions. Topics will be varied and will depend on the interests of the children. Technology is also selected and used to develop skills depending on the children’s needs and abilities.

**Expressive arts and design.**

This area gives the children at Green Lane an opportunity to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials as well as providing opportunities for them to develop and express their imagination through role play, messy play, structured play, music, and art and design technology. Music and movement lessons are used to develop the children’s dance skills.

Play both indoors and outdoors underpins the curriculum, however, the range of difficulties which our children experience lead us to provide a balance of structured learning and play alongside less structured learning through play. Our children very often do not have the skills, developmental maturity and cognitive ability to engage in play and exploratory investigations on their own. They need modelling and adult support to make sense of their environments and often need support to manage their own feelings as well as to engage and interact with others.

**ICT**

Various forms of ICT are made available to the children. These include the iPad, touch screen programmes, switch toys, computer games and use of the internet. The iPad is used on a sensory level- the children try and touch the screen to create eye catching patterns and noises or as part of their mathematical and literacy development. They can access various handwriting, phonics, story, number and shape apps. The iPad is used as part of a focused activity and free play times.

The children with more complex and physical learning difficulties will be given opportunities to access switches and explore various touch screen programmes.

Cause and effect toys are also available, and the computer can also be accessed to develop mouse skills.

**Planning**

A 1 year long term plan is developed that includes seasonal activities, celebrations and various topics that are appropriate to the needs and interests of the children. A medium-term plan is then developed that incorporates the developmental matters statements that are relevant to the abilities of the children and the focus of the topic. Short term plans are developed for more focused activities such as the mathematics focus and the chosen text. Individual targets are set as part of these plans. There is a weekly overview and daily plans focus on the routines, focused activities, and play activities both indoor and outside. Continuous provision activities are specified on the long-term plan where possible.

**Assessment, recording and reporting progress.**

In the Early Years Foundation Stage assessment is made in the following ways, all of which contributes to the child’s individual learning journey and evidence of progress.

·  Children are assessed against Early Steps framework on B-Squared. They have a baseline assessment which is completed in their first term of school and are then assessed at the end of each term.

·       Observations recorded on EFL develop children’s learning journeys. These are used to capture WOW moments and progress against children’s individual targets.

·       Photographs

·       Dated and annotated examples of work

·       Comments on planning- next steps.

·       Therapy notes detailing therapies covered each day.

·       Written notes of WOW moments. Again these will be incorporated into the children’s learning journeys or records of achievement.

·       Video evidence on the i-pad for target work achievements.

·       Ongoing checklists based on the Developmental Matters framework (0-5 years) for parental information and to identify next steps.

·       The children will be baseline assessed as they enter school in line with the STA baseline assessment process.

·       Parental contributions of WOW moments outside school. These are included in the child’s learning journey.

·       Therapists are encouraged to make contributions to the learning journeys when they have made an important contribution to the child’s learning or physical needs.

·       ‘Assessments against the 17 early learning goals and the characteristics of learning must be made in the summer term of the academic year when the child reaches age five, in accordance with the statutory framework’.

·  Individual Education Plans are created to reflect children’s EHCP targets. These are reviewed termly, and progress/new targets are shared with parents.

Parents’ evenings are held in the autumn and summer terms to discuss progress and to look at the child’s learning journey and profile as it develops. IEPs are produced each term and pupils’ progress tracked using these. Each child’s learning journal is produced electronically using EFL and parents are able to view observations as they go live. Annual reviews are also held twice in the reception year and at least once a year thereafter to discuss the family’s needs, the child’s progress and any issues that need to be addressed. The EHCP is reviewed to check that it still reflects the child’s educational needs. There is also an end of year report that focuses on the seven areas of the Early Years Curriculum.

**Specialist provision**

As a special school for children with moderate, complex, severe learning difficulties and autism, we offer a range of specialist strategies to ensure that all children are included.

* Health care plans and emergency protocols to ensure that all the children’s health care needs are provided for.
* The use of a total communication system- Makaton, objects of reference, symbols, PECS.
* Frequent use of visual timetables and schedules.
* Language adapted to suit the individual children’s needs and levels of understanding.
* Specific input from hearing and visual impairment services, speech and language team, physiotherapy and occupational therapy team (NHS and SHINE).
* Behavioural support using Team Teach where needed.
* Children have positive behaviour plans and communication profiles where necessary.

**Visual Impairment**

To aid the development of children with a significant visual impairment certain adaptation to the environment, learning styles and curriculum have been made. With input from the visual impairment team in Warrington the classrooms are risk assessed for safety with regard to pupils’ independent movement. Classrooms around the school have been labelled with tactile symbols to allow the VI children to know where they are and where they are going.

Within the specific classrooms, an object of reference timetable is used to tell VI children what activity is next. The different areas of learning are labeled with talking tins to allow VI children to know what activities are available to them.

In EYFS classes with VI children emphasis is placed on multi-sensory learning, for example the day of the week is named but also associated with a specific texture and smell to allow pupils learn the days of the week.

Some aspects of the EYFS curriculum, particularly in English, have been disapplied for particular VI children, for example handwriting and visual letter recognition. These curriculum areas have been replaced by more appropriate learning (as advised by the VI team) for example, learning to read Braille or Moon.

Children with VI within the early years setting will spend more time learning self-help skills that are challenging for them, this is done primarily through play.

**Parental involvement**

Parental involvement is extremely important in the child’s first years at school. Before the child enters the early years, a home visit or nursery visit is organised with another member of staff to see the child in a familiar setting and to start to build up a picture of the child’s likes and dislikes, sensory needs, medical needs, dietary requirements, personal care and the child’s family unit. The class routine, transport and hours are also discussed.

Usually one or two visits are also organised where the parent/carer can stay with their child to get to know the class team, to meet the other children in the class and to start to become familiar with class routines.

Each child has a home/ school book where daily activities are recorded and any other important information about the child e.g. what they eat at dinner time. The parent /carer is encouraged to also record any important information about the child e.g. if they slept badly or seem unwell as this may have an effect on their general behaviour and wellbeing during the day. Parents/ carers can also ring the school if they have a worry or concern, and their call will be returned as soon as possible.  The school also runs regular coffee mornings to encourage parent support and friendships. Families who require additional advice or support may be signposted to outside agencies through support from our Family Support team.

**Safeguarding**

All reasonable measures are taken to ensure the safety of all the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. We follow the whole school safeguarding policy recording all incidents on CPOMS and work closely with the school safeguarding team and DSL. All staff within the EYFS team have undertaken regular safeguarding training and are up to date with all current practices.

Medicines are kept locked away and medicine books are kept for each child. Another member of staff always checks any medication that has to be administered. Staff receive the appropriate training in gastronomy feeds; how to administer diazepam in the event of a prolonged seizure (emergency protocols have to be adhered to); manual handling and Team Teach. Staff will also receive any other additional training when the need arises e.g. tracheotomy care.  They are aware of the children’s individual learning needs and follow any behaviour plans. Risk assessments are also put in place for any trips outside school and walks in the community.