

Teaching and Learning Policy



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Teaching and Learning Policy

Introduction

At Blackheath Prep we provide full-time supervised education for pupils aged from 3 to 11. Through the curriculum, all pupils will experience linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, physical, human and social, and aesthetic and creative education. This policy lays the foundations for the whole curriculum and is a statement of aims, principles and strategies for teaching and learning for all classes including EYFS. The Governors and staff at Blackheath Prep aim to tailor education to individual need and aptitude to fulfil every child's potential.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning encompasses our values of kindness, curiosity, freedom, ambition, courage, community and joy. We strive for academic excellence whilst focusing on the all-round development of pupils with varied interests and needs.

Our curriculum incorporates the pupils' experiences across a broad range of subjects, co-curricular provision, trips and workshops. Whilst knowledge and skills outlined in the National Curriculum are covered, we go beyond that, providing a bespoke offering where strong and meaningful links are made between subjects to enhance the pupils' learning experiences.

Curriculum overview

The guiding principles of our curriculum are:

- **Promoting School Values:** providing equitable opportunities for personal growth and nurturing the wellbeing of all community members
- **Reading, Language and Vocabulary:** inspiring a lifelong love of literature and language
- **Creativity and Reasoning:** developing independence, sparking curiosity, thinking critically and encouraging imagination
- **Working with others:** communicating, turn taking and inclusive thinking
- **Progress:** building and consolidating knowledge and skills through sequenced learning

To develop:

- **Responsible Citizens:** who know how to keep themselves safe and healthy whilst making a positive contribution to the world around them
- **Competent Readers:** who read fluently and proficiently, for pleasure and purpose
- **Problem Solvers:** who are curious to question, investigate ideas, adjust their thinking and learn from mistakes
- **Effective Communicators:** who contribute positively, work collaboratively, listen and respond appropriately
- **Successful Learners:** who find joy in learning, acquiring knowledge, developing skills and transferring these to new contexts.

Our curriculum is:

- shaped by the power of stories, reading and language development
- delivered through rich, high-quality conversations and opportunities that activate deep thinking
- reflective of our diverse community and creates a strong sense of belonging
- ambitious, broad and balanced, supporting the holistic development of each child

Curriculum delivery

The school week provides approximately 23 hours teaching time for Early Years and 26 hours teaching for Years 1-6. Within the academic year, time is allocated for curriculum enrichment and collaborative events e.g. residential visits, productions, cultural days, music concerts and workshops. The curriculum is taught through discrete subjects and linked topic areas where relevant.

EYFS curriculum: Nursery and Reception

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, we aim to offer an extensive and balanced curriculum whereby children can make choices and become independent learners. We follow the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and cultural aspects of each child's life are considered and respected. We follow the strands set by the curriculum and concentrate on providing learning opportunities that foster and support each and every child in their welfare, learning and development. Discovery, interaction and enjoyment are the key to successful learning.

The EYFS is grouped into four guiding principles to shape practice in early years settings

- Every child is unique
- Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships
- Children learn and develop well in enabling environments
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates

In the EYFS we use three Characteristics of Effective Learning to describe how a child learns.

- Playing and Exploring: Children experience and investigate 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

The EYFS curriculum is divided into two main areas of learning and development which are all interconnected. The 'Prime Areas' are fundamental and work together to support the children's successful learning within the 'Specific Areas' which provide essential knowledge for children to be able to participate successfully in society.

All areas of the curriculum are delivered through a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities. We set realistic yet challenging expectations that meet the needs of all our children; boys, girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from varying social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The Prime Areas

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

The Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World

- Expressive Arts and Design

Healthy eating habits and good oral health are continually promoted. The latter is further supported by regular workshops with the School Nurse and visits from a local dental practitioner.

EYFS: Outdoors

We have a playground that is shared by both Nursery and Reception, which the children have access to each day. This area is an extension of our continuous provision and a variety of resources are available to facilitate learning. The Reception classes also have access to a shared outside learning garden. Pupils attend Forest School in a natural wooded area at the end of the school field and a more structured natural area which has access to a pond. We aim for the children to attend Forest School whatever the weather.

EYFS: Subject specialist lessons

In Nursery and Reception, the following subjects are taught by specialist teachers:

- PE
- Music
- Performing Arts
- French
- Forest School
- Computing (Reception only)

EYFS: Induction and transition

We endeavour to ensure a smooth transition for pupils between Nursery and Reception and between EYFS and Pre-Prep. Children and parents/carers need to feel secure and confident about the changes they will experience as they progress through the school. We recognise that children are vulnerable at stages of transition and implement a range of strategies and activities to ensure a smooth and happy transition.

EYFS: Effective transition practice includes the following:

Prior to transition:

- A settling in morning in the Autumn term (for September starters) and in the Spring term (for January starters)
- Staff discuss individual children and data
- Teachers evaluate the EYFS Profile data to determine the needs of the cohort.

On starting:

- Clear communication with parents about the transition
- Parent Talk at the start of the year to explain the structure and routines in each year group
- Year 1 teachers build on the EYFS approach

Pre-prep and Prep curriculum: Year 1- 6

Form teachers usually teach English, Maths, Science, History, Geography, RE, PSHE and Reasoning (Years 5 and 6). Specialist teachers deliver the curriculum in PE, Music, French, Spanish, German, Computing, Art, DT, Performing Arts and Science (Years 4, 5 and 6). Teaching Assistants and additional adults support the teaching and learning. Learning Support teachers also actively support teaching and learning throughout the school. As the children transfer into the Prep they continue to have a form teacher alongside a deputy form teacher who are pastorally responsible for them.

Detailed guidance on each area of the curriculum can be found in the curriculum booklets for each year group.

Curriculum planning

Progression Maps provide a well-sequenced structure for the teaching of skills, knowledge and vocabulary across all subjects and year groups. Subject Leaders oversee the Progression Map for their subject area. The foundation for most curriculum planning is the National Curriculum but this is amended to suit the needs of our pupils and to align with our School Values and Vision. Medium Term Plans are completed each half term by the subject teacher whereby a sequence of lessons are planned. Weekly resources are completed in English and Maths, with an overview table created for daily lessons to capture the lessons focus, core vocabulary, possible misconceptions and how feedback will be provided.

To ensure all children are given access to the curriculum, including those who may require additional support or higher attaining pupils, adapted teaching approaches form a key part of our planning and teaching whereby teachers continually assess the strengths and needs of learners and adapt their teaching accordingly to ensure all learners can meet expectations. This can be achieved through:

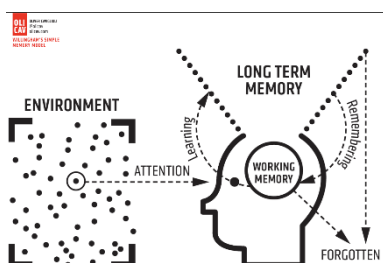
- adapted tasks, while maintaining high expectations for all learners
- effective use of additional adults
- provision of resources
- grouping of pupils
- different methods of recording
- greater depth activities

Our approach to teaching and learning

At Blackheath Prep, we implement the curriculum using direct instruction as our pedagogical approach. Direct instruction has a clear, strong evidence base for effective teaching. Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction are used to support our approaches. Strategies are developed through ongoing staff professional development using evidence-based practices.

High-quality teaching is the vital first step in meeting the needs of all pupils. This requires an emphasis on identifying the needs of all learners and embedding methods to support them and involve them in the learning environment. High-quality teaching is achieved through effective planning, delivery of well sequenced lessons and making effective pedagogical choices. For any meaningful learning to have taken place, there must be a lasting change in pupils' understanding and capabilities.

An important factor in learning is memory. Daniel Willingham's Simple Model of Memory is a model of how people learn and remember information, and it's based on the idea that information is stored in both working and long-term memory:



- Attention: Learners pay attention to information through their senses. Staff must direct pupils' attention to the things that need to be remembered/learned.

- Working memory: Information is brought into working memory, where it's considered in relation to what's already in long-term memory.
- Long-term memory: Information is stored in long-term memory through deep thinking and practice, attaching itself to, and changing knowledge that is already stored there.
- Retrieval: Information can be retrieved from long-term memory and brought back to working memory to support future learning.
- Practice: Essential for learning and retaining new skills and knowledge.

Cognitive Load Theory

The human brain can only process a small amount of new information in its working memory but is able to process large amounts of stored information in the long-term memory. The working memory can only hold about four 'chunks' of information at a time before it is forgotten. Large amounts of information can be stored semi-permanently in the long-term memory in 'schema' which are systems for collecting and organising knowledge. If our working memory is overwhelmed, it makes it harder to understand and it is likely to take longer to retain new learning. With practice, we can automatically recall information from our long-term memory which will free up capacity in our working memory for new learning.

Based on this research, our teaching and learning approaches in lessons are as follows:

- The Blackheath Prep values and learning behaviours are embedded in daily practice.
- Oracy, communication and questioning are central to our curriculum and the strategies we employ. Vocabulary instruction features prominently in lessons and on all working displays.
- Where appropriate, lessons begin with a short review of relevant prior learning so staff can assess the pupils' understanding and adapt their teaching accordingly.
- A clear learning focus is shared with the pupils to make them aware of what they are learning, why they are learning about it, and what is expected of them to be successful.
- New material is presented in manageable chunks, with explicit modelling from adults and with regular pupil practice to build secure understanding. Common misconceptions are shared where appropriate. Staff assess understanding at each stage.
- Effective Questioning strategies are selected by staff so that they can check for engagement and understanding from all pupils. There is an expectation for all pupils to engage and have a voice so a 'no hands up' approach is employed during discussions. Strategies are used to build pupil engagement and a sense of belonging.

Cold Calling (Anyone's Turn) is used where the teacher selects which pupils will answer. Pupils understand they need to listen, engage and think. Inclusive strategies are used to ensure pupils build confidence in giving verbal answers in front of others. This process provides time for staff to assess what has been understood and what feedback, modelling or further explanation is needed.

Think Pair Share is selected by staff during classroom discussions to give every pupil the opportunity to rehearse their ideas, practise explaining and to engage in productive talk using the key vocabulary relevant to the topic, whilst providing adults the opportunity to assess the pupils' input. Whiteboards may be used for pupils to record their ideas. Talk Partners are established so this becomes a regular routine where everyone knows what to do and what to expect. Specific roles may be provided to each partner to support a balanced discussion between the pairs.

White boards ('show-me boards') allow quick, non-verbal responses and gives the teacher a range of responses to check for listening and for understanding against which to assess learning.

Hand Signals

Active Listening Hand Signal posters are displayed in every classroom showing the signal for *Agree, Challenge, Build On*. Sentence stems are provided to support pupils. During discussions staff inform pupils when hand signals will be used before the question is asked. The expectation is for all pupils to respond with a hand signal held still at their chest level.

Hands Up may be used for pupils to share additional ideas or if they have a question.

- **Modelling and Worked Examples**
Staff directly model processes so pupils know the intended outcomes and observe how to achieve them. Staff guide pupils through each stage of the task, narrating their thinking and explaining the rationale before pupils practise independently. Making mistakes and rectifying them is modelled by staff so pupils can see that errors are part of the learning process. Worked examples are used where teachers and pupils work through step-by-step illustrations. They can work as scaffolds, which are gradually reduced, until pupils are ready to practise independently. The strategies 'I Do, We Do, You Do' or 'My Turn, Your Turn' are employed during modelling.
- **Pupil Practice**
Throughout the lesson, pupils are guided through practice tasks so they gain in knowledge and confidence, scaffolds may be provided. Pupils engage in independent practice when ready. Tasks are provided for pupils to activate deep thinking.
- **Scaffolding**
Supportive tools or resources are employed to provide pupils with enough support so that they can successfully complete tasks that they cannot yet do independently. Scaffolds can be visual, verbal or written. Staff aim to reduce support of this nature over time as pupils work towards being able to practise independently.
- **Feedback**
The purpose of feedback is to move the pupils' learning forward. Feedback and assessment methods are consistent across the school, impactful, manageable for teachers and accessible by pupils including those with specific learning needs. Pupil outcomes are assessed promptly and specific feedback given as close as possible to the time of the tasks being completed.

Types of Feedback:

- Live feedback within a lesson
- Small-group and one-to-one conferencing
- Whole class feedback
- Self- and peer-assessment
- Distance written feedback after a lesson
(see Feedback policy)

Learning support

The SEND Policy outlines the School's approach to pupils requiring additional learning support whether they have been identified as having additional needs, special educational needs, English as an additional language or are those with an EHCP.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities

All curriculum areas have a contribution to make to the child's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and opportunities for this will be planned in each area of the curriculum.

Spiritual development

Pupils' spiritual development is shown by their:

- beliefs, religious or otherwise, which inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's feelings and values
- sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them
- use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- willingness to reflect on their experiences

Moral development

Pupils' moral development is shown by their:

- ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong, and their readiness to apply this understanding in their own lives
- understanding of the consequences of their actions
- interest in investigating, and offering reasoned views about, moral and ethical issues

Social development

Pupils' social development is shown by their:

- use of a range of social skills in different contexts, including working and socialising with pupils from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds
- willingness to participate in a variety of social settings, cooperating well with others and being able to resolve conflicts effectively
- interest in, and understanding of, the way communities and societies function at a variety of levels

Cultural development

Pupils' cultural development is shown by their:

- understanding and appreciation of the wide range of cultural influences that have shaped their own heritage
- willingness to participate in, and respond to, for example, artistic, musical, sporting, mathematical, technological, scientific and cultural opportunities
- interest in exploring, understanding of, and respect for cultural diversity and the extent to which they understand, accept, respect and celebrate diversity, as shown by their attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the local, national and global communities

Celebration of achievement

Weekly assemblies, Stars of the Week certificates and the Newsletter celebrate the achievements of pupils.

The awarding of house points encourages pupils to do their best in both class work and their behaviour.

Display boards in classrooms and corridors celebrate their work.

Special recognition postcards linked to the School Values are received by pupils.

Assessment

(see Assessment policy)

Reporting

At Blackheath Prep we work in partnership with parents to develop each child's potential. Through meetings and written reports, we share each child's progress both academically and socially, providing a detailed insight into their education, and ideas on how to support at home. Progress meetings are held in the Autumn and Spring terms. In the Autumn term, Years 3–6 receive a short report. In the Spring term, Years 1–6 receive a short report and all pupils, except Nursery A, receive a full report at the end of the academic year.

Timetable

Registration	8.40am
Phonics or Whole Class Guided Reading	9.05am
Lesson 1	9.35am
Break	10.30am
Lesson 2	10.50am
Lesson 3	11.45am
Pre-Prep Lunch	12.15pm - 1.20pm
Prep Lunch	12.40pm - 1.45pm
Pre-Prep Registration and Afternoon Activity	1.20pm
Lesson 4	1.45pm
Lesson 5	2.40pm
End of day Form Time	3.35pm - 3.45pm

Roles and responsibilities

The Head takes overall responsibility for the curriculum. The school's approach to teaching, learning and the curriculum is monitored by the Governing Body; a summary of main findings is shared termly.

The Senior Leadership Team promotes whole-school approaches that encourage quality first teaching and continuous improvement among teachers and pupils. SLT carry out learning walks, pupil voice exercises and book looks in order to oversee the implementation of the curriculum and teaching and learning strategies and to monitor pupil achievements. The Director of Studies coordinates the work of the Subject Leaders and ensures that the curriculum has progression and appropriate coverage.

Subject Leaders oversee their subject, monitoring the attitudes and achievements of the whole school and groups of pupils through book looks, pupil voice exercises and staff meetings to develop approaches to improve their area. Opinions relating to the curriculum are sought from staff and governors at their regular meetings.

All staff are responsible for planning and delivering the curriculum, making sure that each child is challenged, extended and supported so that the provision meets their needs. Assessment data is reviewed by the Director of Studies, SLT, Subject Leaders and teachers to ensure we respond effectively to pupils' abilities and/or needs via the curriculum in a timely fashion.

Staff partake in INSET opportunities and implement school-wide approaches to teaching and learning to ensure consistency. Observations of pupils' attitude, attainment, progress or concerns are logged centrally for SENDCo and Inclusion Manager and Director of Studies to review.

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2022.1	Minor amendments to Nursery information	September 2022	Executive Assistant
2023.1	Reviewed and updated: Timings of the day from Sept 2023; Curriculum areas taught by Form Teachers; and Performing Arts replaces Drama & Dance	June 2023	Assistant Head Academic
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2024.2	Approaches to Teaching and Learning updated	October 2024	Assistant Head Academic
2025.1	Reviewed	May 2025	Assistant Head Academic
2025.1	Role titles updated	May 2026	Assistant Head Academic
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