



Darlinghurst

ACADEMY

Early Years and Foundation Stage Policy 2025-2026

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Author: Kate Wise

Checked by: Tracy Grant

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Darlinghurst EYFS Policy

Our Vision

The Early Years is a vibrant and happy place with passionate and nurturing staff who ensure that children feel they belong and have the best start to their journey and families feel well supported. Induction and settling routines are valued, with time given to building positive relationships. Our staff work collaboratively to provide high quality provision for all; meeting the demands of the new EYFS framework and the four guiding principles: a unique child, positive relationships, enabling environments and learning and development.

In line with the **EYFS statutory framework (September 2025)**, we place increased emphasis on **high-quality adult interactions, secure foundations in communication and language**, and ensuring children **know more, remember more and can do more** over time. Our provision is rooted in a deep understanding of child development and is responsive to the needs, interests and starting points of our children

Darlinghurst Intent and Aims

At Darlinghurst, we will ensure that children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the foundation of knowledge and skills needed to make good progress through school and life. Quality and consistency in teaching and learning will enable every child to make good progress and no child is left behind. We endeavour to build close partnerships, working alongside practitioners and with parents/carers, ensuring that every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. We want the best outcomes for our children and for our staff to feel empowered to do what they do best.

A curriculum that is ambitious and well sequenced that encompasses the seven areas of learning and development. Three prime areas for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm are

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

Children are also supported through the four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied through awe and wonder where children can encounter, explore and learn:

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

The three characteristics of Effective Learning are interwoven throughout our provision:

- Playing and exploring – children investigate and experience things
- Active learning – children encouraged to have a go and keep on trying – demonstrating determination until success is achieved
- Creating and thinking critically – children have and develop their own ideas, making links and developing strategies

Curriculum Framework: Intent, Implementation and Impact

In line with the **Ofsted Education Inspection Framework** and the **EYFS statutory guidance (September 2025)**, our Early Years curriculum is underpinned by the three I's:

Intent

Our intent is to deliver an **ambitious, inclusive and well-sequenced EYFS curriculum** that ensures all children develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for future learning and life. We prioritise the **three prime areas** as the foundations for learning, ensuring children develop strong communication skills, emotional security, independence and physical confidence. Our curriculum is designed to close gaps early, support children with SEND, and promote equality of opportunity through anti-discriminatory practice.

Implementation

Our curriculum is implemented through:

- **High-quality adult interactions**, modelling language, extending thinking and responding in the moment
- A balance of **adult-led and child-initiated learning**, with flexible planning responsive to children's interests
- A carefully designed **enabling environment**, indoors and outdoors, supporting progression across all seven areas
- Ongoing **observation and assessment** to identify next steps and barriers to learning

Impact

The impact of our curriculum is seen in children who:

- Make **strong progress from their starting points**
- Demonstrate the **Characteristics of Effective Learning**
- Develop secure foundations in the prime areas
- Are **confident, resilient and independent learners**; ready for Year 1
- Achieve the **Early Learning Goals**, including a Good Level of Development where appropriate

Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that applies from September 2025.

Darlinghurst EYFS Design

Children partake in an ambitious curriculum that is coherently planned and sequenced, ensuring clear progression towards the Early Learning Goals. Planning is informed by accurate assessment, strong knowledge of child development and a clear focus on deepening understanding rather than excessive recording, in line with the September 2025 guidance.

Learning through play is supported by intentional teaching moments, where adults skilfully intervene to extend language, thinking and learning.

Implementation

The Rockpool

Our EYFS, the foundation and starting point of our children's journey, is organised in such a way that our nursery and reception enjoy a central, outdoor learning environment that reflects our indoor provision.

Within our EYFS environment, learning is carefully planned in all areas/zones, prioritising Communication and Language development, impacting on effective communication and enriched vocabulary. Our provision is accessible throughout the year and in all seasons; children are encouraged to learn through play in all weathers.

Our classrooms surround the Rockpool, allowing our children to free-flow inside and out. Our nursery and reception children enjoy exploring the outdoor environment together supported by our entire EYFS team. This close working within the team supports building strong relationships, fostering a smooth transition of our nursery children as they move up into the next phase of the EYFS.

We believe that the quantity and quality of interactions makes the difference to a child's development and enables them to know more, remember more and do more. Provocations are carefully planned around the seasons, the contextual make up of our cohort and key events during the year (inclusive of all religions and cultures).

In line with the updated framework, we recognise that the quality of interactions between adults and children is the most significant factor in children's progress. Staff are trained to notice learning, respond sensitively and extend children's thinking through sustained shared thinking, modelling vocabulary and encouraging curiosity.

Partnerships

We value the importance of positive working relationships between children and parents/carers and staff at Darlingtonhurst. We want parents/carers to feel they can speak to us about their child and to feel comfortable in our setting. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to share information about their child, to ask questions and to discuss their child's learning with the staff. We believe that all parents/carers have an important role to play in the education of their child. We recognise the role that parents/carers have played, and their future role, in educating the children.

At Darlingtonhurst, we provide every child in Early Years with an online Learning Journal known as Tapestry, this is a celebration of their achievements and progress during their time in the Rockpool. The journal is accessible by both parents/carers and the Early Years team. It contains observations, photographs, samples of drawings, writing and a document of their experiences, skills, interests and progress within the seven areas of learning identified in the Early Years Foundation stage. This information helps to build a well-rounded picture of the child for everyone.

Parents/carers are encouraged to join in with their child's education from the very start of their academy journey. Parents/carers are encouraged to support children's learning by reading each day with their child, completing simple homework activities as well as sharing experiences at home on Tapestry. Through starting points, mid-year consultations and end of year reports, parents/carers receive information about their child's progress in the EYFS. Parent/carer meetings are offered after children have settled at the academy and as and when needed during the year, where parents/carers have the opportunity to speak with the staff to discuss their child's progress and development and their next steps in learning.

Inclusion

At Darlinghurst we embrace inclusion. We recognise and respect the abilities and strengths of our children at all levels of development and the wealth of knowledge and experience that they bring from their differing backgrounds and cultures.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning and we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of individual children, so that they are able to reach their full potential. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of all children irrespective of their gender, special educational need, ability, social and cultural backgrounds, ethnicity and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We aim to build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs. We will provide: a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively.

- a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued.
- resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.
- challenging activities for all children and for those whose ability and understanding are advanced.

We will monitor children's progress and take action to provide support as necessary. Where a specific need is suspected we will liaise with the Inclusion Leader and seek advice from outside agencies, such as the speech and language service. We adhere to the Equal Opportunity and Inclusion policies of the academy.

Assessment and Reporting to Parents

Throughout Early Years, children's knowledge, understanding, skills and achievements are assessed and tracked using the developmental stages set out in the document 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)'. As part of our daily practice we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform our future plans of interaction with our children. Our assessment depends on us getting to know our children and to identify any barriers to children's learning and narrow the learning gap.

Assessment in the EYFS is purposeful and proportionate. In line with the EYFS statutory framework (September 2025), we prioritise professional judgement, informed by observation, interaction and knowledge of the child.

At the start of Reception, the national baseline is carried out for each child. We gather information from a range of additional sources; observations of the child-led activities, talking to children, adult-led activities and observations. Discussions with parents, carers and professional judgements are also used to finalise outcomes of this baseline. Daily 2-6-2 meetings are held in response to baseline results to ensure early identification and rapid response to individual needs are discussed, implemented and reviewed to ensure every child is able to progress to their next stage of development.

Every child has a 'Learning Journal', held on Tapestry, in which we record in-depth observations and samples of the children's work. Parents/carers receive regular notifications through Tapestry and they can view these observations and any related photographs/videos. Parents/carers are encouraged to add their own comments and also to upload their own observations to show us what their children are able to do at home. Throughout their time in nursery and reception, parents/carers are welcomed in to share their children's learning; both informally through our 'open door' policy and more formally during parent/teacher consultations.

At key points during the year, staff assess children's progress to ensure all children are achieving well. Using staff knowledge and progression documents of child development and the expectations set by the Early Learning Goals any child who is identified as not currently working at a 'typical level of development' in an identified area is offered additional intervention to support their progress and development. Planning is reflective of these identified gaps and adjusted to support and meet our children's needs as well as narrow the learning gap for all.

At the end of the year, the EYFS profile provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements including whether they have reached a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD). Children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals (ELG) by the EYFS staff who use the Early Learning Goal criteria, the EYFS statutory framework, and an in-depth knowledge of the child to make a 'best fit' judgement. Children are assessed as achieving a 1 or 2 against each area of the EYFS curriculum:

2 = Expected ELG – meeting the expected level

1 = Emerging ELG – not yet meeting the expected level

This profile data is used to support transition into Year 1 and is the foundation for their next stage of development and learning. Parents/carers are given information of their child's achievements in a report at the end of the summer term. This profile data is statutory and sent to the Local Authority where it is used to help benchmark and identify improvements.

Safeguarding

Children learn best when they are **healthy, safe and secure**, when their individual needs are met, and when they have **positive, trusting relationships** with the adults who care for them. In the EYFS, we fully follow the **safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (September 2025)** and adhere to the academy's safeguarding and child protection policies at all times as well as **Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025)**.

All Early Years staff hold a **current paediatric first aid certificate**, in line with the EYFS statutory framework (September 2025). At least one paediatric first aider is **on site at all times** when children are present, including during off-site visits. Staff are confident in responding to accidents, injuries and medical emergencies, and first aid training is refreshed in accordance with statutory requirements to ensure children's safety and wellbeing.

Safeguarding is **everyone's responsibility** and is embedded in our daily practice. All staff receive **regular safeguarding training**, including updates in line with statutory guidance, and understand the procedures for **identifying, responding to and reporting concerns**. We ensure clear arrangements are in place for managing **allegations against adults**, whistleblowing, and safer recruitment, and we maintain a strong safeguarding culture where children's welfare is paramount.

In line with the updated framework, we place a strong emphasis on **online safety and digital safeguarding**. Appropriate measures are in place to ensure the safe use of technology, including clear expectations around the use of **mobile phones and devices**, and staff model safe and responsible behaviours. Children are taught about **e-safety in age-appropriate ways**, helping them to understand how to stay safe both online and offline.

We promote children's **health and wellbeing** through our daily practice. As a healthy school, children under five receive **free milk**, have constant access to **fresh drinking water**, and benefit from **free fruit through a government scheme**. All Reception children are eligible for **free school meals**.

We promote **safer eating practices** in line with EYFS statutory guidance to ensure children are kept safe during snack times, meals and cooking activities. Staff are trained to recognise and manage choking risks and ensure food is prepared and served in age-appropriate ways. Children are supported to sit calmly when eating, are supervised at all times, and are taught safe eating behaviours such as taking small bites and chewing food carefully. Any dietary needs, allergies or medical requirements are shared with all relevant staff and managed through individual care plans (where needed).

Our EYFS environment supports children's **independence and self-care**, with direct access to toileting facilities and regular teaching of **hygiene routines**, including effective handwashing. Children take part in growing their own vegetables, helping them understand food from '**ground to plate**' and supporting our wider academy focus on **sustainability**. Throughout the year, children engage in cooking activities in our purpose-built EYFS kitchen, developing awareness of **healthy lifestyles and food choices**.

We actively promote **good oral health** and general wellbeing through our curriculum, including learning about the effects of too much sugar, the importance of brushing teeth, and maintaining healthy routines. These experiences support children to develop the **knowledge and habits** they need to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Senior Leadership Team every year. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board for ratification.

Compliance with paediatric first aid and safer eating requirements is monitored regularly by the Senior Leadership Team as part of our safeguarding and health and safety checks