

Waldorf Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

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Review date: May 2026

Next review: May 2027

Related Policies: Curriculum policy, Assessment, feedback and marking policy, EYFS Exemptions and Modifications Document (Waldorf UK), Kindergarten Developmental Progress Descriptors

Endorsement: Full endorsement is given to this policy by:

Name: Joel Chalfen

Position: Waldorf Cambridge Trustee

1. Aims

This policy ensures that our provision for children in the early years:

- Delivers a **developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum** rooted in the Steiner/Waldorf ethos, aligned with DfE-approved exemptions and modifications to the statutory EYFS framework.
- Provides an **inclusive, enabling environment** where *every child is recognised as unique*, and where all children, including those with SEND, EAL, or from diverse backgrounds, are supported to thrive.
- Promotes **equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice**, ensuring no child is disadvantaged by background, ability, or need.
- Nurtures imagination, creativity, resilience, emotional security, and a strong sense of wellbeing.
- Is structured around the five key developmental themes: *Play, Sense of Self, Sense of Belonging, Daily Life, and Planned Activities*.
- Supports children's transition to Class 1 (Year 1 equivalent) when they are developmentally ready, typically in the academic year in which they turn 6.

2. Legislation, Framework and Exemptions

This policy is underpinned by:

- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021)
- The **Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF)**, with particular regard to:
 - Quality of Education
 - Behaviour and Attitudes
 - Personal Development
 - Leadership and Management

It reflects our DfE-granted exemptions to aspects of the EYFS curriculum, particularly in Literacy, Mathematics, and Understanding the World.

In line with Ofsted expectations, we ensure that:

- Our curriculum is **ambitious for all children**, including those with additional needs.
- Adaptations and differentiation are made so that **all children can access and benefit** from the curriculum.
- Inclusion is **embedded in intent, implementation, and impact**, not treated as an add-on.

3. Structure of the Waldorf Early Years Setting

Our Early Years provision includes mixed-age kindergarten groups (ages 2–6+), known as K2 to K5:

- **K2 (2 years):** Exploratory, sensory-rich experiences with strong emotional support.
- **K3–K4 (3–4 years):** Expanding social relationships and self-initiated play.
- **K5 (5+ years):** Transition phase and preparation for formal learning; deepening social understanding and imaginative capacity integrated into a separate, differentiated curriculum for the final year of Kindergarten.

The mixed-age model **actively supports inclusion** by:

- Encouraging peer learning and empathy
- Allowing children to develop at their own pace
- Reducing pressure linked to age-based expectations

Children remain in kindergarten until entry to Class 1 in the year they turn 6, allowing extended developmental time where appropriate.

4. Curriculum

Our curriculum is rooted in Waldorf pedagogy and shaped to meet **Ofsted's expectations for a broad, balanced, and inclusive curriculum**.

4.1 Developmental Themes

- **Play:** Central to all learning. Inclusive, open-ended play enables children of all abilities to participate meaningfully.
- **Sense of Self:** Supported through secure relationships, autonomy, and respect for each child's identity and background.
- **Sense of Belonging:** Actively fostered through inclusive festival life, representation of diverse cultures, and a strong community ethos.
- **Daily Life:** Predictable rhythms support all learners, particularly those with SEND or anxiety-related needs.
- **Planned Activities:** Adapted and differentiated to ensure accessibility for all children.

4.2 Prime Areas of Learning

- **Communication & Language (CLL):**
Developed through storytelling, singing, and meaningful conversation as well as mixed age, peer conversations. Staff use **scaffolding, modelling, and targeted support** to ensure all children, including those with speech and language needs or EAL, can access communication-rich experiences.
- **Physical Development (PD):**
Inclusive opportunities for movement and coordination, with adaptations for differing physical needs and abilities.
- **Personal, Social & Emotional Development (PSED):**
Strong focus on emotional literacy, self-regulation, and relationships. Adults provide **consistent co-regulation and support**, particularly for children requiring additional help.

4.3 Specific Areas of Learning (Modified/Exempt)

- **Literacy:**
Formal instruction is deferred until age 6+. Emphasis is placed on **inclusive oral language development**, fine motor skills, and pre-literacy foundations.
- **Mathematics:**
Developed through practical experiences. Staff ensure **all children can access mathematical thinking** through differentiated, real-life activities.
- **Understanding the World:**
Delivered through experiential, sensory engagement with nature, seasons, and culture, ensuring representation and inclusivity.
- **Expressive Arts and Design:**
Fully inclusive creative experiences allowing all children to express themselves regardless of ability or background.

5. Assessment

Assessment is **formative, inclusive, and responsive**, aligning with both Waldorf principles and Ofsted expectations.

We use:

- Narrative observations
- Child study reflections
- Seasonal reviews
- Parent dialogue
- Waldorf Summative Assessment
- Starting Points assessments

Assessment ensures that:

- **All children's progress is recognised**, including small steps for those with additional needs
- Staff identify **barriers to learning early**
- Planning is **adapted to meet individual needs**

There is no formal testing; instead, assessment supports each child's unique developmental journey.

6. Inclusion and SEND

Inclusion is central to our ethos and practice.

We:

- Identify and support children with **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** at the earliest stage
- Work closely with external professionals where appropriate
- Implement **reasonable adjustments and targeted strategies**
- Ensure all children can **participate fully in daily life and play**
- Value and support children with **English as an Additional Language (EAL)**

- Promote **cultural diversity, equality, and belonging**

Every child is viewed holistically, and provision is adapted without compromising dignity or self-worth.

7. Working with Parents

We recognise parents as partners and prioritise **inclusive, respectful relationships**.

We provide:

- Regular meetings and home visits
- Collaborative transition planning
- Shared festivals and community events
- Ongoing dialogue about development

We ensure that communication is **accessible and inclusive**, taking into account language, culture, and individual family circumstances.

8. Safeguarding and Welfare

Safeguarding is paramount and aligns with whole-school policy.

We ensure:

- Emotional and physical safety for all children
- Environments that reduce overstimulation and anxiety
- Strong, secure attachments with adults

Inclusive safeguarding practice recognises that some children may be **more vulnerable** and require additional support.

9. Monitoring Arrangements

Monitoring reflects both Waldorf principles and Ofsted expectations for **quality assurance and inclusive practice**.

a) Observational and Developmental Monitoring

- Focused on holistic child development
- Tracks progress for **all groups of learners**, including SEND and vulnerable children

b) Collegial and Reflective Practice

- Weekly reflection ensures provision is adapted responsively
- Child Study supports targeted inclusion strategies

c) Teacher Development and Appraisal

- Ensures staff understand inclusive pedagogy

- Training includes SEND, safeguarding, and adaptive teaching

d) Parent Involvement

- Parents contribute to assessments and ongoing understanding
- Transition to Class 1 includes holistic readiness evaluation

e) Governance and Oversight

- Leadership ensures curriculum is **ambitious, inclusive, and effectively implemented**
- Trustees monitor outcomes for **all children, particularly disadvantaged groups**

Final Statement

Monitoring and practice in the Waldorf Early Years setting remain **holistic, relational, and child-centred**, while also meeting the expectations of the current Ofsted framework.

Inclusion is not an additional element, it is **embedded in the ethos, curriculum, and daily life of the setting**, ensuring every child is seen, valued, and supported to flourish.