

Bedales Pre-prep School Curriculum Policy

INCLUDING EYFS

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Curriculum Policy

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At the Pre-prep school, we want children to take delight in discovering and exploring the world around them. Our aim is to develop creative and divergent thinkers who are driven by their curiosity to learn. We are an inquiry-based school, we frame children's learning as questions to be explored and ensure our learning is purposeful. We plan lessons that facilitate self-directed learning and allow time for children to follow their own interests.

We have designed a structured yet flexible curriculum for all year groups, including the Nursery, that reflects the school's aims and ethos—Head, Hand, and Heart—and embodies the principle of "work of each for the weal of all." Equal value is placed on intellectual, creative, emotional, social, and physical development, ensuring a holistic approach to learning.

Children's wellbeing is woven into every aspect of school life, as we believe children learn best when they feel happy and secure. To support a smooth transition into the school day, time is dedicated each morning for children to settle comfortably. We use the Zones of Regulation to help children identify, understand, and express their emotions effectively. Recognising the importance of holistic development, we give equal focus to nurturing children's social and emotional skills alongside their cognitive growth.

At the Pre-prep school we cultivate curiosity, perseverance and thoughtfulness through carefully designed inquiries. Our half-termly key inquiry questions are devised from broad concepts to develop children's understanding of these ideas rather than simply learning facts. Questions drive the children's learning, curiosity and motivation. Our approach ensures that essential learning skills are taught and developed throughout the children's time at school. A cross-curricular framework, enriched with firsthand, practical experiences, educational trips, and visiting speakers, provides meaningful opportunities for young children to build the language and communication skills they will carry with them for life.

By the time children leave us at age 8, our goal is for them to be fluent readers, creative writers with rich language skills, and confident mathematicians with a strong sense of number fluency. We strive to develop compassionate, critical thinkers who demonstrate resilience when faced with challenges.

We aim for children to understand how to collaborate effectively and apply a range of learning skills across different situations. Equally important is fostering self-awareness, helping children recognise their character strengths, value their own voice, and appreciate their ability to make a positive difference in the world.

Teaching and Learning Overview and Plans

Class teachers plan an overview of the academic year, ensuring a structured yet responsive approach to learning. Our Schemes of Work are broadly based on the National Curriculum, providing a strong foundation for teaching and learning. Half-termly plans are developed from both our Inquiry Overview and Schemes of Work, forming the basis of teachers' weekly plans, which are further tailored to meet the specific learning and emotional needs of the children.

Weekly plans are evaluated regularly to assess progress and inform future learning. Teachers upload their weekly plans to the designated central folder before the start of each week, ensuring accessibility and consistency across the school.

A comprehensive assembly program is in place throughout the year, with themes that align with our Wellbeing Curriculum, 'Be' Values, and Behaviour Policy. These assemblies also explore the wider world and actively promote fundamental British Values.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Teaching and Learning Overview

Our Early Years curriculum, for Nursery and Reception classes, is unique to Bedales Pre-prep, planned and developed around our school ethos, community and environment. It includes the seven areas of learning and development as stipulated in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.

Responding to the needs and interests of each child, our curriculum fosters high levels of engagement and wellbeing through learning inquiries, strong relationships, and a stimulating environment. This responsive approach enables all children to make meaningful progress. They are taught how they learn, developing essential learning skills and gaining a deeper understanding of themselves as learners, both individually and collaboratively.

We enrich our learning approach with educational visits, the use of our expansive estate, and regular outdoor experiences, ensuring children benefit from hands-on exploration throughout the year. At the end of Reception, children are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals across the seven areas of learning.

Years 1-3 Teaching and Learning Overview

Years 1, 2, and 3 broadly follow the Key Stage 1 and 2 National Curriculum in the core subjects, while allowing the freedom to explore concepts in imaginative and creative ways. Wherever possible, learning is driven by firsthand experiences, enriched through visits to local places of interest.

A cross-curricular approach ensures the learning journey remains relevant, engaging, and meaningful for our children. Reading, writing, and numeracy are recognised as essential skills and are given appropriate priority. All children are encouraged to contribute their ideas, and every effort is valued and celebrated.

Wellbeing: Personal Development

Incorporating:

- Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE)
- Social, Moral, Spiritual, and Cultural Education (SMSC)
- Relationships Education (RE)

At Bedales Pre-prep, our Wellbeing curriculum equips children with the knowledge, skills, and understanding they need to lead confident, healthy, and independent lives. It supports their physical, emotional, and social development in a safe, positive, and supportive environment.

We encourage children to play an active role in the life of the school, helping them build a sense of self-worth and the confidence to take risks and manage change. Through this, they begin to understand their rights and responsibilities and what it means to be a positive member of a community.

Our nurturing approach helps children develop self-confidence, resilience, and emotional wellbeing. They gain a positive sense of identity and learn that their choices and decisions impact their emotional and physical health. We empower children to adopt healthy, safe lifestyles and encourage them to assess and manage risks thoughtfully.

We celebrate personal achievements and skills in the classroom, during assemblies, and in partnership with parents, focusing on rewarding the child's effort rather than the outcome. Our approach emphasizes intrinsic motivation, and we rarely use extrinsic rewards, such as stickers, to celebrate success. Acknowledgment of effort is embedded within a whole-class system inspired by Work of Each for Weal of All.

We encourage children to build positive relationships through self-awareness, empathy, tolerance, and respect for others. They learn to identify and appreciate both similarities and differences between people, beliefs, and values, fostering an understanding of diversity. Children are supported in seeing themselves as valued members of a community. Sex education is not taught explicitly. Human body parts are introduced as part of the Science curriculum.

English

At the Pre-prep school, the core skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are taught and developed through dedicated English lessons throughout the week. These skills are then reinforced and applied across other areas of the curriculum to support holistic learning.

Listening and Speaking

Teachers follow our English Scheme of Work to ensure a consistent approach and the progressive development of children's listening and oracy skills. Lessons are carefully planned to include numerous opportunities for drama and role play, encouraging children to express themselves, build confidence, and develop effective communication skills.

Reading

Our aim is to develop enthusiastic, confident readers who read with fluency, accuracy, and understanding. We foster a lifelong love of stories and books while equipping children with the skills to find and interpret information effectively.

From the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), children are taught reading strategies, including phonics, both individually and in groups. Reading books are carefully matched to each child's reading ability, with progress tracked through a banded book scheme. Phonics assessments are conducted half-terminally until children have completed the phonics programme, ensuring consistent development.

We teach phonics from EYFS using the *Read, Write Inc.* Phonics Programme as a guide. In the younger years, a multi-sensory approach is used to support phonics instruction, making learning engaging and accessible for all children.

Writing

We aim to foster a genuine enjoyment of writing, encouraging children to see themselves as writers with a sense of creativity and purpose. Across the year groups, we teach a variety of genres using a wide range of high-quality literature to engage, inspire, and challenge children in their writing.

Spelling

Synthetic phonics are introduced from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) following the *Read, Write Inc.* (RWI) progression steps as a guide. Most children will have mastered phonics by Year 2, after which they are taught alternative spellings and spelling rules. From Year 1, children begin learning common exception words (high-frequency words) alongside their phonics curriculum, with reinforcement both in school and through home practice. Teachers consistently reinforce phonics and spelling principles when teaching and modelling writing.

Assessment Policy:

- Spellings of common exception words (HFVs) are assessed weekly.
- Every half-term, teachers reassess previously learned HFVs to ensure retention.
- Adjustments are made following assessments to create individualised spelling lists tailored to each child's needs.

Grammar

Teachers plan grammar instruction using the English Scheme of Work. Children are introduced to grammar through foundational concepts such as capital letters and full stops. Grammar teaching is fully integrated into English lessons rather than being taught as a standalone subject.

As children progress, they are introduced to more complex grammatical structures and a wider range of punctuation, ensuring their skills develop alongside their writing.

Handwriting

At the Pre-prep school, children begin developing fine and gross motor skills, along with pencil control, from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) as a foundation for achieving fluent cursive writing by Year 3. Teachers plan handwriting instruction using the Pre-prep School Handwriting Scheme of Work. Children practise handwriting in dedicated handwriting books, using pencils and seated at tables to encourage correct posture. Fine motor skills are further developed in EYFS, and from Year 1, handwriting practice becomes a daily routine, reinforced across all lessons.

When writing on interactive whiteboards (IWBs), teachers model the expected handwriting standard for each year group. Additionally, planned activities such as cutting, threading, and moulding are included to strengthen fine motor skills.

In the EYFS, as part of child led learning, our activities develop and strengthen their fine and gross motor skills for pre-writing. We use a range of strategies, activities and methods, such as The Write Dance Program, to develop their pre-writing.

Handwriting Progression

- **By the end of Year 1:**

Most children should use lead-outs as a precursor to cursive handwriting, preparing them for a smoother transition into joined writing in Year 2.

- **By the end of Year 2:**

Most children should be able to form lowercase letters of the correct size relative to one another. They should also use the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letter combinations, when adjacent, are best left unjoined.

- **By the end of Year 3:**

Children should further develop the legibility, consistency, and quality of their handwriting by ensuring the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant. Lines of writing should be spaced appropriately so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch.

Mathematics

At the Pre-prep, we aim to develop confident mathematicians who approach learning with enjoyment, curiosity, and enthusiasm. Numerical skills and understanding, including the use of number facts, are fundamental in building a strong foundation for mathematical development and number sense.

We focus on helping children secure a deep understanding of these facts and their application to mathematical problems across a range of contexts. Children are given time for investigation and exploration, using an inquiry-based approach that progresses from concrete experiences, through pictorial representation, to abstract concepts. Planning and teaching are guided by the *White Rose* progression of skills.

Mathematics lessons often include mental arithmetic practice, and we make meaningful connections to real-life contexts and ongoing events within the school to ensure learning feels relevant and engaging.

Science

At the Pre-prep, we aim to nurture children's scientific curiosity and understanding of both their immediate surroundings and the wider environment through observation, investigation, and evaluation. Our lessons are designed to be hands-on, ensuring that children develop essential scientific skills alongside their conceptual understanding.

Science teaching includes a wide range of practical investigations, class-based research, experiments, and demonstrations. Cross-curricular links are incorporated wherever possible to enrich learning, and visiting experts further inspire curiosity by bringing science to life in imaginative and exciting ways.

We provide opportunities for children to explore the world around them using all their senses. Children are encouraged to think scientifically as they plan and carry out investigations, developing skills in observation, questioning, communicating, and evaluating evidence. They learn to present their conclusions clearly, using appropriate scientific language.

Children are also taught to use equipment correctly and to understand the impact of their actions on both living and non-living things. This helps promote a sense of responsibility, care, and awareness of their environment.

History

We aim to develop children's sense of identity and understanding of the past by exploring their families, communities, and the wider world. Through engaging learning experiences, children build knowledge and understanding of key events, people, and changes in the past, with a focus on investigation, research, and inquiry.

History is brought to life through visits to local sites of historical interest, drama, and the use of historical artefacts, photographs, and primary sources. Learning is further enriched with carefully selected digital resources, including relevant internet materials, films, television programs, and stories, making historical concepts accessible and meaningful.

Religious Education (RE)

Religious Education provides children with opportunities to explore life's big questions, such as the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God and humanity, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be who we are. It encourages children to learn from and about different religions, beliefs, values, and traditions while reflecting on their own beliefs and questions of meaning.

Our curriculum develops children's knowledge and understanding of Christianity as well as other religions, such as Judaism and Hinduism.

Children are encouraged to investigate, reflect, analyse, interpret, and evaluate issues of truth, belief, and ethics, developing critical thinking and communication skills as they share their responses. We provide opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual growth, nurturing a sense of identity and belonging.

Our RE curriculum supports children in flourishing both as individuals and as members of wider communities. It is based on the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus: *Living Difference*, which promotes a broad and balanced understanding of different beliefs, values, and traditions.

Geography

Geographical skills are taught both as discrete lessons and integrated across the curriculum, with a strong emphasis on direct experience and practical activities. The school grounds, local village, and nearby locations are used extensively to support hands-on learning. Through their growing knowledge and understanding of human geography, children gain an appreciation of life in other cultures, fostering curiosity and global awareness.

Environment / Sustainability

We aim to inspire children to find joy in the natural world and, through this connection, develop a deep understanding of the importance of protecting our planet. Children explore both local and global environmental issues and are encouraged to take responsibility for caring for the world around them. We aim for them to appreciate that everyone has a role in safeguarding the environment and that even small actions can make a positive difference.

French and Spanish

The primary aim of learning French and Spanish at the Pre-Prep is to spark a lifelong love of languages. Spanish is introduced from Nursery, while French is taught from Year 2. Lessons are designed to be engaging and interactive, laying the foundations for language learning through songs, stories, and practical activities.

Computing

At the Pre-prep, we aim for children to become confident, competent users of technology. Each classroom and shared space is equipped with computers, and every class has access to an interactive touch-screen whiteboard with audiovisual capabilities. Children also use a range of digital tools, including iPads, sound recorders, digital cameras, microscopes, and data loggers, to support and extend learning.

Our computing curriculum, broadly based on the National Curriculum, covers three key areas:

- **Computer Science**
- **Information Technology**
- **Digital Literacy**

Online safety is embedded across all strands. Technology is integrated throughout the curriculum, enhancing learning experiences and preparing children to participate actively in a rapidly changing digital world.

Music

All Pre-prep children participate in the making of music as composers, performers, and listeners, with creativity nurtured as a natural part of every child's development. Music and movement play a central role in early childhood education at Bedales, with a rich tradition tracing back to the teaching of eurhythmics, the influence of the Dolmetsch family, and a visit from Dr. Maria Montessori in 1919.

Music lessons are led by music staff who teach across the Pre-prep and Prep, under the guidance of the Director of Music, ensuring continuity and alignment with class-based learning. Links are made with other creative areas, including dance, drama, poetry, art, and modern languages.

Singing is central to musical development, helping children refine their listening skills and musical expression. Children have the opportunity to perform as part of their class, in choirs, and in smaller ensembles, with additional experiences such as local festivals and joint performances with musicians from the Prep. A varied program of live music is also provided by members of the Prep, Bedales, visiting music staff, and professional musicians from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Pre-prep children regularly engage in composing and performing music. Individual music tuition is available from Reception, delivered by 24 members of the Prep's visiting music staff. By Year 3, many children receive instrumental or vocal tuition.

At the heart of all musical experiences is a commitment to heuristic learning—encouraging children to explore and discover music independently, providing a broad foundation of experiences that empower them to shape their musical futures.

Outdoor Work and Learning

Outdoor Work (ODW) offers children regular opportunities to explore and connect with the natural world on the Bedales estate. Lessons, planned from the Outdoor Scheme of Work, promote curiosity, resilience, and hands-on learning experiences.

Children also benefit from time spent in the Forest School area of the estate, guided by the Forest School Leader, where they engage in nature-based activities that foster exploration, problem-solving, and environmental stewardship.

Art & Design

At the Pre-prep, we nurture children's artistic development from Nursery through to Year 3 by providing access to a wide range of tools, equipment, and materials. Art & Design is often integrated with other subjects, encouraging cross-curricular learning and creative exploration inspired by topics from across the curriculum.

Visits to art galleries and cultural venues play an important role in sparking inspiration and motivation across all year groups. Additionally, working alongside established artists on creative projects is a well-established and valued part of the Art programme, offering children unique opportunities to engage with professional creatives.

Dance and Drama

Children are encouraged to express themselves through creative dance, mime, and acting, providing opportunities to develop both physical and creative skills.

Dance and drama skills are regularly showcased during class assemblies and school productions, where teachers collaborate closely with the Music department to create memorable performances. Whenever possible, we invite dance and theatre companies to Bedales Pre-prep for workshops and live performances, allowing children to experience the skill and talent of professional performers while learning what it means to be part of an audience.

Parents' Evenings

Parents' Evenings are held for all children from Nursery to Year 3 during the Autumn and Spring terms. These meetings provide parents with the opportunity to discuss their child's progress directly with the class teacher.

Reports

Written reports are provided for each child from Nursery to Year 3 during the Summer Term, offering a comprehensive summary of their progress and achievements throughout the year. Additionally, we hold termly parent-teacher conferences, providing regular opportunities to review and discuss each child's progress and development in collaboration with families.

Parents' Curriculum Information Meetings

All parents are invited to Curriculum Information Meetings early in the Autumn Term. These sessions allow class teachers to share the academic outline for the year ahead and explain how parents can support and engage with their child's learning.

For further details, please refer to the Curriculum Policies and Parents' Handbook.