

*Saltus
Cavendish
Foundation Year*



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Introduction

The Foundation Year is important in preparing children for later schooling.

Children joining our school will have already learned a great deal. The Early Years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- it builds on what our children already know and can do;
- it ensures that no child is disadvantaged;
- it offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children and activity that provides opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- it provides a rich and stimulating environment.

Aims of the Foundation Year

The curriculum of the Foundation Year underpins all future learning by supporting, fostering, promoting and developing children's:

- personal, social and emotional well-being;
- positive attitudes and dispositions towards their learning;
- social skills;
- attention skills and persistence;
- language and communication;
- reading and writing;
- mathematics;
- knowledge and understanding of the world;
- physical development;
- creative development.

Teaching and learning

Key features of effective teaching and learning in our school that relate to the Foundation Year and beyond are:

- the partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- the understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;
- the range of approaches used that provide first-



hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication;

- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Year;
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develops their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and creative abilities;
- the encouragement for children to communicate about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management;
- the support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- the identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observation;
- the clear aims for our work, and the regular monitoring to evaluate and improve what we do.

Play in the Foundation Year

Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences which help them make sense of the world. They practice and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children, as well as on

their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or relive anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Meeting the needs of all children

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of their range of life experiences when planning for learning.

In the Foundation Year, we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals. Some children progress beyond this point. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of all boys and girls.

We meet the needs of our children through:

- planning opportunities that 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;
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

The Foundation Year curriculum

The curriculum for the Foundation Year in our school reflects the areas of learning internationally identified for Early Years Learning. The experiences that our children meet will enable them to develop competencies, skills and concepts across several areas of learning.

Each learning area has Early Learning Goals.



These set out the skills, understanding, knowledge and attitudes which it is anticipated children will reach or exceed by the end of their Foundation Year.

The Early Learning Goals follow the recommendations of the “Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage” published in 2000 by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, London, England. These incorporate the expectations of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and dovetail into the Year 1 curriculum. The Early Learning Goals provide the basis for planning throughout the Foundation Year.

The curriculum is based on learning through play. There are six areas of learning in the Foundation Year. Knowing about these will help you understand what your child is doing so you can support him or her at this important time.

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

This is considered to be an essential area of learning for all children. It is about developing a range of skills including concentration, co-operation and independence, as well as gaining inner confidence and respect for others. Research has repeatedly shown that children who are confident find it easier not only to make friends but also to maintain a positive attitude towards learning.

How are children taught these skills?

In some ways, personal, social and emotional development is 'caught, not taught'. The routine of the day and the activities that your child does will provide opportunities for them to practice many skills.

How will my child learn to sit still and concentrate?

Attention and concentration is one of the skills in this area of learning, but this is not learned by simply sitting still. Concentration is actually about your child being able to focus and persevere, and so it is quite an active skill. Playing with sand, water and dough are examples of the types of activities that build concentration skills. This means that while children may not have anything to 'bring home,' it does not matter because they are actually bringing home an invisible but developing skill.

2. Early Literacy

The effective way of equipping your child with good literacy skills is by having fun!

How does Literacy start?

Literacy — reading and writing — develops from communication, which can be spoken or unspoken. Babies use gestures, facial expressions and crying to communicate. As children get older, they also communicate by talking, listening, playing, drawing and making marks.

Literacy has to be real for young children so they need to see good models of writing. They may encounter adults writing shopping lists, writing letters or e-mails and reading newspapers, letters, books and notices. They need to get involved.

The foundations of literacy are communication and talk, enjoying books and understanding that marks (such as letters and numbers), pictures and print carry messages. Your children will not be pushed into formal reading and writing exercises. There will be developmentally appropriate literary experiences provided every day and children will progress at their own level.



3. Early Maths

The focus of Mathematics teaching in the Foundation Year is based on practical activities that can be incorporated into children's play. This will also make it more enjoyable for them.

Sorting is one of the skills that children need in order to be able to see patterns, understand sizes of numbers and use logic — all essential for them to do well in Maths later. They also need to learn how to predict and estimate.

The type of Maths activities that children will be doing during the Foundation Year include:

- sorting by colour, size and shape — this could involve using, for example, socks, buttons or shells;
- learning counting rhymes;
- comparing sizes of objects; weighing and measuring;
- making and noticing patterns;
- playing games which involve counting and

matching, such as picture lotto or dice games;

- problem-solving games involving sharing, addition and subtraction.

Children who show they have achieved their anticipated goals before the end of the year will be exposed to the next step of their learning. They do not have to wait until Year 1. Some children are ready to be challenged and need the extra stimulation.

4. Knowledge and Understanding of the World

As a parent, you may have already encountered the seemingly endless ‘why’ questions. Your child’s curiosity about the immediate world is recognised in the Foundation Year curriculum in a section entitled ‘Knowledge and Understanding of the World.’ This area of learning is quite wide. Your child will be encouraged to observe and investigate, design and make things to learn about their immediate world. The skills, knowledge and understanding that they gain from this area of learning will form the basis for later work in school in Science, Geography, History, ICT and Design & Technology.

What type of activities will my child be doing?

We will organise activities that encourage children to be active. Learning by touching, doing and observing is thought to help young children process information more easily and remember information, and so children are encouraged to think about and find out about their immediate world. This means that your child may go for a short walk to look at insects or leaves or make a boat for the water tray to find out more about how things float and sink, as well as about materials that absorb water.

What skills will my child learn?

This area builds upon children’s natural curiosity and develops the skills of observation, prediction and exploration. Teachers will also be encouraging them to learn the language that they will need to talk about their experiences and ideas.



5. Physical Development

It is easy for us to take for granted the range of physical skills that we have as adults. From tying shoelaces to making a sandwich, children need to master many skills. It is recognized that physical development plays an important part in helping children to learn and this area is therefore an important aspect of Foundation Year.

What skills does my child need?

Our bodies are like complex machines and young children need to learn how to use and control them. In some ways it is helpful to think of children as in need of mastering areas of movement rather than just particular skills. These will include:

- **Gross and locomotive skills**

These are larger movements that children need in order to run, to kick a ball or to climb steps. Research shows children have to master large arm movements before we can expect them to write fluently.

- **Spatial awareness and balance**

These are important so that children can move safely and avoid having accidents. Spatial awareness is also linked to later skill in mathematics and problem-solving.

- *Fine manipulative skills*

These are the small hand movements that children need in order to pick up objects and use tools. Children who have good control and strength in their hands will find it easier to write later on.

- *Hand-eye/foot-eye control*

These affect children's co-ordination. Children with good hand-eye control will, for example, find writing or doing jigsaw puzzles easier.

How will these skills be developed?

Firstly, it is worth knowing that, while we can provide opportunities to help children develop physical skills, every child will develop at his or her own pace. Research consistently shows that physical development is sequential and that one skill builds and leads on to others.

The Foundation Year curriculum promotes learning through play. We will be providing activities that will help your child to develop their co-ordination and motor skills without it seeming like exercise. Pushing prams or riding tricycles around obstacle courses, for example, may just seem like fun, but they will actually be promoting a sense of balance and spatial awareness while also building up stamina and strength. Your child will also spend some time playing in the sand or water tray or with clay. These types of activities are strengthening your child's hands and improving their hand-eye co-ordination.

6. Creative Development

You will be passed a sticky and drippy work of art, but are you aware of the hidden skills that your child has gained? The Foundation Year curriculum has a section just about Creative Development. It is an essential part of a child's experience in their Early Years education. It helps children to express themselves in a variety of ways, for example through paint, music and modeling. It also allows children to grow in confidence as they set their own challenges and learn how to do things for themselves.



What type of activities might my child be doing?

Your child will get the opportunity to join in a wide range of activities that encourage exploration and self-expression. This may mean using malleable materials such as clay and dough, as well as more rigid modeling materials such as boxes, card and paper. You will also 'hear' your child being creative as he/she sings out tunes and songs and rhymes that have been done earlier in the day. Our children will enjoy a specialized, developmentally appropriate music programme. As well as music, dance and modeling, your child will be joining in imaginative play. This is the forerunner of 'drama' although in a child's early years they will not be learning lines, but just enjoying taking on different roles and even putting on different voices.

How will my child learn to draw and paint properly?

Being creative means finding an individual or original way of doing something. Children are naturally inventive and it is thought that the best approach is to allow children to experiment with colours, marks and textures. 'Teaching' them formally to draw or make something a certain way, is not developmentally appropriate at this stage. Children build their confidence through having their own ideas celebrated.

Assessment

We make continuous assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the Foundation Year takes the form of observations. The Foundation Year teachers use information from the assessments to inform future planning.

As children enter the Foundation Year teachers will prepare a portfolio for each child which continues throughout the year. This is a way of summing up the progress and learning needs of your child. There are no set tasks or tests; there are no 'expectations' placed on children. Through observation, we will provide a picture of what your child has achieved, knows and can do.

The Foundation Year Profiles will be completed by the end of the year. They will be shared with parents and passed on to inform Year 1 teachers. In this way, we ensure a smooth transition into formal schooling. Your child's achievements and needs are already recognized and ready to be built upon.

The role of parents

We believe that all parents have an important role to play in the education of their child. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role in the education of their children. We do this through:

- talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school;
- inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school;
- offering parents informal opportunities to talk about their child's progress;
- encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns;
- providing opportunities for parents to meet the teaching staff during the year to discuss their child's progress;
- arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents.



Conclusion

We encourage a positive attitude towards learning in a fun-filled environment. Children will come together for a shared start to the day. Small group activities encompassing all aspects of the Learning Areas will follow. There will be a dedicated time for Language and Maths activities each day. Outdoors activities are very much a part of our learning environment. Play will be our work! There will be quiet/rest time during the day.

Happy children learn well and grow in confidence and social skills. Our Foundation Year children are fully prepared and comfortable in their surroundings and ready for the excitement of their first year of "big school."

Photographs in this booklet were obtained by Cavendish Preparatory Department Deputy Head teacher, Mrs. Jennie Beard on a recent visit to schools in England and the Channel Islands who currently operate a Foundation Year programme.

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