



## Learning and Development Policy

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### Our Values

At Young Friends Kindergarten, learning and development is not separate from our daily life — it is woven into every conversation, every experience, and every relationship.

We believe that children thrive when:

- **Sustainability** – Learning experiences nurture a deep respect for the environment, each other, and the world they will inherit.
  - **Respect** – Children are seen and heard as competent learners with their own ideas and voices.
  - **Authenticity** – We use real tools, authentic resources, and meaningful contexts for learning.
  - **Supportive Leadership** – Staff are guided and mentored to continually improve their knowledge and skills.
  - **Community** – Children, families, and staff work together as a collaborative learning community.
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### Policy Statement

We provide an inclusive, ambitious curriculum based on the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and inspired by multiple educational influences, brought together within our **unique sustainable education model**.

Our approach is play-based, child-led, and rich in **real-life, hands-on learning**, both indoors and outdoors, with sustainability as the unifying thread.

We expect **all staff** to:

- Fully understand and apply our pedagogy.
  - Know their key children inside and out — their interests, development stage, schemas, and needs.
  - Keep children “in flow” — deeply engaged, either with or without adult interaction, never left idle or disengaged.
  - Extend learning constantly, linking experiences to children’s lives and the wider world.
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### Induction for New Staff

To ensure every new team member starts with deep knowledge of our ethos and expectations, we provide:

- **Two full induction days** to go through *all* Young Friends policies, ethos, and daily ways of working.
- **End of first day meeting** to check understanding and answer questions.
- **Weekly meetings for the first month** with a mentor or manager.
- **Monthly meetings thereafter** until the end of the probation period.
- **Probation meeting** (date given at start of employment) to confirm passing or extension.

After probation, staff join our **regular supervision and appraisal cycle** for ongoing professional development.

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### Educational Influences We Draw On

We are influenced by leading early childhood pioneers, adapting their principles to fit our **sustainable, child-led approach**:

**Froebel** – Outdoor learning, nature as a teacher, real-life skills, and respect for children’s independence.

**Montessori** – Real tools, purposeful activities, and environments where children take ownership of their learning.

**Steiner** – Seasonal rhythms, natural materials, and storytelling to nurture imagination.

**Reggio Emilia** – Children as co-constructors of learning, projects that evolve from children’s interests, and the environment as “the third teacher”.

**Te Whāriki** – A holistic, culturally inclusive curriculum with strong emphasis on community and belonging.

These influences combine in our **sustainability-led practice**, where **the woodland workshop, kitchen garden, animal care, and eco projects** form the foundation for daily exploration.

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## Key Curriculum Tools

### The Just Right System (linked to Behaviour Policy)

- Consistent colour-coded emotional regulation tool:
  - **Green / Just Right** – calm, ready to learn.
  - **Amber / Wobbly** – unsettled, needs support.
  - **Red / Fizzy** – dysregulated, needs calming strategies.
- Staff observe, name feelings, connect before correction, and co-regulate to bring children back to “Just Right”.
- Embedded across all ages and routines.

### Schemas and Schemes

- Staff are expected to know what schemas are (e.g., transporting, enclosing, enveloping) and recognise them in their key children’s play.
- Resources and activities are planned to support and extend these patterns of learning.

### Loose Parts

- We provide open-ended, sustainable materials instead of closed-ended toys.
- Staff introduce them thoughtfully, model safe use, and support child-led exploration.
- Loose parts are regularly replenished via the **Eco Board resource tracker** and team-led sourcing.

### Persona Dolls

- Used to promote empathy, inclusion, and discussion about difference and respect.
  - Dolls have personalities, cultures, and experiences that can be woven into the curriculum to support understanding and anti-bias learning.
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## Staff Expectations in Practice

All staff are expected to:

- Engage in **sustained shared thinking** — extended, back-and-forth conversations that develop ideas.
  - Maintain **constant dialogue** with children, giving a running commentary that names actions, feelings, and discoveries.
  - Plan and lead **child-led projects** linked to sustainability (see Sustainability Policy).
  - Support each other so that no one is left feeling isolated or overwhelmed.
  - Participate in **Eco Board planning** and keep sustainable practices visible and active.
  - Use the **Kitchen Garden, Woodland Workshop**, and animal care as part of daily learning.
  - Record significant learning moments and share with families.
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## Partnership with Families

- Families are treated as co-educators.
- Staff share curriculum aims, learning observations, and ideas for home learning.
- We encourage parents to contribute to sustainability projects and seasonal celebrations relevant to their children.

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### **Monitoring and Support**

- Managers observe practice regularly and provide immediate feedback.
- Staff receive **CPD** linked to learning and development priorities.
- Leaders ensure the curriculum is balanced, inclusive, and reflects our sustainable ethos.

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### **Linked Policies**

- Behaviour and Emotional Regulation Policy
- Sustainability Policy
- Supervision and Appraisal Policy
- Parent Partnership Policy
- Equalities and Diversity Policy