



Teaching, Learning and Assessment in the Early Years

POLICY FOR	Teaching, Learning and Assessment in the Early Years
PERSON RESPONSIBLE	HTLA Primary
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RELATED POLICIES	TWS Teaching, Learning policy, TWS Assessment policy

Executive Principal / CEO and Brand

Ambassador for GEMS Westminster Schools.....



1. Rationale

This policy has been prepared in accordance with the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)* (effective from 1 September 2021).

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years, and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is important. Good parenting and high-quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”

— *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Department for Education, 31 March 2021*

Rooted in this vision, our Early Years provision is committed to creating a nurturing, enabling environment where every child feels safe, valued, and inspired to explore, play, and learn. We recognise that each child is unique and develops at their own pace; therefore, our practice is shaped by strong relationships, responsive interactions, and meaningful learning experiences that promote independence, curiosity, and resilience.

The Teaching and Learning Policy articulate our commitment to consistently strong learning outcomes for all children. We recognise that inconsistency in classroom practice can lead to uneven experiences and outcomes. Therefore, this policy establishes a shared instructional approach that promotes equity, coherence, and excellence across all areas of learning in the Early Years.

Within this context, **Teach Like a GEM (TLAG)** provides the instructional backbone for our pedagogy. It translates evidence-informed teaching practices into a clear, shared framework that supports high-quality instructional design and delivery. In the Early Years, this is carefully aligned with the principles of play-based, experiential learning, and the characteristics of effective learning. By reducing unnecessary variation while maintaining professional autonomy, TLAG ensures consistency where it matters most, while safeguarding the child-centred nature of Early Years practice.

The policy recognises that effective teaching in the Early Years is dynamic and responsive, not mechanical. Practitioners are expected to enact Teach Like a GEM with adaptive expertise—continually observing, assessing, and responding to children’s interests, needs, and developmental stages. Through ongoing checks for understanding, practitioners skillfully adjust pacing, scaffolding, and challenges to support all learners, including multilingual learners, students of determination, and those with high prior attainment.

This integrated approach ensures that learning is secure, meaningful, transferable, and sustained over time, laying strong foundations for future success. It also aligns with and promotes the values and attributes embedded within GEMS Genius, GEMS of the World, and Sparkling GEMS, ensuring that children develop not only academically but also socially, emotionally, and ethically.

2. Aims:

- The main aim for all children in the Early Years at TWS, is to provide every child with a broad and balanced curriculum for lifelong learning and for their growth and development, to motivate children to become independent learners through enquiry, exploration and hands on experiences.
- Apart from providing a free flow curriculum for holistic learning and development, we also incorporate children’s interests in relevant activities that ensure a secure grounding in the core skills necessary for their next stage of education and develop the whole child.

- In the Early Years, the school uses the 4 guiding principles from the EYFS Framework where every child is **unique** who learns through **positive relationships**. Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates in an **enabling environment**.

Vision for Teaching and Learning

- **TWS, a GEMS school, will promote world-class instructional practice by:**
- Creating a robust infrastructure that enables the implementation of the Teach Like a GEM (TLAG) Playbook with fidelity
- Providing high-quality, ongoing professional development that supports teachers on their pathway to worldclass practice
- Establishing a strong culture of instructional support, using regular drop-ins, Practice Clinics, and instructional coaching to continuously improve teaching quality through universal, targeted, and bespoke professional development
- Embedding pedagogical principles grounded in evidence-based research, particularly cognitive science, to strengthen how teaching and learning occur
- Establishing a consistent, school-wide approach to instructional design and delivery
- Systematically improving the quality of education through clear structures for medium- and long-term curriculum planning
- Supporting teachers' understanding of governing body expectations, standards, and practices alongside Teach Like a GEM
- Inspiring consistent and effective curriculum implementation, ensuring appropriate adaptations for all learners, including multilingual learners, gifted and talented students, and Students of Determination

TWS Teachers will promote world-class instructional practice by:

- Securing strong progress for all groups of students through purposeful lesson design aligned to the TLAG structure and responsive teaching
- Building deep, durable substantive and procedural knowledge, alongside conceptual understanding and transferable skills, through effective sequencing, modelling, and retrieval
- Promoting active student engagement, responsibility, and agency by making learning outcomes explicit
- Ensuring equitable access to high-quality instruction through the consistent and adaptive use of TLAG techniques
- Preparing students to apply learning meaningfully within personal, local, and global contexts
- Plan lessons with clear learning outcomes and knowledge components, aligned to high curriculum standards
- Model new learning explicitly, making thinking visible and reducing cognitive load for all learners
- Use ongoing checks for understanding to adapt pace, scaffolding, and challenge in real time
- Provide purposeful guided and independent practice, supported by timely, actionable feedback
- Create calm, orderly, and respectful classroom environments that maximise learning time and support positive learning behaviours
- Use questioning and structured dialogue to deepen understanding and promote thoughtful collaboration
- Adapt teaching to meet the needs of all learners, including multilingual learners, gifted and talented students, and Students of Determination
- Use assessment information effectively to inform planning, teaching, and next steps in learning



- Promote independent learning skills, including reflection, self-assessment, and purposeful response to feedback

3. Learning and Development in the Early Years

The school follows the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum (EYFS) for students in the age group - 3 to 5 years old. The curriculum is divided into 7 areas of learning. These are the

➤ Three prime areas

- Communication and Language (Speaking, listening, and understanding)
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development (Building relationships, managing self and self-regulation)
- Physical Development (Gross motor skills, fine motor skills.)

➤ Four specific areas of learning

- Literacy: Reading and writing skills (word reading, comprehension and writing)
- Mathematics: (Number skills and numerical patterns)
- Understanding the world :(Past and present, people and communities and the natural world)
- Expressive, art and design (Creating with materials, being expressive and imaginative)

4. Role of teachers

It is the role of all adults to support children's learning using a range of strategies. All adults are responsible to provide a rich and stimulating learning environment which encourages independent play and investigation. A wide range of play opportunities is provided in the well-resourced indoor as well as outdoor provision areas such as:

- Sand
- Water
- Role-play areas
- Writing area
- Math area
- Reading area
- Music
- Small world
- Construction

Within each of these areas of provision, there are a range of resources which children can use throughout the year. Planning effectively for continuous provision is crucial.

Displays in the Early Years should support children's interests and learning.

Child initiated play and adult led activities are some of the strategies used in the Early year classrooms. The adult led sessions become more frequent as students' progress in their learning.

In the Reception class, as a part of the daily or weekly routine, children participate in small group sessions in Literacy, Phonics and Math. There are also large group or whole class sessions such as singing, ICT Arabic

and story sessions.

All lessons in the Early Years are inclusive and planned according to the individual needs of children.

5. Teach Like a GEM (TLAG):

At TWS, teaching and learning in EYFS is aligned with Teach Like a GEM (TLAG).

At GEMS Education, world-class teaching requires all staff to understand the mechanisms of the mind – how we think, learn, and remember. Teach Like a GEM defines and supports excellence in classroom practice across all GEMS schools. It is grounded in the work of leading educational thinkers, drawing heavily on Daniel Willingham’s research on cognitive science, Barak Rosenshine’s Principles of Instruction, Doug Lemov’s Teach Like a Champion techniques, and the pioneering work of Jim Knight in instructional coaching.

The Playbook is one of the 4 components of TLAG and features **18 techniques**, organised into three categories: GEMS Essentials, GEMS Talk, and GEMS Culture.



Teach Like a GEM: In Action

In practice, the Teach Like a GEM Playbook is enacted consistently across classrooms to ensure coherence, clarity, and equity in teaching and learning .

All staff use the shared TLAG language, icons, and terminology when planning lessons, delivering instruction, and engaging in professional dialogue.

All teachers use the school-branded Learn Like a GEM PowerPoint template to support consistency in lesson structure and communication of learning to students.

The six GEMS Essentials (Do Now, Learning Outcomes, To Know, I Do – We Do – You Do, Affirmative Checking, and Exit Ticket) are embedded in *every* lesson and used in the *intended* instructional sequence to secure clarity, engagement, and strong learning outcomes.

GEMS Talk and GEMS Culture techniques are intentionally fused with the GEMS Essentials in every lesson, ensuring that high-quality discourse, positive routines, and a successful classroom culture are integral to daily practice rather than treated as add-ons.

Teachers enact the Playbook with *adaptive expertise*. While the core TLAG structures and techniques are used consistently, teachers make informed, professional decisions in response to checks for understanding, adjusting pacing, scaffolding, modelling, and levels of challenge to meet the needs of different learners.

Teachers and students can clearly articulate what the Global Goal for the Week is, why it matters, and what success looks like, supporting coherence across lessons and sustained focus on the most important learning.

a. GEMS Essentials: GEMS Essentials: Structuring Learning for Impact

The six GEMS Essentials are embedded in every lesson and used in the intended instructional sequence to secure clarity, engagement, and strong learning outcomes. Together, they provide a consistent structure that

supports effective instruction while enabling teachers to respond adaptively to students' needs.

GEMS Essentials Techniques:

- **Do Now:** A short, purposeful starter that settles students quickly, activates prior knowledge, and prepares them cognitively for new learning
- **Learning Outcomes:** Clear statements that define what students are expected to be able to do (procedural knowledge) by the end of the lesson, providing focus and direction for teaching and learning; Teachers must include the sentence stem "By the end of this lesson, you will be able to + (verb)..."
- **To Know:** The specific knowledge components (substantive and declarative knowledge) students need to learn in order to achieve the learning outcome, supporting clarity and reducing cognitive overload
- **I Do, We Do, You Do:** An instructional *continuum* in which teachers model new learning, guide practice, and then provide opportunities for independent application, used adaptively in response to checks for understanding
- **Affirmative Checking:** Ongoing monitoring and checking for understanding throughout the lesson to identify misconceptions, adjust instruction, and ensure learning is secure before moving on
- **Exit Ticket:** A short end-of-lesson check that assesses whether students have met the learning outcome and understand the 'To Know' statements to inform planning for subsequent lessons

GEMS Essentials are used to secure clarity of learning, ensuring that students understand what they are learning and why it matters. Lesson design follows a clear instructional sequence, supporting coherence, focus, and effective use of learning time. Explicit modelling and guided practice are used to reduce cognitive load and make new learning accessible to all students. Independent practice (I Do) is structured to check understanding, strengthen learning, and secure fluency, rather than assume mastery. Ongoing checks for understanding ensure that teaching is responsive, with pacing, scaffolding, and challenge adjusted as needed. End-of-lesson Exit Tickets are used to confirm learning against the Learning Outcome and To Know statement and inform next steps, supporting strong progress over time.

b. GEMS Talk: Fostering a Culture of Discourse

GEMS Talk techniques are used in all lessons to foster a culture of purposeful academic discourse, ensuring that all students are actively thinking, articulating ideas, and engaging with content in every lesson. These techniques promote participation, accuracy, and depth of understanding while supporting equitable access to classroom talk.

GEMS Talk is intentionally fused with the GEMS Essentials, ensuring that structured talk, questioning, and dialogue are embedded within lesson design rather than treated as separate activities.

GEMS Talk Techniques:

- **Turn and Talk:** A structured partner discussion that gives all students time to think, rehearse ideas, and verbalise understanding before sharing more widely
- **Show Call:** The strategic sharing of student work to model quality, address misconceptions, and collectively refine understanding
- **Show Me:** A whole-class response technique that requires all students to demonstrate understanding simultaneously, allowing for rapid checks and responsive teaching
- **Everybody Writes:** A technique that ensures all students write before discussion, supporting retrieval, clarity of thinking, and inclusive participation. (evident as students are ready to write)
- **Cold Call:** The intentional selection of students to contribute, ensuring sustained attention, broad participation, and high expectations for all learners



- **Right is Right:** A commitment to accuracy and completeness, where students are supported to refine responses until they fully meet the expected standard
- **Stretch It:** Follow-up questioning that deepens thinking, extends understanding, and encourages students to apply knowledge in more complex or unfamiliar contexts
- **Habits of Discussion:** Explicit structures and routines that teach students how to listen, build on others' ideas, challenge respectfully, and engage in productive academic dialogue

GEMS Talk is used to increase thinking and participation ratio, ensuring that all students are actively engaged in thinking and contributing during lessons.

Classroom discourse is structured to promote active learning, with students regularly explaining, justifying, and refining their thinking through talk and writing.

Purposeful collaboration is established so that students listen attentively, build on one another's ideas, and work productively together. Inclusive dialogue ensures that all students, including multilingual learners and Students of Determination, are supported to contribute confidently. High expectations for accuracy, clarity, and subject-specific language are maintained across all classroom interactions. Students' communication and reasoning skills are deliberately developed, enabling them to engage thoughtfully with complex ideas and unfamiliar contexts.

c. GEMS Culture: Optimising Learning Opportunities

GEMS Culture techniques establish the conditions for successful learning by creating calm, orderly, and respectful classrooms where learning time is maximised and all students are able to engage fully.

GEMS Culture techniques:

- **What To Do** (Directions and Corrections): Clear, specific, and observable instructions and corrections that tell students exactly what to do, reducing ambiguity and maintaining lesson flow
- **Whole Class Reset:** A structured approach to refocus the class when attention, behaviour, or routines drift, restoring expectations quickly and calmly
- **Teacher Radar:** Continuous scanning and monitoring of the classroom to identify disengagement, confusion, or misconceptions early and respond proactively
- **Secure Student Attention:** Intentional strategies used to gain and maintain students' full attention before giving instructions, explanations, or key information. Classroom routines and expectations are applied consistently across the school so that learning time is protected and transitions are efficient.

Behaviour expectations are reinforced in ways that preserve lesson flow and minimise disruption to learning. Teacher actions are aligned with the Be a GEM Playbook, ensuring consistent expectations for behaviour, respect, and responsibility across the school. Adult responses to behaviour are calm, proportionate, and predictable, supporting focus and psychological safety. Classroom culture is actively maintained to support attention, engagement, and readiness to learn throughout the lesson.

3. Students' Understanding of Teach Like a GEM :Learn Like a GEM

Students are supported to develop a clear understanding of Teach Like a GEM and how it supports their learning. Through consistent use of shared language, routines, and visual prompts, students understand the purpose of key instructional techniques and how these help them learn effectively.

The *Learn Like a GEM posters* make the TLAG techniques visible and accessible to all students. They clarify what each technique looks like from the student's perspective and support them to understand how learning happens, what is expected of them, and how they can take responsibility for their learning.

Students are able to articulate, in age-appropriate ways, how Teach Like a GEM techniques support their understanding, memory, and progress. This shared understanding strengthens engagement, supports positive learning behaviours, and enables students to participate actively and purposefully in lessons.



By embedding TLAG explicitly for students, the school ensures that teaching and learning are transparent, consistent, and aligned, supporting learners to become reflective, confident, and increasingly independent.

Distance Learning Provision:

During periods of distance learning, continuity of learning for students at home is ensured in alignment with the TLAG Distance Learning Guidelines. The school's online portal, *The Phoenix Classroom*, along with a range of digital tools, the support of parents, is effectively utilised to support uninterrupted learning. This is achieved by ensuring that:

- A balanced range of learning approaches is implemented, suited to online delivery and responsive to students' individual needs.
- Resources required for completing learning activities at home are reasonable, accessible, and user-friendly.
- Teachers collaborate effectively with parents to ensure student workloads are manageable and well coordinated across subjects. that students are supported at all times online.
- Students are provided with flexibility in time management and assignment deadlines to accommodate varying home circumstances.
- Essential curriculum content is thoroughly addressed in identified key subjects.
- Students engage in a balanced programme of academic and non-academic learning opportunities.

3. Professional Development

Professional development is systematic, responsive, and closely connected to classroom practice, prioritising deliberate rehearsal, feedback, and refinement of practice rather than one-off training events. At the heart of professional learning and development is for all teachers to get better faster. This is to ensure the greatest possible experience for all students. Professional development with deliberate rehearsal and instructional coaching is an integral part of GEMS' model of creating a workforce that epitomises world class standards.

Professional development is delivered through the following core approaches:

- **Practice Clinics:** provide short, focused professional learning sessions where teachers rehearse and refine agreed instructional practices
- **Drop-ins** provide ongoing, low-stakes feedback that supports reflection, consistency, and continuous improvement.
- **One-to-one instructional coaching:** provides targeted and bespoke professional development, aligned to individual needs and stages of development

Together, these approaches ensure that professional development is systematic, responsive, and closely connected to classroom practice and prioritises deliberate rehearsal, feedback, and refinement of practice rather than one-off training events.

Professional development is structured within a clearly defined three-tiered model:

- Universal offer: regular drop-ins and Practice Clinics for all staff focusing on a global goal
- Targeted offer: regular drop-ins and Practice Clinics for specific groups focusing on a targeted goal
- Bespoke offer: one-to-one coaching to address individual development needs and targeted group sessions aligned with **SIP priorities**.

5. Arabic Language Integration

As part of our bilingual approach, we implement an Arabic-based bilingual model, ensuring that a minimum of one-third of the instructional time is delivered in Arabic. During these sessions, qualified Arabic teachers lead interactive, play-based activities that are both culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate, fostering a natural and meaningful connection to the Arabic language from an early age.

In FS2, the introduction of Islamic Education and PSHE are designed to **nurture values, well-being, and social understanding**, forming the foundation for lifelong learning and responsible citizenship.

6. Assessment in the Early Years

Observation and assessment are an important part of good educational practice and reflects the Westminster School's philosophy and educational approach to viewing the child as a unique, active, and developing human being in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Assessment for the very young children is based on the adult's knowledge of child development, and in line with statutory regulation like Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children from birth to 5.

Observations: The teacher in contact with the child, uses the content of the curriculum on a daily basis and conducts a range of assessment activities within the class which is known as 'formative assessment'. These activities will be in the form of observations, photos, student's work and parents' feedback, as well as the child's own comments if applicable, in order to know what the child can do well and what they need to practice. Teachers then record their judgements against the new **Development Matters statements or learning objectives** in the **Sonar Tracker, an online assessment tool**, as an integral part of the **formative assessment**. The **Sonar Tracker** supports formative summative assessments against **the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum standards** in the most efficient and effective way.

Marking Strategy used in the Foundation Stage: "A Star and A Wish"

Each piece of writing will be marked with:

A Star – Something the child did well.

A Wish – Something the child can work on or try next time. (Target)

This feedback will always include **words of praise** and **positive encouragement**.

At the start of school when students have settled into the new environment, they will be screened by using an external speech and language toolkit called 'Wellcomm.' This will support in delivering timely and early interventions to students experiencing a speech and language barrier.

End of year reporting: By the end of their Foundation Year in school, end of year reports indicates where each student is in terms of the Early Learning Goal standards for each of the 17 aspects. This is reported to parents in June, so parents know if their child is performing **at the expected level, above the expected level** or is **at the emerging level**. Most importantly, it shows how much **progress** has been made since the **start of**

the year in September.

8. Parent meetings are conducted regularly throughout the year to familiarise them with the EYFS curriculum and to keep them informed about their child's progress.

9. Inclusion: Students of Determination and Special Educational Needs

There may be times where the child may need extra support if there are questions around their learning and development, language support or in any other area.

Parents are asked to sign a parental consent form in order to prepare the child's individual learning plan to support his/ her learning needs.

10) Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of EYFS staff, and all relevant staff involved with EYFS, to follow the principles stated in this policy and any linked policy.

The teacher appraisal process is aligned with the DSIB criteria and the school's Teaching and Learning Policy to ensure clear, consistent, and high-quality expectations of practice across the school. This alignment is further strengthened through weekly drop-in feedback recorded on StepLab. The continuous feedback loop provides teachers with clear and consistent guidance to refine their practice. The Teacher Pathway to World-Class rubrics further support this by offering a shared and structured framework for evaluating and developing teaching practice.

The appraisal process is underpinned by a strong focus on curriculum intent, implementation, and impact, ensuring that teaching decisions are purposeful and lead to measurable student outcomes. It also incorporates stakeholder engagement, alignment with whole-school priorities, and targeted professional development, enabling teachers to reflect on practice, identify next steps, and continuously improve in line with the school's strategic vision.

When evaluating teaching and learning, we use a range of evidence-based strategies, including:

- Classroom observations
- Analysis of assessment data
- Review and analysis of students' work
- Scrutiny of lesson planning
- Moderation and professional dialogue with colleagues on the quality of students' work
- Drop ins
- Announced lesson observations
- Feedback from parents and wider stakeholder surveys
- Student voice and feedback
- Internal reviews

All teachers are expected to reflect on their strengths and areas for development and actively contribute to shaping their own Professional Development. Alongside school evaluation and the appraisal process, this informs a targeted programme of Professional Learning and Development (PLD) that responds to staff

needs, drawing on both in-house expertise and external providers.

Members of the Senior and Middle Leadership Teams conduct regular lesson observations, with a focus on DSIB recommendations and the school's strategic priorities. Constructive feedback is provided, identifying strengths and outlining clear areas for development to support continued improvement. This structured support is designed to strengthen teachers' knowledge and expertise, enabling continuous refinement of practice and meaningful contributions to improving the school's provision and the shared vision, in alignment with the National Agenda.

Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if needed.