



**Green Shoots**  
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

## EARLY YEARS PROGRAMME

### 1 INTRODUCTION

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 successes. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right.

Our Early Years programme contains three class groups and caters to children who, when entering the programme, are between two and four years old, providing them with the experiences which form the very foundation of future success.

### 2 PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

**Little Shoots** is our bilingual playgroup in which children who are two years old at the beginning of the school year develop both English and Vietnamese language skills in a play-based environment that encourages collaboration, communication, creativity, and a love of learning. Little Shoots students are not formally assessed or reported on.

The programme in our **Nursery** and **Reception** classes is based around the *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)*, which provides a framework for planning a range of opportunities for playing and exploring, creating and thinking critically, and taking part in active learning.

**All classes** take place in an environment which encourages collaboration, problem-solving, communication, and creativity, and fosters a lifelong love of learning. Our programme promotes a balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities, with open-ended play and exploration and direct teaching, to ensure children's 'school readiness.' It gives children a broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for growth throughout school and life.

Green Shoots teachers understand and value how children learn and believe that relationships are at the heart of the EYFS. They understand that through knowing a child well (where they are and where they've come from), teachers can help each child develop a strong sense of belonging, which is critical to their well-being and future success.

### **3 OVERVIEW OF LEARNING AREAS**

There are seven areas of learning and development, as defined by the UK's Department for Education, that shape EYFS learning at Green Shoots. All of these are important and interconnected.

The three prime areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. We also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

#### ***Prime Areas***

*Communication and Language* development involves giving children the opportunity to experience a rich language environment, develop confidence and skills in expressing themselves, and speak and listen with increasing fluency in different situations.

*Physical Development* provides opportunities for young children to be active and interactive, and develop coordination, control, and movement. They learn to understand the importance of physical activity and make healthy choices in relation to food.

*Personal, Social and Emotional Development* involves helping children develop a positive sense of themselves and others, form positive relationships and respect for others, develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings, understand appropriate behaviour in groups, and have confidence in their own abilities.

#### ***Specific Areas***

*Literacy* involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and begin to read and write. Children are given access to a wide range of reading materials including books, poems, and other written materials to ignite their interest.

*Mathematics* involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems, and describing shapes, spaces, and measures.

*Understanding the World* involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

*Expressive Arts and Design* involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

## **Characteristics of Effective Learning in the EYFS**

The characteristics of effective learning fall into three main groups: playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and critical thinking. These play a central role in a child's learning and in becoming an effective learner. They describe *how* children learn, rather than *what* they learn. These styles of learning are explored by:

*Playing:* This can be indoors and outside, alone and with others, quietly or boisterously. Playing allows children to find out about things, try out and practise ideas and skills, take risks, explore their feelings, learn from mistakes, be in control, and think imaginatively. It is an important centre of learning for young children.

*Being with other people:* As well as developing emotional security and social skills, being with other people (children and adults), stimulates ideas and interactions that move learning forward.

*Being active:* Young children need to move as they learn because they remember things best by taking experiences in through the senses while moving. Sitting still for too long can disrupt learning.

*Exploring new things and experiences:* Children's deep curiosity leads them to use all of their senses to explore during hands-on activities, then put the information together in their own mind to form ideas and make sense of the world.

*Talking to themselves:* In 'self-speech' children use 'out-loud thinking' to clarify their thoughts, regulate their activities, take on imaginative roles, and rehearse their skills.

*Communicating:* Even before they can talk in words children are keen to share their ideas through sounds, gestures and body language. Talking helps them to understand what they experience and it is important that they have a chance to express their own ideas and join in conversations that allow them to hear other people's ideas and extend their thinking.

*Representing ideas and experiences:* Children deepen their understanding as they recreate experiences or communicate their thinking in many different ways: in role-play and creative/imaginative play, pictures, movements, models, and speech.

*Meeting physical and mental challenges:* Working out what to do, trying hard, persevering with problems, finding out and thinking for themselves - these are all opportunities for developing understanding. Such challenges may occur in play, real life, or planned activities.

*Being shown how to do things:* Children learn skills by watching others or being shown how to do something. Adults or peers may directly instruct, model, guide or demonstrate.

*Practising, repeating, and applying skills:* Rehearsing skills in similar tasks or new contexts helps children build mastery, enjoy their own expertise, and consolidate what they can do.

*Having fun:* There is no place for dull, repetitive activities in Early Years learning. Laughter, fun, and enjoyment, being whimsical and nonsensical, are the best contexts for learning. Even planned activities can and should be viewed by the children as playful and not as work.

## 4 ASSESSMENT

In Nursery and Reception, assessment plays an important role in helping parents, carers and teachers to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and plan activities and support. It is a journey, gathering evidence over time. The goal is not to compare children against each other but to monitor individual development.

*Formative assessment* is an integral part of the learning and development process. At Green Shoots we utilise an online digital portfolio, *Seesaw*, to keep parents informed. Photographic updates of each child's learning are shared with parents, and teachers are able to utilise these observations and digital notes to build up an overview of where each child's development falls within the age bands of the EYFS Framework. Over time, this documentation shows a clear picture of each child's growth, and teachers use this formative assessment to further inform their planning, observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape individual learning experiences to reflect those observations.

*Summative assessment* of the achievements in relation to age-specific goals are provided in a written report at the end of the academic year. In both Nursery and Reception, progress in the child's abilities are shown as *Emerging*, *Developing* or *Secure*. In Nursery, this is done against the goals of the age-appropriate band and in Reception, against the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) which define the completion of the EYFS.

Both reports show how frequently the Characteristics of Effective Learning are observed in the child throughout the year.