Early Years Policy

Written: March 2026
To be reviewed March 2028

Our Aims

• To provide a secure, safe, caring and stimulating environment.
• To value every child, embracing diversity, culture, religion and languages in partnership with their families and community
• To celebrate and build on what children already know, aiming to develop a positive attitude and love of learning through incorporating children's own specific areas of knowledge, talents and interests
• To lay a strong foundation phonological understanding and the systematic development of early reading skills in preparation for Key Stage One
• To provide a range of opportunities to learn through direct experiences, enquiry, and active exploration, in both the indoor and outdoor environments
• To encourage and promote independence, confidence and personal values and to develop 'cultural capital'
• To value and involve parents and carers in children's learning and development, working together in partnership

Our Foundation Stage Focus

We believe that all children learn best when they feel comfortable, happy, valued and able. We endeavour to nurture our foundation stage children by providing enjoyable and active opportunities, which enable them to develop holistically. We focus on developing children's self-esteem, social skills, language and communication, physical development, natural inquisition and ability to begin to become independent; in addition to teaching basic skills of literacy, mathematics and understanding of the world. Through starting at what the child already knows and aiming to move this forward, creativity and explorative learning is at the heart of our foundation stage work. We understand that play forms the fundamental groundwork for all of children's learning, and hence we use a play-based learning approach to nurture to our children's needs, both personally and academically. We recognise the importance of supporting the whole child.

Planning and the Early Years Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based around four Overarching Principles and seven Areas of Learning and Development. The Characteristics of Effective Learning indicate the ways in which young children best take on new learning and exhibit key traits of engagement.

Overarching Principles

1. Unique Child – Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
2. Positive Relationships – Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
3. Enabling Environments – Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interest and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
4. Learning and Development – Children develop and learn at different rates.

Learning and Development

The **Prime Areas** begin to develop quickly in response to a child's relationships and experiences. They run through and support learning in all other areas and continue to be fundamental throughout the reception year at school. They underpin a child's 'self'.

1. Communication and Language Development
   Providing a language-rich environment which supports children's interactions and their ability to both express and converse with those around them is at the heart of our Early Years practice. By showing and teaching children how to talk and when to listen by commenting, echoing, adding new vocabulary and showing interest, children's learning across all seven areas of learning is supported.

2. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
   By building children's confidence and educating them about their emotions, their sense of self and supporting their social development, our children are well equipped to form healthy and happy relationships in and outside of school. It is within this area of learning that children are taught how to look after their bodies and maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle

3. Physical Development
   Supporting both fine and gross motor development through a range of planned and sensory experiences helps children's strength, co-ordination and physical awareness. Children learn to develop their core-strength, balance, stability and agility and take part in weekly PE lessons.

The **Specific Areas** include essential knowledge and skills such as writing, reading, number, understanding of the world and the arts. They grow out of the prime areas and provide important contexts for learning, providing the basic skills that a child will use throughout their primary schooling and beyond.

1. Literacy
   Children are taught the links between sounds and letters through the teaching of systematic, synthetic phonics. We use the **Little Wandle** phonics scheme to support the teaching of early reading.

   https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/

   By developing both language comprehension and word reading, children are supported to develop a love and interest of lifelong reading. Children are also taught transcription and composition to develop early writing.

2. Mathematics
   Developing a comprehensive number sense so that children can apply and problem solve is essential whilst developing the building blocks to excel mathematically. Children are taught to count, recognise patterns and the relationships between numbers, as well as use manipulatives to carry out basic calculations. They are also introduced to spatial reasoning, shape, pattern, measurement as well as ideas of sequencing and time.

3. Understanding the World
   By building on what they already know, children learn to explore and make sense of their world around them, their communities and their role within society. Through use of stories, external speakers/visitors, school trips and enhanced provision, children's cultural, social, technological and ecological understanding is developed.

4. Expressive Arts and Design
   This area provides children with the resources and opportunities to create, make and design. They also share their ideas through role-play, music, movement and dance and develop both artistic and cultural awareness.

Child-Led Topic Planning

Encompassing the above statutory requirements, we plan learning experiences and respond to spontaneous opportunities that stem from the children's interests. By doing so, we ensure that our children remain engaged, focussed, and develop a real sense of intrinsic motivation towards their learning whilst also ensuring full coverage of the statutory curriculum as children work towards achieving their Early Learning Goals. We work with our children to plan the terms of work, asking them what they already know and what they would like to find out. We work flexibly to alter and change plans if we feel this is appropriate/beneficial to the children's learning and development.

How the Early Years Environment is planned for

The early years environment (both indoors and outdoors) provides areas which invite and encourage children to explore, create, test, practise, question, investigate and socialise. They include construction, creative, small world, maths, reading and role play as some examples. Each area is carefully planned to generate the best possible outcomes for all children and offer

differentiated, challenging opportunities to cater for all abilities within an inclusive school. Providing a language rich environment is paramount to our practice.

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is built primarily around children's play and their own interests or ideas. The staff work alongside the children to guide both planned and unplanned learning experiences. Structured play means that the children are free from pressures, sedentary activities or passive learning and instead are open to an expanse of active, hands-on opportunities and imaginative experiences. Through approaching learning in this way, children simultaneously develop a sense of self, an ability to control their emotions and an understanding of rules and the need for such boundaries. Play-based learning enables children communicate, talk, plan, investigate and solve problems, share, challenge, practise, think and make connections both within the inside and outside environments. The children make their own choices so that they can have ownership of their own self and learning, overseen by the teacher and adults. The adults are trained in extending these choices through parallel play, questioning, conversation, modelling and suggestion.

Assessment

Within the first six weeks of starting in reception, children partake in the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). This is carried out one-to-one with the teacher.

Throughout the year formative assessments are continuously made by staff working with the children. These help to shape and tailor teaching and learning to suit the children's interests, individual needs and ensure they are continuously moving forwards. Practitioners make anecdotal observations of the children that demonstrate key developmental milestones, which are then added to each child's Learning Journey. These assessments are not timely or paperwork heavy to ensure that interactions with the children remain unbroken or disturbed.

At the end of the academic year, the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is completed in line with statutory requirements and reported to the Local Authority. It includes the practitioners' own knowledge and professional judgement of each child and involves assessment against the Early Learning Goals. The Profile is used to discuss each child's development with the Year 1 teacher to ensure smooth and effective transition into Key Stage One. The assessment is also shared with parents and/or carers.

Reports and Parents Consultations

Parents' consultations take place in the autumn and spring terms and provide opportunities for the teacher to discuss each child's development with their parents and/or carers. Parents and/or carers receive an end of year report in the summer term of the academic year. This summarises each child's achievements, identifies areas to work on and details their EYFSP assessments.

Parents are provided with a report feedback slip and are warmly welcomed into school to discuss anything further.

Transition to school

We recognise that the transition process from home or a preschool setting to primary school can be daunting for both parents and children. We have a number of strategies in place that we have found to be successful in order to make this transition as easy and comfortable as possible for all involved.

- *Links with preschools* - We have close links with the local preschools and communication is made to provide knowledge of the child before they start school. Preschools should also provide transition reports to schools.

- *Parents Admission Information Evening* - During the summer term we hold an information evening to provide new parents with an opportunity to meet the EYFS staff, visit the classroom and ask any questions. The evening offers the 'need-to-know' information for starting school, such as routines, dropping off and picking up, lunch options, PE information, the buddy system, part-time and full-time arrangements and a brief overview of how the EYFS operates.

- *Summer term taster mornings* – New reception children are invited for one play-based taster morning in the summer term. This aims to give the children the opportunity to become familiar with the school environment, classroom and the staff before starting in September, while also allowing them to begin to make a few new friends.

- *Staggered transition arrangements* – Children starting reception will attend school for the morning only for approximately the first week (12pm). After this, children are offered the option of staying for lunch (1pm). Following this, full time schooling commences for those who have opted for this, or who are of statutory school age.

- *Home visits*- We offer a home visit in the first two weeks of the school year for children to get to know school staff in their own setting and to find out more about their interests and background information.

Transition into Year 1

- At the end of EYFS children move up into Year 1. This is designed as a gradual transition into more formal learning.

Parents/Carers

We hugely value and encourage the role of parents/carers in their children's education. We recognise that parents are the most important people in children's lives and are the people whom children learn the most from and aspire to, particularly in their early years. We know that children's development is a continuous, complex interaction of environmental and genetic factors in which the body, brain and behaviour become more complex. For this reason, the role of parents and carers is crucial in ensuring children are successful and happy. We welcome and value contributions from parents who can provide a deeper insight or knowledge into specific areas such as their career area of expertise, their culture or interests, as this broadens the opportunities for our children at school whilst at the same time celebrates diversity.

We aim to form positive working relationships with all our families at school to ensure that both parties feel supported by the other and the best outcomes for all children can be obtained.

Some of the annual events which include families can include:

- Admissions information evening in summer term (prior to September) providing details and information about the school day, expectations and roles. An opportunity to meet the teacher and EYFS team, ask questions and have a look in the classroom
- Parent Consultation meetings in the autumn and spring terms
- Summer term reports – highlighting and celebrating the child's successes over the course of the school year and identifying areas to work on for the next academic year
- Regular online communication via Class Dojo. This is a secure, instant messaging app that enables the teacher and parents/carers to communicate on an individual or group basis.
- Stay and Play Sessions – an opportunity for families to enjoy a variety of activities in the classroom with their child, share Learning Journeys and experience 'school life' together. Also an informal time to talk to the teacher
- Opportunities which fit into current learning topics as and when appropriate e.g. reading café's, school trips, art/crafts afternoon, Christmas carol singing, church carol service, sports day, open tray events, assemblies

Parents and carers are warmly welcomed into school throughout the year to discuss any questions or queries they may have. Such informal drop in sessions can be arranged with the class teacher in advance and will usually take place after school. In some cases, the school may request a meeting with the parents/carers to discuss concerns in school which may include behavioural issues, barriers to learning or other matters. In this case, the school will work with parents to solve any issues that may have arisen through various techniques such as writing a behavioural support plan, intimate care plan or contacting outside agencies such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, parent support advisors or other professionals as appropriate.

Touch in the EYFS

Please see Touch Policy for whole school approach.

Admissions Policy

All children are admitted in September as full time or part time in line with the Local Authority's admission policy. (Contact Norfolk County Council for more details)

Equal Opportunities

In line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy, no child in school will be discriminated against or disadvantaged because of their ethnicity, culture, religion, language, family background, special educational need, disability, gender or ability.