

Highwood Primary School



Promoting Resilience - Achieving Potential

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Prepared: November 2023

Next review due by: November 2024

Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the 2021 Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

This policy has been impact assessed against protected characteristics (race, gender and disability) and no adverse impact has been identified.

“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 in its own right. 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 2021)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. At Highwood, this includes the nursery and two reception classes. Each class has thirty children. Our nursery has sixteen thirty hour spaces in addition to fourteen morning spaces and fourteen afternoon spaces.

Intent

At Highwood, our aim is to provide our children in the early years with a happy and stimulating environment, that ensures high quality care and safety while promoting independent learning and enabling achievement by all. We aim to ensure that all our children develop into independent and lifelong learners.

Implementation

The EYFS is based upon four guiding principles: These are:

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**;
- children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- **children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

A Unique Child

At Highwood, we recognise that every child is an individual who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in different ways, at varying rates.

Inclusion

All children receive quality first teaching on a daily basis and activities are differentiated as required. Children identified as having a specific need will have interventions planned in consultation with our Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCo). All of the children at Highwood are treated fairly

regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school. We take into account our children's range of life experiences and interests when planning for their learning.

In the EYFS, we plan carefully to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests. We use a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs. We provide a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively whilst providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued. We have a range of resources and books that reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping. We plan challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills. Children's progress is monitored and action is taken to provide support swiftly when it is needed.

Welfare

"Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them."

(Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021)

At Highwood, we understand that we are legally required to comply with the welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2021. We ensure that all staff are familiar with the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' document and regular training and updates are delivered to all staff on safeguarding. We are a healthy school and participate in the free fruit and milk for under-fives scheme. For our Reception children, we provide the universal free school meals to ensure our children have the opportunity to have a nutritious, hot meal at school. We cater for those children who have special dietary requirements and they have their own menus. Fresh water is readily available for all children and we encourage children to bring in their own water bottles to drink throughout the day. We teach the importance of keeping clean and washing our hands correctly and at key points throughout the day. In line with the new guidance, we plan opportunities and experiences to teach our children about the importance of oral health.

It is important to us that all children in the EYFS are safe. We aim to educate children on boundaries, expectations and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. We believe that children should take risks, but also need to learn how to recognise and avoid hazards.

Positive Relationships

At Highwood, we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent through developing secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families. All early years staff aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. In our nursery, each child is in a key worker group with either the class teacher or a teaching assistant. The adults rotate groups throughout the year. In the reception classes, the class teacher is the key worker although the children will work with all of the adults.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution that parents make. We strive to establish positive relationships with parents from the outset. We hold a meeting for parents in the term before their children join school to share key information. This also provides an opportunity to have a look at the learning environment and meet the staff. We offer regular opportunities to discuss children's progress and parents are invited into school each month to have a look at their child's learning journal. We offer a range of parent workshops throughout the year focusing on particular aspects of learning including fine motor skills, phonics, reading and maths.

There are many opportunities throughout the year for parents to get involved in school life, including fairs, sports days, Christmas plays and school trips. Parents are strongly encouraged to get involved with their child's learning. We send out a new home-learning grid each half-term with activities to complement the learning taking place at school. We also send home "magic moment" sheets for parents to contribute to their child's learning journal.

Transitions

At Highwood, we recognise that starting school and changing year groups has the potential to be a stressful time for both parents and children. We aim to make the transition to school and between different year groups as smooth as possible. We carry out home visits before the children start school at the beginning of the autumn term. These give us the opportunity to meet the children and families in their own home and give the parents a chance to tell us all about their child. The children joining Reception have the opportunity to spend time in their new classroom and meet their new teacher and classmates during our "Class Swap" morning in the summer term. The children joining Nursery are offered "stay and play" sessions at the beginning of September where they can attend with a parent for their first session. The children will have a staggered start into school to enable them to settle well and become familiar with their new teachers and classmates. At the end of the year, children will have opportunities to meet their teachers for the following year and will get to spend some time in their new classroom.

Enabling Environments

At Highwood, we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. The classrooms and outdoor learning environments are carefully set-up to be engaging and challenging for the children. The seven areas of learning from the EYFS are reflected both indoors and outdoors. The learning environments will change as the year progresses and the children's needs and interests change. Early years staff will observe the children and assess their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences for them.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

We have created a bespoke early years curriculum for our children which reflects the backgrounds, needs and interests of our children. Weekly planning provides opportunities for adult-directed activities as well as child-initiated learning. High quality, key texts are used to ensure curriculum coverage and progression of skills. This also promotes Highwood's reading culture and a love of books from early on. Early Years staff plan using observations and interactions with children to inform where the learning should move to. Although class teachers are responsible for writing plans, all members of the team attend meetings and give an input whenever possible.

On entry to Nursery and Reception, the children are assessed against the Development Matters non-statutory guidance in order to provide a baseline judgement. Children in Reception also take part in the Reception Baseline Assessment. This is a short, interactive and practical assessment of each child's early literacy, communication, language and mathematics skills. It became statutory for all schools from September 2021. Children's progress is closely monitored throughout the year so that children who are not on track can be supported to meet age-related expectations. We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Formative assessment in the early years takes the form of observation, and this involves the teacher and other adults as appropriate. Summative assessments are carried out to assess children's learning in maths and phonics at key points in the reception year. Reception children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals during the summer term to see if they have achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD).

The Learning Environment

The EYFS learning environment is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. The environment is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. All resources are clearly labelled to help children become independent when selecting them and putting them away. Both the nursery and reception classes have access to a shared outdoor learning environment. This has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and to be physically active. Outside there are many opportunities and experiences to provoke a sense of awe and wonder. This encourages children to become inquisitive and find out about the world around them. We plan activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that help the children to develop in all seven areas of learning. We also make use of the extensive school grounds, including the field and the pond area to enhance the children's learning.

Learning and Development

At Highwood, we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are inter connected.

Teaching and Learning Style

Our policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our school. Staff receive regular training in different curriculum areas to develop their skills and expertise. Early years staff have a good understanding of child development and how young children learn. In our teaching, we use a range of approaches that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, provide appropriate interventions and extend the children's play. We put a huge emphasis on language and communication and ensure that we teach new vocabulary and give children regular opportunities for speaking and listening. Our staff are skilled at knowing when to let children explore independently and when to intervene to move on their learning.

The Curriculum

Our curriculum is based on the educational programmes outlined in the Statutory Framework for the EYFS. The curriculum encompasses seven areas of learning and development. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships, and thriving.

These are the prime areas:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social, and Emotional Development.

Four areas help children to strengthen and apply the prime areas.

These are the specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. Our curriculum incorporates learning through play, learning by adults modelling, by observing each other and through guided learning and direct teaching. Our plans are flexible to allow us to respond quickly to children's new interests and needs.

Weaving throughout the EYFS curriculum at Highwood are the three Characteristics of Effective Learning. These are:

- playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

These elements underpin how we reflect on each child's development and adjust our practice accordingly. Supporting children in their individual learning behaviours and observing the context of children's play is essential.

Marking and presentation

Every child has their own learning journal. All adults can contribute to this with observations, photos, children's voice, paintings and pieces of 'work'. All evidence within the learning journal must be dated and areas of learning and characteristics of effective learning identified. Pieces of 'work' must also be annotated with the child's voice. Verbal feedback will be given to the children on all pieces going into their journal. Children also contribute and decide what goes into their learning journal. They have free access to their journals which they can add to regularly.

Each class within the EYFS uses floor books as a tool for documenting and reflecting upon children's learning experiences and achievements. These provide a platform for reflection and planning based on observed interests and needs. The floor books capture the children's journey throughout the year and reflects our child-led approach to planning.

All members of staff within the Early Years have the responsibility to contribute to the floor books as appropriate, sharing observations and insights. Entries should be dated and include relevant details such as photos, drawings, quotes, and descriptions of the activity or event. The floor books should reflect the experiences of all children within the class. The floor books will be accessible for parents to view at regular intervals throughout the year.

Behaviour

All adults have high expectations of the children. Adults model appropriate behaviour at all times and children are praised for the good choices they make. We use a visual system for behaviour management where all children start every day on a happy face. Throughout the day they may move up to the superstar for making good choices linked to our Golden Rules. If a child makes a poor choice they will be given a verbal warning and told what behaviour is expected. If the poor choices continue they will be taken to a quiet spot and given a few minutes of thinking time. If this behaviour continues they will be taken to the phase leader and given some time out of class. Parents are always informed if their child has had any time out of class.

Impact

“Children in the early years are very settled and happy. The highly ambitious curriculum enables all children to achieve very well. Children show well-developed learning behaviours, such as respect for others, as they work and play together. They show high levels of resilience when learning new things. Children are proud of their learning. Staff skilfully support all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to deepen their learning through careful and effective questioning and support. Children leave the early years very well prepared for the next stage of learning”. (Ofsted report June 2023)

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS practitioners to follow the principles stated in this policy. There is a named Governor responsible for the EYFS. This governor will discuss EYFS practice with the practitioners regularly and provide feedback to the whole governing body, raising any issues that require discussion. The Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher and Early Years Phase Leader will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.