



Great Whelnetham Primary  
School

# Early Years Policy Document

	Date	Signed
Agreed By SLT	01/05/24	
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# Great Whelnetham Primary School

## Early Years Policy

### Vision

“All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is important in its own right. The EYFS is about what children learn, as well as how they learn. Effective practice is a mix of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other and through adult-guided learning.” Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Department for Education 2024.

At Great Whelnetham Primary school we believe that the early years’ experience has a huge impact on future learning and later life outcomes. We want our children to love learning and thrive in a secure, safe and happy environment as confident and resilient individuals, reaching their full potential.

### Intent

Within the Early Years at Great Whelnetham we aim to ensure:

- Children access a broad, balanced and rich curriculum that gives them the range of knowledge and skills needed to achieve and progress through school and beyond
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes excellent progress
- Close partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers to ensure the best outcomes for every child
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

This policy is based on requirements set out in the 2024 Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

### Implementation

#### The Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2024 Statutory Framework of the EYFS. The framework defines what we teach and we use the Development Matters guidance to support our curriculum. The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, three areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children’s curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving (Early Years Framework 2024.)

The prime areas are:

- Communication and language (Listening, Attention and Understanding and Speaking)
- Physical development (Fine and Gross Motor)
- Personal, social and emotional development (Self-regulation, Managing Self and Building Relationships)

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through four specific areas:

- Literacy (Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing)
- Mathematics (Numbers and Numerical patterns)
- Understanding the world (Past and present, People, culture and communities)
- Expressive arts and design (Creating with materials and Being imaginative and expressive)

The seven areas of learning and development provide a framework for planning, teaching and assessing in the early years. We aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that enables every child to develop and reach their potential, not only intellectually but emotionally, socially, physically, creatively and spiritually.

## **Play**

Learning through play underpins teaching and learning in the Early Years, and we embrace the fact that young children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them to learn. We have indoor and outdoor environments that allow continuous provision. This provision allows children to build upon and deepen their learning experiences. Continuous provision provides children with stimulating, active play to encourage creative and critical thinking. Play allows children the opportunity to follow their own interests, while consolidating their understanding and skills. Our adults take on an active role in child-initiated play through observation, modelling and questioning. We teach and extend play whilst developing skills and language.

## **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

The Characteristics of effective learning support learning across all the areas and are a key element in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They detail the ways in which children should be learning from their environment, experiences and activities. The three main characteristics are:

- Playing and exploring (children investigate and experiment and 'have a go')
- Active learning (children concentrate, show resilience when challenges occur and are proud of their achievements)
- Creating and thinking critically (children have and develop their own ideas, make links in their learning and develop strategies for doing things)

Children who have high levels of engagement, motivation and deep-thinking skills will be creative and adventurous learners who take risks and will naturally enjoy learning and achieve.

## **Teaching**

We ensure there is a balance of child- initiated learning through continuous provision, and adult led activities, across the school day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential. The adults respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. The adult's role is to continually observe, model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing.

There are set routines that we follow each day. There are designated times when the children come together to be taught and we focus on maths, literacy, phonics, stories and topic work. These times provide the opportunity for children to develop their ability to work as a group, to listen, to take turns, to answer and concentrate. Whole class reading and story time are important parts of the day. We want our children to develop of lifelong love of reading. Children are exposed to a wide range of high-quality fiction and non-fiction texts to provide them with opportunities to hear and use new vocabulary. We make sure there is

always time for a whole class story and singing session during the day, as well as opportunities to enjoy books within the continuous provision. In Reception every child will receive a phonics reading book, closely matched to their phonics ability, once a week. In school they will share this book with an adult at least once a week, more where possible. They will also have the opportunity to select a book for enjoyment and a book to share from the school library on a weekly basis.

## **Planning**

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum provides the basis for our planning, which is supported by the Development Matters Statements. We plan to ensure that learning is effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Our planning is;

- Tailored to individual's needs – we have a thorough knowledge of individuals and plan learning that they will enjoy and suiting their learning style and needs.
- Takes account of interests – we make use of children's interests to provide engaging and meaningful experiences but also introduce new ideas and interests.
- Flexible and responsive – we change or adapt to follow interest or needs of children or in response to external events.
- Linked to our environment – we ensure that both our indoor and outdoor environments are planned for and resourced with enhanced continuous provision.
- Informed by ongoing assessment – we understand children's abilities and next steps and plan learning that builds upon and extends what children know and can do.

## **Assessment**

During the first half term of the reception year, teachers will complete a baseline assessment. The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) became statutory in 2021. It is an activity-based assessment of pupils' starting points in language, communication and literacy and mathematics. In addition to this we use our knowledge of the child, make observations and play games and set up activities to assess different skills. We use our assessments, in conjunction with information from parents and nurseries, to give every child a starting point. From this we are then able to measure the progress and attainment made.

In line with our school assessment cycle, we update the attainment and progress made at the end of each term using our individual and cohort tracking documents. This careful monitoring allows us to ensure excellent outcomes and progress to be made by all children. If children's progress in any of the areas gives us cause for concern, support will be put in place for that child.

Observations form a large part of our assessment toolkit, and these can be anecdotal or focused observations. An observation records and gauges a child's ability and needs and will inform planning and next steps. Our assessment informs our everyday planning and is based on continual observational assessment of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles. Observations are recorded on 'Tapestry' our online learning journey, which also allows parents to access and add to their child's learning journey.

At the end of the year the EYFS Profile will be completed for each child. Pupils are assessed against each of the seventeen ELG's, indicating whether they are:

- 'Expected' - meeting the expected levels of development
- 'Emerging' – not yet reaching the expected levels of development.

## **Working with families**

At Great Whelnetham we recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education. Our role is to ensure a two-way flow of information, knowledge, and expertise to create caring, respectful, and professional relationships with our families. To support this, we:

- Hold parent information evenings (including 'New Parent', 'Tapestry' & 'Early Reading')
- Send out half termly newsletters.
- Share children's progress and achievements regularly with observations on online learning journeys (Tapestry)
- Communication on reading progress in reading diaries
- Hold two parents' evenings throughout the year (Autumn and Spring term)
- Send out a written final report (Summer term)
- Operate an 'open door' policy.
- Welcome parents into school to support and volunteer.
- Invite parents into school regularly to share learning experiences.
- Publish our curriculum on the school website.
- Use Facebook to share photos of activities children have been involved in

## **Transition**

Our transition process aims to ensure that all children and their families have an excellent transition to Great Whelnetham and feel welcomed, happy and confident about starting their reception year. Our transition programme is as follows:

- Parents receive a welcome letter acknowledging their child's school place and providing information.
- Visits and reading sessions are held for children that attend our onsite nursery Cygnets. These sessions involve listening to a story read by the class teacher and a 'getting to know you' session. These sessions allow the class teacher to meet and start building relationships with the children and to gain more information from the child's key worker.
- Taster sessions are held so the children can become familiar with the setting, routines and meet children from other year groups.
- When children begin school in September, we give each child a Year 6 buddy to help support them during lunch and break times.

We also support children at the end their reception year when they transition into year 1. As children grow older throughout the reception year, and as their development allows the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning.

## Safeguarding and welfare procedures

Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our Safeguarding and Behaviour policies.

## Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the EYFS Lead every two years. At every review, the policy will be shared and approved by all staff, headteacher and governors.

## Impact

We recognise that every child is unique and that they will learn and develop at different rates and in various ways. We want all of our children to develop a love of learning and become curious, resilient and confident learners. To ensure they are ready for their next stage of learning and have strong foundations to enable them to achieve their full potential.

## Appendix 1. List of statutory policies and procedures for the EYFS

Statutory policy or procedure for the EYFS	Where can it be found?
Safeguarding policy and procedures	<a href="#">See child protection and safeguarding policy</a>
Procedure for responding to illness	<a href="#">See health and safety policy</a>
Administering medicines policy	<a href="#">See supporting pupils with medical conditions policy</a>
Emergency evacuation procedure	<a href="#">See health and safety policy</a>
Procedure for checking the identity of visitors	<a href="#">See child protection and safeguarding policy</a>
Procedures for parent failing to collect a child and for missing children	<a href="#">See child protection and safeguarding policy</a>
Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints	<a href="#">See complaints policy</a>

