

Valley Road Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

‘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 – January 2024

At Valley Road Primary School we value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. We celebrate early childhood as a valid and significant period not simply preparation for the next stage of education. All children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning and we prioritise building strong partnerships with parents and carers. Our team work effectively together to build upon children’s prior learning and foster their development in a vibrant learning community where everyone feels safe, happy, and respected.

The needs of the whole child are at the centre of all we do with personal and social development key to successful attainment and progress. Children and staff are supported and challenged to achieve their full potential with positive regard to gender, religion, age, economic background, disability, and ethnicity.

Early Years at Valley Road

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. In our school, our provision consists of one reception class – Meadow. The reception class is subject to infant class size legislation, which limits the number of pupils per teacher to 30 but we also have a Nursery Nurse supporting the class. Children join in the September before they turn 5. However, on site there is also the privately run Cygnets Nursery providing care for children from birth to when they begin school, who share our outside learning area with us. Our school day is in line with the rest of the school beginning at 8.55am and finishing at 3.20pm.

Aims

- To provide a happy, safe, stimulating, and meaningful start to their school life in which children can establish solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning.
- To provide a broad, balanced, relevant, and creative curriculum which offers a structure for learning with a range of starting points, opportunities for development and provides the knowledge and skills children need to start school as well as future skill development for KS1 and KS2.
- To use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress and fulfil their own potential personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively, and intellectually.

- To enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence within a supportive, secure, and friendly atmosphere.
- To encourage each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and challenge and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.
- To support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as collaboration, cooperation, and sharing.
- Develop positive relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children.
- To provide a caring and inclusive learning environment which is sensitive to the requirements of the individual child including those who have additional needs.

Principles

Our EYFS policy is directly related to our school vision, values, and curriculum statement. It documents further aims and strategies we employ to address the four overarching principles of EYFS:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

A Unique Child

We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates and take account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning. Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured. We use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and sharing circle times, to encourage children to develop an intrinsic positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion - In our school we believe that all our children matter. We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of differences. All children at Valley Road Primary School are treated fairly, regardless of race, gender, religion, or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school.

Positive Relationships

At Valley Road Primary School we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. All staff at the school aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families. The EYFS statutory framework requires that each child is assigned a key person whose role is to 'help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents'. The class teacher is the 'Key Person' to all the children and their families within their care. The Nursery Nurses and Teaching assistants support this role and are available if the class teacher is not.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators, and highly value the contribution they make. When parents/guardians and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. A successful partnership is a two-way flow of information, knowledge, and expertise.

We develop this by:

- Talking to parents about their child before they start school and using 'All about me' questionnaires
- Offering a welcome and meet the teacher session when children start in Meadow Class, where they can ask questions and informally chat to staff.
- From time to time asking parents to provide other/current information about children's interests and skills. If parents do not speak English, we endeavour to link them to other parents/carers who may be able to translate.
- Encouraging Parents to fill in 'WOW' slips to celebrate in school children's achievements and skills at home.
- Written contact through the Home-School Reading Diary and school newsletters.
- Encouraging parents to talk to their child's teachers about any concerns they may have. Conversely, if staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will approach parents and carers to discuss them. they will approach parents and carers to discuss them.
- Offering Meadow Class's parents three parent/teacher consultations per year to talk about their child's progress and development.
- Inviting parents to attend informal meetings about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics or reading.
- Offering opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school on a volunteer basis to assist with the children's learning e.g. hearing readers.
- Offering a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, the setting, and parents. For example, assemblies/concerts to which all family members are invited.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in each class.
- Regular updates and opportunities to see learning in action on the Meadow class 'TEAMS' page and offering opportunities for parents to share and add comments.

Enabling Environments

At Valley Road we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development and work hard to provide one where the children feel confident, secure, and challenged. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up to develop all areas of learning with planned, focussed, and continuous provision. Being outdoors has a positive effect on the children's development and offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

We plan a learning environment that encourages a positive attitude to learning and reflects the individual's interests, passions, and abilities. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. We use materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. Children are encouraged to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning, alongside planned opportunities supported or led by staff. Resources are set up, so children can find and locate equipment independently. They are encouraged to respect and take care of their resources and environment. Play-based learning is key, and we ensure that resources and spaces are safe to use and checked regularly.

Learning and Developing

In Meadow class we recognise the importance of all areas of learning and development. We foster positive attitudes to learning, where children can embrace their mistakes as the next steps along their educational journey. We aim to develop resilient, curious learners; children who love learning, are intrinsically motivated, confident in their growing abilities and eager to continue their education. Our practice is informed by the EYFS framework and covers the education and care of all children in EYFS, including children with special educational needs and disabilities. We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities across the day with set routines in place to aid security and structure.

Curriculum

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape educational provision in Early Years settings, and all are important and inter-connected. None of the areas of learning can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across several learning areas.

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. Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Prime areas -

- Communication and Language – Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking
- Physical Development – Gross motor and Fine motor
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development – Self regulation, Managing Self and Building Relationships

Specific areas -

- Literacy – Comprehension Word Reading and Writing
- Mathematics – Number and Numerical Patterns
- Understanding the World – Past and Present People Culture and Communities and \The Natural World
- Expressive Arts and Design – Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The Characteristics of Effective Learning describe behaviours children use to learn. To learn well, children must approach opportunities with curiosity, energy, and enthusiasm. Effective learning must be meaningful to a child, so that they are able to use what they have learned and apply it in new situations. These abilities and attitudes of strong learners will support them to learn well and make good progress in all the Areas of Learning and Development. We ensure our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning.

1. Playing and Exploring – Engagement

- Finding out and exploring - Playing with what they know - Being willing to have a go

2. Active learning – Motivation

- Being involved and concentrating - Keep trying - Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

3. Creating and thinking critically – Thinking

- Having their own ideas - Making links - Working with ideas

Learning through Play

We believe that play, both indoors and outdoors, is the fundamental way in which young children learn. When playing, children behave in different ways. Sometimes, their play will be lively and interactive, sometimes they will describe and discuss what they are doing, and sometimes they will be quiet and reflective as they play. Through play, children will be developing skills across all the Prime and Specific areas of learning, working towards achieving the Early Learning Goals, the desired outcomes for the end of the EYFS. We believe that it is vitally important for adults to support children's learning through play with their responses building understanding and guiding new learning.

We also include carefully planned, adult led experiences for children which are important for children to learn specific skills and knowledge. It is often then through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on. By the Summer term in Reception the children will experience more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to Key Stage One.

Early Reading and Phonics

At Valley Road sharing, reading and stories play an important part of each day. We share a range of texts, fostering a love of books and to ensure our children leave the EYFS with a bank of stories and rhymes they know well, both traditional and modern. Throughout our Early Years we ensure the reading framework guidance is followed and teach daily phonics and Early reading skills using the Little Wandle scheme. We teach reading and phonics using the Little Wandle Scheme. The class have a daily phonics session and designated reading sessions with an adult. Pupils are given a 'decodable reading' book to take home to share and celebrate their individual reading with their parents and carers. They also choose a library book which we encourage adults to read to them to promote enjoyment of 'real' books and assimilate other key reading skills.

Planning, observation and assessment

Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective and engaging. It builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Teachers use the Early Years Framework, Development matters guidance, the school's chosen schemes of work and National Guidance, where appropriate, to support their planning for children. Our long-term planning is based on themes as a vehicle of interest to engage the children. Medium term and short-term weekly planning then deliver the children's next steps in learning. These plans are always adaptable to respond to the needs, achievement, and interest of the children. Observation and assessment are an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. Staff make regular assessment of children's achievement, interests and learning styles, to then shape appropriate learning experiences for each child and ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.

Within the children's first few weeks of entry to Reception the children are assessed using the national Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) and at regular intervals assessments ensure pupils progress and attainment is on track. All these assessments are made through the children's ordinary classroom experiences or planned activities for children to enjoy and demonstrate their learning and skills. During the final term in Reception Teachers complete a 'Foundation Stage Profile' (FSP) for each child which summarises their progress towards the Early Learning Goals. Each child's level of development against the 17 Early Learning Goals is recorded as Emerging or Expected and is for child's next teacher to make effective plans for the year ahead. Currently a summary of these assessments is also sent to the LA for analysis.

This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the reception child's end of year report given in July. The report also comments on each child's characteristics of learning, highlights the child's strengths and development needs, and gives details of the child's general progress.

Transition

Starting school can be an exciting and nervous time for young children; we therefore plan and stagger this time carefully to support children with the transition and to ensure it is as smooth as possible for each child and that they settle into their new class quickly and happily. When children move from their Nursery/Preschool to Reception they have opportunities to spend time in their new class with their new teachers. We also offer a session for Parents and Carers to meet and discuss the more formal aspects of 'starting school' with the reception staff. Staff liaise with pupils' key workers to gather key information to aid transition and where possible arrangements are also made for a member of the children's new teaching team to visit them in their current nursery setting. Reception and year 1 teachers also work closely together to make the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 as smooth as possible.

Health and Safety, Safeguarding & Welfare

At Valley Road School children's safety and welfare is paramount to us and we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage. We believe children learn best when they are healthy, safe, and secure so create a safe, secure and welcoming environment where children can enjoy learning and grow in confidence. We provide a curriculum that teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We promote good health with all children offered a healthy snack each day as well as access to water at all times and follow set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.

We ensure all adults who look after the children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so and that the setting, furniture, and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for. We maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones or personal handset devices in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal handsets. This is in line with Valley Road Mobile Phone Policy. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation and assessment in the EYFS. These photographs are used to share on the class TEAMS page.

All large climbing equipment is checked by our site officer and fire alarms and lock down practices are held regularly in line with whole school policy.

Intimate care

Intimate Care - "Intimate" care is any care which involves washing, touching, or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children are able to carry out themselves. However, depending on a child's age and stage of development, they may need some support, for example dressing, wiping their bottom after using the toilet and changing underwear following an accident.

We acknowledge that young children sometimes do have 'accidents' (i.e. wet themselves!) so we have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. If needed children are helped to change in the cloakroom outside the toilets and a second member of staff is always made aware support is being given. We ask parents to help keep our stocks of clothes high by returning anything their child has borrowed.

Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child. No intimate care is to be given without the express written permission of the parent or guardian of that child and all parents and guardians will be asked to provide that permission when their child joins Valley Road.

We follow whole school procedures for child protection (see separate policy).

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of those working in Reception to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Headteacher and EYFS co-ordinator will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. The Curriculum Committee of The Governing Body will also be part of this process.

Policy updated November 2025

Annual Review

