



Early Years Policy

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Adaptation of Herts EYFS Policy	
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1. Early Years Foundation Stage – Definition

This policy was written after discussion within the Early Years phase. It outlines the purposes, nature and management of Early Years education at Holwell Primary School. Within this document the terms 'Early Years' or 'Foundation Stage' are used to describe all the children between 4 and 5 years who attend either Reception class.

'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. Good parenting and high-quality early learning provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential. The EYFS sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the right foundation for good future progress through school and life. 3. 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.' (*The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, 2024*)

2. The importance of play in the EYFS

Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. There is an ongoing judgement to be made by practitioners about the balance between activities led by children, and activities led or guided by adults. Practitioners must respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. As children grow older, and as their development allows, it is expected that the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults, to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for Year 1.

3. Aims for the children in the Early Years

'Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.' (*Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, 2025*).

We aim to support children in their learning through teaching and experiences that gives children the broad range of skills that provide the right foundation for good progress through school and in life.

We aim:

- To give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life in which they can establish solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning;
- To offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences and give them the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test them out along with their own, individual experiences;
- To enable each child, through encouragement and high expectations, to develop, to the full, socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- To offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and limitless opportunity for development;
- To encourage children to develop independence within a loving, secure and friendly atmosphere;
- To support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing;

- To help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

4. Learning and Development

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) within Holwell is based upon four overarching principles:

- **A unique child** – developing resilient, capable, confident and self-assured individuals.
- **Positive relationships** – supporting the children in becoming strong and independent.
- **Enabling environments** – where opportunities and experiences respond to the individual needs of the child by developing a strong partnership between practitioners, parents/carers and the child.
- **Learning and developing** – An acknowledgement that children learn in different ways and at different rates.

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We understand that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration / sharing and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

In planning and guiding children's activities, the staff in Reception continually reflect on the different ways that the children are learning and reflect these in their planning and practice.

The three characteristics of effective teaching and learning 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; and
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

'The EYFS learning and development requirements for group and school-based providers are made up of the seven areas of learning and development, as set out in the educational programmes described below. In reception year, teachers and practitioners will also utilise the early learning goals which summarise the knowledge, skills and understanding that all young children should have gained by the end of the EYFS.' (*The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, 2025*)

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape the educational program in our early years setting. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These three areas, the **prime areas**, are:

- *communication and language;*
- *physical development; and*
- *personal, social and emotional development.*

We must also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The **specific areas** are:

- *literacy;*
- *mathematics;*
- *understanding the world;*

- *expressive arts and design.*

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELG's) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

5. Planning, observation and teaching style

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experiences, interests and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
Providing a balance of learning through adult-led learning and child-initiated learning with high-quality adult interactions
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

To achieve this, the EYFS staff in Reception plan objective-led activities, in line with the Development Matters statements and the Early Learning Goals, to ensure maximum and effective opportunities for the children's development and learning. Short term and weekly plans are specific and adapt to follow the emerging interest with each class, highlighting the opportunities for learning in each area of the curriculum.

We ensure there is a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities across the day. The interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In some cases, the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible. By the Summer term in Reception the children will experience many more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to year 1.

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on.

Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc...

Reading and stories play an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern classics. We make sure there is always time for whole class story at the end of the day but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times. Every child is given their own book bag and have designated days when they will have one-to-one time sharing books with an adult.

6. Organisation of the Learning Environment

"A rich and varied environment supports children's learning and development. It gives them the confidence to explore and learn in secure and safe, yet challenging, indoor and outdoor spaces." (*Early Years Foundation Stage*, Department For Children, Schools And Families, 2007)

The EYFS learning environment is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The environment is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. The EYFS has an outdoor area which has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors 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 activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that help the children to develop in all seven areas of learning.

7. Outdoor play procedures in the Early Years

At Holwell Primary School we value outdoor play as a highly important part of the EYFS curriculum as outdoor play is essential for all aspects of a child's development. It provides children with experiences which enable them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically.

Holwell has a dedicated outdoor play area and we operate a policy of providing an enabling environment – where children learn to use outside areas in various weather conditions. The school ensures that all children have the opportunity to learn about their environment. During daily child-initiated play, children can move freely between the indoor and outdoor area using the resources which best meet their needs. The aim of both indoor and outdoor play is to provide a stimulating environment for children's learning in all areas of the EYFS curriculum.

At lunchtimes, in the Autumn and Spring terms when the weather is colder, Reception children have the choice to access either the outside area or one of the Reception classrooms. In the Summer term, as part of their transition into Year 1, Reception children access the main playground alongside the KS1 pupils during their lunchtime play.

During child-initiated play sessions, children free-flow between indoors and outdoors.

Safety procedures in the outdoor play area

- A thorough risk assessment is drawn up by the Early Years Lead and site manager which all staff must read and follow
- Every morning, a staff member will complete a health and safety check when setting up the outdoor area. A designated daily risk assessment tick sheet is completed and staff must look out for risks and remove any unknown/dangerous objects.
- Staff outdoors must always be aware of the safety of the children in their care, be vigilant at all times and never leave the playground for any reason unless another member of staff has taken over responsibility

- The normal adult to child ratio should be maintained outdoors. As the EYFS Framework (2025) states, 'Reception classes in maintained schools and academies are subject to infant class size legislation which is limited to 30 pupils per school teacher'.
- As per the EYFS Framework (2025), children must always be within sight or hearing of staff.
- If at any stage during the day there are a large number of children outdoors, extra staff should be outside to support with this. If most of the children are outside, then most of the adults should be outside. The amount of adults outside should be determined by the lead professionals in Reception (Reception Class Teacher/ Senior Leaders within Early Years)
- If pupils with high needs are playing outside, extra adult support must be outside to support these pupils. If a high need pupil then chooses to move inside, the adult supporting them should remain with them.
- It is important for staff to move around the playground constantly so that all areas are adequately supervised
- At the end of every play session, the outdoor area should be scanned carefully to ensure that no child is being left outside supervised
- Water bottles should be readily available for children on hot days when they are outdoors
- Volunteers such as parents and students helping outdoors must never be left in charge of the outdoor area
- If a child is injured outdoors, pupils should be administered first aid as appropriate outdoors using the equipment from the outdoor first aid box. An iPad will be outside for staff to use to complete medical forms as required. If a more serious incident happens outside, staff outside must call upon extra staff from indoors to support while treatment is given.
- At the end of a session, the outdoor area must be tidied and organised.
- At the end of the school day, the equipment in the outdoor area must be tidied away and equipment such as bikes or scooters must be locked in storage sheds if necessary.
- At the end of each half term, a deep clean of the outside area and equipment must be carried out.

8. Admissions, Transition and Positive Relationships

Children are admitted to Reception in line with the School Admissions policy (available on request).

At Holwell Primary School we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families. We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. As well as the Reception visit days we offer parenting workshops and other sessions for parents, such as our successful Phonics and Maths workshops.

We highly value the contribution that parents make. We acknowledge the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:

- talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school;
- inviting parents to a parent consultation to discuss any matters in private and to successfully allow the child to access the provision in Reception.

- the children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher prior to starting in their Reception class during our visit days;
- inviting all parents of new Reception children to a session in the Summer term to explain the setting and welcome them to the school;
- offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress;
- encouraging parents to talk to their child's teachers about any concerns they may have;
- arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents. For example, fund raising days, themed activity days, sports day, and a Christmas concert, to which family members are invited;
- holding two formal reception parents consultations per year (Autumn and Summer term) at which time the teacher and parent discuss the child's progress and development.

Additionally, in order to support transition we will:

- Have clear transition processes for new children starting school, including pre-visits with parents and regular visits to see children from Ludwick Nursery (our primary feeder) as well as visiting children at other local Nurseries.
- Have close relationships with the Nurseries that the children are coming from.
- Be flexible in order to allow children to settle into the setting.

9. Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

As of September 2021, it is government requirement that schools carry out a Reception Baseline Assessment for each child within the first 6 weeks of them entering Reception. This is a short assessment of practical Literacy and Mathematics activities which take place one-to-one with an adult. These assessments allow practitioners to gain an understanding of the starting points of each individual child.

Throughout the year, practitioners make regular assessments of children's learning and use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of observation, and this involves the teacher and other adults as appropriate.

At the end of Reception, each child's learning is assessed against the Early Learning Goals. Practitioners must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). This is the EYFS Profile. It is shared with parents at the end of the year, as well as shared with the Year 1 teachers within the school and the Local Authority.

10. Safeguarding, Staffing and Welfare

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. (See whole school policy)

Statutory Requirements in the EYFS

At Holwell Primary School we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years 2021. We understand that we are required to:

- Promote the welfare and safeguarding of children.
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

The class teacher is the named key worker for each child in the setting. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years setting actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being now and their future successes. There are rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class and we aim to be consistent in who covers these absences.

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 school policy. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used on the observation app 'Tapestry', in class displays and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school website through the paperwork in their initial starter packs.

At Holwell Primary School staff working in Reception are checked for suitability and are appropriately qualified. Staff:

- are trained in Health and Safety and Safeguarding procedures and policies
- are DBS checked and must disclose any criminal convictions
- are aged 17 or over if included within the adult to children ratios.

In addition:

- all staff members hold an up to date paediatric first aid qualification
- at least one member of staff holds a relevant food and Hygiene certificate

There is a separate teacher for both Reception classes.

We take all accidents seriously and always log and phone home to make parents and carers aware should an injury require it. We have cold compresses stored in the welfare freezer. We encourage all children to start school without nappies but will support any children struggling with this. We acknowledge that young children often have 'accidents' (i.e. wet themselves!) and have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. We ask parents to help keep our stocks of clothes high by returning anything their child has borrowed.

In Reception, staff follow the 'Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance' (DFE, May 2025). This guidance is taken into account and followed, to implement the existing EYFS requirement that states: 'Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, these must be healthy, balanced and nutritious'.

11. Risk assessment of provision and Collection Arrangements

All areas of the provision, indoor and outdoor, will be assessed against the possible risks involved, using the agreed risk assessment form. This will be reviewed as provision is changed and on a regular yearly basis.

All teaching staff will be involved in the forming of the risk assessments and all practitioners will be made aware of the results of the risk assessment. Risk assessments will be available within the EYFS.

Outdoor provision will be checked daily for safety by a member of staff.

If a child is to be collected by a person other than the ones specified, the parent / guardian must share this with the teaching staff when dropping the child off, or ring the school office.

12. Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed following a one year Policy Review Cycle or when there are significant changes to the curriculum that warrant it. It may also be reviewed earlier should it no longer comply with school practice or the legal requirements of schools.