# Early Years and Foundation Stage Policy 2026/27

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## 1. Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards to ensure that children from birth to the end of the reception year '*learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe'.*

> *'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential'.* (Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, for implementation from September 2021).

At Ferry Lane we strive to offer high quality learning opportunities to provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and reach their full potential.

The Early Learning Goals set out the knowledge, skills and understanding children should have achieved by the end of the Foundation Stage.

The Early Years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

1. **A Unique Child** - To build on what our children already know and can do and celebrate that every child is unique
2. **Positive Relationships** – Children build relationships with adults and peers and develop independence
3. **Enabling Environments** - To provide a rich and stimulating environment that encourages children to learn in different ways using different learning styles
4. **Learning and Development** - To offer a structure for learning and development opportunities and activities to meet the needs of each individual child, and provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors

## 2. Aims of the Foundation Stage

The EYFS seeks to provide:

• **quality and consistency**, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind

• **a secure foundation** through planning for the learning and development of each individual child, and assessing and reviewing what they have learned regularly

• **partnership** working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers

• **equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported

At Ferry Lane we aim to offer the highest quality care and education for all our children giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We support children in becoming resilient, capable, confident and self-assured so that they are equipped to become independent members of our community who are able to develop positive relationships.

Through ensuring rich opportunities, enjoyable learning experiences and stimulating environments as well as supporting children to take risks and explore, we strive to develop children who have the desire for lifelong learning.

We actively work with parents and outside agencies to ensure that all children are included and that their needs are met to the highest possible standard.

The learning and development requirements of the EYFS framework cover:

• **the areas of learning and development** which must shape activities and

experiences (educational programmes) for children in all early years settings

• **the early learning goals** that providers must help children work towards (the

knowledge, skills and understanding children should have at the end of the

academic year in which they turn five)

• **assessment arrangements** for measuring progress (and requirements for

reporting to parents and/or carers)

## 3. The Foundation Stage Curriculum

The curriculum for the Foundation Stage in our school reflects the seven areas of learning identified in the EYFS. These areas of learning are Prime and

Specific. All areas of learning and development are important and interconnected.

**Prime Areas** are fundamental, work together and support all other areas. **Specific Areas** strengthen the prime areas and include essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society.

At Ferry Lane we plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests, and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve and exceed the early learning goals.

## 4. Prime Areas

- Communication and Language
- Physical development
- Personal, Social and Emotional development

## 5. Specific Areas

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

In the Foundation Stage planning is devised on a weekly basis and all areas of the curriculum are covered through specific learning opportunities which promote a balance between child initiated and adult led learning.

The Early Years staff work as part of a team and as a unit across the two classes. Children from the classes have opportunities to work together during free flow times, accessing shared continuous provision. EYFS staff plan and work together to ensure continuity and progression, providing age and stage related activities to suit all our children. Children are also taught within their own class groups, they are taught in a variety of ways; in whole class groups, small group work, pairs and individually.

By the end of the Reception year in our school, children have a daily Phonics, Mathematics and Literacy based session. Teachers initially address the requirements in a flexible way using planned purposeful play but, as part of the smooth transition to Key Stage I and as the children's development allows, more emphasis is placed on activities led by teachers to prepare the children for more formal learning by the end of the Foundation Stage.

## 6. Teaching and Learning Style

When planning children's activities, the three characteristics of effective learning underpin our ethos of Early Years pedagogy at Ferry Lane.

- **Playing and Exploring** – children investigate and have a go
- **Active Learning** – children concentrate and keep trying even if they encounter difficulties
- **Creating and Thinking Critically** – children develop their own ideas and develop strategies

## 7. Procedures

Our *Teaching and Learning Policy* defines the features of effective teaching and learning practices in EYFS. These features apply to teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage just as much as they do to the teaching in Key Stages 1 & 2. The more general features of good practice in our school that relate to the Foundation Stage are:

- The partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement
- The understanding that teachers have knowledge of how children develop and learn, and how this affects them
- The range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication
- The carefully planned curriculum which helps children work towards and achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage
- The provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities
- The encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management
- The support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment
- The identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are shared with parents
- The good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school
- The clear aims for our work, and the regular monitoring to evaluate and improve what we do
- The regular identification of training needs of all adults working within the Foundation Stage

## 8. Play in the Foundation Stage

Through play our children explore and develop a range of skills by providing a variety of learning experiences designed to help them make sense of the world. They practise skills and create their own ideas, learn how to manage self-directed activities and co-operate with others. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

## 9. Inclusion in the Foundation Stage

In our school we believe that all our children matter and we value our children as individuals. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and supports them to give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children including boys and girls, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups, and those from linguistic backgrounds other than English.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- 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. This involves speech therapy for some of our children.

## 10. Assessment

At Ferry Lane we use regular ongoing assessments and observations to understand the children's level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and use this information to inform future planning. Observations and assessments are

recorded in a variety of ways and everyone is encouraged to contribute. The information gathered from assessments are used to modify the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children. These assessment records are continually updated throughout the year and used to ensure teaching and learning is matched to individual children's needs as well as sharing them with parents at Parent's Evenings where their progress is discussed. Significant observations of children's achievements are collated in their own personal 'Learning Journey'. These observations are shared with parents. In the Autumn and Spring terms, parents are invited to attend a Parents' Evening and the children's targets are shared on both occasions.

Within the first six weeks of starting Ferry Lane children are assessed using 'The Early Excellence Baseline (EExBA)'. Teachers use a simple screening process using the Leuven Scales of Well-Being & Involvement to ensure that children are assessed at the optimum time within the first six weeks.

The Early Excellence Baseline (EExBA) offers a principled approach to on-entry assessment. The Class Teachers build their knowledge of each child through observations, interactions and every day activities. This information is then used to make a series of judgements about each child based on a clear set of criteria. There are multiple assessment statements that cover the Characteristics of Effective Learning, all three Prime Areas (PSED, C&L, PD) and the Specific Areas of Literacy and Mathematics.

Once the assessments are complete and have been submitted, data is produced by Early Excellence for the DfE and for the school, using the scores. The baseline scores will then be analysed and provide a picture of the cohort as a whole, different groups of children as well as individual children.

At the end of the Reception Year the class teachers will make a judgement based on their child's development against each of the Early Learning Goals and the Characteristics of Effective Learning stating whether the child is meeting the level of development expected at the end of the Reception Year, exceeding or not yet reaching (emerging). This information will then be reported to the Local Authority for analysis.

The completed EYFS profile will be shared with both parents and Year 1 teachers in the form of an Annual Report at the end of the academic year. This will include a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three Characteristics of. Effective Learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs and give details of the child's general progress. We complete these in June and send them to parents in July. The child's next teacher uses this report to plan for the year ahead.

Practitioners in the Early Years use the '*Early Years Foundation Stage Handbook'* as a support in making accurate judgements about each child's attainment. Early Years moderation sessions are also attended as part of our cluster of schools. We endeavour to take account of a range of perspectives including those of the child, parents and carers and other adults who have significant interactions with the child.

## 11. Safeguarding

The EYFS specifies requirements for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare.

The safeguarding and welfare requirements cover the steps that providers must take to keep children safe and promote their welfare.

We provide a welcoming, safe and secure environment where children are able to enjoy learning and develop their confidence and independence. Our curriculum teaches children how to be safe, make their own choices and take risks.

At Ferry Lane the Early Years department carries out a thorough Annual Risk Assessment and daily safety checks to ensure the learning environment is safe and secure. Observations and evidence is gathered using the school digital cameras and i-pads; personal mobile phones are prohibited from being used for taking photographs of the children. At the beginning of the year parents are asked to give permission for their child to be photographed/videoed during their time at school. We use these images in the classroom, on displays, in the children's 'Learning Journeys' and on the school website.

The school takes its safeguarding and child protection responsibilities very seriously. Any concerns, which the school has will be noted and, if deemed necessary, will be reported to the relevant agency. The safety of the child is always of paramount importance.

## 12. The Role of Parents

We strive to maintain a partnership with parents and carers as we recognise that together we have a significant impact on a child's learning. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate confidently in their child's education and care in numerous ways. We do this through:

- Organising opportunities for the children to spend time with their teachers before starting school by visiting school on 3 separate occasions

- Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress in our reception classes
- Encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. There are Autumn & Spring Term Parents' Evenings for parents to discuss the child's progress
- Parents receive termly targets at Parent's Evening, and a full Annual Report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year
- Having flexible admission arrangements that enable children and parents to become secure in their relationship with us, and by allowing time to develop relationships with each child
- Ensuring that all parents are invited to curriculum evenings/afternoons to discuss the kind of work that the children undertake in the reception class.
- Ensuring letters and relevant information is sent home to parents.

## 13. Resources

We plan a learning environment both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning. We use materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. We encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities on offer as we believe that this encourages independent learning.