

New Generation Schools Trust 



Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

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1. Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- Close partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

2. Legislation

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

3. Structure of the EYFS

3.1 The EYFS has four main themes

A unique child

Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

Positive Relationships

Children learn to be emotionally strong and independent through positive relationships.

Enabling Environments

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.

Learning and Development

Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected.

The EYFS states:

‘Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their talents and abilities as they grow up.’

At Hope Community School we aim to do this through a well-planned, play-based approach to learning and development that focuses on the individual child and their needs.

Starting school

3.2 Meeting for Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are invited to a session to meet the teaching team as well as the wider team who may include the Chair of Governors, the Chaplain, the FLO, a PTA representative and Principal/Assistant or Deputy Principal. Here, the vision of the school is shared as well as the expectations for school readiness, uniform requirements, timings of the school day and other routines. Members of the EYFS team will share information about the EYFS curriculum and how the settling in period will work. Parents have the opportunity to sign up for a home visit at this point. Parents/carers are given a small gift of a book for their child at this session – it is vital to share about the importance we place on reading as soon as we meet families.

3.3 Open sessions for new children

All new Reception pupils are invited to at least one 'stay and play' session during the summer term. Grouping is often arranged so that pupils are in smaller groups and the specific needs of the child are considered if concerns have been raised at PVI handover sessions or from records passed on.

At Hope Community School families are encouraged to stay in the EYFS environment with the child until they are settled rather than 'drop and go'. Pupils have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with their new surroundings while still feeling safe with their trusted adult. It also gives the pupils and staff a time to meet each other before the summer break. The session may follow a format of a time to sit and listen to a story, song time and some provided activities for the parent/carer to do alongside the child.

3.4 Home visits

At Hope Community School we ensure each child receives a home visit, ideally before they start school. They form the basis of the strong relationship between home and school which we aim to foster throughout each child's time at Hope Community School.

At the home visit the Class Teacher plus the Family Liaison Officer or a Teaching Assistant will visit the child's home to meet with the child and the child's parents/carers in their home environment. The aim of this visit is to enable children and families and staff to get to know each other before the official start date. Information is gathered about the child's home context, the child's development and health, and recent care/learning opportunities.

Parents/carers have the chance to ask questions and talk over any worries in a safe environment. Staff can explain the settling-in process and talk through what to expect at school.

This session also provides staff with the opportunity to spend 1:1 time with the child and assess their abilities in the prime/specific areas of the EYFS curriculum.

3.5 Induction

The start to the Foundation Stage is staggered, and only some new children start at each session. This is so staff can meet, welcome and get to know each child individually and personally, and to allow time for parent and child to feel at ease with the separation process. It may take a little while for the whole class to settle.

During the initial weeks / settling in period, Foundation Stage staff focus on helping children to:

- separate from their parent/carer with growing confidence;
- feel settled, secure and valued in their new setting;
- be able to express their wants, needs and ideas;
- find security in the organisation and routine of the session;
- behave appropriately in a variety of settings within the school.

We encourage parents to be fully involved in supporting their child's start at school and to continue to be involved in all aspects of their development.

After the first six weeks or so, parents/carers are invited to a settling-in meeting to discuss how their child is getting on, and share the child's interests and achievements so far.

3.6 Home-school relationship

We aim to support families in making these early years at school as smooth and successful as possible. A member of the EYFS team will aim to be available, where possible, at the start and finish of every day to catch up with parents and carers. Failing that, parents are encouraged to make contact with the team through email, the school office or the parent messaging system.

We aim to inform carers straight away if there are any concerns, or likewise any achievements, to share. We encourage parents to share developmental landmarks with us so that we can celebrate individual children's achievements, both at home and at school.

We ask parents to read with their child regularly and to be encouraging and praising of their child's interest and efforts with all aspects of home learning. We aim to keep families regularly informed about the learning taking place in school and to offer advice on how to help at home.

We ask parents to sign a home-school agreement each year, which is designed to encourage home and school to work together for the benefit of each child.

Children's home learning will be further supported by the use of digital learning platforms where appropriate.

3.7 Attendance

Full time education is an entitlement for each child from the age of 5, i.e. from Reception Class.

4. Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the updated 2024 statutory framework of the EYFS.

4.1 The EYFS framework

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

These seven areas describe knowledge, skills and understanding which young children should have acquired by the end of the academic year in which they reach the age of five.

Communication and Language

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, storytelling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive 9 relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.

Physical Development

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives⁷. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

Literacy

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).

Mathematics

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children

develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes.

Understanding the World

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.

Expressive Arts and Design

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

4.2 Self-esteem, behaviour and relationships

In the Foundation Stage at Hope Community School, we are committed to meeting the individual needs of all children. The welfare of the children is central to our provision of care, learning and play. We believe all children deserve to be respected and valued and we provide experiences to support their physical, social, emotional and intellectual development in a warm, caring and secure environment. Through carefully planned activities, play opportunities and interactions, we aim to promote children's self-esteem and to support them in developing skills, knowledge and understanding as they explore their world. Children are encouraged and supported in making choices and decisions as active learners. Their progress is monitored regularly in order to ensure that individual needs are identified and provided for.

4.3 Learning about right and wrong

Children need to learn how to cope with strong feelings and what is, or is not, acceptable behaviour. We support children in managing their feelings and coping with difficult situations.

We encourage and praise children for behaving appropriately. We always treat children with respect and show, by example, appropriate ways to behave with others. We acknowledge that children have strong feelings that they may not know how to express. We help them to talk about what these feelings are and how to deal with any situations that arise.

We support the children in resolving conflict by talking through the effects of their behaviour on others and helping them to work out appropriate behaviour. When inappropriate behaviour occurs, we ensure that the child knows that it is the behaviour that is wrong, not the child who is bad.

We plan activities to allow children to explore right and wrong in a non-threatening context.

4.4 Context for learning

We offer a variety of activities, both planned and free choice, which provide opportunities to learn through play. We run a well thought out programme of stories / themes / topics throughout the year to ensure that the children are given a wide range of active, real-life and everyday experiences to enhance their learning about their world and increase their cultural capital. These themes/topics are chosen to reflect the children's interests and include visits in and around the locality or beyond. We offer a mixture of active and quiet times throughout the day, and the children have opportunities to participate in both indoor and outdoor activities.

4.5 Characteristics of Learning:

- Play and explore
- Active learning

- Creating and thinking critically

When planning and designing learning opportunities in Foundation Stage we keep the Characteristics of Learning at the heart of our thinking. These characteristics develop and mature as the children grow through the school. Staff plan activities and experiences for children that enable children to develop and learn effectively. In order to do this, practitioners working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime areas.

Staff also take into account the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice.

4.6 Physical environment

At Hope Community School we are committed to providing a welcoming and caring environment that provides for the children's safety and well-being and supports them in their development and learning.

We believe that the organisation and layout of the environment should enable children to be active, and involved in social and individual play activities and experiences.

4.7 Indoor provision

We create defined spaces for different child-initiated or adult-led learning activities to support the children in all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage.

We use the available space creatively and flexibly to provide opportunities for the children's imaginative play, movement and large-scale play activities. We provide opportunities for both floor play and table activities.

We create opportunities for children to access equipment and materials independently, and choose for themselves, by using low-level open-storage shelves and boxes.

We encourage the children to care for their environment by making some cleaning equipment (brushes, dustpans, cloths) available for them to access and use independently to clean and tidy up play areas.

4.8 Outdoor provision

We use the outdoor environment to offer a wide range of learning opportunities for investigation and exploration, thus developing skills across the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage.

Our planning for outdoors is intended to enhance and extend the planned learning opportunities of the indoor curriculum, as well as provide opportunities for independent, child-initiated learning to take place.

We aim to offer regular opportunities for children to play in a natural environment of grass, trees and bushes.

We have daily opportunities for children to play outside, providing open space where they can run, as well as using fixed or other play equipment. We ensure that there are areas of shade and shelter.

4.9 Organisation of resources

We make resources accessible to the children, wherever possible, so that they can choose their activities independently. We organise resources and equipment so that children can find, use and return them safely and easily.

4.10 Display

We create a rich and stimulating environment by using visual and interactive displays. We provide display areas for children's own work, including pictures, drawings, writing and models.

We aim to ensure that displays are informative and relevant to all families within the local community.

4.11 Teaching

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Practitioners 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, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year 1.

5. Assessment

5.1 Assessment

Effective assessment takes place when teachers use their knowledge of the child to identify what they know, understand and can do in order to shape teaching and learning experiences for the child reflecting that knowledge.

Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners understanding children's interests and what they know and can do, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. In their interactions with children, practitioners should make and act on their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share. However, there is no requirement to keep written records in relation to this. EYFS staff may choose to keep ongoing records in the form of photos or journal entries but the main focus for the team is to spend time with pupils and moving their learning on through quality interactions.

In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, and no later than 30th June in that term, the EYFS Profile must be completed for each child. Each child's level of development must be assessed against the early learning goals. Staff will note whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are not yet reaching expected levels ("emerging"). The EYFS Profile results are sent to the local authority upon request. Local authorities are under a duty to return this data to the relevant Government department.

5.2 Reporting to parents:

A written report of each child's progress against age-related goals is provided for parents/carers at the end of Reception where the report includes details of the child's progress towards the 17 Early Learning Goals outlined in the Foundation Stage Profile, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

Parents and carers can find out more about how children's learning is planned for and assessed in Foundation Stage, and in particular for their child. As a school we offer a number of formal opportunities for parents to learn about their child's progress and, in Foundation Stage, we initiate, facilitate and welcome informal opportunities to do this throughout each child's time with us

6. Working with parents

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. The progress check and EYFS profile helps to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

Parents or carers are also invited into school throughout the year to participate in different activities or learning opportunities such as phonics sessions, to help them explore how they can further support their child's learning.

7. Safeguarding and welfare procedures

7.1 Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy.

7.2 Keeping healthy

Availability of water

We have fresh drinking water and suitable cups readily available for children and adults working in Reception at all times. We encourage the children to help themselves to water, either with support or independently. We support the children in recognising that they need to drink water when they are thirsty, hot or tired, or feeling unwell.

7.2 Lunchtime arrangements

All Children eat a school meal together in the Hall (arrangements are made for children's medical, cultural and religious needs). Pupils may bring a packed lunch or go home for lunch. We encourage parents / carers to prepare healthy packed lunches.

Parents/carers are required to keep us updated with information regarding children's specific dietary requirements and keep them on our school database. We will make sure all staff, including the lunchtime and catering staff, are aware of children's dietary needs.

7.3 Snacks

We offer fresh fruit and raw vegetables as healthy snacks. Children are also offered milk. We like to make fruit, milk and meal times regular, family, social events. We encourage the children to take turns, share and be polite and to say 'please' and 'thank you'.

Children are encouraged to take part in preparing and serving fruit and milk. There are also regular opportunities for children to demonstrate independence and help themselves, as they might at home.

7.4 Paediatric First Aid

We have members of staff trained in Paediatric first aid. We always take at least one person on visits who has a current First Aid certificate. Please refer to our school policy, "Supporting children with medical needs" for information on administering medicines in school.

7.5 Transition - Helping children move on Reception Class to Year 1

To support with the transition into Year 1 we aim to make the organisation of learning and the daily routines as similar as possible to that offered in Foundation Stage, whilst moving into Key Stage 1 and following the National Curriculum. Once again learning opportunities can take place both indoors and outdoors: Year 1 have their own all-weather outdoor learning space which is used to complement and extend the curriculum, encouraging children to be active, investigative learners.

Children in Reception Class and Key Stage One access some of the same facilities i.e. toilets, art and creative storage areas, shared indoor learning spaces, access to the hall for lunch and collective, so moving from one-year group to the next is seen as a positive and familiar step.

Sessions are organised towards the end of the summer term to help the transition be a smooth one. Children from EYFS are encouraged to share in story times or other similar activities with the Year One teacher and spend time in their new setting before the next academic year starts.