



Early Years Policy

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AUTHOR:	Haydon Abbey School and Preschool
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Teaching and Learning Policy for the Foundation Stage

This policy outlines the principles for good practice across the Foundation Stage.

It uses the four guiding principles from the EYFS framework of every child is a unique child, children learn through positive relationships, children develop well in enabling environments and children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. These principles will ensure a continuity of practice through the Foundation Stage that will enable all children to become competent and confident independent learners.

The Foundation Stage is a distinct phase in education. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is important in its own right as well as underpinning all future learning by supporting and fostering children's personal, social and emotional well-being and establishing positive attitudes and dispositions towards learning. Our curriculum is based on the **EYFS Statutory Framework** and further informed by the non-statutory guidance, **Development Matters**.

Our main aims for all children are:

- To provide a broad and balanced curriculum for every child to develop the building blocks for future learning
- To plan a curriculum that is relevant, fun and based on real experience
- To provide first hand experiences to put their learning into context
- To provide a safe and secure learning environment
- To develop confidence, independence and self-esteem
- To encourage and motivate children to become independent learners
- To support children on the first steps of their learning journey
- To provide a range of learning opportunities such as solitary play, independent group play, adult supported play, adult directed learning and discrete teaching
- To develop social skills and relationships
- To reflect the diversity of social and cultural backgrounds in the class
- To provide a free flow curriculum where learning happens inside and outside
- Take children interests and use them to plan relevant activities
- To provide children with a secure grounding in the core skills necessary for children to continue to be successful in Year 1

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

The curriculum is divided into seven areas of learning.

These are the - three prime areas:

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

Four Specific areas:

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

Teaching and Learning the Foundation Stage

Four guiding principles shape our practice in the Foundation Stage

These are:

- **The Unique Child:** Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- **Positive Relationships:** Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- **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.
- **Learning and Development:** Importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates.

The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). (Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2025)

Key Person in Preschool:

Each child must be assigned a Key group. They have two Key People that they are able to build a close bond with. The Key Person will care for the children's pastoral needs and where possible, their imitate care requirements.

Parents and/or carers must be informed of the name of that person, and explain their role, when a child starts.

The key person must help ensure that every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs, through regular observations, feedback and discussions with the Preschool Teacher and the rest of the Early Years Team.

The Key Person will have opportunities to discuss children's progress and share information with parents through contact when dropping off and collecting, through our open door culture, sharing on the Seesaw online platform, stay and play sessions, parent consultations and an annual summative report.

Teachers:

The Preschool Teacher will:

Support Key Workers to plan for their children's needs, with regard to the EYFS.

Support parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home.

They should also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate.

The Reception Teachers will:

In reception the class teacher will support parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home. They should also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate.

Enabling Environments:

Children learn through having an interesting, stimulating and a safe environment and the time with which to explore it. A well set up learning environment is a powerful additional teacher. There are three aspects of the learning environment. These are the emotional environment, the indoor environment and the outdoor environment. All are to be equally valued and planned for by staff.

A wide range of independent play opportunities need to be provided through stimulating and well-resourced areas such as:

- Role play areas
- Dough area

- Fine motor activities
- Creative arts and design
- Construction Areas
- Small world play
- Puppet Theatre
- Story telling shelves

Within these areas Reading, Writing and Maths provision should be available to enhance the children's opportunities to apply their learning, through play.

Each class will also have:

- A cosy reading area
- Writing area
- Opportunities to practice and apply Maths knowledge and skills.

Areas are set up with a clear purpose for learning. Books should be accessible in as many areas as possible throughout the setting, to support the reading culture of the school.

Library books will be given to the children to take home to share with their families, weekly.

Outdoor Provision:

Children need to have as much access to the outdoor classroom as possible with a free flow approach operating. Both the Preschool and Reception class have access to their own outdoor areas that are resourced for their own specific use.

There needs to be a match in the learning opportunities between inside and outside provision.

Outside areas will have:

- Mud Kitchen
- Large construction
- Sand and Water play
- Climbing apparatus
- Space to move freely
- Bikes and scooters (on a rotation to allow for focus in other areas of learning)
- Physical exercise equipment
- Creative area

There will also be:

- Opportunities for reading, writing and maths within the outdoor provision

Play and the Environment:

In Preschool and reception, it is the role of all adults to support children's learning using a range of strategies.

Adults are responsible for setting up a rich and stimulating learning environment that encourages independent play and investigation.

Time needs to be given to allow children to explore the environment independently and learn at their own pace.

Adults are also to use a range of teaching strategies such as supporting child-initiated play, leading activities that have been planned from child interests and discrete teaching sessions.

Adults need to plan for a balance of these activities depending on the needs of the child.

It is the role of all staff to ensure that the needs of all children are being met equally and that all children have an opportunity to take part in all activities.

Adult led activities will become more frequent across the Foundation Stage as children progress with their learning.

Quality Interactions:

Whilst children play and become deeply engrossed in their own fascinations, the adults will observe and assess how they can engage.

The Early Years team has been trained in the SHREC Approach. They will:

- **Sh: Share attention** – be at the child's level. Pay close attention to what they are focused on.
- **R: Respond** – follow the child's lead. Respond to their non-verbal and verbal communication. You could make a brief comment on what they can see, hear or feel.
- **E: Expand** – repeat what the child says and build on it by adding more words to turn it into a sentence.
- **C: Conversation** – have extended back and forth interactions. Give children time to listen, process and reply.

(The SHREC Approach)

Little Wandle Interaction Techniques:

Interactions are strengthened by our use of the Little Wandle interaction techniques:

- Watch, wait, wonder
- Think before you speak
- Narrate the activity
- Connect to what they know
- Model Language
- Build on language
- Point and label
- Find out more
- Think, suggest, wonder
- Tell don't ask

Adults will encourage children to develop their ability to engage with their peers by:

- Modelling
- Giving prompts for them to communicate with others
- Giving opportunities for a shared focus or goal
- Providing circle times to share ideas and opinions
- Providing a respectful, inclusive culture through conduct and relationships within the Early Years Team to act as role models.

A crucial part of our approach is the balance between adult-led learning and child-initiated play.

Adult-led learning often takes place during 'carpet' sessions or small-group activities. This is where staff intentionally introduce new concepts, skills, and vocabulary based on the curriculum and children's needs. For example, a teacher will lead a phonics session to teach a new letter sound or a maths session on counting skills. These focused sessions provide the direct instruction and foundational knowledge children need to progress.

Adult Led Play is where children actively practice and embed the skills and knowledge they've learned in formal sessions and recall prior learning. Following a formal learning session, for example: a number lesson, the children are encouraged to take part in a challenge provided by the teacher, to support their new learning. Teachers use this opportunity to revisit the concept with children using their observations during the lesson to either support or extend their knowledge and skills. All children have the opportunity to engage in these challenges.

Further planned activities are resourced throughout the environment to inspire learning. The activities provided have clear learning objectives which are based on the children's current level of development and their next steps.

Child-initiated play is where children have the time and freedom to explore the environment and resources independently. Our classrooms and outdoor areas are equipped with open-ended resources. These are materials with no single "correct" use, such as blocks, sand, water, tubes, or loose parts like bottle tops and stones. We use them because they encourage children to be creative, solve problems, and think critically. Children can use them in endless ways to invent, build, and role-play, practicing and embedding the skills and knowledge they've learned in formal sessions.

Central to this play-based approach are the Characteristics of Effective Learning: Playing and Exploring, Active Learning, and Creating and Thinking Critically. These are the ways children learn, and our curriculum is designed to foster these dispositions. Our role as adults is to observe this play and, when appropriate, to join in and extend their learning using the SHREC approach, asking questions and providing new vocabulary to deepen their understanding.

Literacy:

Phonics and Early Reading: The teaching of reading is underpinned by the systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme Little Wandle, aligned with the principles set out in the DfE's **The Reading Framework**. The children receive daily phonics lessons, daily Keep Up sessions to ensure children continue to make progress and keep up with teaching and they participate in a Guided Reading Session (Reading Squad), which is matched to their individual current level of phonics ability.

Writing: We ensure explicit instruction in the three foundations of writing: Oral Composition, Handwriting (letter formation and pencil grip), and Phonetic Transcription, in line with DfE guidance. Fine motor activities and handwriting practice are integrated across the indoor and outdoor provision to ensure the development of the correct tripod pencil grip and muscle control.

Handwriting: Our school follows the Little Wandle Handwriting programme, which provides a structured approach to developing fluent, legible, and automatic writing. In the Early Years, we deliver dedicated 15-minute handwriting lessons that are distinct from our phonics sessions. Following the Little Wandle progression, we move through three distinct stages:

- **Phase 1: Foundations for Handwriting:** Focuses on gross and fine motor strength, posture, and pre-writing patterns to build physical stamina.
- **Phase 2: Letter Families:** Rather than following the phonics order, lower-case letters are taught in movement families (e.g. 'Magic Link' letters like c, a, o, g or 'Down the Ladder' letters like l, i, t). This grouping allows children to master similar directional movements, reducing cognitive load.
- **Phase 3: Capitals and Digraphs:** Once lower-case formation is secure, we introduce capital letters and the formation of digraphs/trigraphs.

Consistency is maintained through the use of Little Wandle formation phrases and chants, ensuring children use the correct starting points and orientations. We employ the 'Ready to Write' checklist (Posture, Pencil Grip, Paper Position) at the start of every session to embed healthy physical habits. Progress is supported by the Little Wandle pupil workbooks, ensuring a clear scaffold from mark-making to independent sentence writing.

Maths:

Our approach to Mathematics ensures a strong and coherent curriculum progression, beginning in Preschool. In Preschool, we lay the vital foundations for conceptual understanding, guided by the principles of White Rose Maths, which focuses on practical, real-life experiences with number, shape, and measure. This groundwork is built upon in Reception through the implementation of a Mastery Maths approach. Our daily maths lessons are well-sequenced to build children's knowledge incrementally and deeply, focusing on fluency and problem-solving. This discrete teaching is continuously reinforced within the Enabling Environment, where we provide rich, accessible, and intentional maths activities in all areas of provision, allowing children to practice and apply their skills through purposeful play.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The setting is committed to identifying and providing for the needs of all children who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), ensuring inclusive practice is central to the curriculum.

Our procedures fully adhere to the statutory requirements set out in the SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 Years.

Our Principles for SEND:

- **Inclusion:** We ensure children with SEND fully engage in all activities alongside their peers, with reasonable adjustments made to the environment and curriculum as appropriate.
- **The Graduated Approach:** We use the 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' cycle to identify needs, set clear targets, implement effective support strategies, and evaluate the impact of interventions.
- **The SENCO Role:** The setting's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) is responsible for coordinating provision, liaising with parents/carers and external professionals (such as health visitors or speech and language therapists), and supporting staff with training and resources.
- **Early Intervention:** We use the Progress Check at Age Two and continuous formative assessment to identify any concerns where a child's progress is less than expected, triggering prompt action and support planning in partnership with parents.
- **Parent Partnership:** Parents/carers are viewed as experts on their child. We maintain open communication and involve them in every stage of planning and reviewing their child's support.

Planning:

Early Years Curriculum- this is drawn up by the Foundation Stage team. These plans show curriculum coverage during the Foundation Stage, from the beginning of the Early Years to the end, when they transition into Year 1. We offer a progressive curriculum that builds on prior learning, teaching skills and knowledge, following the natural rhythms of the year, taking advantage of seasons, celebrations and the cycle of the year.

Over the course of the year, children will build a clear and age-appropriate understanding of the world around them through structured exploration and observation. They will gain foundational knowledge of the natural world, including identifying seasonal changes and understanding the basic needs of living things. Additionally, the curriculum focuses on developing a sense of time and place, helping children recognise their own history and the diverse cultures within their community. By the end of the year, pupils will have acquired the essential vocabulary and concepts necessary to describe and question the physical and social environments they inhabit; a secure foundation of knowledge ready for them to apply to their education beyond the foundation stage.

Medium term plans (Focus Map)- These cover a half term period with specific skills, concepts and knowledge to be taught through a specific unit. They are shared with parents at the beginning of the half term.

Short term plans- These show on a daily/ weekly basis how skills have been broken down to a specific learning objective. They show staff deployment and how a balance of teaching strategies is being delivered.

Teachers are to plan challenging tasks based on systematic and accurate assessments of children's previous skills and needs. Plans are to be shared weekly amongst the team. Teams are required to meet daily in a team briefing to discuss plans, focus children and any changes that may be necessary. Planning needs to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the children.

Assessments

In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners must reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately. All Early Years adults make informal observations of children at work and play to contribute towards formative assessments for each child. These occur while the learning is happening and inform teaching on an ongoing basis. They are then used to plan for activities based on child interests, fascinations and developmental needs. Teachers are to use these formative assessments within their planning cycle.

On Going Assessments:

Each child has an on-entry baseline assessment, this will be formed using visits to children's current Preschool, any stay and play sessions and the first six weeks of starting. The children are then formally tracked termly to consider their ongoing needs and support that is required. All assessments are to be submitted to the Assessment Lead Assistant Head and the Early Years Assistant Head at the end of each assessment cycle and discussed in Pupil Progress Meetings.

Transitions:

There is an end of year report that is shared with the next teacher and the parents. A transition meeting is held for each child between the current teacher and the receiving teacher.

Assessments that are reported:

Progress check at 2:

When a child is aged between two and three, practitioners must review their progress and provide parents and/or carers with a short summary of their child's development in the prime areas. This progress check must identify the child's strengths and any areas where the child's progress is less than expected. If there are significant emerging concerns, or an identified special educational need or disability, practitioners should develop targets to inform planning, to support the child's future learning and development, involving parents and/or carers and other professionals (for example, the provider's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or health professionals) as appropriate.

Assessment at the start of the reception year: Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA):

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is a short assessment, taken in the first six weeks in which a child starts reception.

Assessment at the end of the EYFS – the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP):

In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, and no later than 30 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.

Practitioners must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). The Profile must be completed for all children, including those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). Reasonable adjustments to the assessment process for children with SEND must be made as appropriate.

Early years providers must report EYFS Profile results to local authorities, upon request.

Parents as partners in learning

Transitions:

In the Foundation stage to achieve smooth transitions between home and school a series of visits are planned for both the child and parents.

These involve:

- **Current Preschool Visit:** A member of the Early Years Team visits all children who are currently attending another setting, to discuss the individual child with their Key Person and have an initial interaction with the new child.
- **Haydon Bear and Transition Social Story:** They take out a transition story and bear, which stays with the children until July, acting as a transition tool.
- **Home Visits:** In Reception, we arrange a short 10 minute home visit to all children who are new to Haydon Abbey to support their transition into school.
- **Stay and Play:** Parents and their children come in for stay and play sessions in the summer term, prior to starting school on the whole school 'transition day'.
- **Parent Presentation:** Parents are invited for a presentation by the Early Years Team to welcome families and give information about their child starting school and what to expect.

- **Settling in Sessions:** In September children attend two half day sessions, in the company of half of their class in order to have time and space to begin to build a secure relationship with their class teacher and support team.

All of these are intended to make both the child and the parent feel as confident as possible when they start.

Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their child's learning.

Parent Involvement:

Reception:

At the beginning of the Autumn Term, parents are invited to a presentation on the Early Years Curriculum, focusing closely on Reading, Writing and Early Maths, in order to understand what their children will be learning, how it is delivered and how to support them.

In the Spring Term, parents are invited in for a presentation on Behaviours for Learning, followed by a phonics workshop, where they will observe a short phonics lesson and then be involved in reading and writing activities across the indoor and outdoor environments.

Preschool:

Each term, parents are invited into preschool for a workshop based on the Prime Areas of the EYFS:

Physical Development

Personal, social and emotional development

Communication and language

For each session, the parents will receive a short presentation on what this area of learning entails, how we teach it at school and what they can do to support it at home. They will then observe a 'group time' focused on this area of learning, followed by a stay and play session where they explore the play provision based on the area of learning.

Ongoing parental engagement:

If a parent wishes to discuss a particular issue with a member of staff this is not dealt with in class time. They can make an appointment before or after school, whenever the member of staff is able to offer.

Parents are encouraged to share information about their child. This is gathered through informal discussions that may be recorded as part of the child's formative assessment and forms that are gathered at the beginning of the year to gain information on the child as an individual.

Information is regularly shared via newsletters, seesaw updates, letters and school emails.

Parents will also get information on their child through parent teacher meetings each term and an end of year report.

Staff training and development:

All staff in the Foundation Stage have access to training through the professional development and training offered via the school.

We identify training needs within the team and offer bespoke Early Years training to ensure that the staff are well equipped to deliver high quality interactions and provision to the children in the Foundation stage.

We also offer training through whole school training sessions, phase meetings, individual observations and feedback.

External training programmes will be offered when appropriate to an individual's training needs and in line with the school development plan.

The Early Years Lead is part of an Early Years Professionals Group, made up of other local early years providers in our area, which enables sharing of good practice and liaison with feeder schools and preschools within our locality, with a similar demographic.

Safeguarding and Welfare: Adherence to KCSIE

Our paramount responsibility is to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of every child in our care. Our safeguarding practices are underpinned by two core statutory documents:

1. The EYFS Statutory Framework
2. The latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), published by the Department for Education (DfE).

We are committed to operating in accordance with KCSIE by ensuring that:

- **All staff** are aware of their statutory duties, the signs of abuse and neglect, and the process for referring safeguarding concerns.
- **The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** and Deputy DSLs are clearly identified, appropriately trained, and understand their role in managing concerns, including referral to statutory agencies.
- Our recruitment procedures, including obtaining references and enhanced DBS checks, strictly follow the Safer Recruitment requirements outlined in KCSIE.
- We maintain an open and vigilant culture where staff feel confident to raise concerns and every concern is taken seriously and acted upon immediately.
- We share appropriate safeguarding information with other services and schools, where necessary, to ensure the continuity of care and protection for a child.

Please see the School's **Safeguarding Policy**.