



## Early Years Policy

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| Date Adopted:                    | September 2025                                   |
| Next Review Date:                | September 2027<br>(unless EY curriculum changes) |
| Signature of Chair of Governors: |  |
| Signature of Headteacher:        |  |

## Introduction

This policy outlines the purpose, nature, provision, and management of the early years provision that we offer to all pupils attending Hollingbourne Primary School. The Foundation Stage has its own statutory framework, which applies to all pupils from birth to the end of the Reception year.

‘Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experience between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.’

-Statutory framework for the early years’ foundation stage - Department for Education 2021

Children at Hollingbourne Primary School are admitted to Reception in the September following their fourth birthday. Early childhood education is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Hollingbourne we greatly value the significance that the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. We also believe that early childhood education has strong links to our school values, *Resilience, Acceptance, Aspiration, Honesty, Collaboration and Respect*. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

## Aims and objectives

It is our aim that children settle into school calmly with eagerness and enjoyment that develops their love of learning. We aim to provide a place where learning is nurtured and encouraged so that everyone is treated respectfully. We believe that all children thrive when the Reception class is well organised and managed by adults but led by the children. We are committed to all children becoming independent and collaborative learners in a happy, caring, and fun environment that allows them to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively, and intellectually.

## The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

The curriculum framework that we use at Hollingbourne is Birth to 5 Matters non-statutory guidance. This supports staff to deepen their understanding of child development with guidance on how they can support children’s progress throughout the year. There are four principles that underpin this guidance and work together for all children.

1. A Unique Child
2. Positive Relationships
3. Enabling Environments
4. Learning and Development

## A Unique Child

At Hollingbourne Primary School we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We know that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced initially by home and community environments then their school environment. We begin to build links with the families during the Summer term before the children start with us in September. We observe how each child learns to gain an understanding of the characteristics they develop to become effective learners. We use targeted questioning, specific praise and encouragement to develop a positive attitude to learning and high self-esteem and resilience.

In the EYFS we have realistic and challenging expectations and 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 through a creative curriculum and learning environment
- using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs
- providing a wide range of opportunities and environments to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which each child's contribution is valued
- monitoring children's progress and acting to provide support when necessary

It is vital that all children in the school feel and are safe. We educate the children about boundaries and rules and help them to understand why we need to stay safe, and what we can do to keep ourselves safe. 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 both in the real and virtual world.

### Inclusion

All children and their families are valued within our school. We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate because of differences. All children at Hollingbourne School are treated fairly regardless of race, religion, ability or stage of learning. In the early years the children begin to learn to take responsibility for their learning and begin to understand the concept of challenge and resilience.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning. Planning for children with additional needs is in line with the Special Educational Needs & Disability policy.

### Positive Relationships

At Hollingbourne Primary School we recognise that children learn to be confident and independent through the development of secure relationships. We develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

### Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents/carers are children's first educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education through:

- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts school at our stay and play sessions in the Summer term.
- Working with the local PVI providers (Private, voluntary, and independent sector) to outline cohorts' profile of need.
- Outlining the school's expectations in the Home-School agreement.
- Holding a parent consultation early in the academic year to establish how a child is settling into the school environment.
- Operating an open-door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns to approach our staff.
- Providing parents/carers with school newsletters, curriculum letters, the school website and contact books.
- Inviting parents to attend workshops about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics and maths.
- Offering parent/teacher consultation meetings throughout the year where progress is discussed.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each year.
- Parents are invited to a range of activities throughout the school year such as assemblies, workshops, productions and sports day etc.

## Staff

All staff in Reception will develop good working relationships with all children ensuring that their individual needs are met. Throughout each day they will continue to interact positively with all children, being a positive role model and taking time to listen and respond to them effectively.

## Enabling Environments

At Hollingbourne Primary School we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. We recognise that the outside environment is just as important as the inside and we work hard to ensure both provide a wide range of opportunities for the children to learn. We provide a range of resources inside and outside, particularly those that are open ending and holistic allowing the children to use them in a range of different ways and for different purposes. We ensure the environment reflects the children's current interests by providing provocations into the environment which allow for subtle changes to keep the children engaged and motivated whilst still providing the children with the freedom of choice. The environment is carefully set up in a way to ensure maximum independence to provide the children with self confidence and to learn without restrictions or barriers. We ensure the resources are accessible and clear, everything the children need is on offer and this is constantly be reviewed and reflected upon by the Early Years Team.

We will offer rich learning opportunities through stimulating resources that support children to take risks and explore safely by:

- Allowing all children to have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment with planned continuous provision set up alongside discrete learning opportunities and adult led focuses and interventions.
- Providing play-based learning where children have opportunities to direct their own learning alongside planned opportunities provided by staff.

- Ensuring learning environments are planned for both indoors and outdoors, that will encourage a positive attitude to learning and reflect the children's interests, passions, and abilities.
- Providing materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world.
- Providing opportunities that challenge thinking, encourage independent learning and build resilience.
- Ensuring that resources and spaces are safe to use and checked regularly.
- Allowing all children to use the environment in all types of weather (parents will be asked to provide a waterproof coat, mud suit, wellington boots and sun hat).

### Observation, Assessment and Planning

As each pupil enters Reception, we carry out a baseline assessment. We then use this information alongside the information collected from previous settings and early adult observations and interactions to allow us to ensure an accurate starting point for each child. The baseline assessments will happen within the first 6 weeks of a child starting school and will be recorded within age ranges 1-6 as set out in the Birth to 5 Matters non-statutory guidance for the early years' foundation stage. Statutory Reception Baseline Assessments are carried out in line with the Government scheme.

Ongoing assessment takes the form of informal observations (WOW moments), photographic, written work and focused planned activities. Assessment is completed regularly and involves all staff as well as parents' views, when appropriate. These assessments will allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, and plan for the environments accordingly in order to ensure that the resources reflect the opportunities for development of skills for all groups of children.

Planning is based upon themes with discrete directed teaching for phonics, maths, reading and writing. Although planning is based upon a different focus each term; these can and will change direction in response to the children's needs and interests. Our yearly planning identifies next steps for children working towards the Early Learning Goals, as well as for those working towards National Curriculum levels. Each area of learning has a dedicated continuous provision plan that includes possible lines of development, linked areas of the EY curriculum, possible questions for adults to ask and vocabulary that could be inputted to the play and exploration.

### Formative Assessment

Throughout the year children's learning is observed and observations are recorded on their development and progress within ranges 1-6. This helps us to understand children's needs and allows us to plan for opportunities that help strengthen and develop skills and knowledge. Progress is recorded by using informal observations as well as information gathered in learning journals. Parents will have the opportunity to come in and discuss their pupil's progress at least twice a year. Their input will be used to help inform planning for their children's future learning and development.

### Summative Data

A data capture is taken at the end of each term, this information will be taken to pupil progress meetings to ensure that children are progressing and those requiring support or extension are identified and have their needs met appropriately. The class teacher keeps progress records, work samples, and records examples of each child's achievements within the learning journals. These are shared with parents regularly and child

voice plays a key role within their ongoing assessment. Tracking grids are updated at the end of each long term. Pupil progress meetings ensure gap analysis takes place and that all children are supported and extended. At the end of the Reception year, all pupils will be assessed against the Early Learning Goals. Parents will be informed whether their child has met or not met expected levels of development. EY data is submitted to the Local Authority as requested. We will share this information throughout the year at parental consultation meetings and in the end-of-year report.

### Learning and Development

All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. We recognise that all children develop and learn in different ways and at different times. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early year's provision, including children with special educational needs.

### Characteristics of Effective Learning

The Characteristics of Effective Learning and the Prime and Specific areas of Learning and Development are all inter-connected. We recognise that children's learning is not compartmentalised and many of these elements may be in action at the same time whilst children interact with people and things. We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning and ensure that these underpin learning and development across all areas whilst supporting children to approach opportunities with curiosity, energy and enthusiasm whilst allowing them to remain an effective and motivated learner.

- **Playing and exploring** - children will have opportunities to find out and explore through investigation, playing with what they know and experience things whilst being willing to 'have a go.'
- **Active learning**- children will have time and space to be involved and concentrate on their learning whilst persisting when they encounter difficulties and enjoy their achievements through what they set out to do.
- **Creating and thinking critically** - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for approaching things in different ways.

### Areas of Learning

The EYFS is made up of seven areas of learning:

#### Prime areas

- Communication & Language
- Personal, Social, Emotional Development
- Physical Development

#### Specific areas

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

These areas are taught through a mix of adult led sessions and child-initiated play and exploration.

Opportunities to cover the curriculum are created throughout all aspects of the school day, from free flow snack bar, to lining up times.

We have an outside area which is available to all children throughout most of the day, this helps to provide the children with a range of different ways to experience the curriculum. We make sure that what is on offer outside is different to what is inside, so learning can happen on a larger scale.

Children are taught to read and write through the daily teaching of Phonics, with plenty of opportunities to apply these skills within the environment, other lessons and through plenty of reading opportunities at school and at home. We encourage parents/ carers to read with their children for 10 minutes per day then write about their child's progression in the reading diaries, linking comments to the targets we offer. This provides and encourages the children to develop a love of reading and gives them extra practice at a skill that underpins the specific areas of learning.

### Play

We value play and understand it holds infinite learning opportunities. We understand that play allows children to be inquisitive, creative and experimental all while they ask questions and feel safe. Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. The adults model play and play sensitively with the children fitting in with their plans and ideas. The children are encouraged to try new activities and judge risks for themselves. We talk to them about how we get better at things through effort and practice and that we can all learn when things go wrong. They practice and build up ideas of learning how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own.

### Routines

The children arrive at school between 8.40-8.45 where they come in and take part in early morning work until register time. We then teach predominantly three adult led carpet sessions throughout the day which are Phonics, Maths and Literacy. The carpet session at the end of the day is used to share examples of positive behaviour, learning throughout the day and sharing a story, we also might use this time to develop understanding of expressive arts and design and our understanding of the world. Adult-led sessions will last no longer than 10-15 minutes to ensure the children's focus. When the children are not engaged in adult led carpet sessions they are engaging in continuous provision. The children have free access to milk and fruit at the snack station. Children are closely monitored when eating and can be seen by at least one adult at all times. The children slowly begin to attend assemblies, starting with celebration assembly, then signing assembly and we slowly increase these as we reach Term 6, we make sure that we go at a pace suitable for the current cohort. The children have lunch time between 12:00-13.00 where they eat lunch in the hall then go out on the field with the rest of the school.

### Transition

At Hollingbourne we believe that we should be prepared for the pupils entering each stage of learning. We see learning as a continuum and aim for a smooth transition from home to School. We carefully plan to support children with transition and to ensure that each child starts school positively and settles into their new class quickly and happily.

### Safeguarding & Welfare

At Hollingbourne, we understand that children learn best when they are healthy, safe and when their individual needs are being met. Legally we are required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage. These requirements will include:

- Having a named Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Safeguard Leads available.
- Providing training to all staff to ensure they understand the safeguarding policy and procedures
- Ensuring that all adults who look after the children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so
- Providing induction training so that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities
- Ensuring members of Early Years staff hold a current paediatric first aid certificate and is available and present at all times that children are present
- Ensuring that there is always a first aid box visible and accessible with guidance on keeping it well stocked and up to date.
- Ensuring that staffing arrangements meet the needs of all children to ensure their safety
- A setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence
- Promoting good health and nutrition of all children attending the setting
- Adhering to the school's policy and procedures for administering medication
- Providing healthy snacks and encouraging parents/carers to support this by also sending in healthy snacks
- Managing behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs
- Ensuring that all furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for
- Ensuring that fire regulations and guidance are displayed and that all staff understand and know the procedures in place for evacuating children safely
- Ensuring that children have access to the outdoor play area daily
- Ensuring risks are managed and risk assessments in place where necessary
- Ensuring children with special educational needs (SEN) have specific arrangements in place and are these are reviewed with parents and children three times a year or sooner if needed due to statutory requirements
- Maintaining records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children and our statutory requirements.
- Promoting the good oral health of children.

### Keeping Safe

We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules, limits and risks. We follow the school's behaviour systems and policies. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. We encourage children to take risks and highlight the importance of keeping themselves safe by teaching them how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children.

### Good Health

All children are provided with a healthy snack each day. Milk is offered free of charge until they turn five. Parents are able to purchase milk via the cool milk website. They always have access to water. Parents/carers are asked to provide a water bottle at the beginning of each day, these can be filled up when needed. We encourage children to bring in water only. All school dinners are provided by Caterlink.

### Intimate Care

'Intimate' care is any care which involves washing, touching, or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children are able to carry out themselves. However, depending on a child's age and stage of development, they may need some support, for example dressing, wiping their bottom after using the toilet and changing underwear following an accident. Any child identified as having specific needs will have an Intimate Care Plan which will be shared with and agreed with parents/carers. Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child. Intimate care can be provided with permission from the parent or guardian. If a child has an accident, staff will provide help to change the child (gloves will be always worn). If the child cannot be cleaned to an acceptable standard, parents will be called to assist.

### Safer Eating and Enhanced Supervision

During eating times, children must always be within sight and hearing of an adult, with a dedicated adult present with a Paediatric First Aid (PFA) certificate in the room. Snack (fruit) and milk is available during child-initiated times and children can access this when they feel they need it.

### Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS teacher and staff to follow the principles stated in this policy. There is a named Governor responsible for EYFS. This governor will discuss EYFS practice with the practitioners regularly and provide feedback to the practitioners and to the whole governing body.

Senior Leadership will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

Signed

Jacqui Bennett

September 2025