



Pilgrims' Way Primary School

EYFS Policy



**Policy written: Spring 2025**

**Reviewed: Spring 2026**

**Date of next review: Spring 2027**

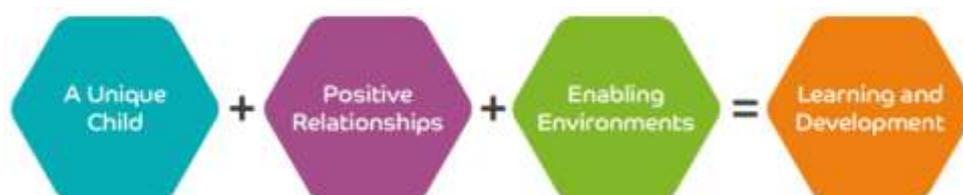
## Rationale

At Pilgrims' Way, our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) policy is rooted in the belief that every child is unique and capable of achieving their full potential. In our pre-school and reception classes, we celebrate the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and strengths of all our children, ensuring an inclusive and nurturing environment where they can flourish. Through a rich, play-based curriculum, we foster curiosity, creativity, and a lifelong love of learning. We recognise that parents are a child's first and most important educators, and we are committed to working in close partnership with families to support each child's development. Together, we lay the foundation for confident, independent learners who are ready to thrive in the next stage of their education.

## Principles

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage states four guiding principles which shape our practice within our EYFS classrooms. These are:

- Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- 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.
- We recognise the importance of all areas of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates. Our practice is informed by the EYFS framework and covers the education and care of all children in EYFS, including children with special educational needs and disabilities. (See SEN and Disability Policy and the SEN Information Report).



Our curriculum design, quality interactions and use of assessment ensures that we address the seven key features of effective practice:

- Providing the best for every child.
- Offering consistent, high-quality care for all of our children.
- Planning a curriculum with a focus on what we want children to learn.
- Using a range of different approaches to ensure our pedagogy is effective in helping children to learn.
- Implementing a range of assessment strategies to check what children have learnt in order to inform future planning.
- Supporting children to develop their self-regulation and executive function.
- Developing a strong partnership with parents through positive and regular communications.

## The Areas of Teaching and Learning

Learning and development is categorised into seven equal and interconnected areas of learning. The three prime areas of learning are crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The 3 prime areas are:

- **Communication and language**
  - Listening, attention and understanding
  - Speaking
- **Physical development**
  - Gross motor skills
  - Fine motor skills
- **Personal, social and emotional development**
  - Self-regulation
  - Managing self
  - Building relationships

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

- **Literacy**
  - Comprehension
  - Word reading
  - Writing
- **Mathematics**
  - Numbers
  - Numerical patterns
- **Understanding the world**
  - Past and present
  - People, culture and communities
  - The natural world
- **Expressive arts and design**
  - Creating with materials
  - Being imaginative and expressive

We recognise that teaching can take place at all times of the day through directed teaching sessions, through times of play and inside and outside the classroom. We encourage all of these. We strive to make our environments irresistible to children and encourage our staff and volunteers to seize every opportunity for teaching. Weekly and daily planning formalise this and aim to ensure a balance of formal and informal learning. Staff are encouraged to think carefully about their questions and interventions in children's learning in order to optimise this. Learning should be personalised by building on the child's interests and involving them fully in reflecting on what they have learned and how they may build on their skills. Children will be intrinsically motivated to be life-long learners.

At appropriate opportunities the adults will:

- Question, respond to questions and engage the child in extended conversations that support sustained shared thinking
- Extend vocabulary, knowledge and skills
- Encourage independence
- Add resources that stimulate, motivate and engage the learner
- Demonstrate, model and work alongside the children
- Help children to see links in their learning
- Support and encourage the children
- Encourage children to be problem solvers, problem setters and investigators
- Re-direct the play if necessary
- Help children to learn how to negotiate and resolve conflict
- Promote children's well-being
- Observe and assess learning
- Record judgments and plan for next steps in learning
- Provide feedback to child/other adult/parents
- Ensure the environment is safe and secure and that the Welfare Requirements are in place

## Characteristics of Effective Learning

We uphold the view that learning is underpinned by the characteristics of effective learning. In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice.

The 3 characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- **playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go';
- **active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements; and
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

All of these areas interlink throughout the curriculum and adults make the most of opportunities to interact with children to develop their playing, thinking and learning. Adults also recognise that there are times when they need to take a step back to enable children to think critically and solve a problem by trial and error or perseverance.

## **Play**

Play is the foundation of learning in our Early Years classrooms, providing children with opportunities to explore, create, and develop essential skills in a meaningful and engaging way. We recognise the importance of both indoor and outdoor play in supporting holistic development. Our carefully planned environments encourage children to develop confidence, independence, and resilience as they engage in purposeful play experiences. Through play, our children build relationships, enhance their communication and language skills, and develop physically, socially, and emotionally. Play-based learning underpins the development of the prime areas—Communication and Language, Physical Development, and Personal, Social, and Emotional Development—as well as the specific areas of learning. By balancing child-led and adult-guided play, we ensure that all children have the opportunity to develop their curiosity, problem-solving abilities, and a love for learning that will serve them throughout their lives.

## **The Enabling Environment**

Our rich and varied environment plays a key role in supporting and extending our children's development and learning. It gives them confidence to explore and learn in secure and safe, yet challenging, indoor and outdoor spaces. Our environment gives all children the opportunity to make independent choices; and this enables our practitioners to observe what interests each child and begin to develop the language that will support these activities. Our EYFS classrooms have areas where the children can be active, quiet, creative, investigative or imaginative. Each classroom has defined learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. This is our established, continuous provision and it is accessed by the children on a daily basis. We have enclosed outdoor areas (both for pre-school and Year R), and our children are able to free-flow between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Being outdoors offers the children opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. They are able to explore, use their senses, develop their language skills and be physically active. Resources both inside and outside enable the children to develop in all the areas of learning

## **Early Language, Reading and Mathematics**

At Pilgrims' Way, we provide a language-rich environment in which high quality talk is valued and encouraged. All staff model good communication skills in their interactions with children and each other.

For early phonics teaching, the school follows the Twinkl Phonics scheme to ensure that we are effective in teaching children to be successful early readers. Pre-school focuses on the skills and knowledge required for Level 1 phonics and then teaching of letter sounds begins with Level 2 in Year R. Home reading materials ensure that the children are given reading books that reflect their phonic knowledge, so phonics is the only strategy used for decoding. The children in Year R start by taking home Level 1 books which are read to the child by an adult. As the children begin to recognise and blend the Level 2 sounds they are given a decodable reading book to take home along with another 'reading for pleasure' book to share with an adult.

The school also places an importance on the development of early comprehension skills; in line with the Revised Framework to ensure that children are able to comprehend what they read and listen to. This sits alongside the development of children's speaking, listening and language skills which are crucial for developing children's comprehension and vocabulary, with a specific focus on closing the vocabulary gap for children starting school with less experience of a language rich environment. Adults also strive to promote a love of reading through daily story time and carefully chosen books within the learning environment. Teachers closely monitor children's progress in reading through regular phonics assessments in order that interventions are implemented to address gaps in learning promptly. Advice is sought from the inclusion team where these do not prove successful.

Maths is taught through a range of experiences including counting as part of the daily routine; discreet teaching with follow up group activities and play based opportunities and experiences through the learning environment. As with phonics, children experiencing any difficulties are identified early and support measures are put into place. Teachers target specific questions at individuals in whole class teaching, extending the children's understanding, allowing key mathematical concepts to be revisited and developed across the year. We use a combination of NCETM Mastering Number and White Rose Maths, which ensures progression and coverage throughout the year.

## **Assessment**

Through observation, we assess and gather information about the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs, before planning challenging, achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning. For our children joining Reception, the Reception Baseline Assessment is carried out within the first four weeks. The Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoEL) are integral to our assessment and accountability systems. At the end of the Reception year, each child's level of development is recorded against the seventeen Early Learning Goals. Our Early Years Foundation Stage practitioners meet with other schools to moderate their high-quality evidence of the children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile. They secure the accuracy of their assessments through professional conversations, observations and children's work, and engage in year group moderation exercises frequently throughout the year.

(See the Assessment Policy for further information on assessment).

## **Safeguarding and Welfare**

Our children's health, safety and well-being are greatly important to us. Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We have a robust Safeguarding Policy (see Safeguarding and Child protection Policy) and are vigilant and consistent in implementing these procedures.

## **Inclusion**

(See Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy)

## **Relationships with Parents**

We know what an important role parents/carers play in their children's learning journey and we aim to involve them as much as possible in school life. We recognise the huge contribution that parents make to their child's learning and we work hard to develop and sustain links with parents. We seek to start building relationships with parents from the term before their child starts school, through clear communication, initial visits and information sessions. Throughout the year we build relationships with parents in the following ways:

- Stay and play sessions
- Reading books shared between home and school
- Termly curriculum newsletters
- Parent workshops
- Parent consultations
- Three formal written reports

## **Transition**

We work closely with our, and other pre-schools, to ensure that we have detailed information about the children prior to them starting school. We invite the children to join us for sessions in the summer term before they join our school.

As the children prepare to enter KS1, the Year 1 teachers observe the children in the Early Years setting during the summer term. The Early Years teachers also meet with the Year 1 teachers to discuss the end of year data in order to ensure a smooth transition into Year 1. These discussions help the Year 1 teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children. The children will also spend time with their new teacher in the Year 1 classroom.