Hedworthfield Early Years Policy

Reviewed September 2026 next review January 2029

Hedworthfield Primary School
Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

"All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality early learning provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential."
(Statutory Framework for EYFS 2026)

Current DfE framing continues to emphasise a secure, safe and happy childhood, high-quality early learning, partnership with parents/carers, equality of opportunity and preparation for Key Stage 1.
(Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, DfE, effective 1 September 2026)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the period of time from a child's birth to the end of their reception year. At Hedworthfield Primary School, this applies to the time children are in nursery and reception year groups. Children join us in nursery school at the beginning of the school year in which they turn four or if there are spaces, the term after they turn three years old. They begin attending reception class full time at the start of the term in which they turn five. We offer various provision types and they are as follows: mornings only, afternoons only and full time 30 hours provision.
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At Hedworthfield Primary School we work across two buildings to deliver our Early Years Curriculum. Our Nursery pupils and Thrive One and Two pupils access the Early Years Unit and our Reception pupils and Thrive Three pupils are based within the infant buildings. This means that for some of the day Nursery and Thrive one and Two and Reception and Thrive Three children work together in the same environment. This benefits children as they are in the same part of the school for a longer period of time. This makes the first few years of education a time of emotional security, which builds confidence and reduces the disruption that may be caused by transition. Children have familiar routines and work with the same team of familiar adults. Staff get to know children and families very well, making it easier to cater for their needs and support children's development. The approach also allows both older and younger children to work together, providing excellent peer group support.

Our Philosophy

We adhere to the Statutory framework the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework 2026, which sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to five years old. All schools and Ofsted registered early years providers must follow the EYFS statutory framework.

We value the four guiding principles.

• 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.

• The ***importance of learning and development***. Children develop and learn at different rates. We plan the curriculum around the seven areas of learning for the Early Years Foundation Stage:

A Unique Child

At Hedworthfield Primary School, we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals within our school and do not discriminate against children because of their 'differences'. All children at Hedworthfield Primary School are treated fairly regardless of race, religion, gender or ability. In our school, all children are valued and we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.
- With support from the school SENCO and regard to the SEND Code o Practice:0 to 25 years,, we have arrangements in place to identify and support children in EYFS with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) ensuring that all children have the opportunity to develop to their full potential. This may take the form of additional class support, targeted questioning or interventions. Where concerns arise, practitioners work in partnership with parents/carers, the SENCO and relevant professionals so that support can be put in place promptly.

Welfare

"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." (EYFS Statutory Framework , DFE2026)

At Hedworthfield Primary School, we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2026. At Hedworthfield Primary School, we comply with the safeguarding and welfare requirements in the current EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers (DfE, effective 1 September 2026), alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education, Working Together to Safeguard Children and the school's safeguarding policies and procedures.

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. 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. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. (See Whole School Safeguarding Children Policy)

In order to promote the welfare of all children in our care, we:

- Promote children's good health, including oral health, and follow current requirements for medicines, infection control and first aid.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs ensuring that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so. Implement safeguarding procedures that include appropriate whistle blowing, safer recruitment checks and safeguarding training for staff.
- Ensure members of the EYFS team are Paediatric First Aid training
- Ensure premises and equipment are safe and suitable, including compliance with the EYFS prohibition on banned dog breeds being kept or present on early years premises.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.
- Implement safeguarding procedures that include appropriate whistle blowing, safer recruitment checks and safeguarding training for staff.
- Maintain a regular two-way flow of information with parents/carers and respond appropriately to unexplained or prolonged absences in line with safeguarding procedures.
- Follow safer eating requirements: children are appropriately supervised while eating; dietary requirements, allergies and intolerances are known and shared with relevant staff; food is prepared to reduce choking risk; and children remain within sight and hearing of a member of staff while eating.
- Follow the guidance for Safer sleeping: we are committed to ensuring that all children who sleep or rest while in our care do so in a safe, comfortable and appropriately supervised environment. Staff will follow current safer-sleep guidance and the individual needs of each child, including information provided by parents and carers.
- Have regard to current DfE guidance on children's screen use in early years settings and ensure any use of screens is purposeful, age-appropriate and supports children's learning and development.

Positive Relationships

At Hedworthfield Primary School, we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the crucial role that parents play in educating their children. We aim to promote partnerships with parents through:

- Offering home visits to all children prior to starting in our nursery setting and talking to parents about their child before their child starts nursery;
- Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school;
- Providing the opportunity for children to spend time with their teacher and keyworkers before

starting school during our 'Come and Join in' visits;

- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress and allowing free access to the children's 'Learning Journal' books;
- Encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher or key worker if there are any concerns. There is a formal meeting for parents each term at which the teacher or key worker and the parent discuss the child's progress.
- Parents receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.
- Arranging a range of regular activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents: Stay and Play sessions, Sports Day, etc.
- Encouraging parents to contribute to their child's children's 'Learning Journal' books in the form of WOW moments and holiday homework which allow parents to leave comments relating to the children's achievements.

All staff working within the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. At Hedworthfield Primary School, each child is assigned to a Key Worke' who will be the parents and child's key contact. The Key Worker'will share information about children's progress to parents at Parents Evenings. The key person will also help ensure that the child's care is tailored to their individual needs, supports the child to become familiar with the setting, develops a settled relationship with the child and builds a partnership with parents/carers.

Key Workers, teachers and Early Years Lead will work with the School Nurse, Speech and Language therapists, SEND support staff, health workers and other family support practitioners to provide a multi-agency network which supports the needs of individual children as and when this is necessary. At times, we will welcome visiting student teachers and school students who work alongside our staff. We may also have volunteers who come in to support children's learning. All visitors and helpers will hold an appropriate DBS certificate, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children.

Enabling Environments

At Hedworthfield Primary School, we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development both indoors and outdoors. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend children's learning.

The Learning Environment

The Early Years provision is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The early years provision is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. The provision has its own enclosed outdoor areas. This has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It caters for different learning styles. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that help the children to develop in all seven areas of learning (see Learning & Development below).

Our outdoor area is a thoughtfully designed outdoor learning space, which children can access every day. With supervision, children can explore freely without any barriers to learning. The outdoor area is a natural extension of the classroom, offering a wide variety of resources to support curiosity, creativity, and skill development. EYFS staff plan engaging activities, while also allowing children the freedom to make their own choices, fostering independence and a love of learning in the fresh air.

In addition to this, we have our on-site Forest School that the children have regular weekly access to. Forest School is an inspirational concept providing learning opportunities through practical activities in an outdoor

environment. Children enjoy the freedom to explore and experience the natural world in all seasons and in all weathers. Forest School embraces an approach of nurturing, supporting and developing the self-esteem of participants. It is an ideal environment in which to develop innovation, problem solving, risk taking, creativity and teamwork. The safety and welfare of the pupils participating in Forest School is paramount and therefore all tasks are age-appropriate and risk assessments have been carried out for all activities prior to taking place.

Learning and Development

Our curriculum is designed for children to learn from a mix of focus adult-led tasks, guided provision and child-initiated learning within provision that are weaved throughout the day. Sequenced curriculum objectives are aligned to the Early Learning Goals and we have deliberately repeated key themes and stories throughout the EYFS to ensure children can build on their knowledge and have opportunities to develop and apply skills from the prime areas of learning and development. As children move through the phase, the curriculum is sequenced to prepare them for Key Stage One.

At Hedworthfield Primary School, we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are inter-connected. Children access a curriculum which is play based and provides playful learning experiences through which they can learn and develop. Opportunities for children to develop these skills independently, are provided throughout the learning environment in the form of resource enhancements to each area.

Teaching and Learning

Our whole school policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our school. These features apply to teaching and learning in the EYFS just as much as they do to the teaching in Key Stage One and Two.

We aim to:

- Develop the partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- Recognise how young children develop and learn, and how this will affect teaching and learning;
- Use a range of approaches that provide practical, play based, first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication;
- Operate an ambitious, carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards the Early Learning Goals throughout EYFS.
- Enable children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;
- Encourage children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management;
- Support learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- Identify the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are shared with practitioners and parents;
- Develop good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school;

Characteristics of Learning:

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners will reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. The three characteristics of effective teaching and learning in EYFS are:

1. *Playing and Exploring*

Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practice and build up ideas and learn 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. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

2. *Active Learning*

Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

3. *Creating and thinking critically*

When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.

Our children are given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the environment to extend their learning.

Areas of Learning and Development:

We follow Development Matters (revised 2023) to deliver the educational programmes for Early Years.
The EYFS is made up of seven areas of learning. There are three prime areas and four specific areas of learning as follows:

Prime Areas:

1 Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2 Communication and Language
3 Physical Development

Specific Areas:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others, each is equally important and are all interconnected. We deliver our curriculum through a combination and balance of adult led and child-initiated activities. We take every opportunity, in the moment, to guide, encourage, model, and support learning. By doing this thoughtfully, meaningful teaching and high-quality learning and interactions naturally happen. In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELG's) that define the expectations that most children should reach by the end of the EYFS.

Oracy, Phonics, Early Reading and Maths

At Hedworthfield, we love language, and opportunities to develop both the children's speaking and listening skills. These are embedded within our Early Years Curriculum. From modelling conversations, joining in with songs and rhymes and through exploring language in our carefully chosen core texts, the foundations of all future learning is form. We aim to build a culture and love of reading that permeates every classroom alongside teaching the essential skills of reading. In the EYFS, quality texts stimulate all forms of learning and all children leave reception with a strong cultural knowledge of well-known traditional tales,

nursery rhymes and stories. The journey of a reader in the EYFS is well mapped. We develop a phonetical awareness, engage in conversations about books and characters, to daily phonics instruction, and then develop their own independent reading strategies, in order to enable children to leave the EYFS being able to successfully access the next stage of their learning in Year 1 and beyond. As a school, we follow the systematic synthetic phonics programme of Read Write Inc.

In order to ensure that children are ready to succeed beyond our Early Years, we adopt a more formal approach to learning throughout the Reception year, whilst maintaining a balance of child-initiated play and planned independent learning experiences and challenges. There is a shift to focus more upon the Literacy and Mathematics areas of learning as we aim to ensure that all children achieve their Early Learning Goals by the end of their Reception year. We implement Read Write Inc Phonics and Mastering Number Maths in addition to the experiences we provide for all pupils through our forest school and seamless outdoor provision. Furthermore, we enhance the environment by adding interesting resources and artefacts linked to the theme and to provide a high level of challenge for the children. Challenges are set for the classroom areas both indoors and outdoors and are designed to stretch children to their full potential.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

The planning within the EYFS is based around children's interests and needs and chosen themes that will be covered over a half term.

We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs and next steps. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of observation and this involves practitioners observing children closely in play-based activities. These observations are recorded in children's individual 'Learning Journal' books. Ongoing (formative) assessment is an integral part of our practice enabling us to build a solid understanding of each child through day to day interactions.

Our rigorous 'Assessment for Learning' procedures ensure that every child has a learning journey that is unique and personalised to their own needs and abilities. Each child has their own Learning Journal where their learning and development is documented. We do this in collaboration with all Early Years staff, the children themselves and parents. We value the knowledge parents hold on their children and strongly encourage them to contribute to their child's learning journals through home observation which allows us to build a more accurate picture of children's development. Practitioners use their professional knowledge of each child to identify progress, strengths and areas where additional support may be needed. Assessment is used to inform responsive teaching and curriculum planning. Development Matters is used as non statutory curriculum guidance however this does not replace professional judgement.

We place great emphasis on 'In the moment' assessment and this enables us to close the learning gaps quicker for all children by providing them with challenges appropriate to their individual learning needs as the children are learning and playing. It also allows us to accurately assess their next steps for learning to move their learning forward with pace. This is evidenced in our children's Learning Journals and is a key feature of our day to day practice.

At Hedworthfield Primary School, we track individual children's progress closely throughout the year in order to ascertain the age band they are working within in order for us to plan for their next steps in learning. This is clearly documented within the children's individual 'Learning Journal' books and on the school's EYFS tracking system.

Reception Baseline Assessment

In line with statutory guidance, all reception children complete the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) in the first six weeks in which they start reception.

Within the final term of reception class, it is a statutory requirement to assess all children's attainment against 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG's). This information is then submitted to the Local Authority (LA) for analysis. Teachers assess each child as either 'expected' or 'emerging'. We then provide a written summary to parents, reporting their child's progress against the Early Learning Goals (ELG's) and a short narrative about *how* their child learns (*Characteristics of Learning*). Parents are given the opportunity to

discuss these judgements with the teacher should they wish. The outcomes of each child's stage of development and learning needs will also be discussed with the Year 1 teacher, as part of the school's transition arrangements, to assist with the planning of activities in year 1.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to follow the principles stated in this policy.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Early Years Leader

The Early Years Leader is critical in ensuring the delivery of high-quality, compliant, and continuously improving early years provision.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Governing Body

There is a named Governor responsible for the EYFS. This governor will discuss EYFS practice with the Early Years Lead regularly and provide feedback to the whole governing body, raising any issues that require discussion.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Leadership Team

The Head teacher, EYFS Lead and Senior Management Team (SMT) will carry out regular monitoring of the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. These reviews will include, but are not limited to

● Statutory Compliance: Understand and apply the implications of relevant legislation, statutory frameworks (including EYFS 2026) and all school policies for early years settings.

● Strategic Planning: Prepare the Risk Assessments, EYFS Development and Action Plans (including short and long-term targets), and contribute strategically to the overall School Development Plan (SDP).

● Monitoring & Review: Regularly review, monitor, and evaluate provision and practice in consultation with the Head Teacher ensuring alignment with the Statutory Framework and all school procedures.

● External Engagement: Participate actively in school, peer, and external reviews to maintain high standards.

● Data Analysis: Rigorously analyse and interpret EYFSP data against national, local, and school historical data. Use this analysis to inform policies, practices, expectations, and teaching methods.