



Esh Winning Primary School

EARLY YEARS POLICY

(Updated October 2023)

Next Review: October 2026 (or earlier if amendments required)

Introduction

'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has 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.'

(Early Years Foundation Stage Profile - Department for Children, Schools and Families 2012)

The Early Years applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At Esh Winning Primary School children are admitted to Reception in the September following their fourth birthday.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Esh Winning Primary School we greatly value the importance that the Early Years plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

Aims & Objectives

As outlined in the EYFS Statutory Framework 'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences 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. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.'

We aim to support all children to become independent and collaborative learners. We will provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential.

At Esh Winning Primary School, we will:

- Provide a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging programme of learning and development for the children to experience as they begin their journey through school.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond and enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment.
- Develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children.
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. We provide early intervention for those children that require additional support.

The Early Years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do;
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;

- It provides a rich and stimulating environment;
- It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents, carers and outside agencies;
- It recognises the importance of every member of staff in supporting the transition process from Nursery to Reception, and Reception to Key Stage 1.

The Early Years is based on four themes:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

A Unique Child

At Esh Winning 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. We nurture each child's "uniqueness" and individuality.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning.

In the Early Years we set realistic and challenging expectations keyed to the needs of our children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the stage. We do this 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 learn effectively;
- Offering a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Employing resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able, of children with disabilities, of children from all social and cultural backgrounds, of children from different ethnic groups, and of those from diverse linguistic backgrounds;
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary (such as referrals to outside agencies) as necessary.
- Working closely with parents, carers and other outside agencies to ensure all children's needs are met and we enable them to access the curriculum and make good progress.

Inclusion

At Esh Winning Primary we are determined to meet the educational needs of all our pupils, to encourage independence and full participation in the life of the school. A number of pupils will, at some stage of their school career, experience some degree of special educational need. Working within the guidelines of the Code of Practice, it is our intention that the educational needs of all pupils are identified and provision made to meet these as early as possible. It is expected that all relevant information concerning children with special educational

needs will be treated with the appropriate respect and confidentiality. We value all our children as individuals irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and supports them at their own pace so that most of our children achieve Early Learning Goals. We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents and outside agencies.

Positive Relationships

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

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

- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts in the Reception class at our open afternoons.
- Arranging, where possible, visits by the Nursery teacher and Early Years Lead to all children in their home setting prior to their starting in the Nursery. The visit will give the staff the opportunity to meet both the parents and the child in their own familiar and secure surroundings.
- Each child will receive a one hour transition session (*Stay and Play*) prior to them starting in the Nursery.
- Arranging, where possible, visits by the Reception teacher to all children in their childcare provision or private Nursery.
- Providing a handbook of information about commencing Nursery and Reception at Esh Winning.
- Outlining the school's expectations in the Home-School agreement for Reception children.
- Providing an Early Years Open Day for parents/carers to meet with staff to discuss school routines, expectations and to answer any questions parents/carers may have. During this open day there is also the opportunity to meet a range of partners, e.g. school uniform providers, school nurse etc.
- 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. Conversely, if Early Years' staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them.
- Written contact through the school newsletters.
- Publishing a Curriculum Overview detailing the areas of learning and the overarching theme of the term or half-term.
- Inviting parents to attend informal meetings about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics or reading.
- Sharing photographs and information through Seesaw on a daily basis and valuing the on-going contributions to this from parents/carers. This may include sharing photos, videos or messages about learning, significant life or milestone events.
- Offering two parent/teacher consultation meetings per year at which their child's progress is discussed.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in Nursery and Reception.
- Asking parents of Reception children to sign a generic permission form for visits, food tasting and photographs etc. This is held in the school's admissions pack.
- Passwords are set up with parents in order to maintain safety and security in the collection of children. Any adult, who is not the parent, will be required to state the password before the child is released into their care. This procedure takes place in both the Nursery and Reception classes.

- Parents are invited to a range of activities throughout the school year such as assemblies, workshops, Christmas productions, sports day and Thank You lunches etc.
- Offering a range of activities, throughout the year, to encourage specific collaboration between child, school and parents e.g. Dads and Lads reading event, topic outcome events.
- Promoting the learning focus for the week and ideas for additional activities, which can be completed at home, are displayed in both the Nursery and Reception cloakroom areas.

Staffing

Nursery – 1 class teacher and 1 Nursery Nurse plus specifically appointed staff to support children with additional needs.

Reception – 2 class teachers and 2 Teaching Assistants plus specifically appointed staff to support children with additional needs.

All staff in the Early Years aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them.

Enabling Environments

At Esh Winning Primary School we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development, where the children feel confident, secure and challenged. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision.

Play-based learning is paramount and children have opportunities to direct their own learning with planned opportunities provided by staff.

We plan a learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning and reflects the individual's interests, needs, passions and abilities. We use materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. We encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning. We ensure that resources and spaces are safe to use and checked regularly.

The EYFS Curriculum

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observations of children's needs. Interests and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve the early learning goals.

All seven areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. None of the areas of learning can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas.

They require a balance of adult led, adult directed and child initiated activities in order for most children to reach the levels required at the end of the Early Years. During children's play, early years practitioners interact to stretch and challenge children further

The three Prime areas are:

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

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Specific Areas:

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

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first hand experiences in which children explore, think creatively and are active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

As a team, we use our EYFS Long term plan (this is a working document that is amended as the year progresses to meet the needs of individuals and classes), this links such things as key texts, Cultural Capital, assessments, interventions, parental engagement opportunities so activities demonstrate progress across the phase and an accumulative diet of experiences.

Children have whole class and small groups teaching inputs which increase as they progress through the EYFS. Reception participate in a daily phonics session, following the 'Read Write Inc' programme and Maths focus sessions using 'White Rose Maths'. The Reception children also receive a two sessions of PE each week, one of which is led by a qualified coach.

Nursery pupils participate in a daily adult led Literacy and Mathematics session. 'Read, Write, Inc' starts in the summer term of Nursery.

Pupils in Nursery and Reception follow weekly sessions of 'Jigsaw' to support their Personal, Social and Emotional development.

Observation and Assessment

Early Years' staff use observations as the basis for planning. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning. Esh Winning staff use Seesaw to record evidence, such as photographs and videos. This evidence is linked directly to the Birth to 5 Matters statements.

During the first term in Reception, the teacher assesses the ability of each child using the NFER baseline test. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children. Both the Nursery and the Reception staff assess children "on entry" using the Birth to 5 Matters statements. A baseline is also completed by the Nursery and Reception staff to show knowledge and understanding of basic concepts, e.g. shapes, colours, measures, numbers and letters.

The Foundation Stage Profile is the nationally employed assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the Reception year, and to summarise their pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.

Reception staff record each child's level of development against the 17 early Learning goals as 'expected' or 'emerging'. We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the Early Years takes the form of both formal and informal observations, photographic evidence and through planned activities. Assessment is completed regularly and involves both the teacher and other adults, as appropriate.

The teacher keeps an overview of learning and records examples of each child's work. Both of these systems contain a wide range of evidence that we share with parents at each parental consultation meeting.

Tracking grids are updated at the end of each term. This provides a summary sheet for each child which feeds into the whole-school assessment and tracking process. We record each child's level of development to be *Emerging or Expected* in the Birth to 5 Matters development bands.

At the end of the final term in Reception we send a summary of these assessments to the LA for analysis. The child's next teacher uses this information to make plans for the year ahead. We share this information too at parental consultation meetings and in the end-of-year report. Parents receive an annual written report that offers brief comments on each child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs, and gives details of the child's general progress. We complete these in the Summer term.

The Learning Environment

The Nursery and Reception classrooms are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are specific areas where the children can be active, be quiet, creative etc. Children have access to both inside and outside area across the day; this has a positive effect on the children's development. Both the Nursery and Reception classes have their own outdoor areas as well as access to the main school grounds. At Esh Winning Primary School we are also supported by a member of staff who is qualified in the Forest School programme and the Nursery and Reception children access a variety of activities linked to this practice. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and in different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. All areas of the curriculum can be explored outside.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- Playing and exploring - children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.

'Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development.'

Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. Each class has a Classroom Charter and we use Zones of Regulation to understand different feelings and emotions. The continued use of these helps the children to stop, think about their behaviour, realise the possible consequences and make a better choice. 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.

- Active learning - children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.

'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 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.

- Creating and thinking critically - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

“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.”

Children should be given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children’s thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning.

Teaching & Learning Styles

The features of effective teaching and learning in our school are defined in our policy on teaching and learning. They apply to teaching and learning in the Early Years just as much as they do to the teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 or 2.

The more general features of good practice in our school that relate to the Early Years are:

- the partnership between teachers and parents, carers and other settings that helps our children to feel secure at school, and to develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- the understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this must be reflected in their teaching;
- the range of approaches that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions, and extend and develop the children’s play, talk or other means of communication;
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception Year;
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests, and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;
- the encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management;
- the support for learning, with appropriate and accessible space, facilities and equipment, both indoors and outdoors;
- the identification, through observations, of children’s progress and future learning needs, which are regularly shared with parents;
- the good relationships between our school and the other educational settings in which the children have been learning before joining our school;
- the clear aims of our work, and the regular monitoring of our work to evaluate and improve it;
- Plan Do Review sessions, which involve the Nursery children sharing their intended activities with key workers and reviewing learning as a class;
- the implementation and consolidation of conflict resolution throughout the Nursery;
- the regular identification of training needs for all adults working in the Early Years.

Transition

Starting school can be a difficult time for young children; we therefore plan this time carefully to support children with the transition and to ensure it is as smooth as possible for each child and that they settle in to their new class quickly and happily.

Leaving Nursery – Parents of all children leaving the Nursery to start Reception will be invited to a Nursery graduation ceremony. This will involve the children wearing gowns, receiving certificates and watching a presentation of the children's learning and experiences throughout their time in the Nursery.

Starting Reception – Parents of all children starting in the next academic year will be invited to an Early Years open day in September to meet their child's new teachers and other key staff and learn more about the Reception curriculum. This is an opportunity for staff to:

- Go through the Reception information booklet;
- Explain about uniform, PE kit and school dinners/ free school meals;
- Explain about holidays and absences;
- Receive their free school uniform, book bag and PE bag;
- Explain the arrangements for the gradual induction in to Reception.

When children join the Reception class in September the following procedures will apply in order that they can gradually adjust to their new surroundings:

- During the first week, children will attend for either a morning or afternoon session.
- At the start of the second week, children will attend for the full school day unless the Reception staff and parents/carers agree that it is not in the best interests of an individual child.

Starting in Key Stage 1 (Year 1)

Throughout the Reception year, each child's involvement in whole school life will have been built upon; many of the teaching and support staff will already be familiar people to them. They will have taken part in Key Stage and whole school assemblies as well as sharing playtimes with the Key Stage 1 children.

Children have the opportunity to meet their new class teacher and spend three sessions in their new class during the summer term.

In the final term in Reception the Year 1 teacher will meet with the Early Years staff and discuss each child's development against the Early Learning Goals in order to support a smooth transition to Year 1. This discussion helps the Year 1 teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children.

Safeguarding & Welfare

At Esh Winning Primary School we,

- Provide a setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence;
- Complete daily risk assessments of the learning environment;
- Promote good health;
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs

- Ensure that all adults who look after the children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so;
- Encourage outside agencies to support the health and welfare of the children in EYFS;
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Keeping Safe

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. 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. (See Esh Winning's Child Protection within Safeguarding Children Policy).

Staff mobile phones are allowed in school, but are not allowed to be used in sensitive areas (EYFS, cloak rooms, toilets, when children are changing, swimming). Mobile phones should only be used for communication when not working with children.

Good Health

All children are provided with a healthy snack each day as well as being given the choice of milk or water. They have access to water at all times and are provided with individual water bottles.

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. In most cases, intimate care is to do with personal hygiene and a *Changing Log* is completed each time this is required.

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.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies;

- Intimate Care Policy
- Staff Acceptable Use Policy
- Child Protection within Safeguarding.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of those working in Nursery and Reception to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Headteacher and Early Years Lead will carry out monitoring on Early Years as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. The Curriculum Committee of The Governing Body will also be part of this process. This policy will be reviewed in October 2026 or as necessary.