Early Years Policy

Reviewed October 2026 by J.Turland
To be reviewed November 2027

The Purpose of the Early Years Policy

The Early Years policy in this school reflects the value and importance of early years education, both during and beyond the foundation stage. It provides a framework for staff which gives guidance on practice, and outlines procedures for planning, teaching and learning, monitoring and evaluating the curriculum. The policy contributes towards raising educational standards within the school and ensures that the needs of the youngest children are met within the context of whole school policies, curriculum planning, agreed teaching approaches and organisational structures. The Early Years curriculum is being developed in accordance with DfE Early Years Foundation Stage which provides a statutory framework for provision from September 2026 and identifies provision for 0 to 5's as a statutory key stage which precedes Key Stage 1 where children continue their early years.

The term foundation stage in our school refers to children from the age of three to the end of the reception year, therefore the terms 'early years'/ foundation stage in this context refer to children in Nursery and Reception.

Introduction

As an Early Years Department we endorse the aims, principles and commitments of the EYFS.
This Early Years Policy addresses all aspects of the needs of young children and ensures that:

- early years education is valued, seen as the foundation for education and the beginning of a continuum of learning throughout the primary phase.
- the curriculum experiences of children are appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- the identification of and provision for special educational needs of children are included.
- the importance of 'play', 'first hand' experiences and an active curriculum are recognised in planning learning opportunities for young children.
- there is shared understanding of the emotional needs of young children, how they learn and develop skills, knowledge and understanding.
- policies and schemes of work include teaching and learning from 3 – 11 years
- the needs of the children are considered carefully in matters of organisation, management and administration.
- children experience a smooth transition from home, pre-school or nursery, into the Nursery class.
- statutory curricular obligations laid down by DfE and the requirements of the Reception Baseline Assessment and Foundation Stage Profile are followed.

Key Aims and Principles of the Early Years Policy

Staff at Thurnby Mead Primary Academy believe that the following aims and principles underpin their practice and reflect a shared vision of how children develop and learn, the activities and experiences which help children make progress, and the type of stimulating environment which promotes opportunities for learning.
The EYFS is based around four themes:

A Unique Child: Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

Positive Relationships: Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.

Enabling Environments: The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.

Learning and Development: Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.

Staffing

All staff involved in the education of young children need to be able to develop good relationships with the children in their care so that they can feel secure, respected and thus able both to make mistakes and cope with minor failures as well as building confidently on their successes.
The following people work in the Early Years at Thurnby Mead Primary Academy:
Early years lead / Reception Teacher
Early Years Teacher
1 x Part time Nursery Nurse (Level 3 & Paediatric First Aid)
1 x Teaching Assistant (Level 2 & Paediatric First Aid)
1 x Part time Teaching Assistant (Level 2 & Paediatric First Aid)
2 x Lunchtime Support Staff

Early Years provision, organisation and the learning environment:

Early Years provision at Thurnby Mead Primary Academy is organised into two classes. Nursery for 26 pupils aged 3-4 and Reception for 30 pupils aged 4-5, who come together to create a 'base' model. A wide range of indoor /outdoor equipment and resources are available to meet the needs of the children in the early years department, and the children also have access to other equipment and facilities throughout the school,
eg. hall, library etc.

Nursery children are admitted in the term following their third birthday and attend part-time provision (8.45 – 11.45am daily). Our school is responsible for admission arrangements.
Reception children are admitted in the September following their fourth birthday and attend full-time (8.45 – 3.15pm daily). The Local Authority is responsible for admissions.
Blossom class is our bespoke provision for young children who are unable to access the mainstream classroom. (9.00 – 3.00pm daily)

The staff in Foundation are trained in using the SHREC model to support high-quality interactions through play. They all have specialist training, knowledge and expertise in working with young children and also work with other professionals eg. Educational Psychologists, School Nurse, Early Years Support Team, Hearing Impaired Team to provide a multi - disciplinary team.

Staff aim to create a welcoming, happy and relaxed environment that enables parents to feel confident in their role as a partner in their children's education.

Teaching and learning in the early years' curriculum is carefully planned and structured to meet individual needs through objective led planning.
Staff organise a range of experiences and opportunities based on 'real' events, which give children chance to make decisions and choices, work individually or in groups and explore the learning environment.
Activities may be adult directed and child initiated with an emphasis on following the needs and interests of the children in order to ensure learning is real, relevant and purposeful.

We offer a play-based curriculum inside and outside the classroom which is carefully organised and planned for and includes opportunities for children to learn through:
Role play, small world, construction, malleable/sensory experiences, mark making, reading area, maths area, creative workshop, ICT, gross and fine motor skill development etc.

Induction/Parental Involvement

Staff at Thurnby Mead Primary Academy believe that meetings and visits to school enable parents to share valuable information that can help make a smooth transition from home to school and allow parents to ask any questions they may have about starting school. During these occasions parents receive information and a 'Welcome' booklet all about what happens in the Foundation Stage and how they can support their child. Staff also recognise that effective partnership with parents has a positive impact on children's development and learning, and therefore aim to provide opportunities for parents to keep staff informed about their child's development or any concerns they may have.

Staff from the Early Years Support Team also liaise with Foundation Staff about any child (and family) they have contact with who has already been identified as having SEND before entering Nursery or Reception.

Parents receive regular electronic newsletters from school. Home-school diaries are kept for some SEND children. Phone contact is also made to parents/carers where particularly new or vulnerable children may have problems settling. At parents' evenings (twice a year) information is exchanged about their child with staff. However, information is exchanged between staff and parents daily in a less formal way before and after school.

Early Years Curriculum

The Early Years Curriculum is based on the learning and development requirements set out in the DfE EYFS Statutory Framework (September 2026) and is planned to lead smoothly into the National Curriculum at KS1 in a way which is relevant and meaningful for all children. The foundation stage curriculum stresses the importance of the child's personal, emotional and social development, emphasises early language and literacy, numeracy, and lays the foundation for the future learning of all children. We also use the DfE Development Matters (July 2021), non-statutory curriculum guidance for the EYFS, to support us in our delivery of the EYFS learning and development requirements.

Children in the early years learn in a variety of ways: by watching others, talking, asking questions, listening, exploring and investigating. The EYFS includes a section on the importance of play in helping children to learn and develop. It says, 'Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults,' thereby recognising the crucial role of staff in planning real experiences to enable children to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.

Play helps children explore ideas, role and relationships. Effective planning for play requires staff to:

- plan & resource a challenging environment
- support children's learning through planned play activity
- support & extend children's spontaneous play
- support & extend children's language and their communication in play

Appropriately planned and structured play supports and develops children's need to socialise, express ideas, thoughts and feelings, experiment, observe and try things out.

The foundation curriculum is organised into seven areas of learning and development all of which are interdependent and should be of equal importance:

- personal, social and emotional development
- communication and language
- physical development
- literacy
- maths
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

However, we recognise that children's learning is holistic and that children neither recognise nor benefit from being confined within subject boundaries. We aim to provide a coherent curriculum that provides a clear focus for learning and draws together relevant activities which contribute to the development of the whole child. Thus, children are able to use and extend what they know, can do and understand within a realistic context.

At Thurnby Mead Primary Academy we are working towards children achieving most aspects of the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) by the end of Reception. The DfE Development Matters (July 2023) helps staff identify children's developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes as they make progress towards the ELGs, throughout the foundation stage. The ELGs establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of the foundation stage but are not intended to be a curriculum in themselves.

For many of our children the home language is not English. We make every effort to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home. We ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS, ensuring children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin year 1. When assessing communication, language and literacy skills, we assess children's skills in English. If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, we explore the child's skills in the home language with parents and/or carers, to establish whether there is cause for concern about language delay.

EYFS (Nursery & Reception) Topics

Autumn	Winter	Spring	Summer
Marvellous Me **Precious People**	**My family** **Hot and cold**	**Amazing Animals** **Glorious Gardens**	**Wonderful world** **Moving On**
Diwali	**Christmas: Singing concert** **Christmas party**	**Chinese New Year** **Mothers Day** **Easter** **Vaisakhi**	**Ramadan & Eid-al-Fitr** **Fathers Day**
Harvest **Bonfire night** **Police service into school**	**School Panto** **Black History month**	**World Book Day** **Trip to the Farm or Soft Play/small world** **Sports Day**	**Memories & reflections: Looking back through Learning Journeys** **Local area walk (Reception)**

The 'Little Wandle Letters and Sound revised' phonics scheme is followed by Nursery and Reception. The children take part in daily lessons. In Reception the children also take part in three reading sessions before a book is sent home.

Observation, assessment, planning, recording and reporting

Observation, assessment, planning, recording and reporting are recognised as essential parts of an effective curriculum. The procedures followed by staff are outlined in the relevant whole school policy documents.

In addition, for Early Years, the following applies:

Themes covered by foundation stage children through the areas of learning are planned with regard to the whole school curriculum map and those covered by children in KS1 and include …

- interesting, enjoyable, challenging and relevant learning experiences, both inside and out, within the seven areas of learning and development.
- learning experiences that take account of the life experiences of the children, the characteristics of the community and the concerns of children's families.
- learning which uses a multi-sensory approach
- learning opportunities which enable children to make connections between areas of learning and transfer and consolidate their learning across the curriculum.

The Early Years Curriculum is planned as units of work or topics which provide a framework for planning and determine what is taught and when it happens. They are based on the stages highlighted by Development Matters provided in the EYFS and the staff's knowledge and understanding of how children develop and learn. They recognise that young children follow recognised patterns of development but that there is considerable variation between individuals. These units of work/topics give aims, learning objectives, learning outcomes, activities, specific vocabulary, teaching methods, assessment opportunities and the resources necessary for the activity.

Long term, medium term and objective-led planning is discussed and organised by the Early Years Lead and involves all the Early Years Staff.
Plans include what children are to be taught in specific sessions and the skills being developed, how staff are organised and how activities can be differentiated to meet the needs of individual children. Evaluation of activities, observation and staff listening to, and talking with children, are key strategies for gaining information on each child's progress and development.

Initial baseline assessments are made on entry to both Nursery and Reception classes. These are completed within the first six weeks of the child's entry to school and then transferred as a summative assessment onto Bromcom. In addition, the staff use information from parents questionnaires, and the child's nursery or pre-school playgroup if available, plus their own observations and evidence in order to establish what each child already knows, understands and can do. This process of assessment provides a framework for future planning which then enables staff to meet each child's future learning needs.
In the Reception class, the teacher also completes the statutory 'Reception Baseline Assessment' 1:1 with each child within six weeks of them starting in the Autumn term. The results from this are reported directly to the DfE with a narrative on each child available to school and parents if requested. At the end of the Reception year staff are required to report, to the LA and DfE, the number of children who have attained a 'Good Level of Development'. 'GLD' is measured by the percentage of children who have attained ARE in the three prime areas and Literacy and Maths.

Our 'Learning Journey' floor books contain observations and pieces of work to show progress and celebrate achievement which is built up during each year the child is in the EYFS. The children have regular planned 'reflection times' where they can look through the floor books allowing teachers to add pupil voice.

Recording pupil progress takes place in a variety of ways - skills assessment, observation, focused activities, questioning and discussion. These observations inform future planning and enable staff to meet individual children's needs. They are also the basis for reporting to parents. Formative assessments are recorded on tracking grids and then summative assessments are recorded three times a year.
Reporting to parents takes place through informal discussions, face to face contact at twice yearly Parents Evenings where parents are invited into school to discuss their child's achievements, interests and experiences, and also annually through a written report. Parents are also invited to a yearly 'Showcase' in school where the Nursery and Reception children can 'show off' their learning.
Regular monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum takes place involving the class teachers and nursery nurses from Nursery and Reception.

Liaison with other agencies

Early Years Support Teacher - contact made through completing referral form for a child with SEND
Hearing Impaired Team - New Parks House - contact made through School SENDCo
Interactive Play Worker works with SEND children - contact made through EYST
Speech Therapist - referral made with School SENDCo or EYST, School Nurse, through child's GP or Health Visitor
Educational Psychologist - referral made with School SENDCo
School Nurse - contact made directly by staff able to phone to ask for advice etc.
Community Paediatrician - contact made through School SENDCo
Children's Centre Teacher, Thurnby Lodge Children's Centre - contact made directly by staff able to phone or walk over to Centre
Family Support Worker - contact made through school DSLs
Behaviour Support Team, New Parks House - contact made through School SENDCo

Staff Development

The identification of training needs for teaching and support staff will take place through Performance Management interviews, as outlined in the relevant policies.
The Early Years Lead will ensure that:

- appropriate dissemination of training/materials/good practice takes place regularly.
- a record of CPD activities is maintained by each member of staff
- there is an assessment of the impact of CPD on the quality of teaching & learning.