

Cherry Willingham Primary Academy



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

September 2025

Introduction

At Cherry Willingham Primary Academy, we strongly believe that play is a child's work, and that they learn best when motivated in an exciting and stimulating environment which has been designed with their needs at the forefront. We want our children to be independent, active learners, to learn through play and exploration and will take their learning both indoors and outdoors, whatever the weather!

We strive to build firm foundations for learning by developing skills and knowledge through a variety of engaging activities and contexts, as well as supporting children's own interests. We aim to provide children with a happy, secure environment with carefully designed areas to ensure children reach their full potential. We do not assume that children will automatically develop knowledge, skills and concepts by engaging in activities that are rich in opportunities therefore direct teaching by adults is crucial and planned.

The adults teach the pupils the skills and knowledge, which they can then transfer to their chosen activity during their child initiated play and rehearse their learning. Through observations of the pupils the adults are able to extend the activity or thinking to suit the needs of the pupil and support them in their next steps. When the children show these skills independently and apply in a self-motivated way, we know they are then internalised.

Our values and ethos are underpinned by the new Early Years Foundation Stage Framework 2021

Aims of our Reception

- To give all children the best possible start in life to enable them to fulfil their potential.
- To value children as individuals and for them to feel safe and secure.
- To embed the Priory values to start them on their journey of becoming a true citizen of the world.
- For our practise to be shaped by the 4 overarching principles: The Unique Child, Positive Relationships, enabling environments and learning and development.
- To provide children with a happy, caring, stimulating environment both indoors and outdoors.
- To provide a purposeful curriculum driven by giving children opportunities, ensuring engagement, and developing a sense of responsibility.
- To ensure we have a focus on improving language, including speech and language and including broadening children's vocabulary.
- To make sure our children experience high quality texts that are revisited.
- To provide high quality opportunities for children to be inquisitive, curious, creative, critical thinkers and to give them the chance to consolidate, rehearse and develop their skills and knowledge through the provision.
- To teach phonics systematically.
- To nurture the characteristics of effective learning through playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically

Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the [Statutory EYFS Framework September 2025](#)

The Curriculum

The EYFS is based upon four overarching principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments

- Learning and Developing in different ways

There are 7 areas of learning, which comprise of 3 prime areas and 4 specific. The prime areas are Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language and Physical Development. These prime areas are fundamental, link together and move through to support development in all other areas. The specific areas are Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design. These specific areas include the skills and knowledge children need to participate successfully in society.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS also includes the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning. Adults plan activities within the Reception class with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them.

The three characteristics 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.
- **Creating and Thinking Critically** – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Play

We understand the importance of a play-based curriculum and appreciate that play is a vehicle for learning. Play allows children to express themselves in a developmentally appropriate way "Children in the Early Years are in the Early Years because they develop best with this type of Early Years experience, play-based, adult supported, unique child initiated, developmentally appropriate learning" (Alistair Bryce Clegg, 2021). We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. We provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child-initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child initiated play, which is controlled, and adult led activities is very important to us and staff regularly reflect on this. Careful thought and planning are put in place not only for our curriculum but also our environment. We want our indoor and outdoor environment to have the maximum impact on children's potential. We strive to provide high quality opportunities for children to be inquisitive, curious, creative, critical thinkers and to give them the chance to consolidate, rehearse and develop their skills and knowledge. Our pedagogy is varied and is a balance of direct teaching and play based learning. We are constantly reflecting on our practise, attending training, reading books to ensure we are providing the best possible education for our children and develop our own subject knowledge.

Teaching

We include direct, carefully planned, purposeful, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning has become internalised.

Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, stories, poetry and songs.

Our Curriculum

Our curriculum is driven by giving children opportunities, ensuring engagement, and developing a sense of responsibility. We have given great consideration to the knowledge and the skills that we want the children to learn during the EYFS which all feed into our curriculum. We are committed to the whole child and to the characteristics of effective learning, we want to make sure that our children have the learning behaviours they need to succeed not only in school, but in life. We created our curriculum by thinking about the children in our academy and their needs. We used the Development Matters (2021, updated in 2023) non-statutory guidance and our knowledge about the children. We also met with all subject leaders in school to go through each area of learning to ensure clear progression through year groups.

Planning

Underpinning our planning is a belief in the value of learning through play, first hand experiences and enjoyment. The Foundation Stage planning involves all members of the team to provide continuity and progression throughout, including the vocabulary used.

Long Term Plans *Giving children **opportunities**, ensuring **engagement** and developing a sense of **responsibility*** drives the curriculum we offer our children. This is our rationale:

Rationale

- We give great consideration to what we want children to learn – the knowledge and the skills.
- Our key academy values of **wisdom, curiosity, passion, generosity, courage** and **respect** run through everything that we do.
- We want our curriculum to be meaningful for our children, giving them a real sense of purpose when they learn.
- We want children to leave Cherry Willingham Primary Academy with a thirst for learning, to be independent thinkers and to care for the environment with self-worth and confidence, with a care for the world and care for each other.
- We want our school values to be embedded within our children and we want to educate them to be 'good people' who care for others and the community, who care for all things around them, including animals and the environment.
- We aim for our curriculum to be skills based and knowledge rich. We also recognise the need for intelligent repetition as nothing has been learnt until it goes into your long-term memory.

Medium Term Plans cover a half a term and provide further details of each area of learning and how we develop particular aspects of learning. Activities may be continuous or blocked and learning intentions are identified to ensure all areas and outcomes are being covered.

Short Term Plans are weekly and are adapted daily where appropriate. These provide the detailed plans for provision. Learning Intentions are clearly stated. They include details of activities, deployment of staff and differentiation for groups of children.

Visits and Visitors

First hand experiences in the curriculum at Cherry Willingham Primary Academy is given great emphasis. We aim to have a visit out of school each half term. 3 of these are termly to Cherry Fields where we choose a tree and watch it change through the seasons. The other trips range from a farm visit to regular visits to our local library and shops.

Visitors also really enhance a topic and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children, a dental nurse for example. We often ask parents/carers if they are able (and brave enough!) to share knowledge or a skill, be it bringing in pets to how to brush your teeth.

Enabling Environments

Our Early Years classrooms have defined areas with clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. Each classroom is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and

activities in all of the seven areas of learning. Classrooms have a creative area, reading area, role play area, construction/small world area, outdoor area and carpeted teaching area, but maths and writing are seen throughout each area rather than stand alone.

The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside for much of the day. We try to ensure that the range of activities outside reflects the different curriculum areas, for example setting up quiet spaces for bird watching, mark making and construction.

Each child has their own locker. We encourage children to take responsibility for keeping their clothes, book bag and work safe.

Assessment

The following is taken from the Statutory Framework for the EYFS (updated September 2025)

- Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners knowing children's level of achievement and interests, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share.
- Assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork. When assessing whether an individual child is at the expected level of development, practitioners should draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement and should not be required to prove this through collection of physical evidence.
- Parents and/or carers should be kept up-to-date with their child's progress and development. Practitioners should address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents and/or carers, and any relevant professionals. Assessment should inform an ongoing dialogue between practitioners and year 1 teachers about each child's learning and development, to support a successful transition to key stage 1.

Our curriculum is built on a progress model and we focus our assessment on key milestones in that model. We need to be sure that children are secure in what they know and can do, before introducing them to something new. Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and then shaping learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

Observation of children engaging in their own learning is our main form of assessment. We take photographs and videos where appropriate which are logged on Tapestry and Floor books. We use these to support our judgements. Parents are encouraged to contribute and use Tapestry to send us photographs and videos of their children's learning at home.

Moderation is rigorous and regular throughout the Trust. Informal conversations are held daily about children and more formal moderation happens at least termly.

There is a new Reception Baseline Assessment that began in September 2021. The RBA is an age-appropriate assessment of early mathematics, literacy, communication and language. It is delivered in English and is administered within the first six weeks of a pupil starting reception – this is now completed digitally.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can

speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. We have an 'open door policy'. An adult is always available at the beginning and end of the day.

We endeavour to invite parents into school on a regular basis. We offer parent workshops and other events such as mystery reader and parent days.

All children who are about to begin their journey at Cherry Willingham Primary Academy have a visit from the class teacher in their current setting. Parents are invited to attend a meeting in June to discuss their child coming into full time education.

Reception children have 2 parent evenings throughout the year where the parents are invited in to discuss their child's learning.

Tapestry has been an invaluable resource for building relationships with parents and for engaging them in their child's learning. We encourage parents to share information and achievements from home so we are working in partnership. We use it to let the parents know what their child is learning about in school.

Health & Safety and Safeguarding

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 follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2025)

Members of staff use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in on class displays and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the website, Tapestry and in school through the paperwork in their initial starter packs. We are a healthy school and our children receive free fruit and milk from a government scheme. We follow whole school procedures for child protection (see separate policy). G Curtis, Head Teacher and J Lowe, Learning Mentor, are the Designated Safeguarding Leads in school and all concerns are discussed with them.

We promote good oral health, as well as good health in general, in the early years by explicitly teaching children about the effects of eating too many sweet things and the importance of brushing their teeth.

Children must be supervised during meals so they are seen as well as heard to prevent choking. The rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy.

Quality Assurance

Quality is maintained by:

- constantly reviewing practice
 - informal and formal evaluation and assessment of children
 - well planned activities informed by a sound knowledge of child development
 - training through high quality courses, visiting speakers and Inset days
 - monitoring by head teacher and governors and trust
 - aspirational performance management target setting for all staff by headteacher
- moderation of children within the Foundation Stage is done by staff in school and through liaisons with other schools in the trust

Next review date: September 2026