

Early Years Policy



Date	Autumn 2024
Review Date	Autumn 2026

Introduction

Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. It is a holistic education that encompasses all learning and development. We believe that every child has the right to a well-planned and meaningful curriculum that will provide them with the tools needed to succeed throughout their lives, regardless of culture, social class, gender, physical and cognitive capabilities and beliefs.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this policy is to support a rich, interesting, and stimulating learning and teaching environment, an environment that allows children to fully develop their skills and abilities.

Throughout EYFS, we aim to:

- ★ Foster a harmonious atmosphere which supports and promotes self-esteem.
- ★ Build confident communicators.
- ★ Support children's development in all areas of the EYFS.
- ★ Support every child as an individual.
- ★ Help every child to grow up feeling confident about their own identity, in a spirit of friendship, understanding fairness and the rights of others, valuing diversity, and ready to be a British citizen.

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Friarage County Primary School. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS department.

Organisation

Our Early Years Foundation Stage comprises of 1 Nursery class (Providing 15hrs or 30hrs across morning and afternoon sessions) and 1 Reception class.

EYFS Staff

Mrs Penny Carver– Reception Class teacher & EYFS Lead
Mrs Rachel Sellers – Nursey Lead HLTA

Mrs Helen McFegan – Advanced Teaching Assistant
Miss Charlotte Totten – Advanced Teaching Assistant

Our EYFS ensures children have daily opportunities for structured and free flow play both indoors and outdoors. This time is supported by teachers and teaching assistants who act as facilitators to the child's learning.

All members of the Foundation Stage Team are involved in planning, preparation, and assessment. We are always aiming to improve our teaching skills, knowledge and understanding and so all practitioners are encouraged to participate in local authority courses, in-service, local cluster group training and Delta Academy Trust CPD.

Our EYFS has good working relationships with PVI settings that feed into our school.

Curriculum

In EYFS at Friarage we follow the curriculum as outlined in the EYFS document. The EYFS is based on seven key features of effective practice as set out in the Development Matters Framework.

1. The best for every child
2. High-quality care
3. The curriculum: what we want children to learn
4. Pedagogy: helping children to learn
5. Assessment: checking what children have learnt
6. Self-regulation and executive function
7. Partnership with parents

As part of our best practice we:

- Provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven areas of learning
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice
- Provide early intervention for those who need additional support
- Work in partnership with parents and where needed outside agencies
- Plan challenging learning experiences for all our children, based on the individual needs of the child
- Provide opportunities for our children to engage in adult led learning and self-initiated learning
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and outdoors
- Plan an exciting, ambitious, and challenging curriculum based on our observations of children's needs, interests, and stages of development across the seven areas of learning.

Teaching & Learning

At Friarage, we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas, and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods. Therefore, teaching and learning at Friarage includes a good balance of adult led and child-initiated learning.

Teaching may be whole class, face-to-face with a child or small group of children during the session. Practitioners also skilfully plan the learning environment to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences, which will support and challenge them in making progress through child-initiated play. Sometimes these two approaches over-lap, for example when a child or small group initiate play which is then supported and extended by the practitioner.

- They make opportunities for the child to contribute and to make choices in their learning.
- They scaffold the child's development, to support increasing independence and control.
- They ask questions to check or develop children's understanding.
- They work collaboratively to solve problems and find answers.
- They provide formative feedback to help children to consolidate their learning and extend their exploration and thinking further.

Areas of Learning:

The EYFS is made up of three prime areas of learning:

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

There are four specific areas of learning:

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

All seven areas of learning and development are important and interconnected.

Our curriculum model details how we provide a well-balanced curriculum and our planning ensures that each child can develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in every area of the EYFS. Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful activities and through a mix of adult led and child-initiated learning. Take aways ensure children gain skills and knowledge through progressive adult led activities which build on prior learning. We strive to ensure the curriculum is carefully planned with exposure and purposeful links for building the foundations ready for their transition from Nursery to Reception and Reception to Year One.

Launchpad for Literacy

Our EYFS use Launchpad for Literacy alongside the curriculum. It plays a key role in supporting children that are not seen to be 'on track' with their learning. This approach enables us to:

- identify and close skill gaps
- embed speech and language interventions
- ensure progression for all and clarifying 'Quality First Teaching'
- create a firm, broad base of skill readiness for all aspects of literacy, including Phonics.

Phonics

The use of phonics is one of the many skills needed to be able to be a reader and writer. We aim to teach high quality phonics to ensure the children have the best start possible in reading and writing. Good quality phonics teaching allows the child to be secure in the skills of word recognition and decoding which allows children to read fluently. This will result in children being able to read for pleasure and will allow them to move onto developing higher order reading for meaning skills.

At Friarage we follow the Read, Write Inc (RWI) phonics programme throughout the school. Children are introduced to this in the Summer Term of our Nursery or if they join from another setting, at the beginning of their Reception Year. RWI is a systematic approach to learning to read using phonics. The phonic approach is to link the letter (grapheme) to the sound (phoneme). The children learn how to blend these sounds together to read words. Research has shown that teaching phonics in this systematic way is the most effective way to teach children to read. They learn fun songs, actions, and rhymes to go with the new sounds and to aid writing letters.

Our EYFS unit provides a strong continuous provision to enable children to repeat, practise and master. Resources enable children to engage in exploratory play with sounds, investigating variations, pattern, rhyme, voice as well as a range of real sounds through active phonics. Practitioner's awareness of the opportunities for phonics within the environment will support children's learning, questioning, and sharing experiences are essential for the development of key skills. Children always have access to a range of reading and writing materials, vocabulary rich classrooms are the basis of continuous provision.

Love of Reading

Friarage School promotes a love of reading, which starts from the very start of a child's journey with us. Books are the key driver throughout our Early Years REC curriculum and high-quality texts are carefully planned to support learning in line with the seven areas of learning. These texts are used to influence enhancement ideas to add into provision for children to reconsolidate their learning and understanding of the book during continuous provision time. Children are exposed to a variety of texts which includes non-fiction and Top 30 reads. We follow a book led curriculum which has been designed to promote a lifelong love of love of books and the importance of reading. Books have been selected for F1 and F2 from the National top 30 reads and have been carefully selected to be delivered throughout the academic year to show progression. Key books selected link to a long-term yearly plan and have been chosen to support key themes and interests and form the basis for an exciting and engaging curriculum.

The Importance of the Environment

Environment activities and experiences are arranged to promote independence. Opportunity is given by adults to play co-operatively, alone, or time is given for children to stand and observe. There must be time and space allowed to develop play both inside and outside, safely, and securely. The environment is aesthetically appealing with lots of examples of children's current work included in child centred displays. It is print rich and ensures children are exposed to the written word from an early age.

Books play a central role and are related to not only the themes we are following but also the phonics that are being taught. Our aim is to ensure that children are immersed in text of many different forms.

Displays are limited to identified notice boards to reduce visual clutter. Displays include examples of children's speech where possible and appropriate and give children opportunities to talk about, review, and think about

their previous experiences and learning (metacognition). This is clear to see through our 'learning journey' display where we display the learning that has taken place on a weekly basis and is led by the children.

As soon as children join Nursery, we introduced them to our school rules - **The Friarage Four - We work hard - We are safe - We are kind - We are respectful.** They give children clear guidelines and boundaries and promote positive behaviour. Challenging social situations are seen as opportunities for growth and development, explaining and working with children to help them feel strong and safe, and to learn how to manage difficult issues and conflicts in appropriate ways. Jigsaw and PSED sessions are incorporated into regular circle times. In a natural environment, where children, are given time to thoroughly explore their thoughts, feelings, and relationships, they develop understanding of the world and the environment using emotions, imagination, and senses.

Phonics is a theme that flows through the environment and exposes children to the learning of sounds in a variety of ways. The environment ensures that children can revisit learning that has already taken place and consolidate it through different learning styles. Our communication friendly spaces are developed to encourage high quality interaction and language development. Staff engagement focuses on developing the needs of each individual child and ensures that learning is progressive.

Assessment For Learning

Formative Assessment

At Friarage we believe on-going formative assessment is at the heart of effective early years practice. All staff have high expectations, and the needs of learners will be fully understood by careful observation of their play, assessment during adult led tasks and through their own self-reflection. Effective practice begins with observation, tuning into the child, and then building a relationship. Most observations and assessment will take place in the moment to ensure learning is moved forward as quickly as possible. This means that some observations and assessments will be documented whilst some will be held in the mind of the practitioner.

Summative Assessment

Whilst we acknowledge that young children's development does not follow a predictable step-by-step sequence, and each child will have their own unique pathway, progression, and momentum, there are, however, some aspects of development that help us to describe the child's progress in terms of whether it is typical for their age.

As each child enters both Nursery and Reception, we will pull together insights from formative assessment and use our professional judgement to assess whether children are developing in line with ARE (Age Related Expectations). We call this our baseline judgement. This data is analysed and used to inform provision and planning for the cohort. At the end of each term, we will repeat this process. Regular monitoring and evaluation of children's progress enables us to continually adjust our provision in response to any areas of underachievement that may be identified.

Tracking assessment systems such as the EYFS RAG and phonics tracker allow us to identify children at risk of making poor progress – always remembering that in the early years, progress can be uneven. Practitioners identify the 20% of children in their class at risk of making poor progress and they specifically focus planning to meet their needs. Staff also identify the more able children (assessed as being ahead of the expected levels of development in EYFS Development Matters) to ensure that we plan rich and stimulating experiences to extend

their learning. Progress data is entered into our RAG on entry and at every 4 weeks. We moderate our assessments through internal processes, and through moderation cluster meetings with other schools in the Trust.

Statutory Assessments

There are two statutory assessment points in EYFS: -

- All Reception Children will complete the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) from NFER within 6 weeks of their start date.
- At the end of a child's Reception year, we complete the EYFS Profile. This a statutory assessment of children's development at the end of the EYFS. Children are assessed against 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs) stating whether they are EMERGING or EXPECTED. We will also measure and report on the progress each child has made from their Baseline Assessment to End of Year.

We are committed to making this process a positive experience for children.

Parents as Partners

At Friarage County Primary School we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents and carers. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development.

Through our Parent App, emails and informal chats at the beginning and end of the day, practitioners encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual. This supports practitioners in establishing and responding to children's needs and interests.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through the School Parent App and Facebook Page. Parents are invited to attend drop-in sessions throughout the year at which we explain aspects of our curriculum and how they can support their child's learning. We also organise fun events for parents to attend with their children like stargazing, decorating our classroom at Christmas, Mother's Day afternoon tea, Father's Day breakfasts etc.

Parents are invited to attend parents' evenings during the academic year. The first of these takes place during the autumn term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into the school or nursery. Another parent's evening takes place during the spring term where practitioners will feedback on children's learning and development progress. The final parents evening takes place at the end of the year. It is an opportunity to discuss the child's achievements and their upcoming transition to Year One.

The school has a friendly and open-doors ethos, parents are always welcomed into school.

Admissions & Induction

Nursery

- Children are invited to apply for a place in our Nursery to start the term after they turn 3 years old.
- Prior to starting Nursery, we invite the children and parents to visit the school, meet the staff, and see where they will be learning.
- Children with 15 hours funding can attend for 5 mornings or 5 afternoons or 2.5 days.
- Children eligible for 30 hours funding can attend 8:45am – 3:15pm.

Reception

- Friarage operates a single term admissions policy with all children starting in the autumn term.
- Parents are invited to an induction meeting in the Summer Term.
- The Reception Teachers will visit the children in their Nursery Settings in the Summer Term.
- Children are given the opportunity to visit the school for “stay and play sessions” with their Nursery Settings.

In September, we offer a gradual, well supported start to school. Children start school in small groups, so they are introduced to the routines of the school at a pace that they are comfortable with. It also gives staff time to sufficiently support children into a new environment, with an understanding that some learners may require more comforting and socialising as they approach a more directed learning situation than they may have experienced before.

Transition to Year One

At the end of Reception there is extensive transitioning between those leaving the foundation stage as they move into KS1. The year 1 teacher spends time in the reception classroom as well as the reception children spending time in the Year 1 class. Meetings are held between Class Teachers to share the knowledge of the children. Additional meetings are held to support the move for children with SEND, with the Class Teachers and School SENCO.

Equal Opportunities

All practitioners at Friarage County Primary School have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered in the EYFS.

All children, irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development within our EYFS. *See Equal Opportunities Policy for more information.*

Special Educational Needs

Care is taken to assess the needs of each child from Nursery age onwards. We have links with various agencies and when necessary, their involvement may be required to support certain children. Parents/carers will always be informed if an outside agency is assisting us to support their child. *We have a full Special Educational Needs (SEN) policy available at the school.*

Photographs/Videos

At the beginning of the year parents/carers are asked to give permission for their child to be photographed and/or videoed during their time at school. We use these images in the classroom, on displays, in the children's individual learning journeys and on the school website.

Safeguarding

The school takes its child protection responsibilities very seriously. Any concerns, which the school has, will be noted and, if deemed necessary, will be reported to the relevant agency. The safety of the child is always of paramount importance. *The full Safeguarding Policy is available in school for parents/carers to read if they wish. The school also has an Intimate care policy available in school for parents/carers to read if they wish. Photograph/Video paragraph above is also relevant to this section.*

Health & Safety

We have a Health & Safety Policy which all staff and students are familiar with, and we have designated people responsible for first aid in school. Foundation Stage staff have had Paediatric first aid training. We keep a note of any medical needs, allergies, children who need inhalers, antihistamines, epi-pens in all rooms so everyone is aware of the individual needs.

Children are taught the safe and appropriate use of equipment and materials. Children are taught to be mindful when moving around the school and are aware of safety issues. Risk assessments are undertaken before school activities take place and before we embark on school outings. *Both a full EYFS Risk Assessment and whole school Health & Safety Policy are available in school.*

Allergies

Parents/carers are asked to inform us of any foods their children are allergic to or any foods they do not wish their child to eat. Official forms must be completed with supporting documentation from doctors where applicable. Meetings are then held with our School Catering Manager to create an individual plan for each child. We are a Nut Aware school.

Monitoring & Review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to follow this policy. The Senior Leadership Team will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring system.

This policy will be reviewed annually at the start of the academic year and will evolve to incorporate the views of all staff concerned.