Great Whelnetham Primary

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

Last reviewed:	**October 2026**
Date of next review:	**October 2027**
Reviewed by:	**Marc Gilbert (Executive Headteacher)**
Approved by:	**Governing body**

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

1. To provide quality learning experiences for all the children. Learning will be through practical and play activities, which are structured, balanced, relevant to the child and related to the real world.

2. To provide a curriculum which takes account of, and responds to, the children's developmental needs and allows them to make progress related to their differing abilities. "What the child can do" will be our starting point.

3. To ensure the children have positive experiences of success at their own levels in order to give them confidence and motivation for learning in the future.

4. To provide a curriculum which promotes the 'Early Learning Goals' identified by the EYFS Framework and which dovetails with the National Curriculum.

5. To provide a curriculum which provides equal learning and development opportunities for all children.

6. To create a partnership with parents to support and enhance the development of the children.

Principles of the EYFS

Our EYFS provision is underpinned by the four guiding principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage:

- **A unique child** – Every child is unique and has the potential to be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- **Positive relationships** – Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships with adults and their peers.
- **Enabling environments** – Children learn and develop well in environments which respond to their individual needs and provide appropriate experiences, support and challenge.
- **Learning and development** – Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. Our provision recognises these differences and ensures that all pupils, including those with SEND, are supported to make progress.

These principles shape our curriculum, environment, interactions with pupils and relationships with families.

The Curriculum

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Great Whelnetham School we aim to provide a broad, balanced, inclusive and ambitious curriculum which is responsive to children's individual needs and development and which addresses the children's social, emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development within a safe, secure, stimulating environment.

Our early years follows the curriculum as outlined in the latest version of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective from 1 September 2026.

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

Prime Areas:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development: Self-Regulation, Managing Self and Building Relationships
- Communication and Language: *Listening, Attention and Understanding and Speaking*
- Physical Development: Gross Motor Skills and Fine Motor Skills

Specific Areas:

- Literacy: *Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing*
- Mathematics: *Number and Numerical Patterns*
- Understanding the World: *Past and Present, People, Culture and Communities and The Natural World*
- Expressive Arts and Design: *Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive*

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

In planning and delivering our EYFS provision, we consider the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- **Playing and exploring** – pupils investigate and experience things and are encouraged to 'have a go'.
- **Active learning** – pupils concentrate, persevere when they encounter difficulties and enjoy achieving what they set out to do.
- **Creating and thinking critically** – pupils develop their own ideas, make links between their learning and develop strategies for doing things.

Adults support these characteristics through high-quality interactions, carefully planned provision, appropriate challenge and opportunities for pupils to explore and develop their own interests.

Throughout the EYFS, we provide a broad range of purposeful learning experiences across the seven areas of learning and development. Our curriculum is designed to build the knowledge, skills and understanding pupils need for future learning, while recognising that the Early Learning Goals are used to assess pupils at the end of Reception and are not intended to be used as a curriculum.

Teaching and learning will take place within the classroom and outside areas. Within these areas children will participate in a variety of activities, both with an adult and independently.

We teach the children their daily phonics through Bug Club Phonics which is a structured and systematic approach to teach phonics. The children will have books to read that correspond to the sounds they are learning to consolidate their knowledge.

Reading is a focus for all children across the school, not only the ability to read but to have a love of books, with adults, their peers and themselves.

Play policy

We believe that play, both indoors and outdoors, is the fundamental way in which young children learn. Play can be enjoyed and challenging. When playing, children behave in different ways.

Sometimes, their play will be boisterous, sometimes they will describe and discuss what they are doing, and sometimes they will be quiet and reflective as they play. Through play, pupils develop knowledge, skills and understanding across the Prime and Specific areas of learning.
In a secure environment with effective adult support, children will be able to,

• Explore, develop and represent learning experiences that help them make sense of the world.

• Practise and build up concepts, ideas and skills.

• Learn how to control impulses and understand the need for rules.

• Be alone, be alongside others or co-operate as they talk to rehearse their feelings.

• Take risks and make mistakes.

• Think creatively and imaginatively.

• Communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

• Express fears to relieve anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Adults in the setting will support play by:

• Planning and resourcing a stimulating environment.

• Supporting children's learning through planned play.

• Extending and supporting children's spontaneous play.

• Extending and developing children's language and communication in their play.

• Listening to all forms of children's communication and their ideas and taking these into account when developing play and planning.

• Narrating children's play.

• Asking questions about children's play.

Planning, Recording and Assessment

At Great Whelnetham our class arrangements change with the number in each cohort. This means at times, EYFS children will be in the same class as Year 1s. In a mixed Reception and Year 1 classroom, the curriculum is carefully organised to balance the play-based, child-led principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage with the more structured expectations of Key Stage 1. Learning is often planned around shared themes or topics, allowing children to access activities at different levels of challenge while developing similar core knowledge and skills. Reception pupils benefit from continuous provision and opportunities for exploratory, hands-on learning, while Year 1 pupils access the National Curriculum through teaching and learning approaches appropriate to their age and stage of development. Whole-class teaching is used where appropriate, particularly for phonics and shared texts, alongside targeted group work that supports the differing developmental stages within the cohort. The environment is structured to promote independence, with clearly defined areas for both provision-based and adult-led learning, ensuring progression, continuity, and smooth transition between the EYFS and Key Stage 1 frameworks.

Through topic planning we identify each of the Prime and Specific areas of development as identified in the EYFS statutory framework. Although the activities may vary according to the children, the learning intentions remain the same and are embedded during the activity.

Pupils complete the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) within the required period after entering Reception. The assessment provides a starting point from which the progress of the cohort can subsequently be measured nationally.

At the end of Reception, the statutory EYFS Profile is completed for each pupil. Teachers assess pupils against each of the Early Learning Goals (ELGs), using their professional knowledge of the pupil developed through ongoing observation, interaction and teaching. For each ELG, pupils are judged as either 'emerging' or 'expected.

Assessment should not require excessive evidence collection. Practitioners draw on what they know about pupils through their everyday practice when making assessment judgements.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

We recognise parents and carers as pupils' first and most enduring educators and value a strong partnership between home and school. We aim to build positive relationships with families from the point of transition into school and maintain regular communication throughout the Reception year.

Families are kept informed about their child's learning, development and wellbeing through informal conversations, parent meetings, Tapestry and other school communication. Families are encouraged to share information about their child's experiences, interests and learning at home and are invited to participate in appropriate school and classroom activities.

Where there are concerns about a pupil's development, these will be discussed with families at an early stage so that appropriate support can be considered together.

We use the online learning journal Tapestry to capture and celebrate aspects of pupils' learning and experiences and to share these with families. Families are encouraged to contribute observations and experiences from home, supporting a strong partnership between home and school.

Assessment in the EYFS is ongoing and primarily based on practitioners' professional knowledge of each pupil gained through everyday interactions, observations and learning. Tapestry supports communication with families but is not used to create an extensive evidence base for assessment judgements. Practitioners are not required to collect physical or digital evidence to prove their judgements against the Early Learning Goals. At the end of Reception, teachers complete the statutory EYFS Profile based on their knowledge of each pupil.

Inclusion and SEND

We are committed to ensuring that every pupil can access and participate fully in our EYFS provision. Practitioners consider the individual needs, interests and development of each pupil and use this information to provide appropriate support and challenge.

Where a pupil may have special educational needs and/or disabilities, practitioners work closely with families and the school SENDCo to identify needs early and put appropriate support in place. Our graduated approach follows the assess, plan, do, review cycle. Where appropriate, we work with external professionals and agencies to ensure pupils receive suitable support.

We maintain high expectations for all pupils and make reasonable adjustments to our provision, environment and teaching where necessary.

Transition

We aim to ensure that pupils experience positive and well-supported transitions into Reception and from the EYFS into Key Stage 1.

Before pupils start Reception, we work with families and previous early years settings to gather relevant information and help pupils become familiar with the school, staff and environment. Opportunities are provided for pupils and families to visit the school and develop relationships with staff before starting.

Transition into Year 1 is carefully planned. Staff share relevant information about each pupil's learning, development and individual needs. Our mixed-age arrangements can provide additional continuity between Reception and Year 1, while ensuring that pupils continue to receive teaching and provision appropriate to their statutory curriculum.

Safeguarding and Welfare

The safety and wellbeing of pupils is paramount. Great Whelnetham Primary School implements the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the statutory EYFS framework alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and other relevant school and Trust policies.

All staff have appropriate safeguarding training and understand their responsibilities for identifying and reporting concerns. Pupils are appropriately supervised and risk assessments are undertaken where necessary to ensure that the learning environment and activities are safe and suitable.

The school follows statutory requirements relating to staff suitability, qualifications, supervision, accidents, medicines, food and drink, attendance and safeguarding.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils' personal needs are met sensitively and safely and that information about pupils is handled appropriately.

Use of Digital Technology and Screens

Digital technology is used purposefully and appropriately within the EYFS where it enhances pupils' learning and experiences. Practitioners consider the nature and duration of screen-based activities and ensure that the use of screens does not displace important opportunities for physical activity, play, communication, social interaction and first-hand experiences.

Paediatric First Aid

The school ensures that at least one member of staff who holds a current full Paediatric First Aid certificate is available at all times when EYFS pupils are present and accompanies pupils on EYFS outings, in accordance with the statutory EYFS framework.

The school also ensures that a member of staff with a current full Paediatric First Aid certificate is present in the room while EYFS pupils are eating.