

Ouston Primary School

Early Years Policy



Review Date: November 2025

Reviewed by: Full Governing Body

Next Review date: September 2026

Curriculum Statement

Intent

At Ouston Primary School, we believe in nurturing, celebrating and developing children's individual interests and skills. We aim to develop resilient, confident and independent learners who are equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to thrive throughout their school journey and beyond.

We understand that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a distinct and crucial phase of education in which children develop rapidly across all areas of learning and development. Because of this, we prioritise a love of learning that will inspire and challenge our children through a balance of child-initiated, adult-guided and adult-led activities. Many of these activities are play-based and practical, and children can access them across both indoor and outdoor environments.

Allowing children the opportunity to pursue their own interests, within a carefully planned and enabling environment, ensures that they know that their own ideas are valued. This supports the development of independence, critical thinking, problem solving and early risk assessment skills and helps to provide them with the best possible start and ensures they are well prepared for the transition into Key Stage 1.

In developing our EYFS curriculum and practice, we are guided by the four overarching principles set out in the EYFS Statutory Framework (2025):

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments with Teaching and Support from Adults
- Learning and Development

This ensures that we provide activities, tasks, resources and interactions that are matched to the changing needs of our children. We design our curriculum to be inclusive, ambitious and responsive, ensuring all children can access open ended learning opportunities that promote high expectations for every learner, guided and supported by EYFS staff.

Our main aim is to provide children with the best possible start to school. For us, this means ensuring they make good progress across all seven areas of learning (please see 'Appendix 2; EYFS Early Learning Goals'), as well as enjoying coming to school. We recognise that children learn best when they feel safe, happy and motivated, and we aim to foster curiosity, independence and a positive attitude to learning that continues into Year 1 and beyond.

We believe in developing the 'whole child' and therefore recognise the importance of building skills, knowledge and confidence in each of the areas of learning. These are:

- Communication and Language
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Although we recognise the importance of all of these areas, we place a strong emphasis on early language and reading as the foundations for future learning. Because of this, reading and

vocabulary development are central to our curriculum design and we use high quality texts to introduce new vocabulary, support comprehension and inspire learning across the curriculum. We aim to provide a language rich environment where reading is promoted throughout all areas of provision. Sharing books, stories, songs and rhymes is a daily part of our practice. We recognise that 'talk' is a key process through which young children learn and so value open-ended play opportunities that encourage children to talk with their peers and allow them to use new vocabulary. EYFS staff encourage talk through their own interactions using various strategies, including;

- Commenting on what a child is doing
- Describing own 'play'
- Pondering/Wondering aloud
- Imagining – "Let's pretend we..."
- Connecting ideas
- Thinking aloud
- Reflecting back
- Posing problems
- Explaining/Informing

We also understand that the prime areas of learning are so named because of their significance in supporting children's holistic development and future learning and therefore must be prioritised in our day to day practice. This is particularly important in Nursery where early communication, emotional regulation and physical development form the foundation for later learning.

Implementation

The Early Years Foundation Stage environment is designed to provide a rich, purposeful and well organised learning environment that supports children's development across all seven areas of learning. Provision is structured to promote independence, exploration and sustained shared thinking. Continuous provision offers consistent, high quality opportunities for children to revisit, practise and embed key skills.

However, these areas are enhanced at different times to reflect children's interests, identified next steps and curriculum priorities. Enhancements are purposeful and linked to specific learning intentions. These types of activities are referred to as *child initiated*, where children independently select resources, initiate play and apply their learning in self-directed ways

Other activities within the Early Years environment are *adult guided*, where practitioners introduce or model learning through structured interactions, games or provocations that support specific skill development.

Children will also complete adult-led tasks. These are planned teaching episodes with clear learning intentions, success criteria and expected outcomes. As the children become more confident and secure in their understanding, they may be able to work on adult led tasks independently, but they are still classed as 'adult led' because they are planned, sequenced and assessed by practitioners. The number of adult led tasks is developmentally appropriate and increases gradually to support children's readiness for more formal learning as they transition to Year 1.

Organisation, Planning and Resources

Each day, children access a visual timetable that supports routine, predictability and independence. This outlines daily routines, teaching sessions and key transitions.

There are specific directed teaching sessions where the practitioner teaches new knowledge and skills through high quality modelling, explanation and interaction and then children move into adult led learning or independent exploration within the environment.

We aim to have an adult available within provision at all times to observe learning, scaffold thinking, extend vocabulary and identify next steps. Practitioners use high quality interactions to assess progress, model language, deepen understanding and provide timely challenge or support.

Children will also take part in discrete, daily phonics sessions. Our whole-school phonics scheme is Floppy's Phonics. We use these resources alongside systematic teaching, cumulative practice and application opportunities across provision. Children are grouped flexibly according to ongoing assessment. Phase 1 phonics is prioritised in Nursery, with progression into Phase 2 when children demonstrate readiness, typically in the summer term.

Planning across the EYFS is structured through a carefully sequenced curriculum that builds knowledge cumulatively and ensures breadth, depth and progression. Themes are used flexibly to provide meaningful contexts for learning. We follow a two yearly cycle to ensure progression and avoid unnecessary repetition. We plan opportunities to revisit previous learning and vocabulary and refer to this as 'sticky learning'. EYFS staff are aware of the importance of sticky learning. They seize opportunities to revisit vocabulary in play interactions and help children to make links with what they already know.

Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis to ensure teaching is responsive, targeted and aligned with children's assessed needs. We recognise the importance of reading and ensure that high quality texts underpin weekly planning, vocabulary development and cross curricular links.

It is expected that children in Nursery engage in developmentally appropriate adult led learning across communication and language, early literacy, early mathematics and physical development. This increases appropriately in Reception to support readiness for Year 1.

Evidence is gathered through a balanced approach including workbooks, shared 'big books' and digital posts (shared with parents/guardians). We ensure assessment is meaningful, proportionate and does not detract from high quality interaction with children, in line with EYFS 2025 expectations.

Continuous provision plans are used for environment areas. Weekly plans include details about 'Environment Enhancements' where further resources/displays/support etc. have been provided to focus on home in on specific learning opportunities. Sometimes, initials of certain children are included where tasks or learning opportunities are targeted to support specific next steps.

The environment is evaluated frequently to ensure it is being used productively promotes purposeful learning, independence and challenge.

Assessment

On entry to Nursery and Reception, we carry out a baseline assessment period to establish children's starting points across all seven areas of learning. This covers the first four weeks of Reception, and the children's first half-term in Nursery. We use previous assessment data, where available, alongside our own observations gathered through high quality interactions, child initiated play and adult led learning.

Reception children complete the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) within the first six weeks of starting Reception. We integrate this within our baseline period to ensure statutory compliance.

We use the EYFS Educational Programmes alongside the non-statutory guidance of Development Matters (2023) and Birth to 5 Matters (2021) to support our ongoing assessment of children's progress throughout the EYFS. Assessments are ongoing and inform daily practice, with summative assessments completed at baseline, the end of autumn, spring and summer terms. Traffic light charts are used weekly to record children's understanding based on adult-led tasks. This allows us to intervene swiftly to inform planning and more targeted support and intervention, where needed, ensuring all children make strong progress from their starting points. Termly summative assessment is in the form of tracking documents for each area of learning, to identify whether children are on track for expected progress. Again, this informs planning for next steps, particularly those who are not on track.

End of year Literacy and Mathematics assessments are recorded using the school's digital assessment systems to support transition and whole school tracking.

In Reception, the summer term assessment (EYFS Profile) is completed by the end of June in line with statutory requirements. Teachers make a best-fit judgement for each Early Learning Goal (ELG) determining whether a child is 'expected' or 'emerging'. Children working below the expected level are recorded as 'emerging'. EYFS Profile data is submitted to the local authority and shared with parents as part of the statutory end of year report.

Impact

The success of our Early Years Foundation Stage is demonstrated through children's strong progress, high levels of engagement and their readiness for the next stage of education. Children develop secure attachments, positive relationships and a strong sense of belonging, which underpin effective learning.

Children make strong progress from their starting points across all seven areas of learning, including the prime areas which form the foundation for future success. This ensures that the majority of children achieve a good level of development (GLD) and are well prepared for the transition into Year 1.

Those children with gaps in their learning or difficulties in some areas, are identified promptly through ongoing assessment, and targeted support is implemented to ensure they make accelerated progress.

Where further intervention or support is required, this is planned in partnership with parents, class teachers, the school's SENCO and, possibly, external agencies. Support plans are reviewed regularly and shared with Year 1 staff to ensure a smooth and well informed transition.

Overall, our EYFS provision provides children with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and confidence they need to thrive in Key Stage 1 and beyond.

Equal Opportunities

Equality is central to our Early Years provision and ensures that every child has fair and equitable access to learning, experiences and support. We are committed to removing barriers to learning and ensuring that no child is disadvantaged due to their race, gender, disability, language, socio economic background, religion or belief, family circumstances or any other protected characteristic.

Our Early Years Foundation Stage provides a safe, inclusive and respectful environment where children learn about similarities and differences, develop positive attitudes towards diversity and understand the importance of fairness and respect.

We actively promote equality of opportunity through:

- a curriculum that reflects and values diversity;
- resources that represent a wide range of cultures, families and experiences;
- high expectations for every child, regardless of background or starting point;
- early identification of barriers to learning and timely intervention;
- ensuring all policies and practices comply with the Equality Act 2010 and EYFS Statutory Framework (2025).

We work closely with parents and carers to understand each child's unique context and ensure that provision is responsive, respectful and inclusive.

Inclusion

Inclusive Early Years practice ensures that every child can access high quality provision, participate fully in learning and make strong progress, regardless of their individual needs, background or starting point.

To develop positive attitudes, children with significant disabilities, or special educational needs, are supported through high quality, inclusive teaching, reasonable adjustments and personalised approaches that ensure full access to the curriculum and environment.

The differing needs of individuals are acknowledged sensitively, promoting understanding, empathy and respect among peers. This ensures that children learn to value diversity and develop positive attitudes towards inclusion.

Clear strategies are implemented through the graduated approach (Assess–Plan–Do–Review), in line with the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and the school's SEN policy. These include personalised targets that are reviewed regularly with parents, practitioners and the SENCO to ensure progress and continuity of support.

We ensure our environment is well resourced, accessible and adaptable, offering open-ended opportunities that enable all children to be supported or challenged appropriately. This ensures that provision is responsive to individual needs and promotes independence.

EYFS staff work collaboratively to monitor children's progress, share insights and ensure that provision is consistent, inclusive and responsive. During child-initiated play, staff use high quality interactions to scaffold learning, extend thinking and provide targeted support.

EYFS staff work collaboratively with the SENCO to ensure that children with SEND receive high quality, inclusive provision and personalised support. This includes individualised plans, adapted provision, targeted interventions and close monitoring of progress.

Resources can include visual supports, communication boards/lanyards, personalised charts, sensory resources and adapted materials to meet a wide range of needs and learning styles.

We work in partnership with parents and carers to understand each child's unique needs, co-produce support plans and ensure consistency between home and school.

Role of the Subject Leader

The EYFS Lead is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of EYFS provision comply with the EYFS Statutory Framework (2025), the Equality Act (2010), the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and all relevant school policies. This includes monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; evaluating the effectiveness of the environment; and ensuring that provision is ambitious, inclusive and responsive to children's needs.

Planning is overseen by the EYFS Lead to ensure coherence, progression and alignment with whole school curriculum intent. The EYFS Lead ensures that planning is responsive to assessment information and reflects children's interests and developmental needs.

The EYFS Lead meets regularly with Nursery and Reception staff to review medium term and weekly planning, ensuring continuity, progression and consistency across the phase.

Data is analysed at key assessment points to identify strengths, gaps and priorities for teaching, intervention and curriculum adjustment. This informs targeted support, enhancements to provision and professional dialogue with staff.

The EYFS Lead engages in ongoing professional development to remain informed about current research, statutory updates and best practice in Early Years education. They share relevant updates with staff, lead training and ensure that practice reflects current expectations.

At the end of every school year, the EYFS evaluates the effectiveness of EYFS provision and produces an annual action plan that identifies priorities for improvement, professional development needs and resource requirements. These targets are informed by monitoring, assessment data, staff feedback, pupil outcomes and whole school priorities.

The EYFS Lead provides regular updates to senior leaders and governors, ensuring they have a clear understanding of EYFS performance, strengths, areas for development and progress towards strategic priorities.

The EYFS Lead also ensures that safeguarding requirements are fully met, that staff understand their responsibilities, and that statutory documentation is maintained accurately and securely.

Working with Parents/Guardians

In line with the rest of the school, we hold an annual welcome meeting to share key information, outline expectations and begin building positive relationships with parents and carers. However, because the Early Years Foundation Stage marks the beginning of each child's formal education, we also provide an additional transition meeting and stay and play session in the summer term prior to entry. This supports children and families to become familiar with the environment, routines and staff, helping to ensure a smooth and confident transition.

In Reception, we offer curriculum workshops (e.g., early reading/phonics and early mathematics) to support parents in understanding how learning is taught and how they can help at home. Parents/guardians are encouraged to engage in practical activities with their child to strengthen home-school partnerships.

Staff maintain open, daily communication with parents and carers, ensuring that information is shared promptly and that families feel welcomed and supported. Parents are able to contact staff through agreed communication channels, and staff respond within reasonable timeframes in line with school policy.

We also use digital communication platforms (Class Dojo) to share learning updates, key messages and celebrations of children's achievements.

Reports are provided at the end of the school year, including statutory EYFS Profile outcomes for Reception children and a summary of progress across all areas of learning. Parents are also offered opportunities to discuss their child's progress at key points throughout the year, including during baseline, autumn and spring term consultations.

We value parents and carers as children's first educators and work in partnership to ensure consistency between home and school, recognising that strong relationships contribute significantly to children's wellbeing, progress and outcomes.

Policy Review & Compliance Statement

This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if statutory guidance changes, to ensure continued compliance with the EYFS Statutory Framework (2025) and all relevant legislation.

The review considers updates to statutory requirements, school improvement priorities, staff feedback, monitoring outcomes and any changes in best practice.

The EYFS Lead is responsible for leading the review process, ensuring that all updates are accurately reflected and that staff are informed of any changes. The reviewed policy is submitted to the Senior Leadership Team and governing body for approval.

This policy should be read alongside the following statutory and school documents:

- EYFS Statutory Framework (2025)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Equality Act 2010
- SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEN Policy
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

All staff working within the EYFS are required to read, understand and adhere to this policy. Compliance is monitored through ongoing practice reviews, staff supervision and leadership monitoring.

The governing body is responsible for ensuring that the school meets its statutory duties and that EYFS provision is high quality, inclusive and aligned with whole school strategic priorities.