



Horizon Schools Federation Early Years Foundation Stage Policy September 2025

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is important in its own right.” Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Department for Education 2021.

Aims of EYFS Education

- Give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life establishing solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning.
- Inspire children through an imaginative and immersive curriculum, ensuring that children are happy and enthusiastic to learn and that we foster and nurture imagination and curiosity.
- Engage children in their learning through effective continuous provision balanced with structured learning opportunities.
- Support children to become independent, self-motivated and entrepreneurial learners, encouraging the children to adapt their work, think critically and take risks.
- Prepare children for 21st Century life by ensuring that every child is literate and numerate, and develops their empathy towards others, resilience and ambition to achieve.
- Encourage each child to be their best in all they undertake, encouraging each child to try new things, work hard and push themselves to continue to achieve and to persevere in any activity that is before them.
- Ignite children’s curiosity about the world around them and practice the technique of enquiry.
- Develop problem solving skills and perseverance.
- Increase awareness of the wider community, starting with their local community and providing opportunities to experience and learn about other communities and cultures further afield.
- Foster and nurture the children’s social and interpersonal skills, ensuring that they have the opportunity to work as a member of a team and can share their experiences and knowledge with their peers.

Curriculum

Children in the EYFS follow a progressive curriculum, as outlined in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is underpinned by *Development Matters* and *Birth to Five Matters*. The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development that shape our educational programme. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. There are three areas that are seen as being particularly important for igniting children’s curiosity and enthusiasm for learning; for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive (DfE 2021:1.4). These three prime areas underpin all other areas of the curriculum:

The Prime Areas are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development (PSED)

The Specific Areas of Learning are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS curriculum also includes Characteristics of Effective Learning. These are regularly assessed through observations and planned for throughout the EYFS:

- Playing and Exploring – children investigate and experience things and events around them and ‘have a go’
- Active Learning – children concentrate and keep trying if they experience difficulties. They enjoy learning and take pride in their achievements.
- Creating and Thinking Critically – children have and develop their own ideas and strategies making links between different experiences.

Teaching Strategies

We ensure that there is a balance of adult led and child- initiated activities across the day. We believe that even during child-initiated activities the adults’ role and interaction with them is essential as this helps to build their understanding and guide new learning. The role of the adult is to continually model, scaffold, support, question and encourage as well as taking time to step back and observe learning and interactions in action.

Play Based Learning

Learning through play is an important and integral part of the Early Years curriculum and classroom. We believe that children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Using their interests as a starting point, we provide stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop learning to help make sense of the world. They have opportunities through play to think creatively and critically alongside other children and independently. Children are able to practice skills and build upon and revisit prior learning and experiences at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interest, inspire those around them and consolidate their understanding and skills. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions.

Direct Teaching

Children in Reception participate in a daily Read Write Inc. Phonics session which is tailored to meet their needs. These sessions give children a solid grounding in phonics. Children also have a daily maths session and activities to support learning through child initiated or independent activities, which provides a purpose for learning and applying all maths skills. Each child is heard reading individually at least once a week. All children will have both a writing and a mathematics book this will show evidence of progress throughout the year. Practical work will not be shown in the books. All direct, taught sessions are carefully planned using previous assessments of the children’s knowledge, skills and ability. Planning is adapted in response to taught sessions and child’s voice, ensuring all teaching and learning is relevant, progressive and challenging.

Children in Nursery will take part in daily adult led activities. These will be varied, short sessions designed to enhance the children’s learning experience. These will include early mathematics skills development, JIGSAW PSED sessions, Early literacy development, communication and language development and topic-based activities. Depending on a child’s individual progress and readiness, we will start to introduce the Read Write Inc phonics programme. This is typically started in the summer term before a child starts Reception.

Weekly planning is to be put on the school’s shared drive.

Visits and Visitors

Visits and visitors play an important role in the Early Years curriculum as these are seen as an opportunity to further develop our children's view of their world or community. Children are regularly given the opportunity to widen their experience through either visits to specific areas (e.g. the local church or library) or have visitors invited into the school who are seen as experts in their field. These are carefully planned and tailored to the topic the children are actively learning.

Classroom Organisation

Our Early Years classroom is organised with defined areas and resources that children can access easily and confidently. Labels with pictures of real-life objects will be used to support children's independence in managing resources in the classroom. Children have the opportunity to experience writing, maths, creative play, role-play, construction and small world play, as well as a quiet reading area. The outdoor area is as important as the indoor environment and is something we continue to develop, creating meaningful links between environments and providing high quality continuous provision for all learners. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales from when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be more physically active. We therefore offer free flow access to our outdoor learning area throughout the school day.

Displays

Displays in EYFS will look different to the rest of the school. The purpose of displays in EYFS is to celebrate children's work and document their journey of learning. We aim to create a language rich environment; this does not involve using excessive lists of vocabulary. A language rich environment involves adults encouraging use of ambitious vocabulary, stimuli for conversation and organising the classroom in such a way that it is conducive to shared learning and play (e.g. small intimate areas, rounded tables that encourage conversation). There will be words of the week displayed in the classroom linked to current learning. This will serve as a reminder to staff of words that we want children to understand and begin to use by the end of the week. We aim to introduce the children to ambitious vocabulary.

The display boards in the classroom will be used to celebrate children's work and photos of their learning process. There will also be photos of real-life stimuli to encourage discussion and prompt language development.

The following must be present in classrooms:

Nursery	Reception
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number line to 10• Displays showcasing children's learning journey across all areas of learning• RWI Frieze/simple sounds chart to be present when children start to take part in the RWI Scheme (Typically the Summer Term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number line to 20• RWI Frieze• Simple sounds chart• Displays showcasing children's learning journey across all areas of learning

Assessments, Observations and Learning Journeys

Assessment is an essential and important part of the Early Years. This involves practitioners observing children during taught sessions and free flow time to gain an understanding into each child's level of development, interests and learning styles. These observations and assessments will then be used to shape and scaffold future learning. Discussions are held with all adults in EYFS about individual children's development and next steps. Significant observations of children's achievements are recorded on Tapestry and shared with parents.

On entry into the nursery, children will be informally assessed by key workers to provide a baseline and identify next steps in a child's learning journey. This will then inform planning. Regular discussion and assessment to take place to identify children's next steps at least half termly.

On entry to Reception baseline assessments are conducted. The children are assessed as being on track or not on track in each area of learning. During the first 4 weeks of starting school, there will be less direct teaching to enable staff to take the time to get to know the children, engage with them in meaningful play and allow children to begin to develop relationships with staff and peers. This time will also be used to complete a basic skills tracker for each child, outlining the strengths that each child has. This will inform planning moving forward. Termly assessments are then carried out in order to measure progress and highlight children's levels of achievement and understanding, enabling us to tailor the curriculum accordingly for each individual child. At the end of Foundation Stage every child is assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG), as either emerging or expected for each area of learning. This is reported to parents and carers in the child's end of year report.

When monitoring subjects in EYFS, subject leaders will have a discussion with the EYFS team. This will involve talking about the journey of learning and what has taken place, as well as discussing next steps for the children's learning.

Role of Staff

The role of adults is to ensure that every child's care and development is carefully catered for through play and other experiences. All adults aim to develop positive relationships with each child whom they teach, ensuring that children are happy, confident and ready to learn. Staff will take part in, and lead adult led activities, engage in meaningful play during continuous provision, as well as observe and assess children's learning.

Role of EYFS Leader

The EYFS leader will carry out termly pupil progress meetings in order to ensure good communication, consistency in practice and accelerated pupil progress. They will support and monitor all EYFS staff in delivering the curriculum and providing high quality learning for all children. This will be done through learning walks, pupil interviews, observations and scrutinising work. The EYFS leader will also take part in regular supervision of staff meetings for all staff working within EYFS. This may be in conjunction with the Nursery Manager. To discuss and arrange for appropriate CPD for staff as necessary for the development of the provision and to support staff development.

Role of the Nursery Manager

The Nursery Manager will lead and manage the day to day running of the nursery. They will support other members of the nursery team to ensure that planning, assessment and observations are completed to a high standard. In addition, they will work with the EYFS leader to complete supervision of staff meetings and in some monitoring activities within the Nursery.

Relationship with Parents

We believe that parents/carers are a child's first educator and so we aim to work very closely with them. There are opportunities for parents to come into class and experience the work that their children have been completing during each term. Regular updates on Tapestry provide parents with insights into their child's learning and progress. This will take the form of individual observations and group/whole class observations. We encourage parents to comment on posts as well as post 'Wow' moments from home to share with staff in school.

Drinks

Ensuring children stay adequately hydrated is incredibly important, not only for their comfort and safety but also to support learning. There will be a 'drinks station' with cups and a jug of water to allow children to independently access water. This promotes skills like pouring as well as allows children the opportunity to drink out of open cups. This is recommended by current NHS guidance that suggests that drinking from bottles that require 'sucking' can alter the development of the mouth and impact on speech and language development. The cups and jug will be washed daily to ensure that they are sanitary. Children will not share cups.

Food

As per statutory guidance, all children within the EYFS will be supervised whilst eating. This means that children must always be within sight whilst eating. This supervision must include staff who hold a paediatric first aid qualification. In addition, due to changes to the EYFS safeguarding requirements from September 2025, we will ensure compliance with the EYFS nutrition guidance when planning snack/meals for children.

Transition

Transition into Nursery can be very daunting for both parents and their children and we aim as a school to ensure that any transition is as smooth and comfortable as possible. In order to do this, we encourage visits to the setting to get to know staff and the setting. Once a start date is agreed, settling in sessions will be offered to support transition. This will involve parents taking part in short sessions with their child to allow them to get used to the setting with a familiar adult.

For transition into reception, parents and children are invited to a transition meeting during the summer term to provide them with information about the school, curriculum and teaching staff. Home visits are encouraged to allow staff and families to meet in an informal setting. During the term before starting school, staff will visit children's nurseries to meet the children, discuss progress with key workers and gain knowledge and understanding about the child's interests and needs.

Safeguarding

In accordance with section 3 of the EYFS Framework, children learn best when they are healthy, safe, secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the people caring for them. We aim to ensure this through the continuous development of positive relationships between children and staff as well as relationships with their peers. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (2024). Our school has rigorous safeguarding policies and procedures that are used to identify anyone at risk of harm or radicalisation, this sets out a clear procedure for reporting any concerns from minor to major. All staff are regularly trained in Safeguarding. The school undertakes rigorous safeguarding checks when employing members of staff in line with statutory guidance for safer recruitment and school policy.

As part of the mandatory pre-employment checks stated in the Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance, all schools must:

- Verify the candidate's identity
- Obtain an enhanced DBS check including children's barred list information
- Obtain a separate children barred list check if an individual will start work in regulated activity with children before the DBS certificate is available
- Verify the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their responsibilities
- Verify the person's right to work in the UK
- Further checks made if the person has lived or worked outside the UK
- Verify professional qualifications as appropriate

EYFS Framework: [EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#)

Health and Safety

Within the school we follow a set of guidelines regarding different aspects of Health and Safety.

Healthy school meals – These are offered to children taking part in afternoon sessions in the Nursery (chargeable) and free of charge to children when they enter Reception (Universal Free School Meal)

Healthy snack – In Reception children are offered fruit and vegetables at playtime. We also encourage children to try new or more varied food/fruit. Milk is provided free of charge. In Nursery a healthy snack menu is planned for the morning. This will be compliant with relevant regulations and menus will be inclusive of allergies/intolerances.

Accidents and First Aid – Paediatric first aiders are on site at all times. If an accident occurs it will be logged and reported to parents as appropriate.

Fire alarms – An emergency evacuation practice is organised at least once a term and all of these are timed and recorded. System is regularly reviewed, checked and maintained.

Lock down – Lock down alarm in place. System is regularly reviewed, checked and maintained. Lock down drills to happen at least once per term.

Child Protection and Safeguarding – Please see relevant policies on our website: www.cowley.lincs.sch.uk.

Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Headteacher every year. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board for ratification.

Created: June 2025

To be reviewed: June 2026