

THE HOWARD PARTNERSHIP TRUST

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS) POLICY

Date of review: November 2025	Responsible body: The Howard Partnership Trust
Review period: Annual	Trust/Committee: Standards & Performance
Next due for review: November 2026	Executive Lead: Director of Education & Safeguarding /THPT Lead
Status: Statutory	Publication: Website

Aims/Purpose:

The statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage October 2024 states that 'All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life.' It goes on to say, 'Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years have a major impact on their future life chances.'

The purpose of this policy is to guide school staff in ensuring the necessary processes and procedures are implemented so that early years provision is making as positive a difference to children's lives as possible.

This policy must be read in conjunction with '*Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024*'

Safeguarding Statement

"It could happen here."

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. We make every effort to provide an environment in which children and adults feel safe, secure, valued and respected, and feel confident to talk if they are worried, believing they will be effectively listened to.

Introduction

The Howard Partnership Trust believes that the early development and learning that takes place typically in the Early Years Foundation Stage is a distinct phase in a child's education and seeks to establish firm foundations for learning. This ensures each child leads a happy and secure school life, gaining confidence, skills, and memorable experiences on the start of the educational journey. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year formally but we recognise that children may work at this stage until developmentally ready.

This statutory policy sets out our principles and is read in conjunction with operational arrangements for each setting.

Aims

The Howard Partnership Trust aims to provide the highest possible care and education for all of our children, thereby establishing a strong foundation for their future learning. We acknowledge the importance of playful exploratory learning which underpins early development. We create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences. We encourage children to become confident and independent learners. We support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation, turn taking and when developmentally ready sharing. We help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and by developing confidence. We value the individual child and work alongside parents/carers and others to meet their needs and help each child to learn, develop and thrive.

Our high expectations will enable each child to develop socially, intellectually, and emotionally, encouraging regulation of feelings and behaviour, and to bring out the best in all children. Schools are not required to follow a prescribed teaching style, and teaching will be effective within each setting by considering the cultural capital of their children and planning for a structure of learning that considers the child's interest and develops them as individuals through a wide range of new and exciting first-hand experiences.

From September 2025, staff who have completed the Experience-Based Route (EBR) to Level 3 are recognised within staff-to-child ratios. Managers must hold a full and relevant Level 3 qualification and demonstrate appropriate experience. Level 3 practitioners are no longer required to hold a Level 2 maths qualification.

A Principled Approach

We adhere to the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (October 2024) and the four guiding principles that shape practice within Early Years settings:

- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments, with teaching and support from adults**, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers
- Importance of **learning and development**. Children develop and learn at different rates. (See "the characteristics of effective teaching and learning" at paragraph 1.18). The framework covers the education and care of all children, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

As part of our practice we:

- Provide a balanced curriculum based on the EYFS statutory framework 2024, across the seven areas of learning, using play as a vehicle for exploration and learning.
- Provide a secure foundation through effective planning for learning for each individual child and assessing and reviewing what they have learned regularly.
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice alongside

consideration of early additional support where needed.

- Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities ensuring quality conversation and interaction and modelling that are both adult-led and child-initiated.
- Have a key person approach to develop effective relationships with individual children.
- Work in partnership with parents and within the wider context.

The Curriculum

When planning and guiding children's activities, our practitioners promote the three characteristics of effective learning:

- **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.

The EYFS is comprised of three **prime areas** of learning: Communication and Language; Physical Development; Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

There are **four specific** areas of learning: Literacy; Mathematics; Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

Environment and Planning

The Early Years Foundation Stage classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are specific areas where children can be active, quiet or creative.

Children have access to both inside and outside areas across the day; this has a positive effect on their development. Each Early Years Foundation Stage classroom has access to an outdoor classroom offering opportunities for exploring in different ways and on a different scale to when indoors. Children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

All areas of learning are delivered through a well-planned play-based approach, with a balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. Planning considers individual needs, interests, and development in order to provide challenging and enjoyable experiences for each child in all areas. Planning to develop personal, social and emotional regulation for all has particular focus. Whilst high quality transition experiences support children it is critical that staff in Year 1 meet children where they are at on their journey.

At the earlier stages of development, the balance of planning focuses strongly on the three prime areas, as these form the foundations for successful learning. As these are secured, the focus broadens to the specific areas and throughout Reception the balance may shift towards a more equal focus on all areas as children grow in confidence and ability.

Progress and Assessment

During the first half term in Reception, the teachers assess each child, in partnership with parents/carers. The Statutory Reception Baseline Assessment is undertaken for all children that are able to access within 6 weeks of commencing in Reception. Parents are informed of

this assessment and a copy of the end statement is available upon request.

Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's knowledge, understanding, skills and achievements are assessed and monitored with reference to the observation checkpoint set out in the document '*Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (2023)*' and supporting documents, such as Birth to 5 Guidance.

Practitioners use the evidence collected, their in-depth knowledge of the child and professional judgement to judge whether a child is on track or not on-track to reach the early learning goals at the end of the reception year. Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development and formally this information is shared with parents as an annual report and reported nationally.

Safeguarding and Welfare

'Children learn best when they are healthy, safe, secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.'

The legal requirement to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years and the Foundation Stage (2024) is planned for. Particular attention is given to emotional health alongside healthy bodies and oral health.

Our wider Trust policies ensure that effective consideration is given to Paediatric First Aid, our Health & Safety processes, Emergency procedures, Risk Assessments and staffing levels. In accordance with updated EYFS statutory guidance (2025), any student trainee counted within staff ratios must hold a valid Paediatric First Aid certificate. Settings must also maintain at least two emergency contacts for each child and ensure robust follow-up procedures for any unexplained or prolonged absences.

We recognise our responsibility in safeguarding the children in our care and ensuring that early identification and intervention is available to support children's emotional wellbeing effectively.

Our annually updated suite of trust-wide policies and procedures for Safeguarding and Child Protection are applied within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Safeguarding procedures include clear whistle-blowing protocols and ensure privacy during intimate care routines, including nappy changing and toileting, in line with revised statutory expectations.

Safeguarding policies extend to all electronic devices capable of capturing or sharing images, including smartwatches and tablets. Staff and visitors must adhere to updated mobile device protocols to ensure child safety and privacy.

All current policies can be found on the school's website.

Wellbeing

The setting has individual arrangements to support the management of food and drink to ensure that children's needs are effectively met. All settings will follow the updated DfE nutrition guidance (2025) to ensure that food provision meets statutory standards. Where an alternative approach is adopted, this will be documented and justified in line with the guidance.

To support our children to develop skills in toileting and managing their own needs we teach the importance of hygiene and hand washing techniques. Procedures are available with our intimate care policy where nappy changing is necessary for young children or children with specific needs.

Parents and Wider Community

We believe that parents/carers are a child's first educator and therefore strive to create and maintain partnerships with parents and carers as we recognise that, together, we can have a significant and positive impact on a child's learning.

Working with other services and organisations is fundamental to our practice in order to meet the needs of our children. At times we may share information with other professionals to provide the best possible support.

Where appropriate to the children's stage of development we make links to the wider community.