

# Early Years Policy 2026

## Dove Bank Primary School



**Approved by:** J Woodward

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026

**Last reviewed on:** 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026

**Next review due by:** 1<sup>st</sup> September 2027

## Introduction

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### [1. Aims](#)

#### Introduction

All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. 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. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential.

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- Close partnership working between staff and parents and/or carers

- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

## 2. Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the [EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#) 2026.

## 3. Structure of the EYFS

The Early Years foundation Stage applies to all children from birth to 5 years. At Dove Bank Primary School, this refers to children in our Nursery department and Reception class.

We have provision for children aged 2 until the academic year in which they turn 5 in our Nursery setting. Children can attend any morning, afternoon sessions or full days each week and this can be altered upon request and by mutual agreement. The Nursery is staffed by nursery practitioners with relevant qualifications and in accordance with statutory requirements as stated in the [Early Years Qualification Requirements and Standards](#) document.

Qualified staff from the main school are sometimes used to maintain ratios required according to ages of the children. All children in this setting have an allocated key worker to provide familiarity, consistency and a strong relationship with parents. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents and/or carers. They should also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate. Key worker groups are referred to as Little Ladybirds, Busy Bees and Big Butterflies.

Children who turn 5 in the academic year (September- August) attend our Reception Class which is located in the main school building. This is staffed by a qualified teacher, additional support staff are available according to the needs and numbers of particular cohorts.

The Nursery and Reception classes work closely together to meet the needs of all children. There will be times when all children in the EYFS come together for a shared event, for example, Mother's Day assemblies.

## 4. Curriculum

Our Nursery and Reception classes follow the curriculum as outlined in the 2026 Statutory Framework of the EYFS.

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.

**The Prime Areas are:**

Communication and Language

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Physical Development

**The specific areas:**

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the World

Expressive Arts and Design

The Early Years Framework also provides a set of Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning that should be used to provide pupils with experiences that allow them to develop strong learning skills. The Characteristics of Effective Learning detail the ways in which children should be learning from their environment, experiences and activities.

**Characteristics of Effective Learning:****Playing and Exploring**

Finding out and exploring

Playing with what they know

Being willing to 'have a go.'

**Active learning**

Being involved and concentrating

Keeping trying

Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

**Creating and Thinking Critically**

Having their own ideas

Making links

Choosing ways to do things

### **Little Wandle Phonics Scheme**

From the age of 2, children will be exposed to nursery rhymes and associated games, as part of the scheme. In the academic year they turn 4, they will also experience Tuning Into Sounds before beginning Phase 1 in the Reception class. All children will participate in the Love of Reading.

### **Writing skills**

In the Nursery setting, children will begin to experience pre-writing skills in the form of gross motor and fine motor skills, in readiness for correct letter formation practice in Reception.

### **Maths and number**

The introduction of the White Rose Maths scheme in the pre-school and into Reception enables a smooth transition into Key Stage 1.

#### **4.1 Planning**

Long term and medium-term plans have been designed to ensure that specific skills and knowledge builds on previous learning in a planned and progressive manner. Key vocabulary that we want children to learn is identified and shared with staff through planning, this is intentionally introduced through purposeful interactions with children, within a meaningful context. Developing language is a key priority with regular opportunities for children to talk and use language for various purposes provided. All staff are trained in the ShREC approach to structuring interactions.

Learning is carefully sequenced and designed to show how children will make steady progress to meet the early learning goals. The curriculum is a progressive model that will be used to assess children at the end of each term. The curriculum is shared with parents on the website. The early years curriculum is familiar to subject leaders and plays an important role in monitoring processes.

#### **4.2 Teaching**

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Practitioners respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. Interactions may include recasting what children have said, revisiting new vocabulary, posing problems, wondering out loud, pointing out links to other learning, asking questions etc

The quality of interactions is to be observed and evaluated as part of the ongoing quality assurance processes in schools. This might be by the Head teacher, Early Year's Lead, or part of learning walks by subject leaders.

Children have opportunities to direct their own learning through choosing where, how and with whom they play. They are supported through a well-resourced environment and staff that can interact skilfully to challenge and develop children's skills.

The children have access to indoor and outdoor provisions. Each will have resources, opportunities and adult initiated activities to support areas of learning.

At certain parts of the day children will be taught as a whole class, a small group or individually. Children may be taught by a variety of familiar adults throughout the day. Teaching in the early years is play based, interactive, multi-sensory and fun! There is a strong emphasis on the children trying, persevering and being active learners. They are introduced to our school values of resilience, aspiration and kindness through daily learning opportunities and also through whole-school events.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year 1.

#### 4.3 SEND and Inclusion

Under the guidance of the SENCo staff in the Nursery support pupils to make progress towards their targets. The Early Identification Pathway has been adapted to help with the identification and support of early years pupils who are observed to be working below age related expectations, not meeting development milestones or who are not making progress with learning.

The school SENCos will signpost EYFS staff to the early identification pathway and will support staff through regular SENCo clinics to discuss concerns.

Assessments and observations will identify when pupils may benefit from targeted interventions such as: WellComm, Bucket Time, Sensory Circuits etc.

Cherry Garden branch maps (communication and language, physical development, PSED and mathematics) will be used to track small steps of progress for EYFS pupils with complex needs.

EYFS staff will work with SENCos to decide if further support from other agencies is needed and make referrals as appropriate. These agencies may include EYFS Consultation, Early Years Forum, Portage Service (PQUIPs) SALT, Sensory Processing Occupational Therapy Support Services (SPOTTSS) etc.

Sources of additional funding for Early Years pupils will be investigated:

- SEN Inclusion funding (SENIF) may be available for pupils.
- Disability Access funding (DAF) may be available for pupils in receipt of disability living allowance.
- Early Years Pupil Premium

#### 5. Assessment

At Dove Bank Primary School, on-going formative assessment is an integral part of the learning processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. Observations are made continuously on their play, speech, behaviour and work to carefully assess their next developmental needs. These observations are used to shape future planning. Practitioners also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

We sometimes choose to record and share these observations using software called Tapestry. These online Learning Journeys allow all staff working with children to contribute to and allow parents to both see and make their own contributions. Not all observations are recorded, some may be shared between staff informally or recorded as annotations on plans or children's work.

Tapestry is used to record new learning and something that is special or remarkable for that child.

When pupils start nursery or reception, staff take time to watch, observe and get to know them. All staff contribute to this on 'on entry' informal assessment and will share what they notice about a child's interests, fascinations, abilities and needs. This information is used to inform planning and provision.

The statutory 2-year check is within the 2-year-old provision. This is done in partnership with parents and health professionals where appropriate and recorded on Teams to be shared with appropriate staff.

Pupils starting Reception will undertake the statutory Reception baseline assessment within the first 6 weeks of the autumn term. The 2 parts of the assessment: literacy, communication and language and mathematics, can be delivered at the same time or separately depending on the pupil's ability to concentrate and will be administered by someone known to the child.

All early years children's language will be screened using WellComm within 6 weeks of starting in Nursery or Reception. The children who scored amber or red will be re-screened every 12 weeks to track their progress and inform decision making. Those scoring amber or red will have interventions such as Time to Talk and More Time to Talk programmes after which, they are reassessed.

In preschool and Reception, summative assessments are made 3 times a year to make judgements on a child's development, usually in November, March and June and entered onto Insight. These are linked to the seven areas of learning. These judgements will be based up on our professional opinion, knowledge of child development and with reference to our curriculum model. Children will be judged as being 'on track' or 'working towards'. Children with complex SEND needs might be judged to be working at a pre-key stage level. Discussions and agreements with EYFS Lead and SENCOs will happen before an early year's child is assessed as pre key stage.

Assessment information is analysed to help us identify areas of learning or specific groups of children who need different approach or additional resources. Informal discussions with the Nursery may be appropriate if this is the case. Pupil progress meetings for Reception class take part shortly after each summative assessment point, which involves a formal discussion between a member of SLT and the Reception class teacher.

Judgements and assessments are discussed and moderated internally between staff and with other early years staff in school across our MAT.

At the end of the EYFS Summer term in Reception staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they have met the goals or not.

The profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are then shared with parents and/or carers and year 1 staff following the guidelines of the Reporting and Assessment Arrangements document.

Once the Early Years profile has been completed and submitted to the DFE, Tapestry accounts, will be closed and deleted as the children will move on to being assessed using tools and materials appropriate to the National Curriculum objectives. We allow parents to access their child's learning journey at any time during their time in Nursery and Reception, we do not create digital or paper copies for them to keep but parents have the option to download their own child's work for their own reference. This is to ensure the safeguarding of all pupils and is in line with our e-safety and confidentiality procedures. Before being given access to their child's Learning Journey, parents must sign an agreement stating that they understand and will follow our guidelines. This record is kept in school.

Early Years children with complex needs (who have or who are likely to have an EHCP) will have their progress assessed and tracked using Cherry Garden Branch Maps. These will identify and celebrate small steps in progress and can be used to inform next steps. 4 Branch maps will be used to assess these children:

- Communication, Language, and Literacy Branch Map
- Physical Development Branch Map
- Personal, Social, Emotional Development Branch Map
- Mathematical Development Branch Map

Pupils will still need to have their assessments recorded on Insight as 'on track', 'working towards' or 'pre key stage' as appropriate.

## 6. Working with parents

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.

We have strong induction and transitions arrangements that build a positive relationship with parents and help children to settle quickly. We encourage parents to talk to us regarding any questions or concerns they have about their child, whether that is in person or by other means when this is difficult.

Parents are invited to look at the child's online learning journey (Tapestry) and to make contributions of achievements and special times at home. We also invite and include parents in celebrating their children achievements throughout the year with events such as Christmas Nativity, World Book Day, Mother's Day assemblies, class assemblies, Science week etc.

Little Ladybirds and Busy Bees children regularly take home activities such as, Proud Clouds, News from home, Beat Baby, Marvellous Me Box and Talking Tubes.

Big Butterflies take home Travelling Ted and during the Summer Term, these children will take home a weekly reading book to share.

We support parents by holding Information evenings before their child joins our Reception Class. Parents of children joining the Nursery are offered a tour of the setting where they meet the staff and are invited to ask any questions when they are shown around. They are also encouraged to ring or email should they have any further queries.

Parent's evenings are held termly and parents are encouraged to make an appointment to speak directly with the teacher or key worker that is responsible for their child. Little Ladybirds and Busy Bees offer a more informal drop-in session at this time. A written report for parents is produced for Nursery and Reception class children.

## [7. Safeguarding](#)

Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy. Please also see our Medication and Attendance policies.

### [7.1 Sleeping arrangements](#)

Children in the Nursery setting are given the opportunity to sleep if and when they need to during the day. Children are encouraged to sleep after their lunch if possible. There is a designated space for this, where there is minimal noise, light and disturbances. Children are encouraged to sleep on a lightweight mattress, with a blanket if required. Staff will monitor the temperature of the room to ensure that it is comfortable. Children will be within sight and hearing of staff when sleeping and checked at ten minute intervals. This is recorded on the sleep register.

Practitioners are familiar with the NHS advice on [Sudden infant death syndrome \(SIDS\) – NHS](#).

### [7.2 Safer eating](#)

Whilst children are eating there should always be a member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate

Upon enrolment, parents are asked if their child has any food allergies or intolerances, this is documented on the admission forms and shared with any staff who care for the child, particularly those who supervise eating or prepare any food for the children. All staff are allergy trained and familiar with Benedict's Law.

All staff who supervise the children whilst eating have a valid paediatric first aid certificate, they sit with the children so that they can closely supervise each child. Any choking incidents are reported to a member of the SLT and shared with parents.

### [7.3. Screen use](#)

In accordance with the DfE guidance on children's screen use in early years settings - <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/screen-use> Dove Bank Primary School consider the following recommendations on screen use in the early years.

- Screens will be used with children for short periods at a time, to protect their ability to focus and concentrate and will avoid using screens with children during mealtimes or within an hour of a sleep period, as this could affect their sleep quality.
- Staff will avoid having screens on in the background, as they can distract from activities such as social interaction and active play and avoid using screens to calm children as this impacts on children's ability to concentrate.
- Screens will not be used to occupy children or manage their behaviour, as this impacts on children's ability to learn to self-regulate.
- Whilst some teaching involves the considered use of screens for phonics, White Rose maths, watching video clips etc. this is considered to be beneficial and does not amount to more than the recommended hour per day of screen use.
- Screen use will also be considered by lunchtime staff and before and after school staff.

#### 7.4. Attendance

Appendix outlining the schools' approach to attendance of early years pupils has been shared and can be added to the whole school attendance policy (with amendments where needed). High levels of attendance of non- statutory aged pupils are encouraged. Regular attendance of sessions is expected. Absence of non-statutory school age children is potentially considered as a welfare concern in the first instance and will be dealt with as such.

- If the reason for an absence is unknown on a particular day, the admin team will contact parents to enquire and discuss the reason. Enrolment documents will collect at least 3 emergency contacts including 1 non-parental contact to be used in cases of persistent non-attendance.
- There is a waved approach for persistent absences, children that fall below the attendance percentage will be referred to the Attendance Lead who will work with families to understand the reasons and to find solutions for irregular attendance.
- Attendance below 90% - The Attendance Lead or keyworker will have an informal conversation with parents/carers enquiring about the reasons for the child being absent from nursery and an understanding of when/if attendance will go back to their usual pattern.
- Attendance below 85% - A letter explaining the developmental and social benefits from regular nursery attendance to be sent to parents. (Suggested letter attached.)
- Attendance below 80% Parents/carers invited into the school for a more formal conversation about the reasons for absence and what support could be put into place to encourage more regular attendance. For example, being able to access before or afterschool clubs to help working families,

reducing the number of sessions the child has committed to attend, referral to health visitor for medical advice etc.

- If, after these graduated steps have been taken, a child's attendance drops below 75%, school may withdraw the child's place and offer it to someone on the waiting list. This decision will be made on an individual basis, considering the needs and context of the family and as a very last resort.

## 8. Accessibility

We are committed to providing an accessible environment which values and includes all pupils, staff, parents and visitors regardless of their education, physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional and cultural needs. We are committed to challenging negative attitudes about disability and accessibility to develop a culture of awareness, tolerance and inclusion.

## 8. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by Joanne Woodward, Early Years Leader, every year.

## **Appendix 1. List of statutory policies and procedures for the EYFS**

This checklist lists the policies and procedures that we must have according to the EYFS statutory framework.

| Statutory Policy or procedure for the EYFS                             | Where can it be found?                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Safeguarding policy and procedures                                     | See child protection and safeguarding policy       |
| Procedure responding to illness                                        | See health and safety policy and medication policy |
| Administering medicines policy                                         | See medication policy                              |
| Emergency evacuation procedure                                         | See health and safety policy                       |
| Procedure for checking the identity of visitors                        | See safeguarding policy                            |
| Procedure for a parent failing to collect a child and missing children | See safeguarding policy                            |
| Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints                     | See complaints policy                              |

|                                                          |                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Procedure for dealing with the intimate care of children | See intimate care policy |
| Procedure for dealing with children with allergies       | Allergy policy           |