



# EYFS Policy

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## 1. Definitions

|               |                                                                                    |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| EYFS          | Early Years Foundation Stage                                                       |
| EYFSP         | Early Years Foundation Stage Profile                                               |
| RBA           | Reception Baseline Assessment                                                      |
| ELG           | Early Learning Goal                                                                |
| GLD           | Good Level of Development                                                          |
| Early Years   | Birth to 5 years                                                                   |
| Practitioners | Qualified members of staff employed to work in early years                         |
| The Trust     | All employees of Grace Schools                                                     |
| CPD           | Continuous Professional Development                                                |
| EEF           | Education Endowment Foundation                                                     |
| SENDIASS      | Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services |

## 2. Application of this Policy

The policy is applicable to all employees (permanent and temporary) of Grace Schools. Where applicable, it also should be taken into consideration for all volunteers supporting Grace Schools early years provision.

The above definitions are included for reference purposes for both School and Central Team staff to enable clarification and transparency when applying this policy.

## 3. Associated Policies and Documents

This Policy should be read in conjunction with Grace Schools Policies and Procedures outlined in Appendix 1.

In addition:

All practitioners working in the EYFS should be aware of, and refer to, the following information: The Childcare Act 2006, EYFS Statutory Framework that applies from September 2025 and EYFS Profile Handbook September 2025.

They must receive regular training and be fully aware of the Grace Schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, August 2025, reporting disclosures or concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately.

## 4. Version control

| No. | Status of document/changes             | Prepared by     | Reviewed by    | Approved by                 | Date of approval | Review Date |
|-----|----------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1.  | Baseline policy                        | Education Team  | Trustees       | Standards & Ethos Committee | 22.9.23          | Sept 2023   |
| 2.  | Baseline policy – updated and reviewed | Trust EYFS Lead | Education Team | CEO                         | Nov 2024         | Nov 2025    |
| 3.  | Policy updated and reviewed            | Trust EYFS Lead | Education Team | CEO                         | April 2026       | March 2027  |

This document will be reviewed on an annual basis. For all questions in relation to this policy, please contact a member of the Education Team.

## 5. Purpose and Scope

Trust-wide early years provision includes nurseries, pre-schools and reception classes. For the purpose of this policy, early years refers to education, learning and development provided to all children in Grace Schools between the age of 0 years until the end of reception.

### 5.1 Statutory requirements

This policy is based on requirements set out in the EYFS Statutory Framework that applies from September 2025 (and all further DfE updates since publication). The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This document also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

#### **Staffing**

The Trust ensures that all early years provision is staffed, as a minimum, to the statutory guidance outlined in The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE 2025). Schools have assigned key workers in each of their early years settings. These assigned members of staff ensure that care and education is tailored to meet individual needs. It also enables children to settle, building strong relationships between themselves and practitioners, and secures parental confidence.

#### **Admissions**

For parents/carers of children below compulsory school age they should apply directly to the Trust school they wish their child to attend pre-school/nursery. Families can gain further information about the Trust's admission arrangements by either contacting the



school or visiting the school/Trust website, where they should refer to the Trust Admission Policy.

A child must start full-time education once they reach the compulsory school age of 5. This is on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday, whichever comes first e.g. if a child reaches compulsory school age on 31 March, they must start full-time education at the beginning of the summer term that year.

The Trust expect children will start school full-time in the September after their 4th birthday. In exceptional circumstances where parents/carers are considering deferral or part-time enrolment Headteachers should invite them into school to discuss this further and make reference to the Admission Policy, outlining procedures that must be undertaken by parents/carers if they wish to take this decision further. If appropriate, Headteachers should also sign-post families to SENDIASS and appropriate LA external services for support and advice at this stage.

Parents/carers of children joining reception should apply through the local authority application process by the published date (even if there is a parental request for deferral later in the reception year). Parents/carers applying for a school place in reception will be considered in-line with the Trust Admissions Policy on the school/Trust website. This Policy is set according to the local authority guidance in which the school is located i.e. Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk. Children who already attend a school's nursery/pre-school provision must still apply for a reception place, even in the same school, through the local authority admissions process.

## 6. Policy Statement

### 6.1 Rationale

The Trust recognise the importance of high-quality early years provision in ensuring that all children have the very best start to their school journey. Children develop quickly in their earliest years and the experiences and interactions children have between birth and the age of five have a major impact on their future life chances. Quality early years provision lays the foundation for later learning and ensures that children are ready and able to access the national curriculum.

### 6.2 Aims

**As a Grace Schools EYFS community we aim to:**

- make certain that all children regardless of school structure and organisation receive their early years curriculum entitlement
- develop consistent and high-quality early years provision across all Trust schools in line with the statutory early years framework
- ensure that all children have access to a broad, balanced knowledge-rich early years curriculum that gives them the range of foundational knowledge and skills needed on which to build
- provide environments to learn where all children feel safe, secure and happy
- guarantee that practice is inclusive of all children, that every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice
- facilitate and attend high-quality professional learning focusing on research informed pedagogy and curriculum to secure strong teaching, learning and development
- motivate children intrinsically, fostering high aspirations, building on their passions and interests.



**Demonstrating our vision 'To lead out' by:**

- forging wider professional partnerships, collaborating in national consultations, working groups, conferences and professional communities
- fostering a collaborative approach to Trust-wide improvement by developing expertise and working together as an early years community and hub network
- establishing strong partnership working between practitioners, outside agencies and with parents and/or carers.

## 7. Procedures

### 7.1 Approach

#### **Pedagogy**

The Trust implements clear research informed pedagogical approach to the early years curriculum that is based on a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities. The balance includes age-appropriate structured explicit teaching which is adult led alongside adult guided learning activities, child-initiated provision and enhanced provision.

#### **Role of the adult**

In all settings, the role of the adult is key to planning purposeful learning. All practitioners are planned for and know their core purpose within the setting at any given time. New knowledge is taught, learning is embedded and reinforced through thoughtful and selective use of provision and adult interaction. The development of early language and communication is a priority and is recognised as the key to success in every area of the curriculum. Practitioners are trained to be able to intervene effectively, observe and facilitate children interacting and learning, plan and provide for their next steps. Through their professional learning they know how to model and develop language and communication effectively using the ShREC Approach (EEF), enabling children to develop their language and communication skills, secure knowledge and embed key skills.

#### **Learning environments**

Our early years provision ensures that curriculum planning includes motivating and purposeful opportunities to learn and develop both indoors and outdoors, in all areas of learning whilst prioritising adult and peer high quality interaction and conversation, whilst facilitating physical development.

The Trust recognise the importance of the outdoor learning environment in supporting a child's development. As such, the outdoor environment is carefully planned for, is language rich, with provision that further embeds or facilitates curriculum learning and development. The outdoor environment is seen as essential to early years development.

In all Trust schools there is a requirement for the outdoor learning environment to be planned for and available for daily use unless risk assessment deems otherwise. All settings undertake an annual EYFS risk assessment which is saved on Smartlog and implement a daily environment check (twice daily if pre-school attendance deems necessary).

#### **Planning**

All schools produce a long-term curriculum map which specifies when core

knowledge, vocabulary and key developmental skills will be taught, with references made to [Development Matters 2024 \(DM\)](#).

Careful consideration is made to when adult directed, adult guided, continuous and enhanced provision is planned, indoors and outdoors, and how this enables all children to develop and learn effectively.

Practitioners also consider the individual needs and interests of each child, providing a balance of opportunities for children to direct their own learning alongside adult directed learning activities.

As a Trust we align to our Principles of Education. Practitioners carefully plan provision for all children to build equity. On entry to the setting or at the beginning of a unit of work practitioners identify what children already know, can do and have previous experience of. Scaffolds and adaptations are planned carefully into provision to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to all children using the indoor and outdoor environment, so that gaps do not appear or widen. Practitioners plan opportunities to revisit prior learning, pre-teach and build on existing knowledge and skills. During adult guided activities practitioners address misconceptions at the point of error, support children in making connections to develop schema, facilitating the development of skills and enabling children to know and remember more.

Where a child may have a special educational need or disability or an emerging area of need, practitioners will work with the SENCo who will support in line with the SEND Code of Practice and Grace Schools Education Principles to consider whether specialist support is required, engaging with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate. Parents/carers will be informed and involved at all stages. Staff and parent interactions will focus on an approach of co-production. Early identification of a special educational need and/or disability is key to ensuring children receive the support they are entitled to.

## **Resources**

Even if a high-quality learning environment has been created, it is not enough by itself. Schools recognise the importance of concrete resources in supporting children to develop a sound understanding of abstract concepts. Open ended materials are provided both indoors and outdoors, enabling children to use and combine these in their own way to meet their own purpose.

Continuous provision must not remain unchanged or unplanned for. It must take into consideration the development trajectory of the cohort and the intended curriculum. Resources and manipulatives must be carefully selected by practitioners to match the needs and development of the children and used to support and scaffold learning e.g. width of paintbrush barrels and bristles, size and range of materials for constructing or assembling.

Care is taken to select non-stereotypical resources that represent both the local context and provide a window to the wider world. The Trust recommend that schools implement the Cambridgeshire PSHE Service Personal Development Programme for PSHE and RSE from reception (or pre-school if in place) and refer to this for guidance on resources and texts to support the curriculum.

### **Working with parents and carers**

The Trust recognise that children learn and develop best when there is a strong partnership between practitioners, children and parents/carers. Every effort is made to reflect on and improve transition arrangements and plan positive engagement opportunities for new families.

All schools are expected to foster and nurture strong partnerships with families. Schools which achieve this well plan early induction opportunities such as:

- parent/carers workshops and information sessions (online and in-person)
- welcome meetings
- transition sessions/days
- induction booklets and activities
- virtual tours
- home visits (remote or in person)
- setting visits
- stay and play sessions
- two-way learning conversations
- open door approaches
- parent consultations

Practitioners should refer to [Grace Schools 'A Successful Start' - Nov 2023](#) for further guidance on transition.

It is essential that parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. The Trust has three assessment checkpoints throughout the reception year. Practitioners use these checkpoints to support their dialogue with parents and/or carers, ensuring they have an up to date, well-rounded picture of their child's development including knowledge, understanding and abilities. Any areas of learning that are not developing in line with age related expectations are discussed with parents and/or carers during the year and provision made to close the development gap as soon as observed.

Each child is assigned a key person who helps to ensure that their learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. The key person supports parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home. The key person also helps families to engage with more specialist support, if appropriate.

## 8.0 Curriculum

### **EYFS statutory framework**

All children enrolled in early years provision within the Trust are entitled to receive the early years curriculum which is outlined in Educational Programmes within the EYFS statutory framework, 2025.

The EYFS statutory framework includes seven areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, three areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important and should be prioritised. Practitioners working with our youngest children focus principally on the three prime areas as these lay the foundations for later learning.

#### **The prime areas are:**

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through four specific areas.

#### **The specific areas are:**

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

Weaving throughout the EYFS curriculum are the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning:

- playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, they 'have a go'
- active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, they enjoy achievements
- creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, they develop strategies for doing things

These elements underpin how practitioners reflect on each child's development, adjusting practice and provision accordingly.

### **Trust principles**

All Trust schools share an ambitious, planned and sequenced, knowledge-rich curriculum. The curriculum is the progression model which begins in EYFS, designed to



teach foundational knowledge in the early years that forms the bedrock on which later learning in key stage one and two builds.

As a Trust we align to our Principles of Education. What we select to teach and how we choose to teach it is key from the moment children enter our schools. The curriculum has been designed to encourage children to build resilience, ambition, and integrity. It is designed progressively from early years to ensure that children have time to embed knowledge and basic skills that are developmentally appropriate, in preparation for later learning.



Each school outlines the key learning expectations for children at each stage of their EYFS journey on the long-term curriculum map. EYFS teachers, all leaders and practitioners in school understand how this is intrinsically linked to the requirements outlined in the National Curriculum. All schools are expected to tailor their curriculum to reflect the individual characteristics of their catchment area and cohort i.e. geographical location, specific physical and human features, cohort characteristics and expertise. The curriculum is planned and carefully sequenced from EYFS to Y6, with nothing left to chance. The curriculum meets the expectations outlined in The Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2025.

The Trust requires each setting to publish a long-term curriculum map on their school website.

Development Matters (DM) provides non-statutory curriculum guidance for the EYFS. It provides an overall view of how children develop and learn, guiding but not replacing practitioner's professional judgement. As stated in Development Matters, children develop at their own rates and in their own way by interconnecting knowledge and building schema, much like a spider's web. As a Trust we use DM statements to support our planning, provision and checkpoints. Schools recognise that the order should not be taken as necessary next steps for individual children and do not use DM statements as check lists.

### **Trust priorities**

As a Trust we pledge to prioritise:

#### **Oracy**

Understanding language and language comprehension is an essential foundation for early reading and writing. Starting from birth (or pre-birth) the development of language and communication 'underpins all seven areas of learning and development' in the EYFS Framework (DfE, 2025).

Research informs the idea that strong oral language skills are linked to later reading ability (Law et al., 2017). Therefore, the Trust recognise the importance of teaching and developing language, communication and vocabulary to enable children to successfully access all curriculum areas. The Trust prioritises and directs all practitioners working within the EYFS towards appropriate and relevant evidence informed professional learning (likely originating from EEF) to ensure high-quality pedagogy. All schools plan for vocabulary instruction and the teaching of rhymes and songs linked to the curriculum. This is outlined on their long-term curriculum map. Practitioners can refer to Grace Schools [Oracy Curriculum - 2024.docx](#) for further guidance.

### **Early reading**

Trust schools prioritise the development of early reading. All schools have daily phonics teaching timetabled for children in reception. Schools implement a validated phonics programme; our recommended programme is Sounds Write. All practitioners teaching phonics are trained.

Children read appropriate texts that are matched to their current phonics teaching and code knowledge. Practitioners working with children in pre-school/nursery make reference to Nursery Sounds-Write Hub materials and prioritise teaching the early aspects on phonological awareness through:

- environmental sounds
- instrumental sounds
- body percussion (e.g. clapping, stamping)
- rhythm and rhyme
- alliteration
- voice sounds
- oral blending and segmenting (e.g. hearing that d-o-g makes 'dog')

The Trust also places priority on the importance of reading for enjoyment and has clear strategies to encourage and reinforce this within schools.

These include:

- planned provision to engage with high-quality texts both in the indoor and outdoor environment
- accessible core texts
- whole school planned Reading Canon
- daily whole class/group story times
- visually engaging and well used social reading areas
- book talk (meta language)
- daily opportunities for reading aloud
- recommendations for reading
- language rich learning environments
- high-quality and well-resourced reading selections, regularly audited and changed
- guidance for families around how to support children in early reading e.g. online reading resources, phonics workshops, stay and play sessions, promotion of home reading opportunities
- promotion and engagement with local libraries

### **Professional development and training**

The Trust values the importance and impact of all staff's professional development on school improvement and pupil outcomes across all areas of the EYFS. The Trust

works closely with early years leaders to support staff development in school and measure the impact of this. The early years community also prioritises the importance and development of early years expertise within leadership, recognising practical solutions to ensure that this is enacted.

Specific professional development opportunities are planned for early years practitioners and leaders, these form part of the Trust's annual professional learning programme. Termly EYFS forums are delivered in addition to hub networks and Trust EYFS bulletins; all members of the school community are welcome to attend. Through these professional development opportunities, EYFS leaders and practitioners are kept up to date with national and local updates and sign-posted towards relevant research informed training. Education Team, school leaders and practitioners work collaboratively to facilitate and lead forums, develop Trust-wide guidance and curriculum, and review provision in partnership. EYFS Leads are expected to attend termly EYFS forums to remain up to date, knowledgeable and proactive in the development of Trust-wide EYFS provision.

The impact of professional development is tracked and used to inform next steps for the early years community, alongside national developments within the sector. Feedback from the EYFS community is used regularly to identify key successes and development points, and these are used to select and implement targeted professional learning and next steps for the community.

## Impact

### Reporting

To be confident of the impact of the Trust's early years provision, Executive Leaders, Education Team, Headteachers and EYFS leaders monitor and review all aspects of the quality of education in early years. This includes regular evaluative learning discussions with children and wider subject leaders. Evaluative joint EYFS reviews between Hub Directors, Headteachers and EYFS Leaders provide quality assurance, monitoring, support and challenge with targeted action steps. The quality and impact of early years provision will be summarised and reported to Regional School Boards (RSBs) on a termly basis.

### **Statutory assessment: Reception Baseline Assessment**

Within the first 6 weeks of a child starting in reception, practitioners will administer the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). RBA is submitted to the local authority. This baseline is used by the DfE to track a child's progress and attainment across both Key Stage One and Key Stage Two. In addition, practitioners administer an internal baseline assessment to gather the information they need to supplement the RBA and identify on entry starting points for all children. During this period of on-entry assessment teaching and learning continues alongside.

### **Statutory assessment: Early Years Foundation Stage Profile**

Throughout their time in early years children partake in an ambitious curriculum which is designed in a sequential way to ensure progress towards the end of reception goals. These goals are defined as Early Learning Goals (ELGs). At the end of the EYFS, practitioners complete the EYFS Profile for each child. Children are assessed against the 17 ELGs, indicating whether they are:

**Expected** - meeting expected levels of development

**Emerging** - not yet reaching expected levels of development

If children achieve the expected standard for ELGs within the prime areas of learning and the specific areas of literacy and mathematics, they will be judged as having a good level of development (GLD).

The EYFS Profile reflects practitioners' knowledge of the individual child through their ongoing observations, interactions and discussions. The end of reception year judgements made in the profile must be shared with parents and/or carers and must form an integral part of transition discussions with year 1 teachers.

### **Trust-wide assessment**

Data is collected by the Trust across all schools at three checkpoints throughout the reception year:

|              |          |                                        |
|--------------|----------|----------------------------------------|
| Statutory    | Autumn 1 | Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)    |
| Checkpoint 1 | Autumn 1 | October                                |
| Checkpoint 2 | Autumn 2 | December                               |
| Checkpoint 3 | Spring 1 | February                               |
| Statutory    | Summer 2 | Early Years Assessment Profile (EYFSP) |

This data is used by school and Trust leaders to reflect and ascertain the impact of teaching and curriculum delivery and to support Trust-wide plans for well-matched professional learning to meet the needs of the schools.

Schools cluster together to moderate EYFSP judgements and practitioners are invited to attend one of the Trust-wide EYFS forum moderation events, to ensure consistency and accuracy in their assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the Education Team and Local Authority.

Ongoing assessment forms an integral part in evaluating and planning for learning and development. Observations are used to shape future planning and should consider information shared by parents/carers. Schools should have systems in place to enable this two-way communication with parents/carers. This informs the relevant next steps of learning and any targeted support required.

At no point should assessment and record keeping take time away from practitioners having high-quality interactions with children in provision. Leaders should review, reflect and evaluate the purpose and type of evidence collection in early years on a regular basis.

## 9. Roles and responsibilities

All members of Grace Schools, regardless of role, have a responsibility for ensuring high-quality provision is provided within each of our Trust schools.

Specific roles are as follows:

### **Regional School Boards**

The Regional School Board will receive termly updates about the quality of early education from the Hub Director and Headteacher.

### **Headteachers**

Headteachers are responsible for ensuring that the Trust EYFS Policy is implemented consistently across their school and the expected quality of education is in place. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring the school leadership team develop expertise in early years. Headteachers are responsible for ensuring they have an effective Early Years Leader in place and that the quality of early years education is prioritised. They are also responsible for ensuring practitioners are suitably trained and inducted to implement this policy and deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum in accordance with the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage.

Headteachers, and leadership team, will collaborate with the Education Team during EYFS reviews and complete EYFS self-evaluation to ensure strategic improvement actions are implemented.

### **EYFS Leads**

EYFS leaders are responsible for monitoring that the curriculum is planned and delivered effectively in their school, fulfilling this EYFS Policy in its entirety and ensuring an effective culture of safeguarding across the setting. It is their



responsibility to develop and collaborate with wider subject leaders and staff members within their own school, across their hub network and the EYFS community, attend termly Trust EYFS Forums and partnership CPD sessions. To ensure reflective and self-sustaining practice improvements, each setting will have an EYFS action plan that is reviewed termly by the EYFS lead and Headteacher. Actions plans will reflect any strategic improvement actions identified during EYFS reviews with their Hub Director or EYFS self-evaluation.

### **EYFS Practitioners**

EYFS practitioners are responsible for reading and implementing the Trust's EYFS Policy and ensuring they have sufficient subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum effectively, seeking support when needed. They are responsible for engaging in staff training and using documentation and guidance to ensure they feel confident teaching all areas of the EYFS curriculum, prioritising high-quality 1:1 interaction with pupils and understanding how to support and develop these in line with ShREC approach. EYFS practitioners should collaborate in monitoring and assessing children's achievement and progress and model the use of agreed pedagogies and approaches. They should adhere to all associated school policies and ensure a culture of safeguarding and equality across the setting.

### **Trust Education Team**

The Education Team will work with the Trust Early Years Lead to quality assure, support, challenge and monitor the quality of education in early years. The Education Team will collaborate with school leadership teams during EYFS review visits and agree strategic improvement action steps. During discussions and reviews the Trust Inclusion Lead and Trust Curriculum Lead will be kept well informed by the school SENCo or Headteacher of any needs arising for children between 0 and 5 years old accessing Grace Schools early years provision.

The Education Team will keep informed of national updates, research evidence and relevant professional learning disseminating and signposting to the wider Trust in a timely manner using a variety of methods including in-person events, remote forums, bulletins, shared resource channel, community group emails, working groups etc.

## 10. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed and approved annually by the Education Team and CEO. It will be published and shared with school leaders for implementation in each school. It will be shared and read by all school staff and published on the school website.

Please note that should there be any changes/further national guidance issued relevant to this policy, it will be updated accordingly prior to the review date shown above and referred to the next Trust Board meeting.

## Appendix 1

All schools delivering provision for children from birth to the 31st of August following their fifth birthday must adhere to the standards set out in the EYFS statutory framework (1 September 2025).

This checklist identifies the policies and procedures that the school must also 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 for responding to illness                                                  | See health and safety policy                         |
| Administering medicines policy                                                       | See supporting pupils with medical conditions policy |
| Emergency evacuation procedure                                                       | See health and safety policy                         |
| Procedure for checking the identity of visitors                                      | See child protection and safeguarding policy         |
| Procedures for a parent failing to collect a child and for missing children          | See child protection and safeguarding policy         |
| Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints                                   | See complaints policy                                |
| EYFS annual environment risk assessment                                              | Grace Schools template - Smartlog                    |
| <b>In addition, schools must also take account of the following Trust documents:</b> |                                                      |
| Admissions policy                                                                    | Grace Schools                                        |
| Behaviour policy                                                                     | Grace Schools                                        |
| Relationship and Sex Education policy                                                | Grace Schools                                        |