Grove Vale Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage and Curriculum Policy

November 2026

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Early Years Foundation Stage and Curriculum Policy

"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.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life."
Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage . *Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five* 31 March 2021

1. Our intent

At Grove Vale Primary School, our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provides a safe, inclusive, stimulating and nurturing environment in which every child is supported to become a confident, independent and enthusiastic learner. Our provision encompasses our school-based Nursery and Reception classes, ensuring that children experience a coherent, ambitious and progressive curriculum from the beginning of their time with us through to the end of the EYFS.

We recognise that every child is unique and brings their own interests, experiences, strengths, culture, language and individual needs. We build on these starting points to develop the knowledge, skills, vocabulary, confidence and learning behaviours children need to succeed in school and beyond.

Through a carefully planned balance of adult-led teaching, purposeful play and child-initiated learning, we encourage children to be ambitious, resilient, creative and curious. We promote communication, language, early reading, writing, mathematical understanding, physical development, independence and positive relationships throughout our provision.

We are committed to ensuring that all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), have access to ambitious learning opportunities and the support they need to participate, achieve and thrive.

We work in partnership with parents and carers, recognising them as their child's first educators and valuing their knowledge and contributions. We aim to foster a lifelong love of learning and ensure that every child is well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Our aims

- Provide a safe, caring, stimulating and challenging environment that responds to children's individual needs.
- Offer a broad, balanced and progressive curriculum that builds secure foundations for future learning.
- Use purposeful play, high-quality interactions and explicit teaching to develop knowledge, skills, vocabulary and understanding.
- Recognise children's starting points and interests and use assessment to identify next steps and provide appropriate support and challenge.
- Promote independence, confidence, curiosity, creativity, resilience and positive relationships.
- Ensure that all children can participate meaningfully, including children with SEND and children who are learning English as an additional language.
- Build respectful, collaborative relationships with families and relevant professionals.

2. Our Nursery and Reception provision

Our EYFS comprises our school-based Nursery and Reception classes. Together, these provide a connected learning journey in which children's development, interests and prior learning inform the experiences and teaching they receive.

In Nursery, we prioritise secure relationships, communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, physical skills, independence and curiosity. Children learn through exploration, purposeful play, high-quality interactions and carefully planned adult-led experiences. Practitioners use their knowledge of child development to provide appropriate support, repetition and challenge.

As children progress into Reception, learning builds on the foundations established in Nursery. The curriculum develops children's early literacy and mathematical understanding alongside all other areas of learning. Children have regular opportunities to revisit and deepen their understanding, apply learning independently and develop the knowledge and skills needed for the transition to Year 1.

Across both phases, staff share relevant information, discuss children's progress and support continuity and progression. We recognise that children develop at different rates and adapt provision in response to their individual starting points and needs.

Nursery sessions and attendance arrangements are communicated clearly to families. The school shares information about available sessions, admissions and funded or additional hours through its published admissions arrangements. Staff work with parents and carers to support settling in and help children feel safe, secure and ready to learn.

3. The statutory framework and curriculum

Our EYFS provision follows the current statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework for group and school-based providers. We also use Development Matters as non-statutory guidance to support curriculum design and professional judgement. The statutory framework sets the requirements that the school must meet; guidance supports, but does not replace, practitioners' knowledge of children and the curriculum.

The EYFS framework is underpinned by four guiding principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

Our curriculum is designed around the children of Grove Vale. We discover and value what children bring to school, including their families, interests, experiences, home languages and cultures. Staff use this knowledge alongside observations and assessment to identify the knowledge, vocabulary and skills children need to learn next.

The seven areas of learning

The EYFS curriculum comprises seven interconnected areas of learning and development:

Prime areas	Specific areas
• Communication and Language • Personal, Social and Emotional Development • Physical Development	•Literacy •Mathematics •Understanding the World • Expressive Arts and Design

The prime areas are particularly important in supporting children's overall development and enabling them to access learning across the specific areas. We therefore place a strong emphasis on communication, relationships, emotional well-being, physical competence and independence throughout Nursery and Reception.

Our curriculum identifies the knowledge, vocabulary, skills and experiences we want children to develop. These are organised to ensure appropriate progression, opportunities for repetition and practice, and increasing depth of understanding.

Staff draw on children's interests and prior learning to make learning meaningful while ensuring that important curriculum content is taught explicitly and revisited over time.

The Early Learning Goals (ELGs) are used to assess children's development at the end of Reception as part of the EYFS Profile. They are not used as a checklist to determine the whole curriculum.

4. Learning through play and the characteristics of effective learning

Learning through play is an important part of our EYFS approach. We believe children learn through a combination of direct teaching, carefully guided experiences, exploration and purposeful play. Play enables children to practise and apply skills, revisit prior learning, explore ideas, solve problems, develop language and build relationships.

Adults play an active role in learning. They observe, listen, model language, introduce vocabulary, demonstrate skills, ask questions, address misconceptions and extend children's thinking. Adults join children's play sensitively and purposefully, while ensuring children have time and space to explore independently.

The three characteristics of effective learning are:

- Playing and Exploring – children investigate, experience things and have a go.
- Active Learning – children concentrate, keep trying and enjoy achieving what they set out to do.
- Creating and Thinking Critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

Staff model, encourage and reflect on these characteristics during adult-led and child-initiated learning. They use this understanding to support children's learning behaviours and plan appropriate next steps.

5. Grove Vale values and school drivers

Our EYFS reflects the whole-school approach to teaching and learning. Through age-appropriate language, modelling and experiences, children are encouraged to:

- Be Ambitious
- Be Resilient
- Be Creative
- Be Curious

These drivers link to our Grove Vale values:

G	Greater Depth Thinking
R	Relationships for Collaboration
O	Outstanding Opportunities to Make

	Progress
V	Valuing Ourselves and Each Other
E	Engaging Learning
V	Visually Stimulating
A	Attitudes to Learning
L	Love of Learning for Everyone, Every Day
E	Empowering All Learners

6. Enabling environments

Our EYFS environment in both the Nursery and Reception areas are organised into 'hubs' to help children explore and learn securely and safely. Within these, clearly organised learning zones provide opportunities to practise and apply skills across all seven areas of learning.

Provision is reviewed in response to children's interests, development, assessment information and curriculum priorities. Resources and enhancements are adapted over time to support consolidation, introduce new learning and provide appropriate challenge. The environment is accessible and inclusive, with adults considering how layout, resources, routines and communication supports enable every child to participate.

Our provision includes investigation and discovery areas, sand and water, construction, mathematics, creative arts, mark-making and writing, home corner and role play, small world, stories and reading, calm spaces, music, gardening, workshop and outdoor learning areas. Reading, writing, mathematics, communication and language are promoted throughout the environment rather than being confined to one area.

During child-initiated learning, children are supported to make choices and access the indoor and outdoor provision in line with the organisation and safety arrangements of the setting. Staff act as responsive play partners, model skills and language, observe learning and introduce enhancements where these will extend children's understanding. Planning includes in-the-moment responses and carefully selected adult-initiated objectives.

7. Teaching and planning

Long- and medium-term curriculum planning

Long-term planning identifies the knowledge, vocabulary, skills and experiences that children will develop over time. It is informed by the EYFS educational programmes, the school's curriculum drivers and the experiences that Grove Vale offers. Texts and topics provide meaningful contexts for learning, while staff ensure that curriculum coverage and progression are not dependent on a particular theme.

Medium-term plans and knowledge organisers identify key learning, vocabulary and intended outcomes in more detail. Provision plans identify how the environment, resources and adult interactions support important concepts, skills, attitudes and knowledge. Environment plans record how provision is adapted over time in response to children's needs.

Seasonal change, celebrations, diversity and real-life experiences are explored through stories, discussion, investigation and practical activities. Staff ensure that these experiences are inclusive and appropriate to the children in the setting.

Adult-led and guided learning

Adults plan direct teaching and guided experiences according to children's developmental stage, curriculum priorities and identified next steps. In Reception, planned sessions include phonics, reading, writing, mathematics and other areas of learning. The length, grouping and approach to adult-led learning are adapted to children's needs and attention, with opportunities to practise and apply learning throughout the day.

Phonics follows the school's phonics progression document and agreed teaching approach. Reading, writing, mathematics, vocabulary and communication are reinforced across routines, stories, continuous provision and play. In Nursery, adult-led experiences are planned to be developmentally appropriate and may be shorter, more practical and more flexible in response to children's engagement.

Child-initiated learning and objective-led planning

During child-initiated learning, adults respond to children's interests while keeping curriculum intentions in mind. Where appropriate, staff use objective-led planning to teach a specific skill or concept within children's play. They may model, prompt, ask questions, introduce resources or provide a short starter activity. The approach and duration are flexible and responsive to the child.

Planning is reviewed regularly to ensure that it has a clear purpose, supports progression and remains manageable. Staff prioritise interactions and experiences that make a meaningful difference to children's learning.

8. Assessment, observation and review

Assessment is ongoing and informs our understanding of each child's development, knowledge and skills. Staff use high-quality interactions, observations, discussions with children, planned activities and information from families to identify starting points, recognise progress and determine appropriate next steps.

Starting points and baseline information

When children join Nursery or Reception, staff gather information from parents and carers and, where appropriate, previous settings. Practitioners observe children in

familiar and play-based contexts and discuss their development with colleagues to build a rounded understanding of their starting points. This informs provision and planning.

In Reception, the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment is completed within the required six-week period. This assessment is distinct from the school's wider observations and is not used as the baseline assessment for Nursery children.

Ongoing assessment and pupil check-ins
Staff use observations and professional judgement to understand children's progress across the seven areas of learning. Pupil check-ins take place termly with interim reviews with the phase leader taking place half termly, to identify strengths, emerging concerns and children who may need additional support or challenge. Agreed actions and interventions are reviewed to consider their impact.

Observations may be recorded on Tapestry, the school's secure online learning journal, where this supports assessment, communication with families or the identification of next steps. Staff use professional judgement about what needs to be recorded and avoid unnecessary paperwork. Information is handled in line with the school's data protection and safeguarding procedures.

EYFS Profile
At the end of Reception, the EYFS Profile is completed in accordance with statutory requirements. Practitioners assess each child's attainment against the Early Learning Goals and report whether each goal is 'expected' or 'emerging'. The profile supports a rounded understanding of children's learning and informs transition to Year 1.

Using assessment to improve learning
Assessment is used to adapt teaching, provision and support. Staff discuss progress, moderate judgements where appropriate and work with families and relevant professionals to develop a shared understanding of children's needs. The focus is on identifying what children know and can do, what they need to learn next and how adults can best support that learning.

9. Inclusion, equality and SEND
Inclusion is central to our EYFS provision. We recognise that children develop at different rates and may require different levels of support to access learning, develop communication and independence, and participate fully in school life.

Staff build positive relationships with children and families to understand each child's strengths, interests, experiences, communication and individual needs. We use observations, assessment, professional discussion and information shared by parents, previous settings and relevant professionals to identify barriers to learning and plan appropriate support.

We adapt our environment, resources, teaching approaches and expectations to meet individual needs. This may include visual timetables, now-and-next boards, communication aids, Aided Language Displays, sensory resources, carefully structured activities, additional processing time, targeted adult support and opportunities to practise skills in manageable steps.

Where appropriate, individual learning plans identify specific, measurable targets, success criteria and strategies. These are reviewed regularly to evaluate progress and inform next steps. We work in partnership with the school's SENDCo, families and external professionals to ensure that support is coordinated and responsive.

All children are entitled to an ambitious curriculum. We provide scaffolding and additional support where needed, while ensuring children have opportunities to develop independence, make choices, build relationships and experience success. We also provide further challenge for children who are ready to deepen their learning.

We promote equality, celebrate diversity and use resources that reflect a range of cultures, languages, families and experiences. We do not discriminate against children or families on the basis of protected characteristics, disability, language, background or ability. Further information is set out in the school's SEND, Inclusion and Equality policies.

10. Health, safety, safeguarding and welfare

The safety and welfare of children are paramount. All staff follow the current EYFS statutory framework and the school's safeguarding, health and safety and welfare procedures. Staff remain alert to safeguarding concerns and follow the school's child protection and safeguarding policy and reporting arrangements.

The school ensures that staffing arrangements, supervision, staff suitability and child-to-adult ratios meet the applicable statutory requirements. Children are supported to understand boundaries and safe choices. We provide appropriate opportunities for managed risk-taking and help children learn to recognise hazards.

The school promotes children's health and well-being through appropriate hygiene routines, access to drinking water, healthy eating, suitable snack arrangements, attention to dietary and medical needs, and procedures for illness and infection control. Accidents, injuries and incidents are managed, recorded and shared with parents or carers in line with school procedures.

A suitably stocked first aid kit is available, and the school ensures that the required paediatric first-aid arrangements are in place whenever children are present, including for outings. Medicines are administered only in line with the school's supporting pupils with medical conditions and medicines procedures.

The premises, furniture, equipment and outdoor areas are checked and maintained to support children's safety. Emergency evacuation, missing child, late collection and visitor procedures are set out in the relevant school policies.

Intimate care and toileting

We recognise that young children may need support with toileting and changing. Staff respond sensitively, protect children's dignity and privacy, follow the school's intimate care and safeguarding procedures, and communicate with parents and carers as appropriate. Individual arrangements are agreed where a child has additional toileting or medical needs. Staff encourage children to develop independence at a pace appropriate to their development.

Mobile phones, photographs and digital records

Staff do not use personal mobile phones to take photographs or record children. School-approved devices and systems are used in accordance with school policy. Access to Tapestry and other records is controlled, and information is handled in line with data protection and safeguarding requirements. Parents and carers are informed about the purposes for which images may be used and the permissions required.

Staff follow the school's current guidance on children's use of digital devices and screens, ensuring that any use is purposeful, age-appropriate and consistent with statutory guidance and school procedures.

11. Parents and carers as partners

We recognise parents and carers as children's first and most enduring educators and value the knowledge they bring about their child. Positive communication between home and school supports children's well-being, learning and progress.

We aim to:

- Gather information from parents and carers before a child starts, including their interests, routines, communication, development and any support needs.
- Offer induction opportunities and, where appropriate, home visits or alternative meetings in school or online.
- Share information about the curriculum, routines, attendance arrangements and ways families can support learning at home.
- Provide regular opportunities to discuss progress and raise concerns, including scheduled parent meetings and informal communication with staff.
- Use Tapestry, where appropriate, to share learning and invite families to contribute observations, photographs or comments from home.
- Offer workshops, curriculum meetings, parent drop-ins, assemblies and events that support partnership between home and school.

Families are encouraged to speak to the child's key adult or teacher if they have a concern. Staff aim to respond promptly and work collaboratively with families to agree appropriate next steps.

12. Home learning

Home learning is intended to strengthen the connection between home and school and is appropriate to children's age and development. Opportunities include sharing reading and library books, practising relevant sounds or high-frequency words, simple practical mathematics games and optional projects linked to current learning.

We recognise that families have different circumstances and resources. Home learning is designed to be manageable, enjoyable and supportive rather than a barrier to participation. Staff communicate expectations clearly and provide guidance about how families can help.

13. Monitoring, evaluation and review

All staff working in the EYFS are responsible for implementing this policy and contributing to a high-quality, inclusive and progressive learning environment.
The EYFS Phase Leader, Senior Leadership Team and relevant subject or curriculum leaders monitor provision as part of the school's monitoring and evaluation cycle. This may include learning walks, observations of teaching and interactions, review of the environment, curriculum and assessment information, pupil progress discussions, staff development and feedback from families.

Monitoring considers both Nursery and Reception, including curriculum progression, children's engagement and well-being, inclusion, the impact of support and preparation for the next stage of learning. Findings inform professional development and improvement planning.

Governors engage with leaders and practitioners to understand the quality of provision and reports to the governing body in line with the school's governance arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed regularly and whenever statutory guidance or school provision changes.

15. Related policies and procedures

This policy should be read alongside the school's current policies and procedures, including:
Child Protection and Safeguarding
Health and Safety
SEND and Inclusion
Equality and Accessibility
Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and Administering Medicines

Intimate Care, where applicable
Data Protection, Online Safety and Acceptable Use
Admissions and Attendance
Behaviour
Complaints

Operational procedures for illness, emergency evacuation, visitor identity checks, missing children, late collection and concerns or complaints are set out in the relevant school policies.

Review date:

Signed:

Dated: