



Early Years Policy

'Every Child, Every Chance Every Day'

Reviewed By	Lisa Smith	Early Years Leader	November 2025
Approved by	Cate Gregory	Headteacher	November 2026
NEXT REVIEW			November 2026

"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" *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DfE, 2025*

Aims

Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) follows The Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework (DfE, 2025) and is planned and delivered by committed practitioners who fully understand the curriculum requirements. Practice in the EYFS is underpinned by four themes.

A Unique Child + Positive Relationships + Enabling Environments = Learning Development

These themes ensure that our practice supports the children to enjoy, achieve, grow up safe, be healthy, make a positive contribution and understand economic well-being.

Through the EYFS our practitioners aim to deliver individualised learning and care for our young learners giving them the best possible start in life. Our learning environments are well planned providing opportunities for the children to work both inside and outside. We believe in offering exciting, enriching and educational opportunities within our inside and outside environments. These areas encourage and support our children's independent skills, curious thinking and perseverance. Throughout the day practitioners provide opportunities for both child initiated, directed child initiated and teacher lead learning. We place a high value on structured and unstructured play. We aspire to develop the individual qualities of all children whatever their gender, race, or belief, building on what they know and can do, and work hard to ensure all children feel confident, secure, safe, valued and special. We ensure that we evaluate our practice and environment in line with our current cohorts and therefore, review our practice in line with children who may need extra support or have special educational needs and any individual specific needs. We do this through planning, moderation and year group meetings. We believe strongly that every child has the right to have access to the full curriculum. We have a disability equality scheme and accessibility plan.

We believe strongly that parental involvement is key to our children's successes and parents are encouraged to attend initial parent 1:1 meetings or home visits in the summer term prior to their start in September. We have a Home school agreement which all parties sign to say they will adhere to for their families' time at Shirley Infant's.

We then have two parents' evenings throughout the year and encourage them to support their child with home learning activities. Each half term we have celebration events at the end of a chosen topic. Children share a piece of work with their parents and can talk through what they have done. Parents are encouraged to comment with their child on their favourite parts of the topic and what the parent feels they have achieved. Parents also have the opportunity to contribute to their children's learning evidence by sharing achievements away from school, this is done through 'wow moments' sent home half termly. The staff help parents identify key skills to watch out for and constantly give ideas and examples throughout the year to encourage all parents to contribute. We work in partnership with the whole school to ensure a smooth and effective transition between the key stages.

Our Expectations

Our children are expected to attend regularly and arrive on time to ensure the best continuity for the child. We support and encourage our parents to be actively involved in their children's learning and share some activities together such as reading, practising sounds, sight words and home learning activities. We expect our practitioners to make sure the children feel valued and know they are part of the whole school community. We have a high expectation for the children's behaviour (see behaviour policy) and develop appropriate attitudes to learning and school life, which is enhanced by our Rights and Respecting Schools ethos.

Legal Responsibilities

From September 2008, the EYFS became statutory for all schools and Early Years providers. It was reviewed in 2025 and a revised curriculum was put in place in September 2025. There are a number of standards set out in the EYFS Statutory Guidance booklet, with the most recent updated booklet being produced in 2024 which our school adheres to ensuring that our provision is of a high standard. These standards cover the learning and development and welfare requirements and are reviewed in line with each new publication.

Child protection

Safeguarding children within our care is of high priority. We endeavour to make our children feel safe within their environment and we build strong relationships from the very beginning. Our topic 'All about me' supports the children's Personal, Social and Emotional development to develop their skills to be happy, confident children who can settle into school quickly in an environment in which their individual needs are met. Our children behave in ways that are safe for themselves as well as others (See behaviour policy). We teach the children about possible dangers and how to keep themselves safe and how to keep themselves clean and prevent the spread of illness and disease. This is carried out through our PSHE sessions (see PSHE planning). All staff (who come into contact with the children) have the relevant qualifications and checks. We ensure risk assessments are carried out regularly and records are kept of maintenance and cleanliness of toys. All Early Years staff are asked to sign to confirm their understanding of their obligation under the new requirements regarding 'disqualification by association'.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Act 1989 and 2004; and in line with the subsequent advice and guidelines, including the 'Working together to safeguard children' documents (2023) and our responsibilities with regard to the Prevent Strategy (2015 and updated in 2023).

The aims of this policy are:

- To provide an environment in which children and young people feel safe, secure, valued and respected, and feel confident to approach adults if they are in difficulties.
- To raise the awareness of all teaching and non-teaching staff of the need to safeguard children and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse.
- To provide a systematic means of monitoring children known or thought to be at risk of harm, and ensure we, the school, contribute to assessments of need and support plans for those children.
- To be extra vigilant for children with SEND
- To develop a structured procedure within the school that will be followed by all members of the school community in cases of suspected abuse.

- To ensure that all adults within our school who have access to children have been checked as to their suitability. This includes other community users of our facilities.
- To ensure staff are aware of the Prevent Strategy and able to protect children and young people who are vulnerable or at risk of being radicalised.

Please see the school's Safeguarding Policy for additional information.

Arrangements for admission

We work together with our feeder Pre-schools and liaise with them closely ready for the next intake. We liaise on the class lists to ensure a balance of boys and girls (where possible), and a balance of Autumn, Spring and Summer born children across the 3 classes. We consider any additional needs that a child may have. (See Admission Policy for induction process). We encourage parents to follow our staggered intake to ensure the best settling period for their child. However, every parent is entitled to a full time school place for their child.

Organisation

The school day begins at 8:40am where there are settling activities for the children until the bell goes at 8:55 am. The children access a variety of lessons and continuous provision throughout the morning, allowing for learning both inside the classrooms and outside. The lunchtime period starts at 11:30 and ends at 1:00. All children go to the hall for lunch with the teachers. There is an afternoon playtime session from 2:35pm - 2:45pm. We have a Storytime everyday. The school day ends at 3:10pm.

The Early Years team review their practice and the curriculum at termly year group meetings and PPA planning sessions for both EYA's and teachers. Reception is made up of 3 classes of 30 children, although we work together across the reception classes during continuous provision sessions. During this time the children explore all the Early Years areas, working wherever their interests take them.

Our outdoor classroom is securely fenced and provides a safe learning environment where children can develop their independence skills and enhance and extend their learning. We believe that outdoor play is vitally important to a child's development and therefore, they have access to it every day, in safe weather conditions for child initiated, directed child initiated and adult led activities. The outdoor space is set up into areas that replicate the indoor classrooms. There are trolleys with a variety of resources appropriate for that area to encourage independence skills and an opportunity for the children to develop their own and each other's learning.

The Curriculum

Our children follow a broad and balanced curriculum with the EYFS underpinning it all. The learning and development requirements are set out into Prime and Specific areas. There are three Prime areas of learning:

Communication and Language (CL) – here the children are encouraged to listen attentively in a range of situation's, giving attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity, allowing them to become competent talkers. They are encouraged to ask questions to demonstrate their understanding and further develop different concepts. Children are exposed to a number of texts, rhymes and poems to build up a repertoire. They are introduced to different vocabulary which they are encouraged to use in different situations.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) - here the children are supported to see themselves as a valuable individual who can build respectful and constructive relationships. They will be encouraged and supported in finding ways to express their feelings, show resilience and identify and moderate their emotions. We have a high focus on self-regulation and managing our feelings. Children are taught to respect the perspectives of others and their feelings and manage their own personal hygiene.

Physical Development (PD) – We develop both gross and fine motor development. Planning and offering a range of activities to enhance physical control, mobility, awareness of space, and manipulative skills.

The four specific areas help children to strengthen and apply the prime areas. These are:

Literacy Development (Lit) – here we develop early literacy skills through reading, writing and phonics activities.

Mathematical Development– here we develop mathematical understanding with a focus on practical mathematics and problem solving. We develop their knowledge of shape, space and measure.

Understanding of the world– this covers finding out about the world around them, other people, cultures and features of the natural and man-made world around them. A foundation for History, Geography, Design technology and Science.

Expressive Arts and Design (EA&D) – we foster the children’s creativity and imagination through exploring and using media and materials, acting, dancing and singing a variety of lessons.

Our Curriculum

Our curriculum is planned through a variety of different topics, each of which offer experiences in all 7 of the areas. Topics are planned with the children’s current interests and abilities in mind, and vary in length depending on where the children take their learning journey. Children are encouraged to pursue their own interests daily, through child initiated play, and are actively encouraged to share aspects of home life through our ‘All About Me bag’ class sessions. We review our curriculum and environments annually in line with our new cohorts and any individual specific needs that a child has. We believe strongly that every child has the right to have access to the full curriculum.

Assessment

Assessment is vital in ensuring that children are encouraged to follow their own interests and are supported at their individual stage of development. We assess the children on entry to school at approximately week 3 through the Government’s Baseline Assessment programme. *“The purpose of the reception baseline assessment is to provide an on-entry assessment of pupil attainment to be used as a starting point from which a cohort-level progress measure to the end of key stage 2 (KS2) can be created.”* (Standards & Testing agency, February 2020, DFE). This assessment takes place 1:1 with the class teacher, the activities are a mix of practical and Ipad based and last around 20 minutes. The children complete a communication and language section, Literacy and Mathematics. Early Years Practitioners use the baseline assessment and other baseline tasks created by the school to work out the percentage of children working on track and off track. These percentages tell us where the cohort are in relation to national expectations on entry to school. We assess the children on the three prime areas and then Literacy and Maths.

We then continue assessing the children against the development matters curriculum. To make these judgements the Early Years Practitioners use a range of formative and summative assessment methods throughout the year. These include:

- Ongoing observational assessments and half termly 5 minute observations to inform planning for each child’s continuing development through play-based activities. These are recorded in the children’s individual learning journey.
- Annotated sample of work
- Annotated photographs
- Individual class teacher mark books
- Busy books – children can contribute to their own assessments
- Scrap books – Parents and child can contribute to their assessments
- Parent and child pages
- WOW moments (parent contributions from home)
- DCPro is used to track children’s progress and inform teachers of their end of year achievement against the early learning goals. This data is sent to the LA at the end of the Reception year for analysis.

All foundation stage assessments are kept electronically on DCPro. The files are known as 'learning journeys'. These files are kept and updated by the class teacher and Early Years Assistants. The Early Years leader closely tracks all key groups through the year Gender, EAL, SEND, EPP and Lowest 20%. These are then passed up to Year 1 when the children move to the next key stage.

At the end of the year each child is assessed against the 17 early learning goals and judged if entering or expected. These results are collated and sent to the LA. The Early Years Leader then collates the data and analyses the % of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD). This is compared to Local and national data once released and a report is compiled to compare year on year trends and this is shared with the SLT and Governors. Action plans are revised and written in line with trends for the following year.

Parents' evenings take place in the Autumn and Spring terms. These give parents the opportunity to formally discuss their child's progress. An end of year written report is sent out in the Summer term. This highlights the children's achievements in the 7 areas of learning.

Staffing

We are committed to staff development through comprehensive professional development. Early Years Teachers have two performance management meetings and the Early Years Assistants have a performance review. We keep a training record for every staff member of the team.

We have a termly meeting to review and discuss our practice and routines and highlight any areas for improvement which everyone is involved within.

Partnership with parents

We start this process very early on in the induction of our new children. We have introductory meetings with our new parents, where they meet the key people that lead each team, including the school nurse, office staff team lead, Attendance Officer, Head teacher and Early Years Leader. We then have afternoon activity sessions for each of the 3 classes. This is where the children can meet other children who will be in their classes and the parents can liaise too. Then throughout the month of July we run our Little Ladybird drop in sessions. The Early Years team run these sessions with the Friends of Shirley Infant School. The parent and child can visit our school library and take home a book, attend our music sessions or play in our hall and have a drink and snack. See Admissions Policy.

A school or home meeting takes place with the child's class teacher and Early Years assistant in July or September. The parents can choose one of the two. The home visit gives the staff the opportunity to meet the child in the comfort of their own surroundings and talk to the parents about their child. This is with a particular interest into their likes and dislikes, home life, allergies, toileting issues, medical conditions etc. Additional home visits may be arranged with the Early Years Leader and class teacher if necessary, prior to the child's start date (See home visits policy). The same philosophy is adopted in the school meeting, however, a family may choose this option if a child is particularly nervous about starting school.

Throughout the year parents are supplied with 'WOW moments' to record observations of their child away from school. These are modelled and explained at the Curriculum Workshop in the autumn term. Alongside each set of 'WOW moments' they receive examples or suggestions are included within a letter to help give parents ideas of key areas of the curriculum to look out for, based on our moderation. These suggestions also boost parent's confidence in their own ability to contribute to their child's Learning Journey.

Parents are invited into school to attend our celebration events at the end of each topic so their child can share their achievements. At the celebration events the children share a piece of work and their parent page. Here the children write what they have liked or learned in the topic. Parents also inform us of their child's learning. They are invited to pupil progress drop in morning sessions 3 times a year to review targets and work. They are also invited to whole school events such as our Christmas Celebration play. We hold Curriculum Workshops for the whole cohort and groups of children, and we will also liaise directly with parents to support each child's learning, including specific home learning targets where appropriate or necessary.

Parents will also receive a weekly update on the focus of their children's learning for each week of the year through Weekly Communication. Providing parents with information on the key sounds and sight words learnt and the focus of the maths learning throughout the week.

We have a very active Friends of Shirley Infant School group which supports our parents through informal sessions organised by the class reps and chair to ease the transition into our school.

Supporting policies

Disability Policy (under review as at Nov24)

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Admissions Policy

Home Visits Policy

SEND Policy

Behaviour & Relationships Policy

Staff members responsible for Implementation and review: Head teacher, Early Years Leader and Early Years team.