

Early Years Foundation Stage at Dean Valley Community Primary School



Intent

We aim to provide engaging and exciting experiences because children are only in Reception once. This ethos resonates strongly with our EYFS team, who are committed to providing the strongest foundations for every child's learning journey at Dean Valley and beyond.

Our ambitious EYFS curriculum equips children with the language, skills and knowledge to become lifelong learners. Learning is inclusive of all children – we are a team, with experiences both inside and outside the classroom, whatever the weather. We make the most of our school grounds and local community to enrich learning and develop the skills children need to thrive.

Positive relationships and interactions with all duty bearers, who model the behaviours and skills needed both in school and within the wider community. We work closely with parents, recognising that every child arrives with their own unique experiences and knowledge. We build on these foundations to create a rich and meaningful learning journey for every child.

Inspiring every child through joyful, purposeful experiences, building strong foundations, nurturing lifelong learning, and celebrating every unique journey.

Implementation

At Dean Valley, we aim to provide every child with a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum that builds knowledge, develops skills and language, and provides opportunities to develop their individual cultural capital further. Our curriculum is rooted in exploration, play and meaningful experiences, while being responsive to the individual needs, interests and starting points of each child. It follows the statutory requirements of the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework 2026**.

Our practice is underpinned by the four guiding principles of the EYFS:

- **Every child is a unique child**
- **Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships**
- **Children learn and develop well in enabling environments**
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**

We also recognise the importance of the three Characteristics of Effective Learning: **Playing and Exploring, Active Learning, and Creating and Thinking Critically**. These characteristics are woven throughout our provision and support children to become confident, motivated and independent learners.

Curriculum Content

Our curriculum is designed with **reading** at the heart. We aim to enthuse children through the use of engaging texts, developing their phonics skills while being immersed in stories, rhymes and poems. Alongside this developing confident early **mathematicians** who can fluently count, recognise numbers and their value. All the time focussing on developing **knowledge, skills and language** to enable them to succeed, we want children to leave Reception prepared for Year 1 and with a love for school.

Knowledge is developed through first-hand experiences, exploration, stories, conversations, play and children's own questions. We recognise that knowledge is much broader than learning facts. It includes understanding emotions, relationships, friendships, how to care for others and the world around us, as well as developing an understanding of enquiry and how things work. When children ask questions, adults take the time to explore these with them, using their curiosity to extend learning and develop deeper understanding.

Skills are developed through modelling, questioning, explanation, demonstration and repeated opportunities to practise and apply learning. Adults carefully consider the skills children need to become successful learners as they move into Year 1 and throughout their school journey. Children are encouraged to develop independence, problem-solving skills, collaboration, resilience and a willingness to have a go.

Language is a key priority across our curriculum. Children are given frequent opportunities to talk, listen and engage in meaningful conversations with adults and peers. Staff model language throughout the day, introduce new vocabulary through teaching and play, and provide opportunities for children to use and apply new words. Reading and sharing books are particularly important, with adults taking time to discuss texts, explore vocabulary, check understanding and encourage children to respond.

Learning Environment

Our learning environment is carefully designed to be **inviting, accessible, inclusive and engaging**. We provide a consistent range of high-quality resources and experiences that enable children to play, explore, practise skills and follow their interests. The environment is enhanced and adapted regularly in response to children's learning, interests and identified next steps.

We aim to create an environment in which children feel a sense of ownership. The classroom reflects the learning that has taken place, with children's artwork, writing, mathematical work, photographs and other experiences contributing to a visible learning journey. The environment therefore changes with the children and provides a record of their development, interests and achievements.

We balance familiar provision with new challenges and experiences, encouraging children to revisit and build upon previous learning while developing new skills and knowledge. Adults use the environment strategically to support children's independence, communication, problem-solving and collaboration.

The learning environment is monitored daily to identify and address any risks or hazards. Appropriate risk assessments are in place and are reviewed as required to ensure that children can learn and explore safely.

Teaching Approach and Learning Experiences

Our approach balances **continuous provision, adult-led teaching, focused group activities and one to one support**. Our daily timetable is carefully structured to provide sufficient uninterrupted time for continuous provision. We recognise that sustained play and exploration are essential for young children's learning and therefore avoid unnecessary interruptions, allowing children to become deeply involved in their learning. Adult-led

sessions provide opportunities to introduce new knowledge, vocabulary and skills, while group work allows adults to provide more targeted support and challenge.

Our teaching is responsive to the cohort and to individual children. Staff use their knowledge of children's development and ongoing assessment to adapt experiences, identify gaps and provide appropriate challenge. Learning opportunities are carefully planned to be engaging, purposeful and developmentally appropriate, with regular opportunities to revisit and practise learning so that it becomes embedded in children's long-term memory.

We recognise the importance of **routine and consistency** in helping young children feel secure and confident. Predictable routines support children to understand expectations and develop increasing independence while being mindful of cognitive overload. We deliberately teach children how to manage tasks for themselves rather than completing tasks on their behalf. Our approach is summed up in the phrase, *"I know how to do this; can I teach you, so you know too?"* This supports children to become capable, resilient learners who have confidence in their own abilities. Furthermore, children being able to complete task independently gives them a sense of achievement and allow more time for further learning.

The Role of the Adult

Adults at Dean Valley recognise that every child is an individual and that effective learning depends upon strong, trusting relationships. Practitioners take time to know the children well, understand their interests and respond to their individual needs. Adults model positive relationships through the way they interact with children. We listen carefully, use respectful language and manners, play alongside children, take turns and share experiences with them. This creates a sense of partnership and mutual respect and supports children to develop positive social skills. Adults are active participants in children's learning. They observe, listen, question, model, explain and extend children's thinking rather than simply providing answers. Adults also support children to recognise and express their own emotions and begin to understand the feelings of others.

Behaviour expectations are clear, consistent and fair. Positive relationships and praise are used to reinforce appropriate behaviour and encourage children to develop a 'can-do' attitude, often rewording 'I can't do it' to 'I can't do it YET.' We want children to feel happy, safe, valued and confident within the setting. Children are also supported to see themselves as part of the wider school community. They join the whole school for break and lunchtime play and participate fully in whole-school events and experiences. We encourage children to build friendships with older peers through a successful 'buddy' system.

Staff ensure that children's health and welfare needs are carefully considered. At least one member of the EYFS team is paediatric first-aid trained, with qualifications renewed every three years. Staff are aware of children's allergies, intolerances and medical needs, including the location of medicines. Adults remain with children during snack and mealtimes, monitoring their diets in school and supporting healthy eating habits.

We recognise that children enter Reception with different experiences, levels of development and needs. Our implementation therefore focuses on knowing children well and removing barriers to learning. Through observation, assessment and close communication with families and other professionals, staff identify where additional support, adaptation or challenge may be required. Provision and teaching are adjusted to ensure that children can access learning and make progress from their individual starting points.

Safeguarding and Welfare

Safeguarding is embedded within our everyday practice and follows whole-school procedures. All EYFS staff know the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and understand their responsibilities in keeping children safe. All staff have read and follow the requirements of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. Volunteers working within the classroom complete the required DBS checks before working with children. Attendance is monitored and supported because regular attendance is essential in ensuring that children have access to the full breadth of the curriculum and do not miss important learning experiences.

Leadership and Governance

Strong leadership and governance support the quality and continued development of EYFS provision. The EYFS link governor visits throughout the year to gain an understanding of the curriculum and provision in practice. The Headteacher maintains a regular presence within the EYFS classroom, supporting a strong connection between EYFS and whole-school priorities.

The EYFS Lead attends termly meetings to remain up to date with changes to statutory requirements and effective practice, and to identify appropriate continuing professional development. This ensures that staff knowledge and practice continue to develop and that curriculum implementation remains responsive to the needs of our children.

Inclusion

At Dean Valley, we believe that every child is unique, valued and entitled to the same opportunities to learn, thrive and achieve. We celebrate the individuality of every child and work hard to ensure that all pupils feel included, respected and able to participate fully in school life. We have high expectations for all children and aim to reduce barriers to learning wherever they may arise. Through early identification of need and close collaboration with our SENCO, we work proactively to understand each child and identify the support that will enable them to succeed. Our

experienced staff have a strong knowledge of the children they teach and are responsive to individual needs, making appropriate adjustments and adaptations to learning, the environment and our approach where necessary.

We recognise that inclusion extends beyond academic learning. We carefully monitor the wellbeing of all pupils and provide support to help children develop confidence, resilience and a positive sense of belonging. We encourage every child to try new things and provide the right level of support and encouragement to help them engage, learn and achieve.

We provide particular support for children with SEND, disadvantaged children and children who are known, or have previously been known, to Children's Social Care. We work closely with families and relevant professionals where appropriate to ensure that children's individual circumstances and needs are understood and supported.

Children's rights are an important part of our approach to inclusion. From the beginning of Reception, we introduce children to the UNICEF Rights of the Child, helping them to understand their own rights and the rights of others. This supports our commitment to developing a respectful, inclusive community where every child knows that they matter and that their voice is valued.

Impact

Assessment is an integral part of our daily practice. Adults continually observe children, listen to their conversations, monitor their play and evaluate their understanding. This enables staff to identify what children know, what they can do and what they need to learn next. Assessment is used to inform teaching rather than becoming an additional activity. Staff use what they notice to adapt the environment, introduce new experiences, revisit learning or provide additional support and challenge. This responsive approach ensures that our curriculum remains relevant to the children in front of us. Our staged curriculum provides a clear progression over the year supporting as many children as possible to achieve the Early Learning Goals.

Within the first six weeks, the National Baseline Assessment, alongside our own observations and baseline assessments, establishes each child's starting point. Ongoing formative assessment takes place through high-quality interactions, strong relationships with children enable adults to build a detailed understanding of their knowledge, skills, interests and development. Assessment is closely linked to the Dean Valley EYFS Curriculum and assessment check points. Staff identify whether children have met or not met key objectives. Summative assessments are completed each term and discussed with the senior leadership team through pupil progress meetings. This enables us to identify children who may need additional support and respond promptly to their individual needs.

Children's progress is shared with parents through regular communication, parents' evenings and end-of-year reports. We work in partnership with families through dialogue, guidance and workshops, including support for phonics, early reading and healthy use of technology.

Moderation with our local schools and nursery cluster helps ensure consistency and accuracy in assessment and supports shared understanding of children's development across our local community.

The EYFS Profile is completed by the end of June and submitted to the local authority. We analyse the outcomes to evaluate the impact of our curriculum and share key information with Year 1 staff, ensuring that children's individual needs, achievements and next steps inform a smooth transition into the National Curriculum.