



Alsager Highfields Primary School

Mighty oaks from small acorns grow

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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This document provides an overview of the policy, philosophy and practice within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Alsager Highfields Primary School, including our Little Acorns Pre-School and Reception classes. It explains how we provide the best possible start for our youngest learners through high-quality teaching, nurturing relationships, rich experiences and carefully designed learning environments. It outlines our intent, implementation and impact, whilst demonstrating how we meet the requirements of the current EYFS Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers. The document reflects our commitment to creating confident, capable learners who develop a lifelong love of learning.

Intent

Our aim is to provide every child with the best possible start to school, enabling them to reach their full potential in a safe, nurturing environment where they can thrive. We want children to leave Reception confident, resilient and well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Our curriculum is carefully designed around the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework and is responsive to children's individual starting points, interests and needs. Through a balance of child-led and adult-guided learning, we encourage children to explore, take risks, solve problems, make connections and develop independence.

At Alsager Highfields, we foster high levels of engagement, curiosity, collaboration and cooperation. We support children to become confident communicators, respectful of themselves and others, and to develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours needed for lifelong learning.

Implementation

Our approach is informed by practitioner expertise, child development research and educational theory. We provide a balance of adult-led, adult-initiated and child-led learning, recognising that each plays a vital role in supporting children's development. Learning is driven by a continuous cycle of observation, assessment, planning and teaching, combining high-quality interactions, structured teaching and purposeful play. Provision, resources and experiences are adapted to meet children's individual needs and interests, with strong relationships between adults and children underpinning all learning.

Impact

Children leave the EYFS as confident, independent and resilient learners who are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They make strong progress from their individual starting points and develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for future learning. Through positive relationships, enabling environments and high-quality teaching,

children become effective communicators, active learners and creative thinkers. They demonstrate the Characteristics of Effective Learning by playing and exploring, engaging in active learning, and creating and thinking critically. By the end of Reception, children are equipped with secure foundations in communication and language, early reading, writing and mathematics, and are ready to access the Key Stage One curriculum with confidence and enthusiasm.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework

At Alsager Highfields, we follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers (current version). Our practice is underpinned by the four guiding principles of the EYFS: that every child is unique; children learn through positive relationships; children thrive in enabling environments with responsive teaching and support; and children develop and learn at different rates. These principles inform all aspects of our provision and ensure that every child, including those with SEND, is supported to achieve their full potential

EYFS Learning and Development Requirements

Our curriculum encompasses the seven areas of learning and development identified within the Early Years Foundation Stage. These areas are interconnected and are delivered through a balance of adult-led teaching, child-initiated learning and high-quality continuous provision.

The three prime areas of learning are Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional Development, and Physical Development. These areas are particularly important in supporting children's development, enabling them to build relationships, develop resilience and establish the foundations for future learning.

The four specific areas of learning are Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World, and Expressive Arts and Design. These build upon and strengthen the prime areas, providing children with the knowledge and skills they need to access future learning.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

At Alsager Highfields, opportunities for children to develop the Characteristics of Effective Learning are embedded throughout the curriculum and provision. Children are encouraged to play and explore, engage in active learning, and create and think critically. These characteristics underpin learning across all areas of the EYFS and support children in becoming confident, resilient and independent learners.

Little Acorns Pre-School

Little Acorns Pre-School provides children with a nurturing introduction to school life in the year before they begin Reception. Our provision is centred around a calm, natural and enabling environment where children feel safe, valued and inspired to explore. We believe young children learn best through meaningful play, high-quality interactions and first-hand experiences. Children have access to open-ended resources and are supported by skilled practitioners who understand child development and the importance of responsive teaching.

Communication and language are at the heart of our curriculum. Through daily stories, songs, nursery rhymes, role play and meaningful conversations, children are immersed in a language-rich environment that promotes vocabulary development, listening skills and confident communication. Alongside this, children participate in daily Phase One phonics sessions, developing early listening and attention skills through environmental sounds, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and oral blending and segmenting, providing strong foundations for Reception phonics.

Physical development is a key priority. Children develop gross and fine motor skills through activities such as WriteDance, Dough Gym, ribbon dancing, mark making, construction, climbing and balancing. These experiences help to build the strength, coordination and control needed for future writing. Mathematical understanding is developed through continuous provision and short daily maths sessions informed by Learning Trajectories research. Children explore counting, pattern, comparison, shape, space and problem solving in meaningful and practical contexts.

Personal, social and emotional development is woven throughout daily practice. Children are supported to develop self-regulation, independence, resilience and positive relationships through play, games and collaborative activities. They learn to take turns, share resources and understand routines and expectations.

Children have daily access to a large outdoor learning environment, including bikes, scooters, a sandpit, mud kitchen, gardening area, stage and large-scale construction resources. The outdoor environment is viewed as an extension of the classroom and provides rich opportunities for physical development, communication, exploration and imaginative play.

Through carefully planned interactions, purposeful play, consistent routines, daily snack and lunch opportunities, and long periods of uninterrupted play, Little Acorns supports children in developing the confidence, independence and skills needed for a successful transition into Reception.

Transition

The Early Years Lead facilitates transition before children start school by visiting nurseries, talking with EYFS practitioners, and meeting new starters in their settings. Expectations regarding starting school are clearly communicated to pre-school settings and shared with practitioners. Children participate in both formal and informal transition activities, and there is an informational meeting for parents.

Children attending Little Acorns benefit from enhanced transition opportunities through regular engagement with Reception staff, shared learning experiences and increasing familiarity with the school environment. This allows children to move confidently into Reception and ensures continuity in relationships, routines and expectations.

In the final term of the EYFS, as Reception children prepare for the transition to year 1, our focus shifts towards providing a blend of independent and adult-led activities to prepare children for more formal learning. The curriculum remains broad and balanced but gradually becomes more structured to ensure children are ready for the next stage of their education.

Alsager Highfields typical reception daily timetable

Morning	Organisation
8.45am	Welcome at the door
8.50am	Self-registration/lunches/morning song
9.00am	RWI phonics
9.35am	Literacy shared input
9.45am	Continuous provision (balance of focused, child initiated, and independent time within the indoor and outdoor environment)
10.40am	Snack/ Let's Say a Poem
11.05am	Maths shared input/continuous provision
11.50pm	Lunch
Afternoon	Organisation
1.05pm	Story/Topic shared input
1.30pm	Continuous provision
2.30pm	Outdoor Play
2.50pm	Story/celebration of learning
3.10pm	Home time

The role of the adult

At Alsager Highfields, we recognise that high-quality interactions between adults and children are fundamental to effective learning and development. Adults support learning through observation, modelling, questioning, scaffolding and sustained shared thinking, responding to children's interests and extending their understanding. Through positive relationships and purposeful interactions, adults encourage children to think critically, solve problems, develop language and build confidence. We value the knowledge and expertise of our staff and are committed to ongoing professional development, recognising the significant impact skilled practitioners have on children's outcomes. As outlined by Ofsted, teaching in the Early Years is not solely direct instruction but encompasses the many ways adults support children's learning through interactions, the environment, planned experiences and responsive assessment.

Whole Class Teaching

At Alsager Highfields, children benefit from a balance of direct teaching and purposeful play. Whole-class teaching takes place daily and includes phonics, literacy, mathematics and wider curriculum learning. Phonics is taught through Read Write Inc., literacy through Drawing Club, and mathematics through Maths No Problem and NCETM Mastering Number. Understanding the World and Personal, Social and Emotional Development are supported through rich experiences, high-quality texts and carefully planned learning opportunities.

Adult-Led Focused Groups

Following whole-class teaching, children participate in short, focused group sessions for reading, writing and mathematics. These sessions are carefully planned to meet the needs of all children and are informed by ongoing assessment, practitioner knowledge and Development Matters (2023).

Linked Provision

At Alsager Highfields, continuous provision is closely linked to the knowledge, skills and vocabulary taught through whole-class and small-group teaching. Children are provided with opportunities to revisit, practise and apply learning independently through carefully planned indoor and outdoor experiences. Adults enhance provision to reflect children's interests, curriculum goals and identified next steps, ensuring learning is meaningful, purposeful and progressive.

Continuous Provision

"To continue the provision for learning in the absence of an adult." (Bryce-Clegg, 2013)

Continuous provision is carefully designed to support all seven areas of learning and development. High-quality resources and open-ended experiences enable children to explore, investigate, create and problem solve independently. Through extended periods of

uninterrupted play, children develop the Characteristics of Effective Learning while consolidating previous learning and applying new knowledge and skills across the curriculum.

In the EYFS, we provide a carefully planned indoor and outdoor environment that supports children's development across all areas of learning. High-quality, accessible resources are selected to meet the needs of the curriculum and the children, enabling them to explore, investigate and build upon prior learning. Continuous provision offers opportunities for uninterrupted, child-initiated play, allowing children to practise and apply new skills while developing the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Children are encouraged to make independent choices, take ownership of their learning and care for their environment.

The Role of the Environment

Alongside the important role of the adult, we recognise that the environment is a key component of children's learning and development. At Alsager Highfields, indoor and outdoor spaces are carefully planned as enabling environments that support all areas of learning and development. High-quality, open-ended resources encourage children to explore, investigate, create and solve problems independently. Long periods of uninterrupted continuous provision allow children to develop the Characteristics of Effective Learning by playing and exploring, engaging in active learning, and creating and thinking critically. Through meaningful play and first-hand experiences, children are supported to develop curiosity, concentration, resilience, independence and confidence as learners.

Reading in the EYFS

At Alsager Highfields, we believe that all children can become successful readers and writers. Children are introduced to Read Write Inc. (RWI) in the final term of Little Acorns to support a smooth transition into Reception and provide early familiarity with the programme. In Reception, phonics is taught daily through Read Write Inc., a systematic synthetic phonics programme that develops children's knowledge of the alphabetic code and enables them to read and spell with increasing accuracy and fluency. The application of phonics is modelled across the curriculum through shared reading and writing experiences. We place a strong emphasis on communication and language, recognising that speaking and listening skills provide the foundations for reading, writing and future learning.

Early Reading and Phonics

Children begin daily phonics teaching in Reception from the second week of the Autumn term. Lessons are carefully sequenced and follow the Read Write Inc. programme with fidelity. Children learn Set 1 and Set 2 sounds and are taught to blend and segment words with increasing confidence and accuracy. Regular assessment ensures children are taught at

the appropriate level, and any child requiring additional support receives targeted keep-up sessions delivered by trained staff.

Language and Vocabulary Development

Communication and Language is a prime area of learning within the EYFS and underpins success in all areas of the curriculum. Rich language experiences are embedded throughout the day through stories, conversations, songs, role play and high-quality interactions.

Vocabulary is explicitly taught and developed through carefully chosen texts and experiences, enabling children to broaden their understanding and use of language. We aim to create a language-rich environment where words are explored, discussed and celebrated.

Reading for Pleasure and Comprehension

We value reading as a fundamental life skill and strive to foster a lifelong love of reading. Children are read to every day and are exposed to a wide range of high-quality texts that reflect their experiences whilst also introducing them to new ideas, cultures and perspectives. Shared reading develops children's vocabulary, comprehension, understanding of story structure and enjoyment of books. Children in Reception are read to at least three times each day, supporting language development and helping them to see themselves as readers.

Home Reading

Strong partnerships with parents are central to the development of early reading. Children take home decodable reading books matched to their phonic knowledge, alongside reading-for-pleasure books to share with their families. Parents are supported through Read Write Inc. resources and guidance, enabling them to reinforce phonics learning and develop positive reading habits at home. Through home-school collaboration, we ensure children experience success and enjoyment in reading both at school and beyond.

Writing in the EYFS

At Alsager Highfields, we recognise that writing develops through a combination of communication and language, physical development and literacy. Children are provided with daily opportunities to engage in meaningful mark making, drawing and writing across both the indoor and outdoor environment. High-quality provision encourages children to represent their ideas, experiences and imaginative thinking through a range of materials and media, supporting the EYFS aim that children communicate meaning through marks, drawings and writing.

Writing is taught through a carefully sequenced approach that develops both composition and transcription skills. Through talk, storytelling, shared writing and oral rehearsal, children learn to formulate and communicate their ideas before recording them. Adults model the writing process, supporting children to understand that spoken words can be written down and that letters represent sounds within words. As children's phonic knowledge develops through Read Write Inc., they begin to apply their understanding of the alphabetic code to

write letters, words and simple sentences, using strategies such as Fred Fingers to segment and record sounds.

From the second half of the Autumn term, children participate in Drawing Club, which uses high-quality texts, storytelling and imaginative experiences to develop vocabulary, comprehension and a desire to write. Across the curriculum, children are encouraged to write for a range of meaningful purposes, gradually developing the confidence, accuracy and independence needed to achieve the Early Learning Goal for Writing and prepare for Key Stage One.

Maths in the EYFS

At Alsager Highfields, mathematics is taught through a combination of direct teaching, practical experiences and purposeful play. Our curriculum is informed by the EYFS Statutory Framework, Maths No Problem and NCETM Mastering Number, ensuring children develop secure mathematical foundations and positive attitudes towards mathematics. Through daily whole-class teaching and carefully planned continuous provision, children develop fluency, confidence and flexibility with number, alongside a deep understanding of counting, subitising, composition, pattern, shape, measure and mathematical reasoning. Teaching follows a Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract approach, enabling children to build conceptual understanding through practical exploration before moving to pictorial and abstract representations. Opportunities to apply mathematical knowledge, use mathematical language and solve problems are embedded throughout the learning environment, supporting children to make meaningful connections and develop a secure foundation for future learning.

Reception Baseline Assessment

In line with statutory requirements, Reception children complete the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) within the first six weeks of starting school. The assessment provides a starting point from which progress to the end of Key Stage Two can be measured and does not form part of children's ongoing assessment, curriculum planning or reporting to parents.

Assessment

Within continuous provision our assessment strategy is 3-fold:

1. Observation

Observation is central to assessment in the EYFS. Through observing children during play and everyday experiences, practitioners gain an understanding of children's interests, development and next steps. These observations inform planning, provision and adult interactions, enabling practitioners to support and extend learning through modelling, scaffolding, questioning and sustained shared thinking. Observations are purposeful and

proportionate, helping practitioners to recognise progress and respond effectively to individual needs.

2. The Leuven Scales

Alongside observation, we use the Leuven Scales of Well-Being and Involvement, developed by Professor Ferre Laevers, to help evaluate the effectiveness of our provision and children's engagement in learning. Well-being reflects how safe, confident and emotionally secure a child feels, while involvement measures the level of engagement and concentration in learning experiences. The scales support practitioners in identifying children's needs and ensuring that the environment promotes deep learning and positive development. Together with observation, they form part of a continuous cycle of assessment, planning and teaching.

3. Summative Assessments

In addition to the continuous cycle of observation and formative assessment that informs each child's next steps, summative assessments are completed in communication and language (using WellComm), mathematical development, and the seven areas of learning. Children's phonic development is assessed half-termly through Read Write Inc. assessments, alongside ongoing teacher assessment. Assessment information is used to identify progress, inform planning and ensure teaching meets the needs of all learners.

EYFS Profile

At the end of Reception, practitioners complete the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP). Judgements are made against the Early Learning Goals across the seven areas of learning and development and are informed by ongoing observation and professional knowledge of each child. EYFSP outcomes are shared with parents and passed on to Year 1 staff to support effective transition and continuity of learning.

Inclusion and SEND

At Alsager Highfields, we are committed to providing an inclusive environment where every child is valued and supported to achieve their full potential. Through early identification, close partnership working with families and external agencies, and responsive adaptations to provision, we ensure that all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), can access a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum and make progress from their individual starting points.

Parent Partnership

At Alsager Highfields, we recognise that parents are children's first and most influential educators and that strong partnerships between home and school are essential to children's success. We work closely with families from the outset through transition meetings, nursery visits and transition sessions, ensuring children and parents feel supported as they begin their school journey.

We value ongoing communication and use Seesaw to share learning, celebrate achievements and strengthen the connection between home and school. Families are encouraged to contribute to their child's learning journey by sharing experiences from home, helping us to build a holistic understanding of each child.

Positive relationships with families are at the heart of our practice. Through daily communication, family events and regular opportunities for collaboration, we foster a strong partnership between children, parents and practitioners. By working together, we create a shared understanding of each child's needs, interests and strengths, enabling us to provide the best possible support for their learning and development.

Health and Safety

At Alsager Highfields, there are clear procedures for assessing risk (see whole school Health and Safety policy and Child Protection Policy.)

In line with the latest EYFS Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers at Alsager Highfields we:

- Ensure that all EYFS staff hold current Paediatric First Aid qualifications in line with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.
- Follow safer eating practices, ensuring children are appropriately supervised during snack and meal times and that staff understand how to reduce and respond to potential choking incidents
- Have a whole school medicine policy whereby prescribed and non-prescribed medicines are administered safely and in accordance with school procedures.
- Ask children to bring in a water bottle each day and are provided with drinking water available throughout the day alongside fruit and milk.
- Provide a care plan for children with specific allergies and/or medical conditions so that all staff are aware of the steps to be taken should a reaction occur
- Complete a health and safety audit of the areas used by children in the foundation stage and have set procedures which cover identifying, reporting and dealing with accidents, hazards and faulty equipment
- Have termly fire and emergency evacuation practices
- Include how mobile phones and cameras are to be used and stored securely whilst children are in the setting in our whole school safeguarding policy.
- Have regard to children's use of technology and screen-based devices, ensuring that screen use is age appropriate, purposeful and balanced with opportunities for physical activity, social interaction, exploration and play, in line with current EYFS requirements

Safeguarding and Welfare

Children's safety, well-being and welfare are paramount. At Alsager Highfields, we follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework and whole-school safeguarding procedures. All staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and work closely with families and external agencies to ensure children are safe, healthy and supported to learn and thrive.

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Appendix

Leuven Scale for Well-Being

Level	Well-being	Signals
1	Extremely low	The child clearly shows signs of discomfort such as crying or screaming. They may look dejected, sad, frightened or angry. The child does not respond to the environment, avoids contact and is withdrawn. The child may behave aggressively, hurting him/ herself or others.
2	Low	The posture, facial expression and actions indicate that the child does not feel at ease. However, the signals are less explicit than under level 1 or the sense of discomfort is not expressed the whole time.
3	Moderate	The child has a neutral posture. Facial expression and posture show little or no emotion. There are no signs indicating sadness or pleasure, comfort or discomfort.
4	High	The child shows obvious signs of satisfaction (as listed under level 5). However, these signals are not constantly present with the same intensity.
5	Extremely high	The child looks happy and cheerful, smiles, cries out with pleasure. They may be lively and full of energy. Actions can be spontaneous and expressive. The child may talk to him/herself, play with sounds, hum, sing. The child appears relaxed and does not show any signs of stress or tension. He/she is open and accessible to the environment. The child expressed self-confidence and self-assurance.

Leuven Scale for Involvement

Level	Well-being	Signals
1	Extremely low	Activity is simple, repetitive and passive. The child seems absent and displays no energy. They may stare into space or look around to see what others are doing.
2	Low	Frequently interrupted activity. The child will be engaged in the activity for some of the time they are observed, but there will be moments of non-activity when they will stare into space, or be distracted by what is going on around.
3	Moderate	Mainly continuous activity. The child is busy with the activity but at a fairly routine level and there are few signs of real involvement. They make some progress with what they are doing but don't show much energy and concentration and can be easily distracted.
4	High	Continuous activity with intense moments. The child's activity has intense moments and at all times they seem involved. They are not easily distracted.
5	Extremely high	The child shows continuous and intense activity revealing the greatest involvement. They are concentrated, creative, energetic and persistent throughout nearly all the observed period.