St. Lawrence Church of England Primary School

EARLY YEARS POLICY

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Policy written by: Helen Lonsdale (E.Y.F.S. Lead)

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Our Vision

At St Lawrence, our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision provides a warm, safe, nurturing and stimulating environment where every child feels happy, confident, valued and respected as a unique individual.

We recognise that children learn and develop at different rates and that the experiences children have in their earliest years provide the foundations for future learning, wellbeing and success. We aim to provide children with the knowledge, skills, experiences and dispositions they need to become confident, independent and enthusiastic learners.

Our curriculum is built around purposeful play, high-quality interactions, rich experiences and carefully considered adult-led teaching. We value children's interests and ideas while ensuring that all children experience a broad and ambitious curriculum that builds progressively towards the knowledge and skills they need for the next stage of their education.

We are committed to ensuring that every child, including children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged children, children with English as an additional language (EAL) and children who may be vulnerable to safeguarding concerns, receives the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

Our provision is underpinned by the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers (2026) and the principles and requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026. The EYFS framework sets the standards for children's learning, development, health and safety, while KCSIE establishes our responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting children's welfare.

As a Church of England school, our Christian vision underpins all aspects of our Early Years provision. We seek to ensure that every child is known, valued and encouraged to flourish within a nurturing environment where kindness, respect, belonging and positive relationships are at the heart of daily life.

Core Principles - A Child-Centred Approach

Children are at the heart of our EYFS provision. We recognise that every child is unique and comes to school with their own experiences, interests, strengths, needs and starting points. We build positive relationships with children and their families so that we understand each child and can provide appropriate support and challenge.

We value children's ideas, interests and questions and use these to enhance our curriculum. However, child-initiated learning is balanced with carefully planned adult-led teaching to ensure that children develop the essential knowledge and skills they need.

Children are encouraged to make choices, solve problems, take risks within a safe environment and become increasingly independent.

The Seven Areas of Learning

Our curriculum supports children's development across all seven areas of learning and development identified in the EYFS statutory framework.

Prime Areas

- Communication and Language
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development

These prime areas are particularly important in supporting children's development and provide the foundations for learning across the curriculum.

Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

The specific areas provide essential opportunities for children to strengthen and apply the knowledge and skills developed through the prime areas. We recognise that learning is interconnected and therefore provide opportunities for children to develop skills and knowledge across several areas of learning through purposeful play, exploration, discussion and adult-led experiences.

Communication and Language

Developing children's communication and language is a priority throughout our EYFS provision. We provide a language-rich environment in which adults model high-quality vocabulary, listen carefully to children, extend conversations and encourage children to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings. Children are given frequent opportunities to:

- listen attentively;
- develop their vocabulary;
- participate in conversations;
- retell stories and experiences;
- ask and answer questions;
- express their ideas and feelings;
- follow instructions;
- develop confidence when speaking to others; and
- develop the foundations for effective communication and reading.

Where children have communication and language difficulties, we identify these early and provide appropriate support, working with families and relevant professionals where necessary.

Play and Exploration

Play is a central part of our EYFS curriculum. Children are given regular opportunities to explore, investigate, create, imagine, practise and revisit learning through both child-initiated and adult-supported experiences. Adults observe children's play carefully and intervene purposefully when appropriate. They model language and skills, introduce new vocabulary, ask questions, provide challenge and help children make connections between their experiences.

We understand that high-quality play requires thoughtful planning and adult involvement. Continuous provision is therefore carefully designed to support children's learning rather than simply provide access to resources.

Independence and Characteristics of Effective Learning

We support children to become increasingly independent, resilient and motivated learners. Children are encouraged to:

- make choices;
- have a go before seeking adult help;
- persevere when something is difficult;
- solve problems;
- take responsibility for resources;
- reflect on their learning;
- try new experiences; and
- work collaboratively with others.

We develop the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning:

- Playing and Exploring – children investigate and 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.

These characteristics are woven throughout our curriculum and are valued alongside children's knowledge and skills.

Outdoor Learning

Children have regular access to outdoor learning and physical activity. Our outdoor environment provides opportunities for children to develop their physical skills, confidence, independence, communication, creativity and understanding of the natural world.

Children are encouraged to explore and investigate their environment, take appropriate risks, develop resilience and work collaboratively. Outdoor learning is viewed as an integral part of the EYFS curriculum rather than an additional activity.

Early Reading, Writing and Phonics

We place a strong emphasis on developing a love of books, stories, rhymes and language alongside systematic phonics teaching. We use Red Rose Phonics to provide a consistent and progressive approach to early phonics. Phonics sessions are short, focused, engaging and appropriately matched to children's developmental stages.

Children are given frequent opportunities to:

- hear and enjoy high-quality stories and rhymes;
- develop phonological awareness;
- learn and apply phoneme-grapheme correspondences;
- blend sounds for reading;
- segment sounds for writing;
- develop their vocabulary and comprehension;
- develop pencil control and handwriting;
- write for meaningful purposes; and
- develop a love of reading and writing.

Reading is promoted throughout continuous provision and children are encouraged to read and share books independently and with adults.

Mathematics

We aim to develop children's strong foundations in mathematical thinking. Children experience mathematics through adult-led teaching, purposeful play, routines and continuous provision. We develop children's understanding of:

- number;
- counting;
- cardinality and subitising;
- composition;
- comparison;
- addition and subtraction;
- pattern;
- shape and space;
- measure; and
- mathematical vocabulary.

Children are encouraged to explain their mathematical thinking, make connections and apply their understanding in different contexts.

Understanding the World

Children develop their knowledge and understanding of themselves, their families, communities and the wider world. Our curriculum provides opportunities to explore:

- people and communities;
- the natural world;
- past and present;
- local and wider environments;
- similarities and differences;
- cultures and traditions;
- technology;
- nature and seasonal change; and
- the world around them.

First-hand experiences, visitors, trips, practical investigation and outdoor learning are used wherever possible to enrich children's understanding.

Expressive Arts and Design

We provide opportunities for children to develop creativity, imagination and self-expression. Children have access to a wide range of materials, media, music, movement, role play and imaginative experiences. They are encouraged to:

- explore colour, texture and materials;
- draw, paint and create;
- sing and make music;
- dance and move expressively;
- engage in imaginative and role play;
- develop narratives;
- respond to music, art and stories; and
- express their ideas and feelings creatively.

Curriculum Organisation

Our curriculum is carefully sequenced so that children progressively build knowledge and skills throughout their time in EYFS. We use topics and themes where they provide meaningful contexts for learning. However, topics do not dictate the curriculum. We avoid allowing themes to narrow children's experiences and instead use children's interests, current events, seasonal experiences and meaningful opportunities to enrich the curriculum. The curriculum is responsive to the needs of the cohort and individual children. The Early Learning Goals (ELGs) are not used as a curriculum or checklist for ongoing learning. Instead, they describe the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS and inform the statutory EYFS Profile assessment.

Continuous Provision

Our continuous provision provides children with opportunities to practise, consolidate and apply their developing knowledge and skills. Resources are carefully selected and organised to encourage:

- independence;
- curiosity;
- creativity;
- problem-solving;
- communication;
- collaboration;
- mathematical thinking;
- literacy;
- physical development; and
- exploration of the wider world.

Resources and experiences are adapted and enhanced in response to children's interests, assessment information and identified next steps. Adults use continuous provision as an opportunity to interact with children, observe learning and provide appropriate support and challenge.

Adult-Led Teaching

Children participate in carefully planned adult-led sessions throughout the week. These include appropriate teaching and learning in areas such as:

- phonics;
- reading;
- writing;
- mathematics;
- communication and language;
- personal, social and emotional development;
- physical development;
- understanding the world;
- expressive arts and design;
- RE; and
- relationships, health and wider personal development.

Adult-led sessions are appropriately brief, engaging and developmentally appropriate. Teaching is balanced with substantial opportunities for children to learn through play, exploration and independent application.

Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. We use ongoing formative assessment to understand what children know, understand and can do, identify gaps in learning and determine appropriate next steps.

Assessment is primarily based on practitioners' knowledge of each child gained through everyday interactions, observation, discussion and children's work and play.

Assessment does not require unnecessary recording or excessive documentation. Practitioners use professional judgement to identify children who may need additional support or challenge and adapt teaching accordingly. The purpose of assessment is to improve children's learning rather than create unnecessary workload.

EYFS Profile

The EYFS Profile is a statutory assessment completed in the final term of the academic year in which children turn five. Each child is assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals across the seven areas of learning. For each ELG, children are assessed as either 'expected' or 'emerging'.

A child is judged to have achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) when they achieve the expected level in all of the ELGs in the prime areas of Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Physical Development, and the specific areas of Literacy and Mathematics. The EYFS Profile is a summative assessment and is not used as an ongoing assessment framework or as a curriculum checklist.

Assessment judgements are based on practitioners' professional knowledge of children and their development. Reasonable adjustments are made where appropriate for children with SEND. Children are not exempt from the EYFS Profile because they have SEND. EYFS Profile information is shared with parents and carers and with the Year 1 teacher to support a successful transition into Key Stage 1.

Where a child is assessed as emerging in an area, relevant information about barriers to learning, successful strategies and additional provision is shared with the receiving teacher where appropriate.

Inclusion and SEND

We are committed to providing an inclusive EYFS curriculum in which every child can participate, succeed and feel valued. We identify children's needs as early as possible and work closely with:

- parents and carers;
- the school's SENCO;
- the child's key adults;
- external professionals;
- health professionals; and
- other agencies where appropriate.

Provision is adapted to remove barriers to learning. This may include changes to the environment, resources, adult support, communication systems, routines, teaching approaches or expectations.

Children with SEND are supported to access the full breadth of the EYFS curriculum wherever possible.

We recognise that children develop at different rates and that developmental differences do not automatically indicate SEND. Where concerns arise, these are carefully considered alongside the child's individual circumstances and development.

Relationships with Parents and Carers

We recognise parents and carers as children's first and most important educators. We develop positive partnerships with families through:

- regular communication;
- sharing information about children's learning;
- opportunities to discuss children's development;
- home-learning opportunities;
- transition arrangements;
- meetings and workshops where appropriate; and
- sharing information about how parents can support learning at home.

Parents and carers are encouraged to share information about their child's interests, development, experiences and needs so that this can inform our provision.

At the end of the EYFS, parents and carers receive their child's EYFS Profile results and are offered the opportunity to discuss these with the teacher.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Safeguarding is a fundamental responsibility of our EYFS provision. We maintain a child-centred approach, recognising that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that concerns about a child must always be taken seriously. All staff understand that abuse and neglect can happen to any child and that safeguarding concerns can arise in any family or community.

Our EYFS provision operates in accordance with the school's safeguarding and child protection policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

All staff are expected to:

- read and understand the relevant safeguarding information in KCSIE;
- follow the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures;
- know who the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSLs are;
- report concerns promptly;
- maintain professional boundaries;
- understand the school's procedures for managing allegations and concerns about adults;
- record safeguarding concerns accurately and appropriately;
- understand the importance of information sharing where necessary to safeguard children; and
- contribute to a culture in which children feel safe to speak to trusted adults.

KCSIE 2026 confirms that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that schools must maintain a child-centred approach, always considering what is best for the child. All staff are required to read Part One of KCSIE and follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

Safeguarding concerns are dealt with in accordance with our school safeguarding and child protection policy, including procedures relating to:

- abuse and neglect;
- domestic abuse;
- child-on-child abuse;
- sexual violence and sexual harassment;
- online safety;
- exploitation;
- radicalisation and extremism;
- children missing education;
- mental health and wellbeing;
- attendance;
- allegations against staff;
- low-level concerns; and
- information sharing.

The EYFS environment is organised and supervised to promote children's safety and wellbeing. Staff remain alert to changes in children's behaviour, presentation, attendance, relationships and communication and understand that these may indicate that a child requires help or protection.

Health, Safety and Welfare

Children's health, safety and wellbeing are central to our provision. We follow the welfare requirements of the current EYFS statutory framework and the school's relevant policies and procedures. This includes appropriate arrangements for:

- supervision;
- staffing and ratios;
- first aid;
- medical needs;
- allergies;
- food and drink;
- hygiene;
- toileting and intimate care;
- managing children's behaviour;
- risk assessment;
- collection and release of children;
- emergency procedures;
- site security;
- safeguarding;
- online safety; and
- health and wellbeing.

The September 2026 EYFS framework strengthens and clarifies welfare and safeguarding requirements, including requirements relating to safer sleep, screen use, banned dog breeds and safeguarding notifications. Our provision will follow the current statutory requirements relevant to school-based EYFS provision.

Children are taught age-appropriate ways to keep themselves safe and healthy. This includes developing understanding of personal boundaries, relationships, emotions, healthy lifestyles, online safety and seeking help from trusted adults.

Healthy Living

We promote children's physical and emotional wellbeing through:

- healthy food and drink choices;
- regular physical activity;
- outdoor learning;
- good hygiene;
- opportunities for rest and quiet time;
- positive relationships;
- emotional literacy;
- developing independence; and
- teaching children how to keep themselves safe.

We work with families to support children's health and wellbeing and take account of individual medical, dietary and cultural needs.

Behaviour and Relationships

We promote positive relationships and behaviour through consistent, warm and respectful interactions. Children are supported to:

- understand and express emotions;
- develop friendships;
- listen to others;
- take turns;
- share resources;
- resolve disagreements appropriately;
- understand boundaries;
- show kindness and respect; and
- recognise how their behaviour affects others.

Adults model the behaviour and relationships we want children to develop. Behaviour is understood in the context of children's age, stage of development, individual needs and circumstances. Where behaviour indicates that a child may need additional support, staff work with families and relevant professionals to identify appropriate strategies.

Online Safety and Technology

Technology is used purposefully to enhance children's learning and develop appropriate digital skills. Children are supported to understand simple, age-appropriate online safety messages and to recognise when they should seek help from a trusted adult.

Any technology used within the EYFS is appropriately managed and supervised in line with the school's online safety, filtering and monitoring arrangements. The EYFS framework also requires providers to have regard to children's screen use, and we ensure that screen-based activities are purposeful, proportionate and balanced with active, social, creative and outdoor experiences.

Transition

We recognise that effective transition supports children's emotional wellbeing, continuity of learning and future success. We provide appropriate transition arrangements:

- into EYFS;
- between EYFS and Year 1; and
- where children move to another setting or school.

Information is gathered from families and previous settings where appropriate. At the end of Reception, EYFS Profile information is shared with the Year 1 teacher. Staff communicate information about children's development, strengths, needs, barriers to learning and successful strategies to support continuity and progression.

Staff Development and Professional Practice

All staff working within EYFS are expected to understand the statutory EYFS framework and the school's policies and procedures. Staff receive appropriate professional development to strengthen their understanding of:

- child development;
- safeguarding and child protection;
- communication and language;
- early reading and phonics;
- early mathematics;
- SEND;
- behaviour and relationships;
- assessment;
- outdoor learning;
- health and wellbeing; and
- effective interactions with young children.

Staff maintain high expectations for all children and use their knowledge of child development to adapt teaching and provision.

Roles and Responsibilities

The EYFS Leader is responsible for:

- leading and developing the EYFS curriculum;
- ensuring statutory requirements are met;
- monitoring children's progress and attainment;
- supporting staff development;
- ensuring provision meets the needs of all children;
- working with the SENCO and DSL;
- supporting effective transition;
- working with parents and carers; and
- reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of EYFS provision.

All EYFS staff are responsible for:

- knowing and understanding the children they work with;
- providing safe, nurturing and stimulating environments;
- supporting children's learning and development;
- safeguarding children;
- observing and assessing children's learning appropriately;
- working collaboratively with colleagues and families;
- promoting inclusion; and
- maintaining high professional standards.

The DSL retains overall responsibility for safeguarding and child protection within the school, supported by the EYFS team in identifying and reporting concerns. The EYFS Lead, Helen Lonsdale, is a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) for the school.

Monitoring and Review

The EYFS Lead, DSL and SENCO are responsible for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.

The EYFS provision is regularly reviewed to ensure that it continues to meet statutory requirements and the needs of the children at St Lawrence. The policy is reviewed in light of changes to:

- EYFS statutory framework;
- EYFS Profile requirements;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Safeguarding legislation and guidance;
- SEND requirements; and
- The needs of our children and families.

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Behaviour & Relationships Policy;
- Online Safety Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Attendance Policy;
- Intimate Care Policy;
- Educational Visits Policy.