

Early Years Teaching and Learning Policy



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Statement of intent

Every child deserves the best possible start in life. At Ravenbank Primary School, we greatly value the importance of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in providing a secure foundation for future learning and development and understand our responsibilities in ensuring that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe.

This policy has been developed in conjunction with the relevant DfE guidance and legislation and seeks to provide:

- **Quality and consistency**, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.
- **A secure foundation** through learning and development opportunities which are planned around the needs and interests of each child and are assessed and reviewed regularly.
- **Partnership working** between practitioners and parents /carers.
- **Equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

Our EYFS Vision: *Little Explorers, Big Thinkers*

At Ravenbank, our Early Years provision gives children the strongest possible start to school life. We want every child to feel safe, known, valued and ready to learn. Through nurturing relationships, purposeful play, rich language, high-quality teaching and carefully planned provision, children develop the confidence, curiosity and independence they need to flourish.



Our vision is for every child to become a little explorer and a big thinker: a child who asks questions, investigates, creates, talks, listens, perseveres, collaborates and develops a genuine love of learning. Through a highly engaging curriculum and a carefully planned environment, children are encouraged to communicate clearly, listen attentively, use new vocabulary, explain their thinking, explore ideas, solve problems, make links, and think creatively.

We want children to develop the skills and learning behaviours that will help them develop a love of learning and build strong foundations for the rest of their education at Ravenbank. Children are supported to make choices, how to keep themselves and other safe, manage routines, take care of resources, work with others, return to challenges, learn from mistakes and become increasingly independent. They are encouraged to try new things, take appropriate risks, be imaginative, show resilience and develop pride in their achievements.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation, statutory requirements and national guidance relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage, including:

- Childcare Act 2006 and Childcare Act 2016
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Education Act 2011
- DfE, Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective from September 2025
- DfE, Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook
- DfE, Excellence in Reception Teaching: Content Framework, 2026

This policy should be read alongside other relevant school policies, including:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Attendance Policy

Together, these documents support the school in meeting statutory duties and ensuring that children in the Early Years are safe, included, well supported and able to learn and develop effectively.

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board will be responsible for:

- Ensuring the school has clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the setting and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff.
- Ensuring that there are appropriate policies, procedures, and practices in place to deliver the 'Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework' in line with statutory requirements.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with the 'Headteachers' standards' and the expectations of the school community.
- Creating a safe culture where children experience a positive and enriching school life.
- Upholding ambitious educational standards which prepare children from all backgrounds for their next phase of education and life.
- Promoting positive and respectful relationships across the school community and a safe, orderly and inclusive environment.
- Understanding and acting within the statutory assessment frameworks which set out the duties, responsibilities and reporting arrangements to be followed.
- Establishing and sustaining high-quality, expert teaching across all subjects and phases, built on an evidence-informed understanding of effective teaching and how children learn.
- Ensuring teaching is underpinned by high levels of subject expertise and approaches which respect the distinct nature of subject disciplines or specialist domains.
- Supporting staff development by identifying and/or providing regular training and CPD opportunities. Providing regular 1:1 meetings with staff to support professional development.
- Ensuring a broad, structured and coherent curriculum entitlement which sets out the knowledge, skills and values that will be taught.
- Establishing effective curricular leadership.
- Ensuring valid, reliable and proportionate approaches are used when assessing children's knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and ensure effective use is made of formative assessment.
- Forging constructive relationships beyond the school, working in partnership with parents and the local community.
- Ensuring all staff members read and implement this policy.
- Ensuring that all staff are up to date with current statutory and Ofsted expectations, including the early years team and the SLT.
- Supporting the policies, ethos and vision of the school and actively promoting high levels of achievement in the early years stage.

The Reception Class Teacher is responsible for:

- Leading the early years team in the planning and delivery of a creative and stimulating curriculum based on the educational programmes of the 'Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework'.
- Ensuring the educational provision and practice is based on the EYFS characteristics of effective teaching and learning, supports a range of learning needs and develops children's independence.
- Taking responsibility for high-quality teaching provision throughout the early years stage.
- Ensuring the requirements for the EYFS, including the arrangement of assessment, are met in line with the relevant statutory requirements.
- Monitoring the progress of children and reporting evaluated data to the headteacher.

- Developing and maintaining effective relationships with parents, colleagues, the governing board and the local community.
- Ensuring parents are informed about their child's progress, development and targets, and are aware of relevant early year's policies, practices and procedures.
- Deploying support staff effectively.

All early years' staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the children are taught safe and calm routines, learning how to build positive relationships with others
- Ensuring that the children they support receive learning tailored to their needs.
- Helping children become familiar with the setting.
- Building a relationship with parents / carers.
- Helping families with more specialist support, where required.
- Helping children become familiar with the school and acting as a point of contact for children and their parents / carers.
- Acting in accordance with this policy at all times.
- Understanding and acting within the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.
- Having proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school.
- Demonstrating consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct.
- Having a firm understanding of child development and age-appropriate needs.
- Supporting and promoting children's early education and development in the EYFS.
- Planning and delivering valuable learning experiences, environments and opportunities that are appropriate to the age, stage and needs of the individual and groups of children.
- Identifying the needs, interests and stages of development of individual children.
- Using formative and summative assessment to track children's progress to plan next steps and shape learning opportunities.
- Working cooperatively with colleagues and other professionals to meet the needs of all children and enable them to progress.
- Liaising closely with parents / carers to help them promote their child's health, wellbeing, learning and development.
- Identifying any areas of concern relating to children and their learning, development, behavioural and emotional needs.
- Considering whether a child may have SEND which requires specialist support and knowing and understanding the policy and procedure to follow to provide this, liaising with the Inclusion Team
- Taking charge of their own personal development, including undergoing additional training, and identifying what support they need to benefit children and the provisions in place to support them.

Learning and development

In partnership with parents, the school will promote the learning and development of children to ensure they learn and develop well, are kept healthy and safe and have the knowledge and skills they need to start

school. Practice is informed by a secure understanding of child development, so that teaching, routines, interactions and provision are developmentally appropriate and adapted to children's individual starting points.

We place high importance on helping children become independent, confident learners. Children are supported to manage belongings, use the toilet independently, dress and undress for outdoor learning and PE, use cutlery, carry trays, follow routines, make choices, tidy resources, ask for help, help others and solve simple problems. These everyday skills are an important part of the curriculum and help children develop confidence, self-esteem and readiness for future learning.

Our Curriculum Design

Our EYFS curriculum is planned around the statutory educational programmes, children's interests, seasonal opportunities, high-quality texts, first-hand experiences and the knowledge and skills children need for future learning.

Learning is organised through carefully chosen themes and experiences that build children's vocabulary, background knowledge and confidence. These include opportunities to learn about themselves, their families, the local area, the natural world, stories, celebrations, people who help us, past and present, and the wider world.

We ensure that children experience a broad curriculum while giving particular priority to communication and language, early reading, early writing, mathematics, physical development, self-regulation and independence.

Provision and practice within the early years will be centred around the requirements of the DfE's 'Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework'. The EYFS framework outlines seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in the early years. These are categorised as 'prime areas' and 'specific areas'.

In line with the DfE's Excellence in Reception Teaching: Content Framework, we recognise the prime areas as the foundations for children's readiness to learn, future curriculum success and a good level of development:

Prime areas – the foundations for children's readiness to learn, future curriculum success and a good level of development:

Communication and language: Communication and language sits at the heart of our EYFS curriculum. Adults model high-quality language throughout the day and introduce new vocabulary through stories, songs, rhymes, talk, play, visits, routines and direct teaching. Children are supported to listen carefully, speak in full sentences, ask questions, explain their ideas and take part in back-and-forth conversations.

Physical development: Physical development is supported through regular PE sessions led by our dedicated sports coach, daily routines and our outdoor provision. Children develop strength, balance, coordination, control and fundamental movement skills, while also building confidence, independence and healthy habits.

Personal, social and emotional development: We help children feel safe, valued and ready to learn through nurturing relationships, consistent routines and carefully planned provision. Adults support children to manage feelings, build friendships, take turns, share, listen to others and resolve simple conflicts. Our

school values of friendship, respect, perseverance and trust are introduced through stories, play and daily interactions, alongside Zones of Regulation and My Happy Mind and our PSHE curriculum.

Specific areas – the areas through which the prime areas are strengthened and applied:

Literacy: We develop early literacy through a language-rich environment, high-quality texts, songs, rhymes, storytelling, role play and purposeful mark-making. Literacy Counts supports our teaching of phonics and writing, helping children develop secure early reading, writing and transcription skills. Adults model reading and writing throughout the environment so children see themselves as readers and writers. See below for oracy and transcription skills development.

Mathematics: Mathematical understanding is developed through direct teaching, practical exploration, songs, stories, games, routines and meaningful play. Our curriculum is supported by NCETM, White Rose and continued Maths Hub support. Children also take part in Mastering Number sessions to build fluency, confidence and a deep understanding of number, including counting, subitising, comparison, number composition and problem-solving.

Understanding the world: Children are encouraged to be curious about themselves, their families, the local community and the wider world. Through first-hand experiences, visitors, stories, outdoor learning, observation and discussion, children learn about people, places, nature, seasons, celebrations, the past and present, and the world around them.

Expressive arts and design: Children regularly explore, create, imagine and express themselves through art, music, movement, dance, role play, construction and small-world play. Adults model skills where appropriate, while valuing children's own ideas, creativity and imaginative responses. The school will plan and provide educational programmes that involve activities and experiences for children, as set out in each area of learning.

When planning the early years curriculum, practitioners will:

- Consider the individual needs, interests, and development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development.
- Stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and guiding their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning.
- Reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately.

If a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, practitioners will discuss this with the child's parents and agree on how to support the child. Staff will also consider whether a child may have a special educational need or disability which requires specialist support.

For children whose home language is not English, practitioners will:

- Take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home.
- Ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS, ensuring children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin Year 1.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

At Ravenbank, the Characteristics of Effective Learning are woven through daily practice and help children to understand themselves as learners. Staff regularly refer to **playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically** during play, adult-led learning, routines and reflection times. This helps children recognise when they are investigating, concentrating, persevering, making links, thinking creatively or trying a new approach.

Adults model these learning behaviours through their language and interactions. Staff notice and name specific examples of children demonstrating these characteristics, so children begin to understand what effective learning looks and feels like.

The characteristics are promoted through open-ended provision, high-quality adult interaction, problem-solving, collaboration, investigation, creativity and appropriate challenge. Children are encouraged to take risks, learn from mistakes, revisit ideas, make choices, explain their thinking, and celebrate effort as well as outcomes. In this way, children develop the confidence, curiosity, resilience and independence they need to become successful lifelong learners.

How our Early Years Provision is organised

Learning in Reception is carefully balanced between adult-led teaching, adult-guided learning, child-initiated play and purposeful continuous provision. Each day includes direct teaching in phonics, early reading, mathematics and other key areas of learning, alongside carefully planned opportunities for children to practise, revisit and deepen their learning through play.

The classroom environment supports learning through carefully planned continuous provision that is open-ended, meaningful and appropriately challenging. Provision is designed to help children revisit experiences, test ideas, solve problems, collaborate and remain deeply involved in their learning. Adults balance child-initiated play, adult-guided experiences and intentional teaching so that children develop the knowledge, skills and learning behaviours needed for future success.

Adults use observation, questioning, modelling, and timely interaction to advance learning. Provision is planned so that children can return to key concepts many times, applying new vocabulary, skills and knowledge in meaningful contexts.

The indoor and outdoor environments are treated as one learning space. Children have regular access to outdoor learning, physical development, exploration, investigation and imaginative play. Our forest area and wider school grounds are used to strengthen children's curiosity, confidence, language, collaboration and understanding of the natural world.

The role of adults in play

Adults play a vital role in extending children's learning. They know when to observe, when to join play, when to model language, when to introduce new vocabulary, when to ask a question and when to step back to allow children to think independently. Staff use high-quality interactions to support children to make links, solve problems, explain their thinking, negotiate with others and practise new skills. Adults also use assessment information to adapt provision, provide additional support and identify when children are ready for greater challenge.

Language-Rich Environment to Support Oracy Skills

We are committed to creating a language-rich environment that promotes the development of children's communication, language, and oracy skills. We recognise that strong speaking and listening abilities are fundamental to children's learning, wellbeing, social development, and future success.

Our setting provides a wide range of opportunities for children to hear, understand, and use language in meaningful contexts throughout the day. Practitioners act as positive language role models, engaging children in high-quality interactions that extend vocabulary, encourage conversation, and support children to express their thoughts, feelings, ideas, and experiences confidently.

To support the development of oracy skills, we will:

- Foster a warm, inclusive, and respectful environment where all children feel valued and confident to communicate.
- Engage children in regular conversations, listening attentively and responding thoughtfully to their interests, ideas, and questions.
- Use rich and varied vocabulary during daily interactions, routines, play experiences, and adult-led activities.
- Encourage children to participate in discussions, storytelling, role play, singing, rhymes, and group activities that develop speaking and listening skills.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop turn-taking, active listening, questioning, reasoning, and conversation skills.
- Support children in expressing their views, making choices, negotiating with others, and sharing their opinions.
- Promote a love of books, stories, songs, and language through regular reading and storytelling experiences.
- Use visual supports, gestures, signs, objects, and other communication aids where appropriate to ensure all children can access learning and participate fully.
- Recognise and value children's home languages and cultural backgrounds, encouraging families to share and celebrate their linguistic heritage.
- Identify and respond promptly to children who may require additional support with speech, language, and communication needs, working in partnership with parents, carers, and relevant professionals.

Transcription Skills

We recognise that the development of transcription skills—handwriting and spelling—is an important part of early literacy in EYFS. Children are provided with daily opportunities to develop the fine motor control, physical strength, and coordination needed for writing through a range of play-based and purposeful activities.

Practitioners support children to develop correct letter formation, pencil grip, and writing fluency through explicit teaching and modelling. Children are encouraged to apply their developing phonics knowledge to write sounds, words, and simple sentences independently, fostering confidence as emergent writers.

Writing opportunities are embedded throughout the learning environment, enabling children to see themselves as writers and to use writing for a range of meaningful purposes. Activities are carefully planned to meet individual developmental needs, ensuring that all children make progress in their transcription skills and are well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Inclusion

At Ravenbank, all children are valued as individuals and are entitled to an inclusive, ambitious and nurturing Early Years' experience. We recognise and celebrate children's different starting points, strengths, needs, interests, backgrounds and experiences, and we ensure that no child is disadvantaged because of any protected characteristic, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Inclusion begins with a strong universal provision. This includes secure routines, positive relationships, visual support, carefully modelled language, accessible resources, adult scaffolding and a safe, calm, nurturing environment where children feel safe, known and ready to learn. The EYFS curriculum is planned and adapted to meet the needs of individual children, supporting them in learning and developing at an appropriate pace while maintaining high expectations for all.

Where children need additional support, staff use the school's graduated approach to identify barriers, adapt provision and provide targeted support. This may include small-group language work, fine-motor activities, emotional regulation support, social communication support, additional adult modelling, adapted resources, sensory support or individual plans. Staff work closely with parents, the SENDCo /Inclusion Team and external professionals where appropriate. SEND in the EYFS is monitored and supported in line with the school's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy, and equality and inclusion are underpinned by the school's Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Assessment

Assessment plays an important part in helping the school to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, plan activities, and assess the need for support.

In line with statutory requirements, the school will undertake a summative assessment of each child's development at certain stages. These are:

- Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) – a short assessment of early mathematics and early literacy, communication and language which is taken within the first six weeks of a child starting Reception, regardless of what time of the year this occurs.
- The EYFS Profile – a comprehensive assessment completed at the end of the EYFS to provide a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, attainment against the ELGs, and their readiness for Year 1.

Ongoing formative assessment is proportionate and closely linked to the planned curriculum. Staff use observations, interactions and knowledge of each child to identify what children know, what they can do, where they may need support and how provision or teaching should be adapted. Practitioners will interact and observe children to understand their achievements, interests and learning needs, and will use this information to shape learning experiences for each child.

Parents will be kept up to date on their child's progress and development, and the teacher will address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents. The school uses Tapestry to share updates on children's learning in the classroom.

When undertaking assessment activities, all staff members will have due regard to the 'Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook', any assessment and reporting arrangements for that year, and any LA advice.

The Learning Environment

The school recognises that the physical and emotional environment plays an important role in supporting, enabling and extending pupils' learning and development.

The school will provide a safe and stimulating environment that values active learning, exploration and play, where children feel free to create, make links and develop critical thinking skills.

Early years practitioners will ensure that learning environments are well-organised and suitable for group, individual and whole-class learning, with interactive displays and easily accessible resources utilised to encourage independence.

At all times, children will have access to indoor and outdoor learning environments. Staff will plan provision to ensure that there is a range of learning opportunities available, and that the learning opportunities available in the outdoor environment build on and develop those inside.

Independent learning will be encouraged through planned continuous provision where children can make their own selection from a variety of resourced areas.

Staff will support children to navigate and access the learning environment, intervening and interacting where necessary to ensure that all learning opportunities and teaching moments are captured and capitalised upon.

Appropriate and stimulating educational visits and visitors, from both within and outside of the local community, will be arranged to further expand children's learning experiences.

The school values the importance of positive relationships. To support this, staff will be responsible for:

- Knowing and understanding the families, cultures and what they bring (also known as cultural capital).
- Ensuring they interact and empathise with children.
- Supporting children's emotions.
- Ensuring children feel valued and confident to try new things.

The expectations of behaviour will be consistent throughout the different learning areas and children will be supported to regulate their emotions through co-regulation and the knowledge of their key person. We use Zones of Regulation & My Happy Mind to support children's emotional development and keep everyone safe.

Family Involvement

We recognise that children make the strongest progress when school and home work closely together. To capitalise on children's school and home experiences, the school will be committed to working closely with parents and creating an ongoing dialogue. The school will ask that parents / carers support the school by:

- Ensuring that their child regularly attends school, giving reasons for any absences.
- Informing the school of any concerns or problems which may affect their child.
- Actively engaging in the school community.
- Meeting with the teachers where possible

- Enabling their child to be as appropriately dressed as possible with regard to the School Uniform Policy – parents should talk to their child’s class teacher if this is a problem so that the school can support this.
- Enabling their child’s knowledge and understanding through sharing the ideas sent from school.
- Encouraging their child’s development and progress.
- Work collaboratively with the school in managing their child’s individual needs.

The school will support parents by making the following information available:

- The school’s privacy notice for parents and children
- How the school delivers the EYFS and how parents can access more information
- The daily routine and the activities offered in the school’s EYFS and how parents can assist their child’s learning at home
- How the school’s EYFS supports children with SEND
- Details of the food and drink provided to the children
- Details of the policies and procedures in place.
- The procedure to be followed in the event of a parent failing to collect a child at the appointed time, or in the event of a child going missing at, or away from, the setting.
- Staffing details, including the name of their child’s key person and their role.
- Telephone number for parents to contact in an emergency.

The school will provide support, advice and workshops for families, with the aim of developing a two-way understanding so that the school can use children’s home cultures and backgrounds to enrich and underpin teaching. The school will also provide parents / carers with the opportunity to join pupils in sessions on a regular basis. Tasks will be set to be completed at home under parental supervision.

Parents/ carers will be kept up-to-date through the use of conversations, Tapestry, the school website, School Spider, and weekly newsletters. The school understands the importance of communicating with parents, but will ask that appointments are made whenever possible.

Parents will be invited to autumn and spring term learning reviews; however, the school will have an open-door policy, and parents/carers are welcome to talk to teachers at the end of the school day.

The school has a Complaints Procedures Policy in place which is shared with parents/carers – written records will be kept of all complaints the school receives.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is central to all aspects of our Early Years provision. Staff know the children well and remain vigilant to any changes in behaviour, presentation or wellbeing. Any concerns about a child’s safety or welfare are recorded and reported in line with the school’s safeguarding and child protection procedures. We work closely with families and, where appropriate, external agencies to ensure children are safe, supported and able to thrive.

Children are supervised by school staff while eating their meals. During lunchtime, staff support children to eat safely, encourage appropriate table manners and monitor children’s wellbeing. A paediatric first aider is

always present in the hall while Early Years children are eating, ensuring that any medical or first aid needs can be responded to promptly.

Transition

The school understands the importance of the transition process and, therefore, will adapt its practices to support children settling into their new environment. The school invites children and parents to transition sessions in the summer term before they start school and the class teacher visits any nursery settings to observe children in their familiar settings.

At the end of the reception year, children visit their Year 1 classroom and meet their new teacher. The Year 1 teacher will also visit the children in their current classroom to observe them in their familiar classroom.

Monitoring and Review

The quality of teaching will be continuously monitored, and any concerns will be raised with the class teacher or head teacher. Leaders will use current DfE guidance, including the Excellence in Reception Teaching: Content Framework, alongside the EYFS statutory framework, to support reflection, professional development and continuous improvement in Reception practice.

This policy will be reviewed annually. The next scheduled review date of this policy is September 2027.