

All Hallows C of E Primary School



Early Years Policy 2026

**At the heart of the community, with the
children at the heart of the school.**

We are committed to providing an ambitious, nurturing and inclusive Early Years environment where every child is recognised as a unique individual and empowered to become a curious, confident and resilient learner. We prioritise warm, responsive relationships and a thoughtfully sequenced curriculum that builds strong foundations across all areas of learning. Through rich play experiences and high-quality interactions, we ensure children develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to thrive now and in the future. Our vision is for every child to feel safe, valued and inspired to achieve their very best.

**“Early childhood education is the key to the betterment of society.”
Maria Montessori**

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**Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential.
EYFS Framework, 2021**

Teachers' aim:

- To provide a secure, nurturing and stimulating environment where every child feels safe, valued and confident to explore and learn.
- To promote high-quality play and rich learning experiences that support children's holistic development across all areas.
- To ensure children develop strong foundations in communication, language, early literacy and early mathematics.
- To champion the importance of warm, responsive relationships as the basis for effective learning and emotional wellbeing.
- To recognise and celebrate each child as a unique individual with their own interests, strengths and developmental pathway.
- To foster curiosity, independence, resilience and a positive attitude to learning.
- To work in close partnership with parents and carers to support each child's learning journey.
- To provide an inclusive environment that removes barriers and ensures equal opportunities for all children.
- To ensure children gain the knowledge, skills and dispositions they need to be ready for Year 1 and for lifelong learning.

- To continually observe, assess and respond to children's needs to ensure progress and secure next steps in learning.

Our Curriculum

Our EYFS curriculum is grounded in the principles and requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework and informed by the non-statutory guidance *Development Matters*. These documents shape our ambitious, well-sequenced curriculum, ensuring that children build secure foundations across all Prime and Specific Areas of Learning. We provide a rich, stimulating environment where high-quality play, meaningful interactions and a strong focus on communication and language underpin all learning. Guided by children's interests and developmental needs, we balance child-initiated exploration with carefully planned adult-led experiences. Through this approach, we support every child to develop curiosity, independence and resilience, preparing them confidently for the next stage of their education.

The Statutory Framework highlights four guiding principles these are:

1. **A Unique Child.** Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
2. **Positive Relationships.** Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
3. **Enabling Environments.** Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and carers.
4. **Learning and Development.** Children develop and learn in different ways. The statutory framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Our curriculum encompasses seven areas of learning and development, all important and all interconnected. It is recognised that three of these areas are particularly important for building children's foundations to learning.

These prime areas are:

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

These are then further developed through these specific areas of learning:

- Literacy
- Maths

- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Throughout their time at All Hallows our staff will be supporting children's development towards the Early Learning Goals. They will do this by following our highly ambitious, carefully planned and sequenced curriculum, that meets the needs of our current learners to ensure they make the appropriate level of development needed to guarantee a successful transition into year 1.

We also explicitly teach the skills required to navigate the Characteristics of Effective Learning. These characteristics are integral to our curriculum as they are how children learn.

The characteristics of effective learning are:

- Playing and Exploring
- Active Learning
- Creating and Thinking Critically

Staff observe children's play behaviours and adapt the curriculum and environment to support children's individual learning behaviour.

Planning

Our curriculum and planning are based on the learning and development needs of our children, as identified through observations and assessment. Before they join our school, staff spend time with the children, their families and key workers at their nurseries and in school, and preliminary observations of the children's abilities and interests form the basis of our planning for the first few weeks of term. At the start of the year, we complete a thorough baseline assessment for every child using both our in-house baseline document and the government's statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA), where applicable. During the first few weeks, staff observe children closely across a range of play and learning experiences to build an accurate picture of their starting points, ensuring we can tailor our teaching and provision to meet their individual needs from the outset.

Our learning is built on throughout the year and our themes align with this idea that first children need to learn about themselves before they can learn about others. If children show a specific interest or desire for an aspect of learning then this will be developed and enhanced into provision.

Our curriculum and planning have been built on the school's HEART values, where children are taught to show:

- Humility
- Empathy
- Ambition
- Respect
- Trust

These link to our aims of wanting children to become well-rounded lifelong learners and a view that executive functioning skills should be embedded into our teaching and learning throughout the year. At All Hallows we recognise that without the core components of executive functioning children will not become successful learners. So therefore, a focus throughout the year is how children develop these to become confident learners.

Working Memory: Holding and working with information in the mind.

Cognitive Flexibility: Adapting to new situations, shifting perspectives, or switching between tasks.

Inhibitory Control: Managing impulses, distractions, and emotions (self-control).

Weekly planning shows the whole class, group and independent activities that are planned for that week, and the enhancements made to our indoor and outdoor continuous provision to enhance child-led learning.

All members of Foundation Stage staff contribute to planning through weekly meetings and daily informal discussion of the children.

Assessment in the Early Years

Assessment in the Early Years is ongoing, purposeful and rooted in high-quality interactions with children. Its primary aim is to ensure that every child receives the right support at the right time so they can make strong progress from their individual starting points.

Baseline Assessment

At the beginning of the academic year, we complete a thorough baseline assessment for every child. This includes our in-house baseline document, which captures children's early development across the Prime and Specific Areas of Learning, as well as the government's statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) where applicable. During the first few weeks, staff build a clear picture of each child's strengths, interests and areas for development through careful observation, conversations with parents and carers, and time spent engaging with children in play.

Ongoing Assessment

Throughout the year, practitioners use continuous, formative assessment to understand what children know, can do and need next. These assessments are based on day-to-day interactions, high-quality informal observations and professional knowledge of child development. We use this information to adapt our provision, plan next steps, and ensure teaching is responsive and meaningful.

Summative Assessment

At key points throughout the year, staff review each child's progress to ensure they are on track and to identify any emerging barriers or additional support needs. These reviews help us evaluate the effectiveness of our curriculum and provision, and

ensure that all children are making strong, sustained progress. This is done collaboratively with all staff in EYFS so we gain a clear picture of each child and all staff have an awareness of children's next steps.

Phonics Assessment

Summative phonics assessments are carried out half termly and reading groups and small intervention groups are informed by the most current assessments. During Phonics lessons staff also identify children who have not yet got the learning for the day and these children will take part in a same day intervention to allow them to 'keep up' with their peers.

Writing

Every child has a Drawing Club book where evidence of their writing can be found. Select children who have been identified as needing more support with handwriting also have their own handwriting book, where staff support their individual handwriting needs.

Working with Parents and Carers

We value parents and carers as partners in their child's learning. We share regular updates about progress, next steps and ways to support learning at home. We welcome parental contributions whereby parents can make an appointment to discuss their child's progress with the class teacher at any time. We also value parents sharing pictures and learning that has taken place at home to help us build an even clearer picture.

Using Assessment to Support Inclusion

Assessment plays a vital role in identifying children who may require additional support or early intervention. When needed, we work closely with families and external professionals to ensure timely and appropriate strategies are put in place so that every child can thrive.

Learning Through Play

Play is at the heart of our Early Years provision and is the primary way in which young children learn, develop and make sense of the world around them. We recognise that high-quality play provides rich opportunities for children to explore, investigate, problem-solve and build the characteristics of effective learning. Through play, children develop crucial skills in communication, language, social interaction, physical development and early literacy and mathematics.

Our environment is thoughtfully planned to inspire curiosity and independence, offering a balance of child-initiated play and purposeful adult-led experiences. Practitioners play a vital role in extending learning by observing children closely, knowing when to step in with meaningful interactions, and when to allow children the time and space to explore freely. We ensure that play opportunities are inclusive, open-ended and responsive to children's interests and developmental needs.

The indoor and outdoor learning environment should give children time and space to develop and consolidate their learning through play. Resources should be freely available and accessible to the children, they know where things are and do not need to ask for what they need. They have been taught appropriate safety measures (e.g. for using scissors, using the climbing frame) which they put into practice independently.

Play enables children to develop their skills of co-operation, working together, communication, thinking creatively and critically, exploring, investigating, taking risks, making mistakes and solving problems, within a safe and secure environment.

Through sustained shared thinking, sensitive scaffolding and rich play experiences, we support children to become confident, motivated learners who approach challenges with resilience and creativity. Play underpins our curriculum and ensures that every child develops the strong foundations they need for future learning. Staff are continually refining our approach to interactions during continuous provision, using the evidence backed ShREC approach. The ShREC approach highlights the importance of a language and communication rich environment in supporting children's development. The approach highlights how staff will communicate with children, these are:

Shared attention: staff will tune in and show genuine interest in a child's interest. This establishes a connection between child and teacher.

Respond: staff's responses will be dependent on their knowledge of individual children. Both verbal and non-verbal communication is an important aspect when responding to children. Staff observe these cues carefully and respond accordingly.

Expand: a back and forth conversation will begin to take place where adults will use modelling and scaffolding to expand learning. Staff's strong knowledge of children's starting points mean they are able to pitch new vocabulary a level above where the child is currently at.

Conversation: the overall goal is to develop sustained back and forth conversations that involve many turns. Staff understand that by questioning less it offers children the opportunity to practise turn taking.

Equal Opportunities

We are committed to providing an inclusive Early Years environment where every child has equal access to learning, experiences and opportunities, regardless of their background, needs or circumstances. We celebrate the uniqueness of each child and ensure that all children feel valued, represented and respected within our setting.

Our curriculum, environment and resources are designed to reflect and promote diversity, fostering positive attitudes towards similarities and differences. We actively

challenge discrimination, stereotyping and bias, and ensure our provision is free from barriers that may limit a child's participation or progress.

Practitioners are trained to identify and respond to individual needs, ensuring that children with SEND, those learning English as an additional language, and children who may be disadvantaged receive high-quality support and inclusive teaching. We work closely with parents, carers and external professionals to ensure early intervention and personalised approaches where needed.

Through our commitment to equal opportunities, we strive to ensure that every child can learn, thrive and succeed, and that they grow up with a strong sense of belonging, fairness and mutual respect.

Written by:	India Linley
Updated:	March 2026
Agreed by governors on:	
Review by:	March 2027