



Spread your wings, learn new things, fly as high as you can.

Early Years Policy

Approval Date: October 2025

Review Date: October 2026

1. Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- A close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

2. Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the 2025 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

3. Structure of the EYFS

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. Within Dovecotes Early Years Unit we have a Reception Class that can hold up to 45 children, a Nursery class which has a daily session, and a Terrific for Twos room that has a daily session.

At Dovecotes Primary School we offer 15 hours 'Terrific for Twos' childcare provision for those eligible families with two-year-olds. We also offer the Universal 15 hours Nursery provision for all children the term after their third birthday in a daily nursery session. We also offer some 30 hours provision for nursery children of working parents who meet the eligibility criteria.

4. The Four Principles of EYFS

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based upon four principles that should shape practice in early years settings:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

A Unique Child

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as rewards (such as stickers and certificates) to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion and Welfare

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All

children and their families are valued within our school. In our school we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the EYFS we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits. We provide children with choices to help them develop these important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children.

We understand that we have welfare requirements to uphold and we endeavour to meet all the following requirements:

- Promote the welfare of children
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children

Positive Relationships

We recognise that children learn to be strong independent and form secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make.

We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating their children.

We do this through:

- Our Welcome Sessions for all those parents with children starting in any of the areas within the Early Years Unit
- A Questionnaire 'Starting Little Doves/Nursery/Reception for parents to complete prior to starting school
- Home Visits by the teacher and another member of the Early Years' Team prior to the child starting within the Early Years Unit
- Visits by a member of staff to meet the child in a previous setting prior to the child starting within the Early Years Unit.
- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school
- Transition Sessions within the last half term before the Summer for those children starting in Reception in the September and for those moving into Year 1.
- Staggered starts for all the children starting within the Early Years Unit.
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress in our Nursery and Reception Classes.
- Sending weekly information sheets home detailing what the children have been during the week and ways that they can support their child at home.
- Email addresses for parents/carers to use to send pictures and other wow moments into school about their child.
- Encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. There is a Termly Parents Evening for Nursery and Reception children. Parents with a child moving to Reception or in Reception receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents: Assemblies, Easter Bonnet Parade, etc
- Providing the opportunity for parents to comment on any learning or achievements their child has made at home. Parents have access to a class email address which they can send information and photos into school.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. At our school and in accordance with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2025, all children have a key group worker. We have weekly Early Years Team meetings to talk about the children and talk through activities that happening within the Early Years Unit.

Enabling Environments

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

The Learning Environment

The EYFS Unit is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. All classes - Little Doves, Nursery and Reception have a classroom base which is set up with freely accessible, easily identifiable equipment, which children are encouraged to access independently. We also have our own enclosed Early Years garden which provides resources for all 7 areas of learning. This has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. The school grounds are regularly accessed and learning is planned regularly.

Learning and Development

We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are inter-connected. As

mentioned in Section 7 there are seven areas of learning with 3 prime areas that are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building children's capacity for learning and to help them form relationships and thrive. None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other.

5. Curriculum

Our Early Years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2025 EYFS statutory framework. The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

5.1 Planning

Staff plan activities and experiences for children that enable them to develop and learn effectively. All seven areas of learning are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. Planning within the Early Years is flexible and based upon the children's interests as well as the individual needs and stages of development of each child in their setting. Early years practitioners use the children's interests to develop half termly themes and, from these, weekly plans are written which highlight the learning that is being focussed upon within each activity.

Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

5.2 Incorporating Different Teaching and Learning Styles

Features that form the teaching and learning within our EYFS are as follows:

- Practitioners need to consider different ways children learn and reflect this in their practice.
- The partnership between teachers and parents is crucial, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement
- The understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching
- The range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication

- The carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards each class' 'I CAN' statements and the Early Learning Goals at the end of Reception.
- The provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities.
- The encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management.
- The support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment
- The identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are shared with parents
- The good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school
- The clear aims of our work and the regular monitoring of our work to evaluate and improve it
- The regular identification of training needs for all adults working within all areas of the Early Years Unit.
- Each child will be assigned a key person when they are in each class.

The 3 characteristics of effective learning are:

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

1. Playing and Exploring

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

2. Active Learning

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfactions as they take ownership of their learning.

3. Creativity and Critical Thinking

Children should be given opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults can support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

6. Assessment

At Dovecotes Primary, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning.

In each area of Dovecotes' Early Years Curriculum there are 'I CAN' statements that a child is expected to complete by the end of each stage. Assessments are largely through our floor book approach, and observations staff have made. Staff spend a prolonged amount of time with the children in playful activities taking on a co-play approach. Therefore, staff know the children

thoroughly and have a good knowledge of individual children's level of development. We then use these different observations of the children to inform the next days and future planning and build upon the children's current knowledge.

Our summative assessments look at our Early Years Curriculum and whether individual children are on track or not on track to meet the requirements by the end of their time within each class. This then feeds into discussions with the Early Years Leader and the Headteacher as to how we are going to help those children currently not on track to make more progress.

During the children's first few weeks attending any of the classes within the Early Years Unit, staff get to know the children and find out what they already know so that they can then build upon this within continuous provision and in focused activities.

When a child is **aged between 2 and 3**, staff review their progress and provide parents and/or carers with a written summary of the child's development in the 3 prime areas. This 'progress check' highlights the areas in which a child is progressing well and the areas in which additional support is needed.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child **starts reception**, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

At the **end of the EYFS**, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile reflects ongoing observations, and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child.

The profile is moderated internally (referring to the Development Matters guidance) and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.

WellComm (Speech & Language Screening) This assessment uses a traffic light system that identifies children requiring immediate intervention, as well as those who show potential language difficulties. The system bands children by placing them into one of three categories:

- Red: Consider referral to a specialist service for further advice/assessment
- Amber: Extra support and intervention required
- Green: No intervention currently required

Safeguarding and Welfare

The class teacher is responsible for the pastoral care of each child as well as the academic side of school life. All safeguarding and child protection concerns will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and procedures followed in accordance with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

All practitioners are trained in line with the criteria set out in Annex C of the EYFS Statutory Framework 2025. Named members of the Early Years teaching team are qualified in Paediatric

First Aid. Students and apprentices (aged 16+) can be included in ratios at the level below their study if they hold a valid Paediatric First Aid qualification and are deemed competent.

Intimate Care

“Intimate” care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children are able to carry out themselves. However, depending on a child’s stage of development, they may need some support, for example, dressing, verbal encouragement to wipe their bottom after toileting and changing underwear following an accident. In most cases intimate care is to do with personal hygiene.

Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child. It is our aim that all children should be independent, and we consider our role to be one of supporting and encouraging rather than doing.

Child absences

School has a statutory requirement to follow up on absences in a timely manner. If a child is absent for a prolonged period of time, or if a child is absent without notification from the parent or carer, attempts must be made to contact the child’s parents and/or carers and alternative emergency contacts. School will adhere to their Attendance Policy that include expectations for reporting child absences and the actions providers will take if a child is absent without notification or for a prolonged period of time.

Safer Sleeping

Most of the children will not be sleeping during their time at Little Doves or Nursery since they only attend 15 hours. We will encourage children to stay awake by distracting and discouraging sleep by offering a wide range of stimulating activities; however, there are times when children may need to sleep due to lack of sleep at home, additional needs or because they are developing an illness.

Little Doves, Nursery and Reception Procedures

- The room will be properly ventilated and room temperature will be monitored.
- If a child does fall asleep, they will be placed on a sleep mat.
- In the event of a child falling asleep they will NOT be left unsupervised and 10-minute checks will be carried out, documented and initialled.

10 MINUTE CHECKS ARE TO ENSURE CHILDREN ARE STILL BREATHING NOT TO CHECK THAT THEY ARE STILL ASLEEP

- Any clothing will be removed if necessary, to ensure comfort and safety and prevent overheating in young children who are unable to regulate their temperature.
- Staff will ensure any blankets are not covering faces.
- Unless normal, or parents/carers have alerted staff to the fact that their child is tired and may fall asleep, parents/ carers will be phoned and asked how they would like school to proceed. If we suspect that a child has fallen asleep due to illness, parents/carers will be asked to collect their child.
- After a sleep mat has been used, it will be wiped with disinfectant and any blankets, sheets etc will be placed in the washing machine before they are used again.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome SIDS

The following guidance is from <https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sids-guide-professionals.pdf> and the staff at Dovecotes Primary School follow this.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden and unexplained death of a baby where no cause is found after a detailed post-mortem.

Unsafe sleeping positions and environments are increased factors in possible SIDS, so to prevent this we follow the subsequent guidance.

Research has shown that overheating arising from high room temperature, excessive insulation (overwrapping) or both, is associated with an increased risk of SIDS.

A high proportion of infants who die as a result of SIDS are found with their head covered with bedding. Loose bedding which can cover a baby's face or head can be dangerous and has been shown to increase the chance of SIDS. Soft or bulky bedding, such as quilts, pillows and duvets is also associated with an increased risk of SIDS in the UK.

There is substantial evidence from all round the world to show that sleeping a baby on their back (known as the supine position) at the beginning of every sleep period significantly reduces the risk of SIDS. However, sleeping an infant prone (on its front) or side is associated with a significantly increased risk of SIDS.

Studies have also shown that infants who usually sleep on their back but are then placed on the front or side to sleep are at a particularly high risk. It is therefore important that babies are put on their backs consistently as part of their regular sleep routine.

Safer Eating

To minimise the risk of choking and ensure safe eating environments for young children, the following practices are implemented:

- **Supervision:** All children are supervised during mealtimes and snack time. Children will be within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating. Where possible, staff will sit facing children whilst they eat so they can be sure children are eating in a way to prevent choking and so they can prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.
- **Choking Hazards:** Staff to prepare food in a way to prevent choking and be vigilant to ensure foods sent in packed lunches have also been prepared safely. Firm, spherical foods like grapes and cherry tomatoes must be sliced into quarters or segments. Cylindrical foods such as cucumber, carrots and cocktail sausages must be cut lengthways into thin batons. This guidance on food safety for young children – [Help for early years providers : Food safety](#) It includes advice on food and drink to avoid, how to reduce the risk of choking and links to other useful resources for early years settings. If a child experiences a choking incident that requires intervention, staff will record details of where and how the child choked and parents and/or carers made aware. The records will be reviewed; risk assessed each term, and appropriate action will be taken to address any identified concerns.
- **Age-Appropriate Food Types:** Foods will be suitable for the child's developmental stage (e.g., food will be cut into small, manageable pieces for younger children). Popcorn, marshmallows, jelly cubes and hard sweets are never permitted for children under 5.
- **Mealtime Environment:** Children will sit down and remain seated while eating and be given time to chew and swallow their food properly. Children are discouraged from talking loudly at mealtimes / snack time. Food sharing is not allowed.

7. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the headteacher every year.

At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.