



LAYFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Early Years Policy

Autumn 2026

To be reviewed Autumn 2027

1.Introduction

Early Years

1.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the statutory framework for the early education and care of children in the early year's age group. The Early Years (EY) includes requirements for the provision of young children's welfare, learning and development that all providers must meet, as well as good practice guidance.

1.2 The four principles of the EYFS underpin all the guidance in Birth to 5 Matters, which is designed to show how these principles work together for children in the EYFS.

These are:

- A unique child
- Positive relationships
- Enabling environments
- Learning and development

1.3 The Early Years applies to children from the age of 3-5 years old and is a uniquely important and precious time in a child's life and should be valued as such. The child's time in Early Years lays the foundations for all future learning, providing the base on which everything else builds.

1.4 Layfield Primary School Early Years operates as a unit, even when the children work in different areas, staff focus on the needs of the children and their learning. Working closely as a unit reduces the number of transitions young children experience, as for some children this is a very traumatic experience. Allowing a child to stay in the same environment, with familiar adults and routines, until they are emotionally secure reduces stress for the child and helps build up their confidence and become emotionally secure.

1.5 Children learn at different paces and in the Early Years. This allows children to learn at their own developmental level and not at the chronological level. There is no limit to what new starters can achieve, they can learn alongside older children and have access to their teaching and activities. The Early Years Unit works closely with Year 1 children and adults and this allows children to make the transition from Early Years to Year 1 a calm and relaxed one.

2. Aims

- To provide a safe, happy and stimulating learning environment that can be accessed by all children
- To promote confidence and positive self-image
- To provide a stimulating environment where learning is fun
- To establish a partnership with parents for the education of their children.
- To provide a well balanced curriculum for each child to develop socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually.
- To encourage all children to be independent learners.
- To strive towards excellence in all we do and create for the children; this includes the resources, the environment, the activities and most importantly the teaching and learning which takes place.

We value, seek to understand, and identify the potential in everyone. In our setting we promote values which include:

- British democracy
- the rule of law
- individual liberty
- respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs (and no faith)

We do this alongside an appreciation and celebration of difference and diversity (reflecting all protected characteristics and social class). We promote rights and accept that rights come with responsibility.

Valuing our cultural heritage, we explore our local, regional and national heritage and British history, both positive and negative – learning from history and taking pride in positive contributions made.

3. Principles

To ensure high quality of education and care in the Early Years, we;

- Employ staff who understand child development
- Create an atmosphere of mutual respect
- Plan a relevant, rich and stimulating and carefully structured curriculum
- Observe, assess and review, building on what individual children already know and can do
- Plan transitions between home and school
- Use effective communication systems with parents, carers and other agencies.

4. Teaching and Learning

4.1 The Learning and Development theme of the EY is made up of seven areas. All areas of Learning and Development are inter connected and of equal importance. The areas of Learning and Development are:

4.2 Prime Areas:

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2. Communication and Language
3. Physical Development

The prime areas begin to develop quickly in response to relationships and experiences, and run through and support learning in all other areas. The prime areas continue to be fundamental throughout the EY.

4.3 Specific Areas:

4. Literacy
5. Understanding the World
6. Expressive arts and design
7. Mathematics

4.4 Specific areas include essential skills and knowledge. They grow out of the prime areas, and provide important contexts for learning.

5. Characteristics of Effective Learning

The ways in which the child engages with other people and their environment – playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically – underpin learning and development across all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner.

The Unique Child reaches out to relate to people and things through the Characteristics of Effective Learning, which move through all areas of learning.

Children develop in the context of relationships and the environment around them. This is unique to each family, and reflects individual communities and cultures.

5.1 According to the new Statutory Framework for the EY, the Early Years seeks to provide:

- **Quality and consistency** in all early years settings, 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 individual child and are assessed and reviewed regularly;
- **Partnership working** between practitioners, with parents and/or carers, child minders and other setting children attend;
- **Equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

5.2 The **learning and development requirements** cover:

- The *areas of learning and development* which must shape activities and experiences (*educational programmes*) for children in all early years settings;
- The *early learning goals* that providers must help children to achieve (the knowledge, skills and understanding children should have at the end of the academic year in which they turn five); and
- *Assessment arrangements* for measuring progress (and requirements for reporting to parents and/or carers).

6. Overarching principles from the EY

6.1 These are as follows:

- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**;
- 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/or carers; and

6.2 **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early year's provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

6.3 Early Years staff aim to make each child's time fun as well as educational. The curriculum is structured to provide opportunities for Child Initiated activities as well Adult Initiated and Adult Led activities. Adults will lead structured activities in small and large groups. We build upon children's prior experiences; develop their practical skills through hands on activities, which the children find interesting and fun. Teaching staff are responsible for keeping children's learning journey folders up to date and these will be regularly scrutinised in the same way as pupil's books further up the school.

6.4 Children with English as an additional language are encouraged to listen to and observe adults through the activities provided and encouraged to develop social language skills as well as the language needed for learning. The school year is broken into six half termly topics; each topic is based around the Early Years, but also allows for staff to follow the children's interests as well.

7. Planning

7.1 The planning which takes place in the Early Years is based upon the knowledge of the children and the next steps in their development. When planning tasks we not only think about the learning outcome but we also pay careful attention to how the children learn. Using evaluations and observations from the previous week we carefully plan our continual provision in the Early Years so all parties are able to move the child's learning forward effectively and create enjoyable activities. The curriculum is carefully structured with the understanding that every aspect of learning for our children is interrelated and interdependent and experiences are mostly based on real life situations. We prepare topics for each half term and this leads us into our medium-term planning, an overview of activities and objectives we will be covering that particular half term.

8. Observation, Assessment, Recording and Reporting

8.1 The children's progress is measured against the Birth to 5 Matters document which includes the Early Learning Goals. Staff use the Early Years Trust Tracker to record the development of each individual child. Through the use of daily observations, continual provision, child initiated, adult led and adult focused activities, discussions with parents/carers, child minders, other settings and reports from previous settings, staff are able to build a picture of a child and assess and record their progress thoroughly. Early Years staff maintain a bank of on-going personal records for each child on Tapestry and in their own red file.

9. Indoor and Outdoor Continual Provision

9.1 Children learn through play and first-hand experiences, both indoors and outdoors. Children do not draw a distinction between work and play, and play is the most effective way in which a young child learns.

9.2 The Early Years Team plan a curriculum to meet the needs of the children whilst at the same time following the EYFS. Through adult led, adult focused, and child initiated activities using both the indoor and outdoor continual provision, children are able to explore and extend what they already know and can do in an environment in which they feel familiar.

Well planned play both indoor and outdoors, is a key way in which all children are challenged appropriate to their ability and interests.

Each area in the classroom has a 'frog challenge' which get changed every week so children are continually being challenged and enhances and moves their learning forwards.

9.3 Through play, in a secure environment with effective adult support, children:

- Explore, develop and represent learning experiences
- Practise and build up ideas, concepts and skills
- Learn how to control impulses and understand rules
- Be alone, alongside others or co-operate as they talk through activities
- Take risks and make mistakes
- Think creatively and imaginatively
- Communicate with others as they investigate or solve problems
- Express feelings or re-live experiences in controlled and safe situations.

9.4 There is a clear importance for outdoor play as well as indoor, but Early Years staff also understand that there will be times when it is not appropriate for children to be outside in some

weather conditions and will use their professional judgement as to whether it is appropriate for children to be outdoors.

10. Being Healthy

10.1 Reception and Nursery children enjoy fruit for snack and are asked to bring a water bottle from home to have several drinks of water throughout the school day/session. Reception children are offered milk at lunchtime. Nursery children have milk and a piece of fruit at snack time.

Through food activities that take place in the Early Years Unit, children are made aware of which foods are healthy and which are not. School liaises with parents/carers if there are any specific concerns. Children are made aware of the needs of basic hygiene and the importance of physical activity and its effect on the body.

11 Inclusion

Layfield Primary is a fully inclusive school and will strive to meet the needs of every child. Part of the teachers role is to carefully observe each child's educational, physical, social and emotional development and share the information with parents/carers and, if necessary, our Special Needs Lead (SENCo). If we are worried about progress, first we will plan particular activities in class to help the child move on. If this is unsuccessful we will ask for guidance from other agencies. Parents/carers are encouraged to approach the Early Years staff if they have any worries about their child's progress. The Early Years staff will always keep parents/carers informed of any steps taken within school to address specific needs.

All children are individuals and in this respect every child has a special educational need. For this reason children are grouped to match their ability and match the specific needs of the group. By assessing, observing and keeping records, we challenge every child to try their best.

12. Gifted and Talented and More Able Children

12.1 Layfield Primary School Early Years offer extra possibilities for the children to use their unique abilities. We plan and organise for stimulation, positive, purposeful and an active learning environment to challenge all children and extend children further when needed.

13. Equal opportunities

13.1 The Early Years operates an equal opportunities policy. As we live in a multiracial, multicultural community, all children have equal opportunities regardless of gender, race, religion, or ability. They all have equal access to the curriculum, and equipment. The Early Years staff strive to enable all children to develop to their full potential and be fostered as individuals.

14. Role of parents/carers

14.1 We believe that all parents/carers have an important role to play in the education of their child. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. At Layfield Primary Early Years Unit we seek to develop an effective partnership with parents/carers through;

- Opportunity for a home visit for Nursery children and a school visit before their start date and their parents/carers
- A professional, friendly atmosphere in which parents/carers feel comfortable to share concerns, welcomed and valued
- Actively encouraging use of their knowledge and expertise to support learning
- Sharing topics with parents/carers

- Welcoming each child individually into our setting and assist the parent/carer with toilet training. We will help and encourage a child to have independent toilet skills and change any accidents. We only accept children in pants unless the child has a medical condition.
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents.
- Offering a range of activities that support the involvement of parents/carers. There is regular communication with home through the half termly newsletters, the use of a Learning Journey home/school book and discussions with parents/carers at the start of the day and at home time.

15. Liaison

15.1 Good communication aids smooth transitions. We liaise with;

- Parents/carers as first educators
- Pre-school settings such as playgroups (Spring) child minders and nursery schools
- Key Stage 1 staff

16. Behaviour Management & Positive Handling

16.1 Refer to school Behaviour Policy and Intimate Care Policy; as the children in Early Years are much younger we encourage adults to make it clear as to why the child has to be spoken to and how they can put their mistake right. If children become distressed or upset they will be comforted by an adult, appropriately, and will not be left feeling upset or alone.

16.2 We understand that occasionally children within Early Years will have a toileting accident, we ask parents to bring changes of clothing so children can be changed discreetly. See Toileting Policy.

17. Resources

We plan a learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning. We use materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. We encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning. Through this process the children learn to think through their play and begin to play with purpose.