



THE HERMITAGE SCHOOLS

Inspire, Learn, Achieve

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Person Responsible:	EYFS lead
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"All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality early learning provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential"
(Early years foundation stage statutory framework 2025)

Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At The Hermitage Schools, our Nursery provides care for up to 29 children per session aged 2 to 4 years. Children join Reception at the start of the academic year in which they turn five. Children enter Reception with a wide range of experiences and prior learning. Many attend our Nursery, while others join us from a variety of local nursery and pre-school settings. Our EYFS provision builds on these early experiences, recognising the important role of both previous settings and home learning. Working in close partnership with parents and carers, we provide a nurturing, stimulating environment that supports children to become confident, independent and active learners, laying strong foundations for future success.

Aim

At The Hermitage Schools, we are committed to providing high-quality care and education that gives every child the best possible start in life and establishes strong foundations for future learning. We create a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment where children feel valued, supported and challenged to achieve their full potential. Working in partnership with parents, carers and other professionals, we recognise and respond to the individual needs of every child.

In line with the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, we aim to:

- Provide a safe, caring, inclusive and stimulating environment that meets the needs of all children, including those with additional needs.
- Deliver a broad, balanced and engaging curriculum that promotes children's learning and development across all areas of the EYFS.
- Recognise, value and build upon each child's strengths, experiences and individual learning journey.

- Foster independence, confidence, resilience and positive attitudes to learning.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for children to explore, investigate, create and develop through play and first-hand experiences.
- Work in partnership with parents and carers, valuing their contributions and supporting children's learning at home and school.
- Ensure equality of opportunity for all children, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, language, family background, gender, disability or ability.
- Support children to become confident, capable learners who are well prepared for the transition to Key Stage 1 and beyond

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

A Unique Child – developing resilient, capable, confident and self-assured individuals.

At The Hermitage Schools, we recognise that every child is a unique and capable learner who develops at their own pace. We value each child's strengths, interests and experiences, providing a supportive and inclusive environment where they feel safe, confident and valued.

Through positive relationships, encouragement, praise and celebration of achievement, we promote resilience, independence and a positive attitude to learning, helping every child to reach their full potential.

Positive Relationships – supporting the children in becoming strong and independent.

We recognise that children learn and develop best through secure, positive relationships. We aim to build caring, respectful and professional relationships with children and their families, supporting children to become confident, independent learners. We value parents and carers as children's first educators and believe that working in partnership with families is essential to children's success and wellbeing.

We support this partnership through:

- Transition arrangements with nurseries and pre-schools prior to children starting Nursery or Reception.
- Induction meetings and stay-and-play sessions for children and families.
- Home visits, where appropriate, to support a smooth transition into school.
- Staggered starts for new children to enable a positive and personalised introduction to school life.
- Regular communication between home and school.
- Sharing children's learning and achievements through our online learning journey platform.
- Termly celebration events and parent consultations to discuss progress and next steps.
- An annual written report on each child's attainment and progress.
- Home reading diaries to support communication about reading development.
- Workshops and family learning opportunities throughout the year.
- Encouraging parents and carers to contribute to and celebrate their child's learning journey.

Enabling Environments – where opportunities and experiences respond to the individual needs of the child by developing a strong partnership between practitioners, parents/carers and the child.

We recognise that children learn best in stimulating, engaging environments that respond to their individual needs. Through observation and assessment, we identify children's interests and next steps, enabling us to plan meaningful learning experiences.

At The Hermitage Schools, we provide rich indoor and outdoor environments that support all areas of learning. We encourage children to make choices, explore independently and take ownership of their learning, developing confidence, resilience and a positive attitude towards learning.

Learning and Developing – An acknowledgement that children learn in different ways and at different rates. We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. Our Early Years provision provides a balance of adult-led and child-initiated learning, enabling children to explore, investigate and learn in a safe and supportive environment. We encourage children to take appropriate risks, develop independence and become active learners.

The EYFS Curriculum

The EYFS curriculum is organised into seven areas of learning and development, three Prime Areas and four Specific Areas. Together, these provide the knowledge, skills and experiences that support children's progress and prepare them for future learning.

Prime Areas

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

Specific Areas

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

Each area of learning and development is delivered through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated experiences. Play and active learning are fundamental to children's development, helping them to build confidence, develop resilience, solve problems and form positive relationships. Children learn through leading their own play and exploration, which is carefully facilitated and extended by adults, as well as through purposeful learning experiences guided by practitioners.

Planning and provision reflect an understanding that children learn in different ways and at different rates. Practitioners consider children's individual needs, interests and stages of development when planning experiences. At The Hermitage Schools, we recognise the importance of the child's voice and adapt our curriculum and provision to reflect children's interests, motivations and emerging fascinations.

We actively promote the three Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning, which underpin children's development as confident and capable learners:

- **Playing and Exploring** - children investigate and experience things and are willing to 'have a go'.
- **Active Learning** - children concentrate, persevere when they encounter difficulties and take pride in their achievements.
- **Creating and Thinking Critically** - children develop their own ideas, make links between their experiences and learn strategies for solving problems and achieving goals.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Through ongoing observation and assessment, including information shared by parents, carers and previous settings, staff evaluate children's development and use this knowledge to inform planning, provision and next steps. As children grow in confidence and capability within the three prime areas, the curriculum gradually develops a more balanced focus across all seven areas of learning and development. Where concerns arise regarding a child's progress, practitioners work closely with parents, carers and, where appropriate, external agencies to provide targeted support.

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning and is used to celebrate achievement, identify next steps and ensure that all children make strong progress. At The Hermitage Schools:

- Information gathered from previous settings, together with baseline assessments completed during the Autumn term, is used to identify strengths, areas for development and cohort priorities.
- Children's progress is monitored regularly through high-quality interactions, observations and professional judgement across all seven areas of learning and development.
- Ongoing assessment primarily takes the form of snapshot observations during child-initiated learning and play, which are recorded on our online learning journey platform.
- Assessment is a collaborative process involving teachers, teaching assistants, parents and carers and, where appropriate, other professionals.
- Assessment information is used to adapt provision, plan future learning experiences and ensure appropriate challenge and support for all children.
- During the final term of Reception, practitioners complete the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP), drawing upon ongoing observations, assessment records and discussions with parents and carers.
- Children's attainment is assessed against the Early Learning Goals and recorded as either **Expected** or **Emerging**.
- EYFSP information is shared with Year 1 staff to support effective transition, including each child's strengths, next steps and characteristics of effective learning.

This approach ensures that teaching and provision are responsive to children's needs and that every child is supported to achieve their full potential.

Health and Safety

The health, safety and wellbeing of all children is of paramount importance. We provide a safe, secure and stimulating environment in which children can learn, play and develop confidently.

Robust risk assessment procedures are in place to ensure children's safety at all times, including during educational visits and for any aspect of the environment, activities or provision that may present a potential risk. In addition,

comprehensive annual risk assessments are carried out for all Early Years learning environments, both indoors and outdoors, and are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain effective. (See EYFS Risk Assessments.)

Children are encouraged to explore, investigate and take age-appropriate risks within a safe and supportive environment. Through carefully planned experiences and adult guidance, children learn to recognise hazards, make sensible choices and develop an understanding of personal safety.

Welfare

We are committed to promoting the welfare, safety and emotional wellbeing of every child. We recognise that children thrive when they feel secure, valued and supported by positive relationships with adults and their peers.

We educate children about boundaries, rules and expectations, helping them to understand why these are important. Through consistent routines and opportunities to make choices, children develop independence, self-regulation and an understanding of responsibility. While children are encouraged to take appropriate risks as part of their learning and development, they are also taught how to recognise and manage potential dangers safely.

We aim to safeguard and promote both the physical and emotional wellbeing of all children and work closely with families and external agencies where appropriate. (See the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.)

In line with the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, The Hermitage Schools will:

- Promote the welfare and safeguarding of all children.
- Support children's good health, prevent the spread of infection and take appropriate action when children are unwell.
- Manage behaviour positively and effectively, taking account of children's age, stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure that all adults working with children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitably vetted and meet statutory suitability requirements.
- Provide premises, furniture and equipment that are safe, suitable and fit for purpose.
- Deliver enjoyable, challenging and inclusive learning experiences that meet the needs of every child.
- Maintain the records, policies and procedures required for the safe, efficient and effective management of the setting.

Through these measures, we ensure that children are safe, supported and able to flourish in an environment that promotes their learning, development and wellbeing.

Safer Eating

This section of the policy outlines the procedures in place at The Hermitage Schools to ensure that all eating and drinking experiences in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are safe, inclusive and supportive of children's health, wellbeing and development. It aims to minimise the risks associated with choking, allergic reactions and unsafe eating behaviours while promoting children's independence and positive attitudes towards healthy eating.

At The Hermitage Schools:

- Children are fully supervised at all times whilst eating or drinking.
- Staff are aware of individual dietary requirements, allergies and medical needs.
- Eating environments promote calm, positive and safe behaviours.
- Staff model and encourage safe eating habits and good table manners.
- Mealtimes and snack times are viewed as important opportunities to develop children's independence, social skills and healthy lifestyles.

To ensure children's safety:

- Children must remain seated whilst eating and drinking and must not walk, run or play with food.
- Staff should position themselves at children's level and actively supervise throughout eating and drinking times.
- Appropriate statutory staff-to-child ratios must be maintained at all times.
- Staff must remain vigilant and avoid distractions, focusing fully on the children in their care.
- Children who require additional support during mealtimes will be closely supervised and supported as necessary.

All food provided within the setting will be suitable for the age and developmental stage of the children.

Where appropriate, high-risk foods will be modified to reduce the risk of choking:

- Grapes and cherry tomatoes will be cut lengthways.
- Hard fruits and vegetables will be cut into small, manageable pieces.
- Sausages will be cut lengthways.

The following foods will not be provided unless covered by an approved individual plan:

- Whole nuts.
- Hard sweets.
- Large pieces of raw, hard foods that present a choking hazard.

In addition to following the school's Medical Needs and Allergy Procedures:

- All staff must be familiar with children's allergies, dietary requirements and individual healthcare plans.
- A strict no food-sharing rule applies at all times.
- Children with known allergies will be closely monitored during snack and mealtimes.
- Where necessary, children may be seated in a position that allows closer staff supervision.
- Emergency medication, including adrenaline auto-injectors (EpiPens), will be readily accessible.
- Relevant staff will receive appropriate training in the administration of emergency medication.

Staff will actively teach, model and reinforce safe eating habits, including:

- Taking small bites of food.
- Chewing thoroughly before swallowing.
- Sitting appropriately whilst eating and drinking.
- Avoiding talking or laughing with a full mouth.
- Drinking only after swallowing food.

- Using utensils safely and appropriately.
- Showing consideration and respect for others during mealtimes.

Children will have access to drinking water throughout the day.

- Children should drink only when seated or standing still.
- Water and milk will be the primary drinks offered unless alternative arrangements have been agreed.
- Open cups will be used where developmentally appropriate to promote independence and physical development.
- Staff will encourage regular hydration, particularly during warm weather and periods of increased physical activity.

All relevant staff receive paediatric first aid training, including procedures for responding to choking incidents. In the event of choking, staff will:

- Remain calm and respond immediately.
- Follow current paediatric first aid procedures and training.
- Call for additional assistance if required.
- Contact emergency services where necessary.
- Inform parents or carers as soon as possible.
- Complete an accident or incident report in accordance with school procedures.
- Review the circumstances of the incident to identify any necessary actions or preventative measures.

To maintain high standards of hygiene:

- Children and staff must wash their hands before and after eating.
- Tables and eating areas will be cleaned before and after use.
- Food will be prepared and stored in accordance with school food hygiene procedures.
- Staff will promote good hygiene practices throughout all eating and drinking experiences.

See Appendix 1 for Early Years Choking Hazards

Early years food choking hazards

Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)

Vegetable and fruits	Advice
Pips or stones in fruit	Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit.
Small fruits	Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters).
Large fruits and firm fruits	Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Vegetables	Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Skin on fruit and vegetables	Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily.
Cooking fruit and vegetables	Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons.
Meat and fish	Advice
Sausages and hot dogs	Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily.
Meat or fish	Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish, it will help the food pass smoothly down the throat.
Cheese	Advice
Grate or cut cheese	Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible.
Nuts and seeds	Advice
Chop or flake whole nuts	Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old.
Bread	Advice
White bread and other breads	White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips.
Snacks and other foods	Advice
Popcorn	Do not give babies and young children popcorn.
Chewing gum and marshmallows	Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows.
Peanut butter	Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread.
Jelly cubes	Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes.
Boiled sweets and ice cubes	Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes.
Raisins and other dried fruits	Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces.

Make sure food is prepared appropriately for children under 5 years old, see: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/>

It is also advisable that care givers are familiar with how to respond to a choking incident, see: How to stop a child from choking: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/> and How to resuscitate a child: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>