



THE HERMITAGE SCHOOLS

Inspire, Learn, Achieve

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Person Responsible:	EYFS lead
Date Adopted:	Autumn 2022
Date of last review:	Summer 2026
Date of next review:	Summer 2029

“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 we have a Nursery which provides care for 29 children per session from the age of 2 – 4 years old. Children are able to join our Reception year at the beginning of the school year in which they are five. Children joining Reception may have already learnt a great deal: many have been at our own school nursery and many more come from a range of settings that exist in our community. The Early Years education we offer our children builds upon the foundations that they have already started to develop within their previous settings and home life. In partnership with parents and carers we enable the children to begin the process of becoming active learners for life.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

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

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 and at varying rates. Children’s attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning.

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

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

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 the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to enhance and extend their learning.

Learning and Developing – An acknowledgement that children learn in different ways and at different rates. Within our Early Years classes we allow children to explore and learn safely, whilst encouraging them to manage their own risks. There are areas where the children can be active, investigate and explore. Learning and development in all areas of learning are supported with a balance of adult led learning and child-initiated learning.

Aim

At The Hermitage Schools, we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children, giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent. We value the individual child and work alongside parents and others to meet their needs and help every child to reach their full potential. As outlined in the EYFS 'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances.'

At The Hermitage Schools we aim to:

- Provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child including children with additional needs;
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm Early Years foundations for further Learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond;
- Value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress;
- Enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence;
- Work in partnership with parents and guardians, valuing their contributions ensuring that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability;
- Provide opportunities for children that are challenging and enjoyable and that extend their learning and development;
- Provide inclusive experiences for all children

We endeavour to ensure that children "learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe." We aim to support children in their learning through "teaching and experiences that gives children the broad range of skills that provide the right foundation for good progress through school and in life." (Statutory Framework for the EYFS)

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 celebration/sharing assemblies and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion in the EYFS

At The Hermitage Schools, children are treated as individuals and have equal access to all provisions available. All children are encouraged to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. Assessments take into account contributions from a range of perspectives to ensure that any child with potential special educational needs is identified at the earliest possible opportunity. Early identification of special needs is crucial to enable staff to support the development of each child. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage and the schools Inclusion Lead provides support for further information and advice. Appropriate steps are taken in accordance with the school's Inclusion policy for SEND.

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 all children and 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.

Positive Relationships

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

The Role of Parents/Guardians

We believe that all parents/carers have an important role to play in the education of their child. We recognise the role that parents/carers have played, and their future role, in educating the children is a crucial one:

We do this through:

- phone calls to nurseries the summer before starting Reception;
- an induction meeting for new parents/guardians during the term before their child starts school;
- children having the opportunity to spend time with the teacher in their new classrooms (three stay and play sessions) before starting school; if required, further follow-up visits or individual visits are arranged;
- 1:1 visits with children and parents at their homes prior to their starting Reception;
- 1:1 visits with children and parents at their homes prior to their starting Nursery;

- staggering the starting day for children throughout the first week so that the teacher can welcome each child individually into our school;
- sharing of achievements and learning with parents through online learning journey platform;
- termly celebration afternoons which allow parents to visit their child's class and to review their child's learning journey;
- encouraging parents/guardians to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns;
- formal meetings for parents/guardians each term at which the teacher and the parent/guardian discuss the child's progress.
- parents/guardians receive a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of the school year;
- the Home Reading Diary, parents/guardians can keep the teachers informed of reading progress at home;
- organising a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and home;
- inviting parents/guardians to a selection of workshops during the Autumn Term;
- encouraging parents/guardians to share their child's successes, contributing to the child's learning journey.

Learning and Development

In the Foundation Stage there are seven areas of learning and development of which three are "prime areas," and four "specific areas."

The prime areas are:

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

The specific areas are:

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

Through careful assessments and observations, including information provided by parents and other settings, children's development levels are assessed. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas. However, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child.

Each area of learning and development is implemented through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Play and active learning are essential parts children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own learning which is facilitated and extended by adults, and by taking part in active learning which is guided by adults.

“Play is essential for children’s development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals, and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play and learning that is guided by adults. Practitioners need to decide what they want children in their setting to learn, and the most effective ways to teach it. Practitioners must 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.

As children grow older and move into the reception year, there should be a greater focus on teaching the essential skills and knowledge in the specific areas of learning. This will help children to prepare for Key Stage 1.

(Early years foundation stage statutory framework 2025)

Planning and guided children’s activities will reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. We also believe pupil voice plays a significant role in the design of the curriculum at The Hermitage Schools and adapt our provision to reflect the children’s interests and motivations.

At The Hermitage Schools, we support children in using the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning. These are;

- **Playing and Exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go’;
- **Active Learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements; and
- **Creating and Thinking Critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things. (Taken from statutory framework for the EYFS 2025)

Observing, Assessment and Planning

- We use assessment information from the child’s previous setting and baseline assessment data in the Autumn term to support our early identification of learning priorities for each cohort.
- We make regular assessments of children’s learning throughout the year identifying, in accordance with curriculum guidance, age band attainment levels for each individual child for each of the seven areas of learning.
- Ongoing assessment takes the form of snapshot observations during children’s self-initiated learning times. Snapshot observations are recorded on our online learning journey platform. As many of the opportunities for observation take place during group learning children will appear in their peers’ Learning Journeys.
- Assessments and observations involve the teacher and other adults as appropriate. The team use the information gathered to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.
- During the final term in Reception, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, staff and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child’s knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for their next stage of school. The Profile includes on-going observation, all relevant records held by the setting, discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution.
- Each child’s level of development is assessed against the early learning goals. The profile indicates whether children are meeting expected levels of development (expected) or not yet reaching expected levels (‘emerging’). Year 1 teachers are given a copy of the Profile report together with a short commentary on each child’s skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning. This informs the dialogue between Reception and Year 1 teachers about each child’s stage of development and learning needs and assists with the planning of activities in Year 1.

The Learning Environment

At The Hermitage Schools, we plan an inside and outside learning environment that encourages a positive attitude to learning and that helps the children to develop in all seven areas of learning. We use resources and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. 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 their own decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning. We encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities and resources, as we believe that this encourages independent learning.

Welfare

“Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.”
(Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2025)

It is important to us that all children in the school are ‘safe’. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this 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. (See the schools’ Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy)

At The Hermitage Schools we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2022.

We understand that we are required to:

- Promote the welfare and safeguarding 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.

Health and Safety

At The Hermitage Schools there are clear procedures for assessing risk which includes procedures for keeping children safe during outings and for any aspects of the environment or provision that may require a further risk assessment. In addition to this, an annual risk assessment is conducted of the Foundation Stage learning environments, both indoors and outside. (See EYFS risk assessments).
Safer Eating Policy for Early Years

Safer Eating

Purpose

This section of the policy sets out procedures to ensure that all eating and drinking experiences in Early Years are safe, inclusive, and supportive of children's health and development. It aims to minimise risks of choking, allergic reactions, and unsafe eating behaviours.

Key Principles

- Children must be fully supervised at all times while eating or drinking.
- Staff must be aware of individual dietary requirements, allergies, and medical needs.
- Eating environments must promote calm, seated, and safe behaviour.
- Staff must model and encourage safe eating habits.

Supervision and Positioning

- Children must sit down while eating—no walking, running, or playing with food.
- Staff should be seated or positioned at children's level, actively observing.
- A minimum appropriate staff-to-child ratio must always be maintained.
- Staff should remain vigilant and avoid distractions (e.g., camera/device, unrelated tasks).

Food Preparation and Suitability

- All food provided must be age-appropriate and prepared safely.
- High-risk choking foods must be modified:
 - o Grapes and cherry tomatoes cut lengthways
 - o Hard fruits/vegetables cut into small pieces
 - o Sausages cut lengthways
- Avoid giving:
 - o Whole nuts (unless part of an approved allergy-safe plan)
 - o Hard sweets
 - o Large chunks of raw, hard foods

Allergy and Medical Management (alongside following the school policy)

- Staff must be familiar with:
 - o Allergy lists
 - o Individual Plans
- A no-sharing food from your plate rule must be followed.
- Any child with a known allergy must be:
 - o Closely monitored during eating
 - o Seated appropriately if required (e.g., near staff)
- Emergency medication (e.g. EpiPens) must be:
 - o Readily accessible
 - o Staff must be trained in its use

Safe Eating Behaviours

Staff must actively teach and reinforce:

- Chewing food thoroughly
- Taking small bites
- Not talking or laughing with a full mouth
- Drinking after swallowing food

- Using utensils safely and appropriately

Drinks and Hydration

- Children must only drink while still.
- Only appropriate drinks (e.g., water or milk) should be offered unless otherwise approved.
- Open cups should be used where developmentally appropriate, for example in the lunch hall.

Responding to Choking

- Staff must receive regular paediatric first aid training, including choking response.
- In the event of choking:
 - o Remain calm and act immediately
 - o Follow first aid procedures (back blows and chest thrusts as trained)
 - o Call for additional assistance
 - o Contact emergency services if required
 - o Inform parents/carers and record the incident

Hygiene and Food Safety

- Children and staff must wash hands before and after eating.
- Tables and eating areas must be cleaned before and after use.
- Food must be stored in line with school hygiene requirements.

Communication with Parents/Carers

- Parents must provide accurate and up-to-date information about allergies and dietary needs.
- Packed lunches must follow school food safety and allergy guidance.
- Concerns about eating behaviour or food intake should be shared appropriately.

Review

- Review records of any near miss incidents or accidents often to identify any patterns or common issues that need to be addressed.

Procedures

- Children wash their hands and collect their water bottles before snack time.
- The setting operates a rolling snack system.
- Member of staff prepares food, if necessary.
- Children independently choose their snack from the snack bowl and take it to a designated table.
- Children must remain seated while eating and drinking to ensure their safety and allow for close supervision.
- Staff supervise children throughout snack time to ensure safe eating practices.
- Children are encouraged to develop independence by self-selecting their food and managing their own snack routine.
- Children wash their hands after lunch or after eating snacks brought from home.

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/>

Sleep Provision

Our Nursery provides care for children aged 2–4 years and does not operate a designated sleep room or permanent sleep area, as children within this age range typically have reduced daytime sleep needs. However, we recognise that rest and sleep are an important aspect of children's wellbeing, and we follow each child's individual needs in line with the EYFS requirement to promote children's good health and well-being.

If a child becomes tired and requires sleep, staff will provide a safe, suitable, and supervised sleeping arrangement within the main environment. This will be risk assessed to ensure it is in accordance with safer sleep guidance and the setting's duty to maintain a safe environment at all times.

In line with safeguarding and welfare requirements:

- Sleeping children remain within sight and/or hearing of staff at all times
- Children are positioned safely, in accordance with safer sleep guidance
- Staff carry out regular checks at least every 10 minutes
- Checks include monitoring the child's breathing, colour, temperature, and comfort
- All checks are recorded and documented in a sleep monitoring record

We ensure that sleeping arrangements are:

- Clean, safe, and age-appropriate
- Free from hazards or inappropriate equipment
- Continuously supervised as part of staff's duty of care and safeguarding responsibilities

We work in partnership with parents to understand and support each child's individual sleep needs, and any specific requirements are discussed and agreed.