

Early Years Policy



This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment

Date approved:	Autumn 2026
Review period:	Annually
Next review date:	Autumn 2027
Committee Responsible:	FGB

Contents

1. Aims.....	3
2. Legislation.....	3
3. Structure of the EYFS	3
4. Curriculum	4
5. Assessment	7
6. Working with parents.....	7
7. Safeguarding and welfare procedures.....	7
8. Monitoring arrangements	7
Appendix 1. List of statutory policies and procedures for the EYFS.....	9

1. Aims

At St Peter's School we believe that a good Early Childhood Education is fundamental to the child's whole development.

A good, positive, enjoyable start to school is essential to children's learning. This policy refers to the Reception Class children aged 4 and 5 years old.

It is important to consider the child as a whole. Social, emotional, spiritual, physical, moral, intellectual, and cultural development is interrelated.

A positive learning environment is essential to a child's development, this can be created by adults and children in the child's life.

Future learning depends on the foundations of an early childhood education.

This policy aims to ensure:

That children access a broad, balanced and creative curriculum that gives them the full 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

Close partnership working between practitioners and parents and/or carers

Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

- to create a safe and caring environment for the children to learn in
- to provide opportunities for individual, group and whole class activities
- to provide a full and varied education for each child
- to develop the children's social, emotional, spiritual, physical, moral, intellectual and cultural experiences
- to provide a strong foundation for all future learning.

Pupils will be encouraged:

- to develop in all areas of learning
- to reach their potential in a positive learning environment
- to learn through first-hand experience
- to develop positive relationships with other children and adults.

2. Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, dated 13 July 2026 and effective from 1 September 2026.

3. Structure of the EYFS

The Early Years Team

The school's EYFS provision comprises its Reception class; the school does not provide nursery provision.

Our Reception team consists of an Early Years teacher who understands the needs of the young child and how best to create an environment to enable a love of learning, supported by experienced Teaching Assistants.

In the Reception Classroom, the team work together to provide a varied and meaningful education. Parent helpers are encouraged into the classroom to work with the children. In our small school the whole school including the Headteacher, other teachers and staff work together to support each other. This includes governors, lunchtime staff, and pupils when available.

Occasionally the services of additional members of the Early Years team are called upon. These may include the SENDCo, Education Psychologist, school nurse and doctor, health visitor, speech and

language therapist, occupational therapist and social workers.

All members of the Early Years team will be encouraged to share an understanding of the aims of Early Years education and be sensitive to the children's differing experiences.

Admissions and Pre School Links

Visits to local pre-schools and nurseries will be made by the Early Years team to meet the children who are joining the school. Children will visit the Reception Class, the term prior to their starting date for a story time session.

Parents/carers are invited to a welcome meeting in the term before their child is due to start in the Reception Class.

4. Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2026 statutory framework of the EYFS.

A Unique child - Each child develops in their own individual way. Each child is a capable, competent learner who will thrive in a safe, secure setting which allows them to be self-assured and confident learners. At St. Peter's C of E Infant School, we recognise that children are individuals, with individual needs and starting points, and that children learn at varying rates. Children's dispositions and attitudes to learning are influenced by the feedback of others. We use positive praise and encouragement, as well as rewards and assemblies to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Positive relationships – At St. Peter's C of E Infant School we recognise that role modelling and creating positive, secure relationships between children, children and teachers, teachers and parents, is key to children becoming confident, independent individuals. In our School we view parents as partners and aim to develop strong, secure relationships with them. These effective relationships will support each child throughout their school journey. With parental support we aim to focus on developing the whole child in a safe and secure environment whereby children feel empowered, strong and can become independent learners.

Enabling Environments – We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the child's development. We aim to create an attractive, stimulating, and interactive learning environment that is rich in purposeful resources. Through observations, focus activities, parent mornings for sharing of learning and parent/teacher meetings, we gain a greater understanding of the children's needs, interests, and stages of development. This informs our planning which allows us to have challenging but achievable activities whereby children extend their learning both indoors and outdoors.

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

Our EYFS Curriculum

- is at the heart of our learning journey approach
- is distinctive, innovative, and strategically planned
- is reviewed in the light of national developments, new thinking and research and
- introduces challenging, engaging, and real-life problems
- strives to encourage and develop a love of learning
- enables learning to happen within a child centred approach
- ensures resources and apparatus are available to support learning at every stage and in every area of the EYFS curriculum
- ensures all areas of learning are regarded with the same level of importance and are interlinked
- includes fundamental British values to teach children a sense of self and belonging, enabling them to learn and stay true to the values that make people good human beings
- ensures that children learn to live together peacefully, with each of them playing a valuable role in the multi-cultural world in which they live.

4.1 Planning

Staff plan effectively taking account of children's needs and interests. Effective planning means effective learning as it builds and extends on what children already know and can do. At St Peter's C of E Infant School, exciting and challenging activities are planned, informed by observations of children that have been made during adult focus sessions or during continuous provision, small group focus activities, parent input and one to one time. All staff in Early Years contribute to the planning process. In doing so, topics, individual interests, and group interests are considered, and this in turn ensures that all staff are aware of objectives to achieve.

Early Years plan on a weekly basis. This may change depending on whether there is a need to reflect on children's interests or spontaneous events that may occur. By being flexible, staff can give learning a context and real meaning.

Planning documents:

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| <u>Long term</u> | – involves the whole staff. |
| <u>Medium term</u> | – planned by Early Years teacher each term. |
| <u>Short term</u> | – detailed plans are drawn up by the Early Years teacher. |

4.2 Teaching

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Practitioners respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through purposeful, warm, and positive interactions.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning

The characteristics of effective learning are the way in which children engage with those around them and their environment, playing and exploring, active learning, creating, and thinking critically. Children use all characteristics of effective learning when playing and investigating. However, they tend to use one more than another and by observing children using their environment, responding to challenges, and engaging with peers and adults, we understand more about how they learn. This then allows us to plan activities which incorporate their preferred learning styles to extend learning.

Learning through Play

Early Years focuses on learning through context and play. At St Peter's C of E Infant school, activities are tailored to include topics, books or current celebrations that are relevant and interest the children. A range of activities are planned to reflect the EYFS principles and enable each child to reach their Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception in all the areas of learning. Children can access a rich indoor and outdoor learning space.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year 1.

Throughout the year, we celebrate national days of importance and religious festivals.

Phonics

Phonics is taught using 'Unlocking Letters and Sounds'. It uses a synthetic phonics approach to reading and writing, whereby children learn individual sounds and blend them together to read words or segment words into individual sounds to allow them to write the word. Children are taught daily using this method and progress quickly. Children are assessed every half-term.

By the end of Reception, it is expected that children are able to read and write simple sentences independently.

Reading

Reading is at the heart of our EYFS curriculum, with high quality core texts at the centre of each half term's planning. These are based on the chosen topic following the interests and needs of the children. To support reading and writing in Early Years children are sent home with a reading book that matches their phonic awareness and understanding. This is for parents to read at home with children and we encourage parents to read every day with their child for approximately 5-10 minutes. Children are read with once weekly on a one-to-one basis and the book will be changed once a week. All comments and progress are recorded in a reading record.

Maths

Maths is taught everyday through indoor and outdoor provision. In Reception we use 'Power Maths' and Pearson 'Abacus' and the sessions start on the first term, with 10 minutes sessions that will increase throughout the year. The sessions follow the Maths Mastery approach. This helps children develop a concrete understanding of maths concepts and enhances reasoning to support children to explain their working out. Assessment is continuous which allows children to move forward in their learning.

4.3 Learning Environment

Whilst a large amount of learning will take place in the Reception Classroom, surrounding areas are also very important in the development and learning of the children including home/school links. These areas include.

- school
- local community
- playground
- home
- school visits.
- outdoor play area

The Reception classroom area is carefully planned to ensure all areas are used to enable learning for every child.

The learning environments support and develop all 7 areas of learning and development. The environments are language rich and support children to learn new vocabulary and extend their linguistic skills.

The children have the choice of where they choose to learn.

All activities are based upon current assessment, and all have a main learning intention that can be accessed with and without adult support.

Our basic provision is linked to the age-related expectations of the cohort.

We encourage child-initiated activities and adapt our continuous provision accordingly. There are also adult led activities focused on the learning of the week in all areas.

We enhance our provision through objects, prompts, conversation and questioning.

5. Assessment

At St Peter's C of E Infant School ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes and it is carried out regularly to identify gaps in learning. Interventions are then implemented swiftly for targeted pupils to ensure progress is made. The assessment of each child is done daily in the Early Years in the form of observations, photographs, focused group work and independent learning. These observations form the foundation of planning next steps for individual children. They are kept as a record in each child's 'Learning Journey' to inform all stakeholders how children's learning is assessed. Parents/carers are given the opportunity to meet with the class teacher regularly.

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.

Please also see our Assessment Policy on the school website.

Reception Baseline Assessments will take place in the first half of the Autumn Term. The results will be used to plan the children's work.

Throughout the year assessment will be ongoing through individual targets for English, Maths and RE. Records will be kept on each child from the first day in the Reception Class.

Reception also complete and enter data for the NFER baseline assessment for national recording. Data is updated termly to ensure all children are on target and making at least good progress.

6. Working with parents

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. Once the child has started school parents are invited to help with activities in the classroom.

Members of the Early Years team are available at the beginning and end of the school day to discuss issues.

Information such as termly key skills, curriculum details and parents workshop information are regularly sent to parents.

Parent information evenings take place regularly and annual reports are sent to parents at the end of the Reception year.

Parents will be asked to sign a home/school contract at the beginning of the year outlining expectations of parents/carers and staff at school.

7. Safeguarding and welfare procedures

From 1 September 2026, the school has regard to the Department for Education's guidance on children's screen use in early years settings. Screen use in Reception is limited, carefully planned, age-appropriate and linked to a clear learning, communication or accessibility purpose. Children do not access screen content without adult oversight, and screens do not replace high-quality interaction, practical play, stories, physical activity or outdoor learning. Appropriate assistive technology for pupils with SEND is considered according to individual need.

The school's safeguarding arrangements set out how mobile phones, cameras and other electronic devices with imaging or sharing capabilities may be used. Digital content is checked before use; advertising, autoplay, algorithm-driven content and unsuitable artificial intelligence tools are avoided in Reception.

The school follows the safer-recruitment and suitability requirements in the EYFS framework and Keeping Children Safe in Education. Staff and regular volunteers working directly with Reception children must have the appropriate identity, reference, enhanced DBS and, where eligible, children's barred-list checks before starting. Occasional supervised helpers are managed through the school's

risk-assessment and volunteer procedures. Staff and prospective staff must disclose relevant information that may affect their suitability, subject to the legal rules on protected convictions and cautions.

Banned dog breeds within section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, including the XL Bully type, must not be kept or present on the school premises at any time, including where a dog has a certificate of exemption.

The detailed safer-sleep requirements for children under two are not applicable because the school provides Reception provision only. If a Reception pupil needs to rest or sleep because of a medical condition, disability or other identified need, an individual plan and risk assessment will specify safe supervision and care arrangements.

When Reception pupils attend school-run breakfast or after-school care, the safeguarding and welfare requirements in section 3 of the EYFS framework continue to apply. The learning, development and assessment requirements in sections 1 and 2 do not apply to wraparound-only care for children who normally attend Reception or an older class during the school day.

Further safeguarding and welfare procedures, including child protection, allegations against staff, whistleblowing, online safety, safer recruitment and staff conduct, are set out in the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Online Safety Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and associated procedures.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where statutory requirements change. The next scheduled review is Autumn 2027.

Appendix 1. List of statutory policies and procedures for the EYFS

This checklist lists the policies and procedures that we must have according to the EYFS statutory framework.

Statutory policy or procedure for the EYFS	Where can it be found?
Safeguarding policy and procedures	See child protection and safeguarding policy
Procedure for responding to illness	See health and safety policy
Administering medicines policy	See supporting pupils with medical conditions policy
Emergency evacuation procedure	See health and safety policy
Procedure for checking the identity of visitors	See child protection and safeguarding policy
Procedures for a parent failing to collect a child and for missing children	See child protection and safeguarding policy
Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints	See complaints policy
Children's screen use and use of mobile phones, cameras and electronic devices	See online safety policy, child protection and safeguarding policy and staff code of conduct
Safer recruitment, staff suitability and volunteer checks	See child protection and safeguarding policy, safer-recruitment procedures and single central record
Banned dog breeds and premises controls	See health and safety, visitor and lettings arrangements
Safeguarding and welfare during school-run wraparound care attended by Reception pupils	See child protection and safeguarding policy and wraparound care procedures