

Downsell

PRIMARY SCHOOL



Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Date Approved:	2 nd December 2025
Next Review:	Spring Term 2027



EYFS Policy

1. Introduction

'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.'

Source: Early Years Foundation Stage Profile - DfE September 2025

The Governing Body greatly values the importance that the EYFS and parental partnership plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. This policy links and has references to:

- Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage. T
- EYFS Development Matters guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education.

EYFS applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception Year. The school runs 'Stay and Play' sessions for 2 mornings per week for children aged birth to 3 years.

Nursery children start during the term after their 3rd birthday.

Reception children are allocated a place by the Local Authority and start in the September following their 4th birthday.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives.

2. Aims & Objectives

The school aims to support all children to become independent and collaborative learners. It will provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential.

The school will:

- provide a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging programme of learning and development for the children to experience as they begin their journey through school.
- provide a broad, balanced, relevant, challenging and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond and enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and ensure each child makes progress.
- develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children.
- provide a caring and inclusive learning environment which is sensitive to the requirements of the individual child including those who have additional needs.

The early-years' education offered is based on the following principles:

- Building on what children already know and can do;
- Ensuring that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
- A structure for learning with a range of starting points; content that matches the needs of young children and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- Providing a rich and stimulating environment;
- Acknowledging the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers.

3. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is based on four themes:

- Unique child
- Positive Relationships and Transition
- Enabling Environment
- Learning and Development

3.1 Unique Child

The school recognises that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. The school recognises that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; the school uses praise and encouragement, as well as celebration, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

The school gives its children every opportunity to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. The school does this by taking account of children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

At the Foundation Stage the school sets realistic and challenging expectations keyed to the needs of children and support them in achieving the Early Learning Goals by the end of the stage.

The school does this 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 learn effectively;
- Offering a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Employing resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able, of children with disabilities, of children from all social and cultural backgrounds, of children from different ethnic groups, and of those from diverse linguistic backgrounds;
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary (such as referrals to speech therapy) as necessary.
- Working closely with parents, carers and other outside agencies to ensure all children's needs are met and the school enables them to access the curriculum and make good progress.

Inclusion: The school values the diversity of individuals within the school and believe that every child matters. All children at Downsell Primary School are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, religion or abilities. The school values all its families.

The school actively promotes the UNICEF initiative 'Rights Respecting Schools' (RRS) based upon the United Nations Children's Charter. The Charter highlights children's rights across the world and responsibilities of all to support these rights.

3.2 Positive Relationships and Transition

The school recognises that children learn to be strong, confident and independent from being in secure relationships. The school aims to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners – the school recognises that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and the school values being partners with them in their child's education through:

- Arranging visits by school to all new children in their home setting or childcare provision prior to their starting school.
- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts school at Open Days and Induction meetings.
- Providing a Parents' Handbook of information about commencing EYFS at the school.
- Outlining the school's expectations in the Home-School agreement.
- Inviting parents/carers and children the opportunity to spend time in Nursery or Reception for induction visits before starting school.
- Providing an induction meeting for Reception parents/carers to meet with staff to discuss school routines, expectations and to answer any questions parents/carers may have.
- Operating an open door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns. Conversely, if Foundation staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will approach parents and carers to discuss them. • Daily meet and greet at the start of each session.
- Written contact through Home-School Reading Records, year group and school newsletters and Downsell Primary School website.
- Publishing the overarching theme of the term or half-term in the year group newsletter. • Inviting parents to attend informal meetings about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics or reading.
- Electronic Learning Journals via 'Tapestry' of their child's learning for parents to contribute to, look at and discuss with the staff and their child. This also provides evidence of children's progression across the EYFS.
- Offering three parent/teacher consultation meetings per year at which their child's progress is discussed.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of the school year.
- Parents are invited to a range of activities throughout the school year such as assemblies, workshops, Christmas productions and sports day etc.
- Offering opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school on a volunteer basis to assist with the children's learning e.g. hearing readers.
- Offering a range of activities, throughout the year, to encourage specific collaboration between child, school and parents e.g. Stay and Read and World Nursery Rhyme Week.

3.3 Enabling Environment

The school recognises that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development, where the children feel confident, secure and challenged.

The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision.

Play-based, active and challenging learning is paramount and children have opportunities to direct their own learning with planned opportunities provided by staff.

The school plans a motivating and interesting learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning and reflects the individual's interests, passions and abilities. The school uses materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. The school encourages the children to participate in adult led activities and make their own selection of the well planned activities on offer, as the school believes that this encourages independent learning. The school ensures that children's learning and development progression is a key factor across the environment. The school ensures that resources and spaces are safe to use and checked regularly.

3.4 Learning and Development

The EYFS Curriculum reflects the areas of learning and development identified in the Early Learning Goals.

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape educational provision in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and interconnected. Within each area of learning there are 'strands' to support and highlight children's overall development.

None of the areas of learning can be delivered in isolation from the others. Children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas. They enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas. They require a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities in order for most children to reach the levels required at the end of EYFS.

Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

4 The three Prime Areas with each strand are:

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)** – Self-Regulation (SR), Managing Self (MS), Building Relationships (BR)
- **Communication and Language (C&L)** – Listening, Attention and Understanding (LAU), Speaking (S)
- **Physical Development (PD)** – Gross Motor Skills (GMS), Fine Motor Skills (FMS)

The four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied are:

- **Literacy (L)** – Comprehension (C), Word Reading (WR), Writing (W)
- **Mathematics (M)** – Numbers (N), Numerical Patterns (NP)
- **Understanding the World (UW)** – Past and Present (PP), People, Culture and Communities (PCC), the Natural World (NW)

- **Expressive Arts and Design (EAD)** – Creating with Materials (CM), Being Imaginative and Expressive (IE)

Children's development levels are assessed on entry and as the year progresses, the balance shifts 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 of the prime areas gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents/carers and agree how to support the child.

Children's progress is checked and planned for during informal evaluations, weekly planning meetings and pupil progress meetings.

5 Characteristics of Effective Learning

The school ensures that its environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

5.1 Playing and exploring

All children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.

'Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development.'

Through play, children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, 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.

5.2 Active learning

All children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.

'Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.'

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

5.3 Creating and thinking critically

The school encourages and supports children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

'When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.'

Children should be given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children's thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning.

6 Planning

The EYFS Curriculum and Early Learning Goals provide the basis for planning throughout the Foundation Stage. The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Development Matters Statements and Early Learning Goals in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Early Years Outcomes DfE documents. The planning is based upon themes with discrete phonics, maths and reading directed teaching. Planning is also based upon different topics identified as vehicles of interest to deliver the children's next steps in learning. It responds to and challenges the needs, achievements and interests of the children. The short-term planning identifies staff input, vocabulary development, challenge and evaluations.

7 Observations

Foundation Stage staff use observations as the basis for planning. The process of learning is more important than the end product. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning. Relevant and significant observations are recorded on the school tracking system.

8 Assessment

As children enter EYFS, parents contribute to the children's learning assessment through the parent conference meeting. During the first half term, EYFS staff assesses the starting points of each child against the EYFS curriculum via quality interactions, well planned activities and smooth transitions. These initial assessments aid further planning to support children's learning and identify patterns of attainment within the cohort and groups of children.

The Foundation Stage Profile is the nationally employed assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the Foundation Stage, and to summarise their pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.

The school records each child's level of development against the 17 early Learning goals as Emerging, Developing or Secure. The school makes regular assessments of children's learning, and the school uses this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, photographic evidence and through planned activities. Assessment is completed regularly and involves both the teacher and other adults, as appropriate. The collection of assessment data in the Foundation Stage Profile is currently a statutory requirement.

The staff use 'Tapestry' and subject books to record examples of each child's work. These contain a wide range of evidence that the school shares with parents at each parental consultation meeting. The children's attainment is recorded on the school tracking system – SIMs.

Tracking grids are updated at the end of each half term, which feeds into the whole-school assessment and tracking process. The school records each child's level of development to be emerging, developing or secure in the Development Matters age-bands/ Early Learning Goals.

At the end of the final term in Reception the school sends a summary of these assessments to the LA for analysis. The child's next teacher uses this information to make plans for the year ahead. The school shares this information at parental consultation meetings and in the end-of-year report.

Parents receive an annual written report that offers brief comments on each child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs, and gives details of the child's general progress.

9 The Learning Environment

The Foundation Stage classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are specific areas where the children can be active, be quiet, creative etc. Children have access to both inside and outside area across the day; this has a positive effect on the children's development. Nursery and Reception all have their own outdoor areas. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and in different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. All areas of the curriculum can be explored outside.

10 Safeguarding & Welfare

'Children learn best when they are healthy, safe, secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the people caring for them.'

Source: Early Years Foundation Stage Profile - DfE September 2025

The school will:

- provide a setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence;
- safeguard children by being alert to any issues of concern in the child's life at home or elsewhere.
- promote good health;
- provide a First Aid box including appropriate supplies and a written (now recorded on Tapestry, which feeds direct to parent) record of any accidents, injuries, treatments or medication administered.
- manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs
- ensure the suitability of adults who have contact with children by having systems of staff declarations for any disqualifications from working with minors. Staff must also declare if they are taking any medication or substances that may affect their ability to care for children.
- ensure that all adults who look after the children have appropriate qualifications, training, support and supervision
- ensure at least 1 member of staff, who has a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate, is on the school premises and available at all times and must accompany children on outings.
- ensure each child has a key person allocated to ensure their care is tailored to meet their needs.
- ensure the school is compliant with staff ratios: Nursery = 1:13 (1QTS & 1 level 3 qualification minimum), Reception = 1:30 (1QTS)
- ensure Risk Assessments are completed as and when required. This must include any school trips.
- ensure arrangements are put in place to support children with Special Educational Needs. This will be completed by the class teacher, SENCO, parents and when appropriate with the involvement of the local authority.
- maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.
- ensure parents and carers must have access to the following information; how the EYFS is being delivered, the activities and experiences provided, daily routines, how parents can share learning at home, how SEND children are supported, food and drinks provided, all school policies and procedures, staff in the setting and their child's key person.
- Ensure the school has a written Complaints Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints.

They require a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities in order for most children to reach the levels required at the end of EYFS. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

11 Keeping Safe

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. The school aims to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. The school provided children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. The school encourages children to take risks and highlight the importance of keeping themselves safe by teaching them how to recognise and avoid hazards. The school aims to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. (See the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

12 Good Health

All children are provided with a healthy snack each day as well as being given milk in the Nursery. They have access to water at all times.

13 Intimate Care

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. (See the school's Intimate Care Policy)

14 Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of those working in EYFS in the school to follow the principles stated in this policy.

The Senior Leadership Team and EYFS Co-ordinator will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.