



Early Years Curriculum Policy

Respect - Excellence - Friendship

School values

Respect, Excellence, Friendship.

Determination, Inspiration, Courage and Equality

Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) covers the critical developmental period from birth to age 5. At Stowford School, we offer a single point of entry to the foundation classes, which takes place at the beginning of the school year. Children are welcomed into our nursery once they reach their third birthday.

The EYFS plays a vital role in preparing children for future schooling. The Early Learning Goals outline the expectations for most children by the end of the EYFS.

At Stowford, our EYFS programme is designed to create an engaging, stimulating, and exciting environment that sparks curiosity in young minds, aiming for every child to achieve their full potential.

In the early years, we place a strong emphasis on teaching human virtues, recognizing the importance of balancing academic success with personal development. We introduce our school values—Respect, Excellence, Friendship, Determination, Inspiration, Courage, and Equality—encouraging children to cultivate their own personal virtues. By fostering these qualities, we help them grow into young adults who are not only successful and motivated in their careers but also possess strong, steadfast character.

The Early Years Inspection Handbook (September 2024) emphasises that the aim of the EYFS curriculum should be *"appropriately ambitious,"* guiding children to *"develop, consolidate, and deepen their knowledge, understanding, and skills across all areas of learning."* Early childhood is crucial for laying the foundation that significantly influences a child's future. Cultural capital within the early years is about equipping children with the best possible start in life, preparing them with the knowledge and skills they need for future success. We firmly believe that the experiences and learning children undergo during these formative years will have a lasting impact on their lives, shaping their potential and lifelong learning journey.

Purpose and Aims

Every child deserves the best possible start in life, with the support needed to reach their full potential. The experiences children have during their early years significantly shape their future opportunities. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is crucial not only for its own sake but also as the foundation upon which children can build and fully utilise their abilities and talents as they grow.

We acknowledge the disruption caused by the pandemic, which may have affected our children's learning and development, leading to a broader range of starting points. As such, we recognise the importance of addressing these gaps and ensuring that all children receive the tailored support they need to thrive.

The primary aim of the EYFS is to help children develop key characteristics of learning—being engaged, motivated, and able to use creative and critical thinking. In everything we do, we are committed to embedding traditional British values and fostering a strong moral compass in our children, guiding them toward becoming well-rounded, responsible individuals.

These outcomes are achieved through a variety of targeted actions, including:

- **Setting Clear Standards:** Establishing high expectations for the learning, development, and care that all young children experience, ensuring a consistent and high-quality approach across our setting.
- **Promoting Equality and Inclusion:** Actively providing opportunities that support equality and anti-discriminatory practices, ensuring every child, regardless of background or circumstance, has access to the same high standard of education and care.
- **Identifying and Addressing Gaps:** Recognising and responding to any delays or gaps in learning and development that may have emerged due to the pandemic, ensuring timely and tailored interventions are put in place to support children's individual needs.
- **Fostering Strong Partnerships:** Building a collaborative framework for working closely with parents and carers, encouraging open communication, shared goals, and a unified approach to supporting each child's development.
- **Ensuring Consistency and Quality:** Committing to continuous improvement in the quality of provision and maintaining consistency in the delivery of our early years curriculum, ensuring all children receive the best possible learning experience.
- **Supporting Future Learning:** Creating a solid foundation for future academic and personal success by designing learning experiences that are tailored to meet the unique needs, interests, and developmental stages of each child.
- **Developing Executive Function:** Strategically focusing on promoting and developing executive function skills—such as memory, attention, and self-regulation—which are essential for both effective learning and overall well-being.

We firmly believe that for our children to feel safe, nurtured, loved, and supported, we must:

- Provide a thoughtfully planned, vibrant, and engaging environment where children can develop essential skills, attitudes, and understanding that will help them lead fulfilling lives and become confident, active members of a diverse, ever-changing society.
- Offer opportunities for each child to become a valued member of the school community, fostering a strong sense of self-image and self-esteem.
- Support the development of key learning skills—such as listening, speaking, concentration, persistence, and collaboration—through appropriate adult-guided play and interaction.
- Encourage a positive attitude towards learning by fostering curiosity, excitement, a willingness to take risks, and perseverance.

- Provide a broad and challenging learning experience for our children, both indoors and outdoors, ensuring a rich variety of opportunities for growth.
- Develop the intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual potential of every child, nurturing a well-rounded approach to their overall development.
- Support the independent growth of each child's unique characteristics, helping them build confidence in their individual strengths.
- Promote healthy growth through balanced nutrition, fresh air, and good hygiene practices.
- Celebrate successes as the starting point for further learning, recognising progress and effort.
- Build strong partnerships with all parents for the mutual benefit of children, parents, and staff, creating a collaborative learning environment.
- Establish effective connections with local feeder pre-schools, ensuring smooth transitions for children as they move through different stages of their learning journey.
- Provide opportunities for each child to explore and discover through verbal and non-verbal means—such as language, books, equipment, music, visits, meals, visual stimuli, mathematics, and play.
- Continuously assess and evaluate each child's development, ensuring that every child receives the support they need to progress and be ready for their next stage of learning.

Effective practice in the EYFS is built on the following themes:

- A Unique Child;
- Positive Relationships;
- Enabling Environments;
- Learning and Development.

Daily Routines

In the EYFS, we build on the knowledge and skills children have already acquired at home, while establishing a strong foundation for their future formal education. The environment we provide is secure, caring, and educational, offering children a grounding in the fundamentals of learning. We ensure that no child is excluded or disadvantaged, with a particular focus on developing strong partnerships with parents and encouraging regular feedback.

In the nursery and foundation stage, we provide a structured timetable that supports effective learning. For part-time nursery children, we ensure they participate in adult-led sessions every day they attend, ensuring consistency in the sequence of lessons taught. These child-initiated and adult-led activities are incorporated into the teacher's planning to ensure a well-rounded learning experience.

The structured timetable provides children with security and a sense of order, and we aim to lay the groundwork for a routine that increases their chances of leading a successful and fulfilling life as adults.

At Stowford, children are offered a balance between structured free play and formal, teacher-led activities. These activities are carefully planned and reflect the children's next steps in their learning journey. While children are encouraged to make choices in their play, their decisions are monitored and, when necessary, guided to ensure a well-rounded development. This balance prepares children for

future decision-making as they grow older. The choices they make are drawn from well-planned, purposeful, and progressive activities that cater to their individual needs and abilities.

In both the nursery and foundation setting, children are taught key subjects daily, including phonics, maths, storytelling/reading, and fine motor skills. These sessions are supported by our continuous provision, which offers opportunities for children to consolidate and build on their learning each day. Additionally, we include regular sessions focused on Personal, Social, and Emotional Development (PSED), as well as language and communication skills, through activities such as snack time, circle time, and 'news of the day.'

Key Curriculum Aims

We aim to harness each child's natural curiosity and prior knowledge to structure play experiences that foster their development. During their time in the Early Years, children will enhance their ability to make choices, complete tasks, concentrate for longer periods, cooperate with their peers, improve their physical skills, and begin developing early reading, writing, and mathematical abilities.

We promote growth and learning across all areas of the children's development—intellectual, physical, moral, spiritual, and social. This is achieved in an environment where high expectations are set to help children realise their full potential. Our staff work collaboratively as a team to ensure that every child can achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the foundation stage. These goals form the foundation for the stimulating activities offered as part of our structured programme, designed to nurture a love of learning and inspire children to achieve their personal goals in life.

All children in the Early Years have equal access to the opportunities we provide, regardless of their race, gender, religious or cultural beliefs, family background, home language, or individual learning abilities or disabilities.

Teaching and learning style

At this stage, children are building a framework for learning and life. They are developing key attitudes towards learning, exploring learning processes, and acquiring both core knowledge and language skills.

Our planning is informed initially by information provided by parents and other settings, followed by our own observations. This helps shape the learning environment to stimulate and motivate each child, allowing them to progress at their own pace.

Our curriculum is child-centred, focusing on the development of each child in all areas—socially, emotionally, physically, aesthetically, morally, and cognitively. We recognise that, for young children, their need for learning experiences is inseparable from their need for care and emotional support.

Children learn through their senses and active interaction with their environment. There is a strong emphasis on play-based and outdoor learning, combined with structured play, first-hand experiences, and some directed teaching. We consider the development of the whole child to be of utmost importance.

We encourage active exploration and autonomy, providing opportunities for investigation and discovery in both indoor and outdoor settings. Adults play a crucial role in enriching and extending the children's learning potential. A wide range of resources is available to stimulate interest and nurture curiosity. We design a learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that fosters a positive attitude towards learning. The resources we use reflect both the community the children come from and the wider world. We encourage children to select resources and make choices to support independent learning.

Children are actively encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning experiences, fostering independence and self-confidence.

Inclusion in the Early Years

We believe that every child matters. We give all our children the opportunity to achieve their best by considering their individual life experiences when planning for their learning (please refer to our inclusion policy).

In the EYFS, we set realistic and challenging expectations tailored to the needs of our children, ensuring that most children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of this stage. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of all children, including those with special educational needs, more able children, those with disabilities, children from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, children from various ethnic groups, and those with different linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build on and extend the children's knowledge, experiences, and interests, while also developing their self-esteem and confidence.
- Using a variety of teaching strategies that are responsive to the children's learning needs.
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children, helping them learn effectively.
- Offering a safe and supportive learning environment where the contributions of all children are valued.
- Planning challenging activities for children whose abilities and understanding exceed their current language and communication skills.
- Continuously monitoring children's progress, providing support and interventions as needed to ensure all children stay on track.

The EYFS curriculum

The Early Years Profile summarises and describes children's attainment to the end of the EYFS. It is based on ongoing observations and assessment in the three Prime Areas and four Specific Areas of learning, and the three Learning Characteristics: (see Early Years Curriculum Statement)

The Prime Areas of Learning:

- Communication and Language (CL);
- Physical Development (PD);
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED).

The Specific Areas of Learning:

- Literacy (L);
- Maths (M);
- Understanding the World (UTW);
- Expressive Arts and Design (EAD).

The Characteristics of Learning:

- Playing and Exploring;
- Active Learning;
- Creating and Thinking Critically.

Our curriculum for the EYFS reflects the areas of learning identified in the 17 Early Learning Goals. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas.

The Early Learning Goals form part of the National Curriculum, and are in line with the objectives stated in the EYFS Guidance. Accordingly, from the beginning of the foundation year, our children have daily literacy, phonics and mathematics lessons. Teachers address these requirements in a flexible way at first, but by the end of the EYFS, as part of the smooth transition to Key Stage 1, they put these into regular operation. We also begin to introduce daily Guided Reading sessions when the children are ready.

Development Matters and the Early Learning Goals provide the basis for planning throughout the EYFS. Our medium-term planning is completed half termly and linked to topics. These plans identify the intended learning, with outcomes, and are flexible and can be adapted to match the children's interests and needs.

Assessment

At the beginning of the foundation stage, we complete the statutory 'RBA' (Reception Baseline Assessment) alongside our own adapted 'Development Matters' assessment tool. This enables teachers to assess children's progress throughout the EYFS and track their journey towards achieving the Early Learning Goals by the end of the foundation stage. Our assessment covers each of the seven areas of learning outlined in the EYFS curriculum guidance.

We make regular assessments of children's learning using the scales provided in the EYFS framework, and use this information to ensure that future planning addresses the identified needs of each child. Assessment in the EYFS is ongoing, focusing on identifying the next steps in children's learning and providing opportunities to address any gaps, ensuring they are well-prepared for their next stage of development.

Each child has a learning journal that records samples of their work and development over the year. In the nursery, parents can also access their child's learning and development through an electronic portfolio on 'Class Dojo', in addition to their learning journal.

At the end of the year, parents receive a formal report which provides detailed feedback on their child's attainment and progress in each area of learning, as well as in the Characteristics of Effective Learning. The report highlights the child's strengths and areas for development, and offers an overview of their general progress throughout the year.

The role of parents

We believe that all parents play a crucial role in their child's education. We recognise and value the contributions parents make, both in the past and in the future, towards their child's learning. We foster this partnership through:

- Engaging in conversations with parents about their child before they start school.
- Providing opportunities for children to spend time with their class prior to starting school.
- Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child begins.
- Offering regular opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress.
- Encouraging parents to use the home-school diary to inform teachers of any issues that may affect their child's behaviour or well-being.
- Promoting open communication, encouraging parents to speak with the child's teacher if they have any concerns.
- Organising a variety of activities throughout the year to encourage collaboration between the child, school, and parents.
- Additionally, we provide formal opportunities for parents to meet with the teacher and key workers to discuss their child's progress in private.

Resources

We carefully plan a learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that fosters a positive attitude towards learning. The materials and resources we use reflect both the local community and the wider world. We encourage children to make their own choices from the activities available, as we believe this promotes independent learning and decision-making.

Readiness for the Next Stage in Education

At Stowford, children experience a smooth and seamless transition from Nursery to Foundation and beyond. Effective communication and collaboration ensure that children leave the Early Years with a solid foundation on which to build further learning. We provide children with time to reflect on their learning and encourage them to use their own voice, empowering them to become more confident and independent learners.

Assessment begins in Nursery and continues throughout the Foundation Stage. The statutory 'RBA' is conducted within the first six weeks of Foundation, alongside additional baseline observations. These are then used to inform future planning and create a personalised, unique profile of each child. By closely monitoring children's experiences and progress each term, we can clearly demonstrate their learning and how they are developing across all seven areas of the Early Years curriculum.

At the end of the Early Years, children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). Most children will achieve a good level of development and be well-prepared for the transition to Year 1.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years.

Date Policy due for review: March 2026