

The Federation of Middleham Church of England (VA) Junior School and Spennithorne Church of England (VA) Infant school



Early Years Foundation Stage policy

Person responsible for this policy & its implementation	Headteacher
Review Frequency	Annually
Date approved	September 2026
Date of next review	September 2027
Purpose	To deliver a high-quality, inclusive Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum that supports every child's learning, development and transition to Year 1.
Links with other policies	EYFS Safeguarding and Welfare Child Protection and Safeguarding SEND Teaching and Learning Behaviour Anti-bullying Health and Safety

At The Federation of Middleham CE (VA) Junior School and Spennithorne CE (VA) Infant Schools, we recognise that the Early Years Foundation Stage is a vital part of a child's education.

We aim to give every child the best possible start to school through a welcoming, nurturing and stimulating environment where children feel safe, happy and confident and develop a love of learning.

Our Early Years provision reflects our Federation vision of providing **a place to Learn, Love and Grow**.

We value each child as a unique individual. Children arrive at school with different experiences, interests, strengths and needs, and we build on these starting points in partnership with parents and carers.

Principles of the EYFS

Our practice is guided by the four overarching principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

A Unique Child

Every child is unique and develops at their own rate. We aim to develop confident, resilient and capable learners who feel valued and included.

Positive Relationships

Children learn through warm, positive relationships. Adults support children to develop confidence, independence, friendships and the ability to communicate and manage their emotions.

Enabling Environments

Our indoor and outdoor environments are carefully organised to encourage independence, curiosity, creativity, exploration and purposeful learning.

Learning and Development

Children learn in different ways. Our provision combines child-initiated learning, continuous provision, adult interaction and direct teaching.

Aims

Through our EYFS provision, we aim to:

- give every child a happy and positive start to school;
- provide a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum;
- build on what children already know and can do;
- develop communication, language and vocabulary across the curriculum;
- encourage curiosity, independence, creativity and problem solving;
- develop confidence, resilience and positive relationships;
- provide an appropriate balance of play and adult-led teaching;
- ensure that all children can participate, achieve and make progress;
- develop strong partnerships with parents and carers;
- prepare children successfully for the next stage of their education

Statutory Framework

Our Early Years provision follows the **Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage for group and school-based providers**, effective from September 2026.

We also have regard to **Development Matters**, the Reception Baseline Assessment arrangements, the EYFS Profile requirements, the SEND Code of Practice and other relevant statutory guidance.

This policy should be read alongside other Federation policies, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection, SEND, behaviour, equality, attendance, health and safety, medical needs, educational visits and online safety.

The EYFS Curriculum

Our curriculum provides children with the knowledge, skills, understanding and experiences they need to develop secure foundations for future learning.

The EYFS consists of seven areas of learning and development.

Prime Areas

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

Specific Areas

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

All seven areas are important and interconnected.

Our curriculum is carefully sequenced across all seven areas. Separate progression documents identify the knowledge, skills and vocabulary we want children to develop throughout Reception. Additional progression documents support **Oracy and Computing**.

These progression documents help staff to build learning across the year while allowing teaching and provision to respond to the needs, interests and experiences of each cohort.

The Early Learning Goals support assessment at the end of Reception. They do not form the curriculum or limit the breadth of experiences offered to children.

Broad themes and topics provide meaningful contexts for learning. Children explore a wide range of subjects and experiences, including animals, plants, seasonal change and the natural world.

High-quality stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction texts are used throughout the curriculum to develop children's language, knowledge, imagination and enjoyment of reading.

Teaching and Learning

Children learn through a balance of play, exploration, adult interaction and direct teaching.

Play allows children to investigate, practise skills, communicate, solve problems and make sense of the world around them. Children are given time to develop their own ideas and interests while adults know when to observe, join in or extend learning.

Teaching takes place through child-initiated and adult-supported play, continuous provision, modelling, questioning, small-group activities, whole-class teaching, stories, conversations and carefully planned practical experiences.

Adults use their knowledge of each child to introduce new vocabulary, model skills, make connections with previous learning and deepen children's thinking.

As children develop through Reception, the balance of provision responds to their increasing knowledge, confidence and readiness for more structured learning while retaining the importance of play and active learning.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

We consider the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning throughout our provision.

Playing and Exploring

Children investigate, experience things and are encouraged to 'have a go'.

Active Learning

Children concentrate, persevere when things are difficult and take pride in their achievements.

Creating and Thinking Critically

Children develop their own ideas, make connections and find different ways of solving problems.

These characteristics support children in becoming confident, motivated and independent learners.

Continuous Provision

Continuous provision is the range of carefully selected resources and learning opportunities available to children throughout the day.

It enables children to make choices, explore, revisit previous learning, practise new skills, collaborate with others and develop their own ideas.

Resources are accessible wherever possible so that children can become increasingly independent.

Adults enhance continuous provision through purposeful interaction, modelling, conversation and questioning, using opportunities within children's play to extend learning.

Outdoor Learning

Outdoor learning is an important part of our EYFS provision and supports all seven areas of learning.

Children have regular opportunities to develop physical skills, investigate, solve problems, create, collaborate and explore the natural environment.

Provision may include large-scale construction, imaginative play, gardening and growing, observing plants and animals, physical challenge and opportunities to apply literacy and mathematics.

Focused teaching and child-initiated learning take place both indoors and outdoors.

Communication and Language

Communication and language underpin learning across the curriculum.

Adults model effective spoken language, introduce and revisit vocabulary and encourage children to talk about their experiences, ideas and learning.

Children regularly take part in conversations, listen to stories, rhymes and poems, ask and answer questions, explain their ideas and encounter new vocabulary through books and first-hand experiences.

Oracy progression is planned alongside the statutory areas of learning to support children's confidence in speaking, listening and communicating.

Early Reading, Phonics, Spelling and Handwriting

Reading is at the heart of our curriculum.

The Federation follows **Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised**, a validated systematic synthetic phonics programme.

Children receive a daily phonics lesson. From the middle of the Autumn term, spelling is taught at the end of each daily phonics session.

Children take part in **three small-group reading sessions each week** following the Little Wandle approach. These sessions develop decoding, prosody and comprehension.

Reading books are carefully matched to children's phonic knowledge so that children can develop accuracy, fluency and confidence.

Handwriting is taught through separate sessions using the **Little Wandle Handwriting** programme, supporting correct letter formation and the development of fluent handwriting.

Reading for Pleasure and Story Time

Children are read to by an adult every day.

A selection of high-quality books is made available and children use a **voting system** to choose the daily story.

Story time helps children develop enjoyment of books, listening skills, vocabulary and comprehension. Children are encouraged to talk about stories, characters and events, revisit familiar texts and join in with repeated language, rhymes and phrases.

Mathematics

Children develop mathematical understanding through direct teaching, practical experiences, mathematical talk and opportunities within continuous provision.

Children develop secure understanding of number, counting, subitising, numerical patterns, shape, space, measure and pattern.

Practical resources and meaningful contexts help children develop mathematical vocabulary, reasoning and a secure understanding of mathematical concepts.

Inclusion and SEND

We recognise that every child is unique and that children enter Reception with different experiences, strengths and needs.

We have high expectations for all children and are committed to equality of opportunity. Provision takes account of children's individual starting points, including children with SEND, children who are disadvantaged and children who experience other barriers to learning or wellbeing.

Where appropriate, teaching, resources, adult support and provision are adapted to enable children to participate successfully.

Where a child may have special educational needs or a disability, staff work closely with the school's SENDCo, parents and carers and, where appropriate, external professionals.

Children with English as an Additional Language are supported through play, conversation, stories, modelling and visual support. We work with parents and carers to understand the child's use of their home language and, where concerns arise, consider both their home language and developing English before identifying any additional support.

Where concerns arise about a child's progress or development, these are discussed with parents and carers and appropriate support is agreed.

Our aim is for every child to participate fully in school life and make the best possible progress from their starting point.

Planning

Planning is informed by the statutory EYFS educational programmes, our progression documents, children's previous learning, assessment, needs and interests.

Planning provides clear curriculum direction while allowing staff to respond to children's interests and unexpected learning opportunities.

Teachers use their professional judgement to decide when children will benefit from direct teaching and when learning can be developed through play, provision and adult interaction.

Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning.

The most important source of assessment information is practitioners' day-to-day knowledge of each child. Through teaching, observation, interaction and children's work, staff build a picture of what children know, understand and can do.

Each child's progress is considered individually across the curriculum. Staff identify specific next steps and use these to inform teaching, adult interaction, provision and, where appropriate, targeted support.

Assessment is used to identify progress and recognise where additional support or challenge may be needed.

We do not seek to collect unnecessary evidence of every learning experience. Professional knowledge of the child and meaningful interaction with children remain central to assessment.

Reception Baseline Assessment

The statutory Reception Baseline Assessment is completed within the required period after children start Reception.

It provides an on-entry assessment and is separate from our ongoing assessment of children's learning.

EYFS Profile

At the end of Reception, each child is assessed against the **17 Early Learning Goals**.

Children are assessed as either:

- meeting the expected level of development; or
- not yet reaching the expected level of development (emerging).

The EYFS Profile is completed within the statutory timescale and the outcomes are shared with parents and carers.

Information from the Profile, alongside practitioners' wider knowledge of the child, is shared with the Year 1 teacher to support continuity in learning.

Key Person

The **Reception Class Teacher is the key person** for children in Reception.

The key person helps children settle into school, develops strong relationships with children and their families and maintains an overview of each child's learning, development and wellbeing.

The Teaching Assistant works closely with the Class Teacher and meets with them regularly to discuss children's progress, individual needs and next steps. This helps ensure that adults working within the EYFS have a shared understanding of the children and can support their learning consistently.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

We recognise parents and carers as children's first and most enduring educators.

We aim to establish open and positive relationships with families from the point at which children begin their transition into school.

Parents and carers are encouraged to share information about their child, celebrate achievements from home and speak to staff about questions or concerns.

Communication takes place through day-to-day conversations, ClassDojo, parent meetings, reports and other school communication.

We encourage families to support reading and phonics at home and work with us to support children's learning and development.

Sharing Learning through ClassDojo

We use **ClassDojo** to strengthen communication between home and school.

Selected individual '**WOW Moments**', photographs and updates about whole-class learning, activities and events are shared with parents and carers.

Parents can comment and can also send photographs and information about learning, interests and achievements from home. This helps staff build a broader understanding of children's experiences and provides opportunities for families and school to celebrate learning together.

ClassDojo complements day-to-day assessment; it is not intended to provide a record of every learning experience.

Transition into Reception

Starting school is an important transition for children and their families.

We work with parents, carers, nurseries, pre-schools and other early years providers to gather information and help children become familiar with school before they start.

Throughout the year, we provide a number of **stay-and-play sessions**, inviting parents, carers and pre-school children into the Reception classroom to experience our Early Years setting.

These sessions allow children to become familiar with the environment, staff and routines while giving families the opportunity to ask questions and begin building relationships with the school.

Transition arrangements are adapted where necessary to meet individual children's needs, particularly where additional support may be required.

Transition to Year 1

Transition from Reception into Year 1 is carefully planned.

Throughout Reception, children develop the independence, confidence, knowledge and learning behaviours needed for the next stage of education.

Reception and Year 1 staff work together to ensure continuity. Information about children's achievements, needs and EYFS Profile outcomes is shared to support future teaching.

Where Reception children are taught alongside Year 1 pupils, teaching, routines and provision are organised to meet the distinct needs of both age groups.

Reception children continue to have full access to an appropriate EYFS curriculum, including continuous provision, play, adult interaction and carefully planned direct teaching. The organisation of the mixed-age class ensures that Reception children have the time, space and teaching opportunities needed to develop secure foundations across all seven areas of learning.

Enrichment and First-Hand Experiences

We value meaningful first-hand experiences that develop children's knowledge and bring learning to life.

These may include visitors, local visits, educational visits, cooking, gardening, practical investigations, community links and opportunities to explore animals, plants and the natural environment.

Experiences are linked to children's learning and provide opportunities to develop vocabulary, knowledge and understanding.

Digital Learning

Technology is used where it has a clear educational purpose and enhances children's learning.

Children develop an age-appropriate understanding of technology and how digital devices can be used safely and responsibly.

Our Computing progression supports children's developing knowledge and skills, while digital technology complements rather than replaces active, practical, social and play-based learning.

Safeguarding and Welfare

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure and have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.

The Federation meets the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the statutory EYFS framework.

Detailed procedures are contained within the Federation's relevant whole-school policies and the separate **EYFS Safeguarding and Welfare Policy**.

Role of the EYFS Leader

The EYFS Leader is responsible for supporting the quality and development of Early Years provision across the Federation.

This includes:

- promoting high-quality teaching and learning;
- supporting curriculum development and progression;
- monitoring provision and children's progress;
- supporting assessment and moderation;
- developing the learning environment;
- identifying priorities for improvement;
- supporting staff development;
- keeping up to date with developments in Early Years education;
- supporting effective transition into Reception and Year 1.

Monitoring and Accountability

All staff working within the EYFS are responsible for following the principles and expectations set out in this policy.

The **Executive Headteacher, Mrs Helen Dudman**, and Governors have overall responsibility for ensuring that the Federation fulfils its statutory responsibilities for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated when necessary to reflect changes to statutory requirements, guidance or the Federation's Early Years provision.

Policy approved: _____

Review date: _____

Chair of Governors: _____

Executive Headteacher: Mrs Helen Dudman