



Hilltop First School and Foundation Stage Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

SLT responsibility	LB
Reviewed by:	LB
Date:	09.11.2021
Approved by:	FGB
Date:	30 November 2021
Review frequency:	As required
Next review date:	November 2024

**Hilltop First School and Foundation Stage
Early Years Foundation Stage Policy**

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Introduction

At Hilltop First School Primary School, we intend for each child to have a happy and positive start to their school life, establishing solid foundations on which to foster a deep, lifelong love of learning.

We aim to develop a stimulating, engaging and challenging learning environment and curriculum, which promotes curiosity, kindness and reflection and encourages independence so that every child reaches their full potential. We work with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children's learning.

Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the range of knowledge and skills needed to progress successfully through school and life.
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.
- A close partnership between practitioners and parents/carers.
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the [Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#) that applies from September 2021.

Its overarching principles shape our practice in the early years::

- The unique and capable child
- Positive relationships
- Enabling environments
- Strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers
- The importance of learning and development

Structure of the EYFS

At Hilltop First School, we have a Nursery class with 26 places in each of the morning and afternoon sessions. We are able to offer full time places through the 30 hour free entitlement. Where families are not eligible for this funding, they may choose to pay for additional hours. The Nursery class is supported by a teacher and a nursery nurse.

We have a Reception intake of 45 children split into two Reception classes each supported by a teacher and at least one teaching assistant.

Our Nursery and Reception classes share many topic links and children in the Nursery will spend time in the Reception learning environment towards the end of the summer term.

Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2021 statutory framework for the EYFS. The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are inter-connected. At Hilltop, we strongly believe the children should learn through their play as they grow and develop within each of these 7 curriculum areas. Three of the curriculum 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
- Expressive arts and design

Alongside these 7 curriculum areas, we aim to support children in developing the characteristics of effective learning and British Values. The characteristics of effective learning form the foundation of lifelong learning:

- 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
- Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

At Hilltop First School, we reflect on these characteristics of effective learning with the children through our Learning Friends:

- **Bee:** collaborative learning and teamwork
- **Butterfly:** Attention to detail and accuracy
- **Cat:** Curiosity and asking questioning
- **Elephant:** Remembering and using facts and information
- **Pegasus:** Imagination and Creativity
- **Spider:** linking new concepts to prior learning
- **Tortoise:** Perseverance, practise and resilience

We strongly believe that all children, including those identified as having special educational needs have an entitlement to a broad, balanced and creative curriculum which is accessible to them. We endeavour to achieve maximum inclusion for all pupils whilst meeting their individual needs. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff plan carefully to meet their needs, working closely with the SENCO and where appropriate services from other agencies (see SEN policy).

Play

Learning through play underpins our approach to teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage. We embrace the fact that young children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them to learn. Play gives our pupils the opportunity to pursue their own interest, inspire those around them and consolidate their understanding and skills. They learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. Our adults take an active role in child-initiated play through observing, modelling and questioning. They teach and extend play whilst developing skills and language. We understand that outdoor play is of equal importance to indoor play and that the outdoor classroom offers children 'bigger', 'louder' and 'messier' experiences. We therefore aim to offer free flow access to our outdoor learning areas throughout the school day.

Planning

We follow a two year topic rotation across both Nursery and Reception. The topics offer learning opportunities linked to real-life experiences or imaginative contexts. Activities each week are broadly based around a focus text linked to the whole term topic. Fiction and non-fiction texts introduce vocabulary, story language and

starting points for conversation and wonder. Alongside our pre-planned topics, staff will respond to pupils' interests and questions by providing opportunities for curiosity and further investigation.

All members of the EYFS staff team are involved in weekly planning. The team follow a broad map of knowledge and skills to be introduced and practised across the terms. These will be woven into weekly activities alongside flexible learning opportunities which allow children to determine their own direction of play or exploration. The learning environment and resources are evaluated and reviewed weekly and activities may be carried over or adapted from one week to the next according to the children's interests or questions.

During 'free flow' times, staff observe pupils and join them in their play and discovery, challenging and extending their knowledge and understanding through well planning questions and modelling. Through ongoing observation and questioning, staff are able to monitor pupils' individual progress and introduce both planned and 'in the moment' opportunities for moving them on.

Reception Teaching

Whole class Teaching

Any whole class adult-directed learning takes place in short, active carpet sessions.

- **Phonics**

We follow the Letterland phonics programme at Hilltop. Pupils in Nursery practise auditory processing skills through the exploration of environmental sounds. Phonological awareness is developed with games and rhymes throughout the school day. From the start of the spring term, pupils begin daily phonics lessons. They are introduced to the Letterland characters and corresponding phonemes in alphabetical order. Attention is drawn to the initial sounds in words through activities involving alliteration.

Pupils in Reception have two short whole class phonic lessons each day. Lessons are fun, fast-paced and multi-sensory. Children's reading books are matched to the programme. We recognise that pupils starting Hilltop in Reception may not have been exposed to Letterland. During the first half term we complete the *Fast Track* programme which recaps all single sounds in isolation. The full Letterland programme begins from half term onwards.

Staff strive to create a language rich environment and children enjoy listening to multiple stories during the school day. Familiar well-loved stories and new texts are repeated frequently, exposing the pupils to new vocabulary and language patterns as well providing opportunities to join in with repeated refrains.

- **Maths**

In addition to weekly small group learning in the Maths zone, classes will practise and explore maths knowledge daily through rote counting, estimating, shared online games and number rhymes.

- **Stories and Rhymes**

Staff read stories to the class on at least two occasions each day. These will include the focus texts linked to the topics and books from the classroom or main school library. A mix of fiction and nonfiction will be chosen. Whole classes are encouraged to join in daily songs and rhymes.

Group Time

During the morning, Reception pupils are split into 4 activity groups. These are not attainment related although staff will take into account social confidence and levels of language and communication development. Each of the groups will spend part of the morning in one of our activity zones focussed around specific areas of the curriculum:

- The language and communication zone
- The Maths zone
- The Creative zone
- The outside classroom

Groups rotate through the zones across each week. The individual learning environments are planned and resourced to promote purposeful play. Children will be called either individually or in pairs to join the adult in engaging in a task or challenge. These adult lead instructional activities are intended to model new skills, introduce new concepts or practise tasks that the child is not quite ready to do independently.

By spending some time across the week in each learning environment, children become more open to engaging in all activities and 'having a go' rather than continually choosing resources or types of play with which they feel safe. The smaller groups of no more than 12 pupils allow lots of opportunities for talking resulting in increased verbal interaction between children as they explore, play and solve problems alongside each other.

Group times allow all staff to work directly with every child. As a result the whole team are able to contribute to conversations around pupil progress and end of year attainment judgements.

Free Flow

Reception children enjoy child-initiated play each afternoon. During their free-flow times, the children move between both the indoor classrooms and outdoor area. Pupils continue to access the resources available during the morning group times and are encouraged to independently repeat what they might have been doing with an adult earlier. When a child takes something they have learned during the adult directed activities in the mornings and introduces it into their play later in the day, it shows that the learning has been embedded.

Staff work alongside the children to observe, challenge or support their learning as appropriate. Staff are aware of the need to be flexible in order to respond to unplanned events in which the children show interest.

Nursery Teaching

Nursery children will spend a short amount of *circle time* on the carpet as a whole group at the start of each session. During this time the adults may read a story, engage the children in songs and rhymes or introduce/review visual props which might be used in small group teaching at other times.

For most of the session, the children may move freely between the indoor and outdoor learning environments engaging in self-directed play and exploration. Adults observe the children and engage with them, modelling language and skills in the child chosen activity. At times adults will encourage individual or small groups of children to join them in adult led tasks or play linked to one or more of the Areas of Learning.

Assessment

At Hilltop, we believe that every child deserves the best learning environment and support to be successful. Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know. As such, it assists staff in determining the most effective next steps for each pupil. Children who may struggle in their early learning are not identified as 'low ability'. We do not know what their potential might be. Every child can make progress with the right support.

Nursery

Informal assessment is carried out across the day as staff observe and interact with the children. The non-statutory Development Matters document describes pathways of children's development in broad ages and stages. The observation checkpoints within the document help staff to notice whether a child may be at risk of falling behind. By monitoring a child's progress closely, staff can make the right decisions about appropriate help or challenge.

End of year Nursery reports will describe a pupils' level of development within each of the Prime Areas as meeting or working towards age related expectations.

Reception

Teachers administer the DfE Reception Baseline assessment within the first six weeks of pupils starting in Reception. This is only completed once the individual child has settled into school and feels secure in the setting. These assessments are carried out on an individual basis and will be presented as a series of low-stress games or fun activities.

Ongoing informal assessments are carried out as an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of engagement, achievement, interests and social interaction. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels (emerging)

The profile reflects ongoing observations, and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child. The profile is moderated internally and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.

Working with Parents

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong and respectful partnership between practitioners and parents/carers. This includes listening regularly to them and giving clear information about their children's progress. We encourage parents/carers to support their child's learning and development at home and will offer advice and strategies throughout the year.

To develop this communication between home and school we will:

- Provide information about the school and the Early Years for parents/carers prior to their child starting at Hilltop
- Arrange, where possible, visits by the teacher and teaching assistant to all children in their home setting prior to them starting school
- Offer a curriculum evening during the autumn term to share information around the curriculum and teaching and learning in Reception
- Operate an open door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns
- Immediately approach parents and carers to discuss any emerging concerns about a child's learning or development
- Share photographs and comments about children's learning and play via Tapestry and invite parents / carers to do likewise
- Offer parent workshops about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics or reading
- Keep parents/carers updated with what pupils are being taught through the Learning Update each half term
- Invite parents / carers to join in weekly Song and Rhyme sessions at drop off time
- Invite parents to a range of activities throughout the school year such as Golden Time, assemblies, and whole school celebrations, Christmas productions and sports day etc
- Offer opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school on a volunteer basis to assist with the children's learning e.g. hearing readers
- Offer two parent/teacher consultation meetings per year at which child's progress is discussed
- Send a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in Reception, including their child's results in each area of learning and development of the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

Effective Transitions

We work hard to ensure an effective transition between Nursery and Reception by:

- Building relationships with pre-school settings, through a telephone call or visit (from teacher or SENCO as appropriate). This allows nurseries to inform staff of each child's needs and development
- Offering taster stay and play session for parent/carers, and their child, in the school setting
- Organising individual home visits before the children start school
- Planning staggered start dates and morning sessions initially

The transition between Reception and Year 1 is another key transition for the children. In addition to the whole school summer transition arrangements, we will support children moving from the EYFS to KS1 by:

- Ensuring strong communication between EYFS and Yr1; all teachers moderate together
- Sharing the Early Years Profile with Year 1 staff
- Planning Circle Times for children to talk about changes and growing up
- Spending lunchtimes in the main playground towards the end of the summer term
- Spending short periods of time completing slightly more formal pieces of table-based learning towards the end of the summer term in reception
- Spending a morning a week with their current adults in Year 1 classrooms during the last half term in Reception
- Offering a transition information meeting for parents and carers in the summer term
- Making EYFS staff available to support children at the start of each day in the September they begin Yr1

Safeguarding, Safety and Health

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. All statutory safeguarding checks have been carried out for any staff and volunteers working within the Foundation Stage.

Staff are not permitted to use personal mobile phones or digital devices within the learning environment whilst children are on site. Digital images of children may only be taken using school devices and all images must be used in accordance with permissions given by parents/carers.

Every member of staff is fully trained in safeguarding children and child protection as all staff complete training at least annually. Our safeguarding and Child Protection procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy and meet the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021). The weekly Early Years Team Meeting provides a further opportunity for any further safeguarding or health and safety issues to be raised.

There is an accident book and basic first aid kit in both classrooms. There is full first aid kit available in the main office. At least one member of the EYFS staff team on site at any time has full paediatric first aid training. Parents/carers are informed via Tapestry if first aid has been administered to their child. Individual emergency medical equipment (auto injectors / inhalers) are kept safely within the Foundation Stage classrooms – these are clearly labelled with the relevant child's name.

A visual risk assessment and check of equipment is made every day by a member of staff. There are risk assessments for both the indoor and outdoor learning environments.

Staff promote the good health, including the oral health, of pupils through direct teaching and modelling. Children in the Foundation Stage are encouraged to eat a piece of fresh fruit or vegetable daily during snack time. They are given a drink of water or milk.

Supporting behaviour

Our behaviour support process is based on the positive reinforcement and recognition of positive behaviour, whilst calmly addressing inappropriate or unhelpful behaviour. Positive behaviour is always praised verbally or by body language. Attention is drawn towards children who remember the School Golden Rules and Stretch Values.

Hilltop's Golden rules are:

- Be Kind
- Aim High

The school advocates a restorative approach rather than an authoritarian approach to applying consequences and dealing with conflict. This encourages pupils to take some 'time out' reflect on and take more ownership of, and responsibility for, their behaviour. Any consequence needs to be effective and focused on supporting the pupils to improve their choices of behaviour in future situations.

It is important for this age group of children that 'Time Out' for inappropriate behaviour happens immediately. The child will be asked to sit away from the rest of the children for no longer than 3 minutes (Nursery) or 5 minutes (Reception). An adult will discuss the behaviour and encourage the child to apologise to all parties involved.

Further details regarding how we promote positive behaviour is contained in our School Behaviour Policy.

Link Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy and Information Report
- Teaching & Learning Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Admissions policy
- Attendance policy
- Home School Agreement