



Willow Wood Community Primary School Early Years Foundation Stage Policy 2025 – 2026

Introduction

At Willow Wood Community Primary School, we are committed to ensuring that every child gets the best possible start in life. Our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is underpinned by a clear and ambitious curriculum, designed to develop the knowledge, skills and language that our 3–5-year-olds need to succeed in their next stage of education. Our curriculum is designed by what we want children to learn, based on their individual starting points, language development and what our children already know and can do. This is delivered through high-quality interactions, environments and experiences and the progress and achievements our children make from their individual starting points. We place a strong emphasis on communication and language, personal development, and building strong foundations for future learning. In line with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, our approach reflects how young children learn best which includes learning through play and exploration, direct teaching and high-quality interactions with staff. We prioritise inclusive practice, ensuring that all children feel safe, valued and able to thrive; regardless of their background or individual needs. We work in close partnership with parents and carers and create enabling environments that support children to develop independence, resilience and a lifelong love of learning.

Aim

We aim to establish a clear framework for high-quality practice in our EYFS at Willow Wood Community Primary School. It outlines how we support children's learning, development and well-being through effective teaching, inclusive provision, safeguarding and strong partnerships with families. This policy ensures consistency in our approaches, enabling all children to access appropriate support and opportunities so they can progress well and develop the foundational knowledge they need to be ready for the next stage of their education.

Objectives

- To deliver a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum that is clearly sequenced and builds on children's prior knowledge, enabling all children to make strong progress from their starting points.
- To support children's learning through high-quality interactions, purposeful play, well-planned continuous provision and quality first teaching, promoting active learning, independence and sustained engagement.
- To ensure teaching is responsive to children's individual needs, including those with SEND, through a graduated approach and adaptive practice.
- To prioritise the development of communication and language, recognising its fundamental role in supporting children's thinking, learning and future attainment in all areas of their development and learning.
- To use ongoing, formative assessment to understand children's development and inform teaching, focusing on what children know and can do rather than excessive recording.
- To provide an inclusive, safe and nurturing environment where all children feel valued and safe, in line with safeguarding requirements.
- To promote equality of opportunities and remove barriers to learning, ensuring that every child can access the curriculum and achieve their full potential.
- To build strong, collaborative partnerships with parents/carers, recognising their role in supporting their children's learning and development.

- To work effectively with external professionals and other settings to ensure effective transitions, continuity, consistency and appropriate support for all children.

Teaching and Learning

At Willow Wood Community Primary School, teaching and learning in the Early Years is driven by our values - Inspire, Believe, Challenge, Achieve - so that every child is happy, safe, and motivated to do their very best. Our approach reflects the EYFS principles and statutory requirements for learning, development, assessment, and welfare.

We achieve this through:

- **Partnership with parents and carers**
We work closely with our parents/ carers and share observations and next steps, and we encourage families to contribute insights from home to secure a holistic understanding of our children. Staff keep parents/carers up to date with progress and any emerging needs.
- **Skilled, responsive pedagogy**
Staff understand how young children learn and use this to plan ambitious, enjoyable experiences that start from each child's interests and needs. Teaching blends child-led play with adult-guided learning, modelling and purposeful interactions.
- **A balanced approach: play and direct teaching**
Children lead their own play and engage in adult led, whole-class, small-group and 1:1 learning (e.g., stories, talk, early phonics/mathematics), so that knowledge and skills build securely over time.
- **Curriculum that builds to the ELGs without narrowing**
Our curriculum covers the seven areas of learning and is sequenced so children are well prepared for Year 1. We use the Early Learning Goals to judge attainment at the end of Reception but do not use them as a day-to-day curriculum.
- **Enabling environments indoors and outdoors**
Provision is thoughtfully organised and well-resourced to promote exploration, language development, independence and creativity, with daily access to outdoor learning, whatever the weather.
- **High-quality interactions**
Staff routinely use evidence-informed interaction strategies (e.g., ShREC and Sustained Shared Thinking) to extend vocabulary and thinking in the moment and across the day.
- **Assessment that informs teaching**
Assessment is ongoing and based on professional knowledge of the child. It is balanced, does not require excessive written evidence, and is shared regularly with parents/carers. At the end of Reception, teachers complete the statutory EYFS Profile. **Agreement trialling supports the accuracy of our judgements.**
- **Inclusion and ambition for all**
We have the same high aspirations for every child and adapt provision and support, working with the SENDCos and external partners where needed, so all children can thrive.
- **Reflective practice and professional learning**
Leaders, staff and TFC school improvement officers review impact, monitor provision and engage in continuing professional development to keep practice strong and current.

Throughout all teaching and learning, we embed the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning (Playing and Exploring, Active Learning, and Creating and Thinking Critically) so children become curious, resilient learners who make connections and solve problems.

How young children learn at Willow Wood Community Primary School

Young children learn best through playful, language-rich, active exploration with responsive adults. The following principles guide our everyday practice and reflect both our values and the EYFS Framework:

- **Playing indoors and outdoors, alone and with others**
Play lets children try ideas, practise skills, manage risk, explore feelings and think imaginatively; it is a central context for deep learning in EYFS.

- **Learning with and from other people**
Warm relationships and collaboration with peers stimulate ideas, language and self-regulation, moving learning forward.
- **Being active and using the senses**
Movement and sensory experiences support attention, memory and the development of gross and fine motor foundations for later learning.
- **Exploring new things and experiences**
Curiosity is nurtured through hands-on investigation, role play and talk that connects new knowledge to what children already know.
- **Talking and “thinking out loud”**
Adults model rich vocabulary and full sentences, prompting children to reason, explain and extend ideas in back-and-forth exchanges.
- **Sustained, responsive interactions**
Practitioners use approaches such as ShREC and Sustained Shared Thinking to notice, respond and expand children’s ideas, building language and cognition.
- **Representing ideas in many ways**
Children deepen understanding when they represent thinking through role play, small world, drawing, music, movement and model-making.
- **Meeting appropriate challenges and persevering**
Well-pitched challenges in play and adult-guided tasks build independence, resilience and problem-solving.
- **Modelling and guidance from adults and peers**
New concepts are introduced explicitly, then practised and applied across different contexts to secure fluency and transfer learning.
- **Practice, repetition and application**
Repeated opportunities to revisit and apply knowledge (e.g., vocabulary, number, phonological awareness) help children master and enjoy what they can do.
- **Joyful, engaging experiences**
Enjoyment, curiosity and success are integral to motivation and wellbeing – in line with our values of Inspire and Believe.

Inclusion

At Willow Wood, we are an inclusive school. We hold high expectations for every child including disadvantaged children, those with SEND, children known (or previously known) to children’s social care, and those who may face other barriers, so that all children can belong, participate and achieve. We meet the needs of all children through:

- **High expectations and early, accurate identification**
We set ambitious goals for all children and identify emerging or changing needs early, using a graduated approach (assess-plan-do-review) so support is timely and effective. The SENDCos are empowered to lead whole-school improvement for pupils with SEND and work closely with TFC SEND school improvement officer to ensure best practise.
- **High-quality inclusive teaching as the first response**
Everyday quality first teaching reduces barriers for those who find learning hardest. Staff adapt teaching and the environments, make reasonable adjustments and draw on specialist advice when needed without lowering expectations.
- **Curriculum access in the early years**
In Nursery and Reception, the curriculum is ambitious and designed so that children develop, consolidate and deepen knowledge across all seven areas, with a strong focus on communication and language. Staff engage in high-quality interactions (e.g., ShREC and Sustained Shared Thinking) to build vocabulary and thinking.
- **Language development, EAL and early foundations**
For children at the early stages of English, we assess proficiency accurately, extend vocabulary deliberately, and ensure access to systematic synthetic phonics and pre-phonics skills in Nursery and Reception. **NELI provides a structured language development intervention.** We also recognise and value children’s home languages while ensuring sufficient opportunities to learn English. Working closely with TFC’s EAL Team enables us to do this well.

- **Partnership with parents and the key-person approach**
Each child has a key person to tailor care and learning and to build strong, trusting relationships with families. We produce plans and share these with parents and use their insights and feedback to shape support and next steps.
- **Targeted support, specialist involvement and multi-agency work**
When appropriate, we involve external specialists (e.g., SALT, EP, health practitioners) and work with safeguarding partners so children get the right help at the right time; we meet requirements for looked-after and previously looked-after children via the virtual school.
- **Disadvantage and funding strategies**
Our Early Years Pupil Premium strategy is evidence-informed, aligned with school priorities, understood by staff, and monitored for impact on attendance, participation and learning.
- **Enabling, safe and respectful environments**
We provide inclusive, well-organised indoor/outdoor provision where all children feel safe, valued and ready to learn; we actively promote equality of opportunity, British values and respect for protected characteristics across personal development.
- **Monitoring, review and transition**
Leaders and staff track progress for all children with a focus on those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged. Staff review adaptations systematically and adjust support swiftly. We share assessment information with Year 1 to secure smooth transition and continuity of provision.

Assessment

Assessment in the EYFS at Willow Wood Community Primary School is continuous and purposeful. Staff use their professional knowledge, gained through day-to-day interaction, observation and high-quality dialogue, to understand what each child knows and can do, and to shape next steps. Ongoing assessment is embedded in our daily practice across all seven areas of learning. Staff notice, respond and scaffold learning in the moment, recording only what is necessary to inform planning, adapt provision and share progress meaningfully with parents and carers.

Statutory assessment points.

- *Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)*. Within the first six weeks of Reception, children complete the RBA; this is separate from formative assessment and is used nationally to create the reception-to-KS2 progress measure.
- *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)*. In the final term of Reception, teachers assess each child's development against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs) and judge whether each ELG is 'expected' or 'emerging'. The EYFSP provides a well-rounded picture of attainment and readiness for Year 1; it is not a test and reflects staff's holistic judgement. ELGs define the expected level by the end of the EYFS; they are not used as a day-to-day curriculum or limit the rich experiences our children receive throughout Nursery and Reception.

We keep assessment simple and manageable. Leaders ensure any internal tracking or data summaries are for teaching and transition.

Reporting, sharing and transition.

- We keep parents/carers regularly informed about progress and next steps; each family receives two parents/ carers meetings each year, an interim report and an annual written report commenting on achievement in each area of learning and overall progress. **Parents are also invited to an end of year drop-in session to discuss progress in line with the end of year report outcomes.** Parents/ carers with children who have identified SEND needs also receive an additional three parents/ carers meetings a year.
- In June, the school completes the EYFSP for each child and submits outcomes to the local authority; the LA returns approved data to DfE by 31 July.
- EYFSP outcomes are shared with Year 1 staff to support curriculum continuity and smooth transition; we also share information with parents/carers and invite discussion.

Inclusion and fairness.

Assessment reflects high expectations for all children, including those who are disadvantaged, have SEND, are learning English as an additional language, or are known (or previously known) to children's social care. We identify needs early, draw on specialist advice where appropriate, and take a graduated approach (assess–plan–do–review) so support is timely and effective.

Parents and Carers

At Willow Wood Community Primary School, parents and carers are integral partners in their child's education; we actively build a trusting, two-way relationship so that every child is happy, safe and able to achieve their best, consistent with our school ethos and values. Our approach reflects the EYFS requirement for a key person and a regular two-way flow of information with parents/ carers, and Ofsted's expectation that schools work closely and effectively with parents to identify needs early and remove barriers to learning.

How we work with parents and carers

- We talk with parents/carers before children start (including stay-and-play sessions), gather key information about each child, and introduce the staff who will tailor care and learning and be the family's main point of contact.
- We maintain a genuine open-door policy and encourage parents/carers to speak with staff at drop-off/pick-up or to arrange a time if they have questions or concerns, ensuring a regular, two-way flow of information that supports learning and well-being.
- We provide up-to-date information about our provision, curriculum themes and key dates via the school website and EYFS pages, supplemented by class updates in our weekly 'newsletters'.
- Across the year we offer parent workshops (e.g., phonics/early reading/ Talk Boost) and stay-and-play sessions so families understand how we teach and how to support learning at home; we also invite families to share "wow moments" from home so that achievements outside school contribute to our picture of each child.
- We keep families informed about progress and next steps through ongoing dialogue; statutory arrangements are followed, including the EYFS Profile at the end of Reception, with outcomes shared and discussed with parents/carers and used to support transition to Year 1.
- We produce support plans for children with SEND and share these with parents/carers half termly or termly (depending on the level of need) using the graduated approach (assess–plan–do–review), drawing on specialist advice when appropriate, and ensuring reasonable adjustments, so that every child can access, participate and thrive. We also invite parents/ carers (with children with SEND) in to school for a further three meetings to support them to understand the support in place for their children.
- Through regular communication (e.g., website/class pages/newsletters and agreed home–school channels, questionnaires and surveys etc.), we reinforce routines, celebrate successes and promote attendance, behaviour and personal development consistent with our values and early-years pedagogy.

Professional Expectations & Routines (EYFS Non-Negotiables)

At Willow Wood Community Primary School, our non-negotiables prioritise children's safety, high-quality interactions, language-rich play, inclusion, and manageable workload so that every child is happy, safe and achieves their best. These expectations reflect statutory EYFS requirements and have an emphasis on strong early education and inclusive practice.

Learning environment: daily readiness and continuous provision

- Staff will prepare and reset indoor and outdoor areas so children always arrive to an enabling environment with well-organised, safe, accessible resources; reset and tidy at the end of each day/session. (Includes water/sand/paint/malleable areas set safely and hygienically.)
- Staff will ensure outdoor learning is available daily (unless unsafe), with provision that promotes exploration, independence and communication.
- Displays, prompts or adult models are used to support and inspire (e.g., techniques or vocabulary) without restricting children's creativity or ownership.

High-quality interactions and pedagogy (not "yard duty")

- Staff are present in provision (especially outdoors) to notice, respond and extend learning through back-and-forth talk, modelling rich vocabulary, scaffolding, questioning and sustained shared thinking. This is active teaching and learning time, not supervisory duty and is planned to extend and challenge thinking and learning.

Health, safety, welfare and hygiene

- Staff will maintain hygiene and safety routines (e.g., sinks and wet areas cleaned; crockery returned; sand/water managed safely), complete daily checks and follow risk-assessments, first-aid and food-hygiene policy/ safety expectations.
- Staff will follow safeguarding and welfare policies (including mobile phones/cameras/e-devices), incident/accident reporting, and the expectation that children are within sight and/or hearing of staff.

Inclusion, SEND and early help

- Staff will hold high expectations for all - including disadvantaged children, those with SEND, children known (or previously known) to social care, and those facing other barriers; apply a graduated approach (assess-plan-do-review) and seek specialist advice when needed; implement reasonable adjustments without lowering ambition.
- All staff will attend relevant reviews/meetings and contribute succinct, high-quality information to ensure support is timely and effective.

Early reading, phonics and home reading

- Teach systematic synthetic phonics daily in Reception (and Foundations for phonics in Nursery), ensuring decodable books match each child's current level. Children read regularly with an adult in school, with frequency responsive to need (keep up, catch up and blending practise). Send matched decodable books home at least weekly (and more frequently where needed), monitoring reading records.

Teamworking, cover and continuity

- Staff who are covering follow the planned curriculum and ensure learning continues as intended; the team resets/tidies the environment before the next session/ day so provision remains consistent.
- All staff contribute towards evidencing children's learning and achievements in the children's individual learning journals/ Literacy and Mathematics books.

Professional learning, briefings and reviews

- All staff (including trainees) attend EYFS phase meetings, whole staff continuous professional development sessions and pupil-progress reviews, contribute to focused observations, know children's next steps and understand how adaptations are supporting progress over time.

Partnership with parents/carers

- Staff will maintain a genuine open-door approach, share progress and next steps and offer workshops/stay-and-play so families can support learning at home. Record keeping and communication remain clear and effective.

Safeguarding and Health & Safety in the EYFS

At Willow Wood Community Primary School, our school-based EYFS follows the whole-school Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and associated policies. This section explains how statutory EYFS requirements are implemented in Nursery and Reception day-to-day.

EYFS safeguarding arrangements (what we do in EYFS every day)

- Every child has a key person who tailors care, maintains a regular two-way flow of information with parents/carers, and escalates concerns promptly in line with whole-school policy and procedures.
- Children are within sight and/or hearing of staff at all times, with staffing that at least meets EYFS staff to child ratios and is often higher. Outdoor learning is provided daily unless conditions are unsafe; **however, children are provided with appropriate adverse weather equipment and clothing.**
- All school trips are risk-assessed; children are kept safe on and off site. Visitors are identity-checked and are never left unsupervised with children unless fully vetted.
- EYFS practice follows whole-school rules for mobile phones/cameras and the handling of images (capture, storage, sharing, consent).
- EYFS staff receive safeguarding training as part of the whole-school programme; Paediatric First Aid (PFA) coverage is maintained on-site at all times and on trips.

Medicines, allergies, safer eating and food safety (EYFS-specific)

- We follow written procedures for administering medicines, use written parental consent, keep records of doses given, and ensure staff are trained where medical/technical knowledge is required.
- We collect information on special dietary requirements, allergies and intolerances before admission; we create and review allergy care plans with parents/ carers/ health professionals and share key information with relevant staff.
- A PFA-qualified staff member is present whenever children are eating; children sit safely to eat and are continuously observed by staff (choking can be silent).
- Staff follow DfE Food safety advice for under-5s (e.g., quartering small round foods, avoiding whole nuts/seeds for under-5s, close supervision) and apply safer weaning practices for any of our children who may need this.
- Where food is provided, it must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. EYFS staff and catering staff follow the DfE Help for Early Years Providers - Nutrition resources and the Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance for menu planning, portion sizes, cultural/religious diets and communicating with parents. (From September 2025, providers are expected to follow this guidance unless there is good reason not to).

Environment, hygiene and premises (EYFS-specific)

- EYFS staff complete daily checks of indoor/outdoor areas, keep wet areas hygienic, and ensure equipment is safe, suitable and accessible; emergency evacuation arrangements and site security are maintained.
- Facilities are suitable and hygienic; practice preserves dignity and privacy while meeting safeguarding expectations.
- Sleeping children are frequently checked; safe sleeping practices are used by staff in line with statutory guidance.
- **Staff follows school's policy for intimate care. Supply staff are not allowed to perform such care.**

Curriculum & everyday safeguarding in the EYFS

- Staff use high-quality interactions as prevention. Staff build children's language, confidence and self-regulation through consistent routines and back-and-forth talk, reducing risk and promoting well-being (in line with the EYFS focus on communication and language).

Policy reviewed March 2026