

Thinking Schools Academy Trust “Transforming Life Chances”

New Horizons Primary School



Early Years Foundation Policy

This policy was adopted in the September 2023

This policy will be reviewed in July 2024

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Introduction

The term 'Early Years Foundation Stage' (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of their first year at school. In this policy, it is used to describe children who are in our Early Years classes.

In the EYFS at New Horizons Primary School, we aim to provide a secure, happy and caring environment in which every child can develop and learn. We are passionate in our commitment to making a difference for each individual and believe that by providing purposeful and carefully planned play we enable children at all stages of development to thrive.

'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five 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 together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.'

[\(Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2023\)](#)

At New Horizons Primary School, we recognise that the EYFS is a crucial stage in children's development and education. We strive to ensure that young children are motivated by an engaging curriculum with a balance of adult initiated and child led play and learning; supporting development and independence. Albert Einstein recognised that, 'play is the highest form of research.' For young children, play is the vehicle for exploring and learning, developing new skills and connecting with others. Through play, children practise talking, singing, writing, reading and developing key skills that serve as a foundation for school readiness. Relationship building is crucial. Through nurture, questioning, clear routines and challenge, children's characteristics of learning are developed, supporting them in becoming a confident and resilient learner.

Aims and Objectives

- To provide a safe, secure, caring and well-resourced learning environment which supports children to be successful learners and happy, confident individuals.
- To provide support, encouragement and challenge to meet the individual needs and promote good progress for all children.
- To promote a love of learning through a rich, vibrant and engaging curriculum
- To nurture children's characteristics of learning and support them developing confidence and resilience in learning.
- To lay the foundations and support children to develop skills, behaviour and dispositions for effective learning and later life.

The EYFS 4 Principles

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is based upon four principles:

	<i>At New Horizons Primary School...</i>
Every child is a unique child , who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;	We recognise that each child has different needs, interests and previous knowledge or experience, and plan learning opportunities to meet these needs and enable them to make progress.
Children learn to be resilient and independent through positive relationships . At New Horizons, we strive towards 'making a difference together', through positive relationships within our whole school community; between children, parents, staff, external professionals and the wider community.	We build positive relationships with children throughout our establishment phase, to ensure that children feel secure, settled and physically and emotionally safe. We also plan opportunities for children to build relationships with their peers. We develop a partnership with parents/carers through our transition arrangements before children start school, parents' evenings, regular opportunities for parents to come into school for workshops and topic celebrations and our open-door approach each day.
Children learn and develop effectively in enabling environments , in which their experiences are matched to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between staff and parents/carers.	Children engage in a range of learning opportunities in the indoor and outdoor classrooms. The learning environment has clearly defined areas to support development across all areas of learning, and resources are fully labelled and accessible to children. Children receive challenge and support from adults who know them well.
Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, and all children should be supported and challenged through an inclusive approach .	Staff constantly assess children's knowledge, skills and progress in relation to each area, and use this information to adapt and plan future learning opportunities to provide necessary support and challenge. Teachers also use this information to identify children's next steps and targeted interventions where necessary.

Curriculum

Areas of Learning and Development

Our EYFS curriculum is carefully planned to ensure continuity and progression of skills in the seven areas of learning and development identified in the EYFS profile. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

The three prime areas reflect the skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively and these are:

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

There are also four specific areas through which the prime areas are strengthened and applied:

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

Characteristics of Effective Learning

In planning and guiding children's activities, staff also reflect on the different ways that children learn. We believe that it is as important to respond not just to what children learn but also how they learn. These are highlighted through the EYFS Characteristics of Effective Learning:

- Playing and exploring: children investigate 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.

These characteristics of engagement, motivation and thinking are not just for Early Years but are the learning values that are promoted throughout the children's time at New Horizons through our learning heroes. Throughout children's time in Early Years, our learning heroes are introduced alongside the dispositions and behaviours that they promote.

Planning

We aim to provide children with a wide range of exciting and engaging learning opportunities through our topic-based curriculum. Long-term planning outlines our half-termly topics, which begin with a 'hook' to engage and inspire children and end with a 'celebration', which often includes opportunities for parents to come into school and share their child's learning.

Medium-term planning, which is completed by teachers half-termly, identifies key learning opportunities on a weekly basis as well as a 'Discovery Time' challenge and enhanced provision that will be used to motivate the children in their child initiated learning.

Weekly planning includes a comprehensive overview of each session of the week for each of the three classes in Early Years. All weekly planning should include a balance of adult-led, discrete lessons such as

phonics, mathematics, literacy and PE; and child initiated learning. Teachers plan for a range of learning opportunities for children to develop skills related to all areas of learning and development in the inside and outside learning environments.

Planning for discrete lessons will detail the learning intentions and tasks that will be undertaken each week to promote all children's progress. During 'Discovery Time' each day, children lead their own learning, but a plan will outline provision for inside and outside learning.

Phonics

At New Horizons, we follow the Systematic Synthetic Phonics Programme "Floppy's Phonics". This is supported by using a wide range of resources to support the effective delivery of phonics lessons by catering for all children's needs. Early Years children are taught phonics through two daily sessions. Lessons are quick in pace, well structured, engaging and challenging for all children within the lesson. Each day one lesson also includes opportunities for children to practise and apply their phonics skills in a variety of adult-supported and independent activities. Phonics skills are also embedded in writing and reading tasks in Literacy sessions. Activities are differentiated to ensure that all children are reaching their full potential within a challenging and supportive environment. Continuous provision and the outdoor learning environment in EYFS support children in developing and applying their phonic knowledge. Phonics 'sound mats' are freely available in the in each area of learning and outdoors. We aim for most children to be confident in applying Level1+, Level 2 and Level 3 phonics at the end of EYFS.

Reading

In EYFS, children are taught early reading skills through daily phonics lessons and daily guided reading sessions. Children are encouraged to read daily at home through our whole school reading passport scheme through which they have the opportunity to swap their home reading book weekly. Teachers also seek opportunities to read with children on an individual basis regularly, in order to assess each child's progress and provide more challenging books when necessary.

Maths

At New Horizons Primary School, we follow the NCETM mastering number curriculum. In EYFS, children participate in a 'Maths Meeting' and mastering number session each day, through which adults model mathematical language with the children as they observe and scaffold the learning and provide ideas linked to the children's interests. We also ensure that maths is available in all areas of continuous provision, ensuring that there is an appropriate balance of child-initiated activities and those led by adults. This will include carefully structured teaching of mathematical concepts and frequent short, sharp periods of practise and consolidation.

Assessment

At New Horizons, assessment for learning occurs constantly throughout lessons and child-initiated time, and is used to inform teachers' questioning, support, challenge and future planning. In EYFS, we assess children in different ways, in relation to the objectives outlined for each area of learning in the EYFS profile as well as the characteristics of effective learning.

Observations

All staff are responsible for making observations of children's learning and development electronically, using the 'Evidence Me' app. These observations contribute to children's learning journeys, which allow us to capture children's achievements through photographs and link them to the Early Years profile. Parents are able to view and comment on their child's achievements through the app, and contribute special moments in their child's learning and development at home too.

Baseline

When children start their journey at New Horizons Primary School, teachers make assessments of children's abilities in relation to the different areas of learning and development. These assessments are made through a combination of judgements shared by pre-school settings, teachers' observations of the child during play, and children's responses in adult-led activities. These assessments identify children's prior learning and knowledge and allow teachers to plan learning which provides appropriate support and challenge. We also complete the national baseline for reception during the children's first six weeks of school.

End of EYFS

During the Summer term in Early Years, summative assessments are made of children's achievements in relation to the Early Learning Goals in the EYFS profile, these are based on teachers' knowledge of each child. Before submitting each child's assessment, teachers undertake extensive moderation to ensure accuracy and consistency across our three classes and with different schools. Teachers also attend moderation 'surgeries' with the Early Years team at the Local Authority (LA). Children's end of EYFS assessments are reported on to parents, the local authority (LA), and Year 1 teachers.

Tracking Progress

Each class teacher uses insight to keep a record of progress and attainment for each child in the class in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. This is revisited and updated each half term, and allows teachers to identify any children who may not be making sufficient progress in specific areas, and put support in place.

Transition

Transition into Early Years

Before children start their journey at New Horizons Primary School, we aim to gather as much information as possible, with the aim of facilitating a smooth and happy transition into school. Staff communicate with all children's pre-school and nursery settings to learn about children's attainment, individual needs, interests, friendships and family. We are flexible in our approach to transition and put additional support in place where necessary to meet individual children's needs.

Parents and carers of new Early Years children are invited to an induction evening during the Summer term to receive information about the EYFS curriculum, uniform, school meals and school life. This is an opportunity for parents and carers to meet their child's teacher, see the school environment and ask questions.

The children also have the opportunity to meet their teachers and explore their environment during the Summer term, at 'Stay and Play' sessions with their parent/carer. We also arrange for children and staff from our main feeder nurseries to join current Early Years children for child-initiated play sessions.

In September, each family has the opportunity for a home visit, during which parents and carers receive more information and the child can talk and complete activities with their teacher and LSA in their own environment. Children then start school on a staggered entry basis, grouped by age. This allows for small groups initially, gradually builds up until children attend school full-time. This is an important opportunity for children to build relationships with staff and their peers, and is important in enabling them to feel safe, secure and happy at school.

Transition into Year 1

At New Horizons, we aim to ensure that children's transition to the National Curriculum in Year 1 is smooth so that they can continue their successful learning journey as they move into Year 1. During the summer term, children engage in PSHE-based circle time activities around transition and change, aimed at preparing children for the jump to their new Year 1 class. Meetings are held between Early Years and Year 1 teachers, during which information around children's attainment, progress, interests and individual needs are shared, to ensure that Year 1 teachers have a full picture of individual children and the class as a whole. Throughout the Reception year, each child's involvement in whole school life will have been built upon; many of the teaching and support staff will already be familiar people to them. They will have taken part in assemblies, whole school celebrations and mixed year group curriculum days. Towards the end of the Summer term, children will spend time on transition mornings in their new classroom. This is an opportunity for them to become familiar with their new teachers, other children in their class and their new learning environment. Parents also have the opportunity to meet the new teacher and receive information about the Year 1 curriculum and how to support their child in transition. Summer home learning is given to support the expectations of Year 1.

Safeguarding

At New Horizons Primary School, we understand that *"children learn best when they are 'healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with adults caring for them."* (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2023).

Staff provide clear messages to children about why it is important to eat, drink, rest, exercise and be kind to each other. We teach children to take managed risks and challenges as they play and learn, supporting them to be active and develop. This ensures they understand themselves and their role as responsible citizens within their communities.

We understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage:

- To provide a setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence;
- Promote good health;
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs
- To ensure that all adults who look after the children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so;
- Ensure that the setting, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for;
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children and our statutory requirements.