

Thinking Schools Academy Trust “Transforming Life Chances”

New Horizons Primary School



Early Years Foundation Policy

This policy was adopted in the September 2024

This policy will be reviewed in July 2025

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 nurturing environment in which every child can develop and learn to reach their full potential. 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.
- To provide a close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.

The EYFS 4 Principles

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

<p>Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;</p>	<p>At New Horizons Primary School, we use questioning, praise and encouragement to develop a positive attitude to learning and high self-esteem. Children are taught to be resilient, resourceful, reflective and reciprocal using our Learning Heroes and their learning behaviours. 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.</p>
<p>Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.</p>	<p>At New Horizons Primary School, 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.</p>
<p>Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time.</p>	<p>At New Horizons Primary School, children engage in a range of learning opportunities in the indoor and outdoor classrooms. The resources used provide an engaging environment matched to the children's interests which in turn provides opportunities for child-initiated learning. Children receive challenge and support from adults who know them well, encouraging them to take risks and explore.</p>
<p>Recognise the importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates.</p>	<p>At New Horizons Primary School, 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. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected.</p>

Curriculum

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 statutory framework. All areas of learning and development are equally 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 Primary 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 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 in each area of learning 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. Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

Phonics and Early Reading

At New Horizons Primary School, we follow the DFE approved Systematic Synthetic Phonics Programme “Floppy’s Phonics”. This is adapted for the needs of our children, by using a wide range of resources to support the effective delivery of phonics lessons. Early Years children are taught phonics through two daily sessions which are quick in pace, well structured, engaging and challenging for all. There are two daily sessions of phonics and early reading, one to teach a new sound and the other to practice and apply the new sound through a variety of adult-supported and independent activities. Continuous provision and the outdoor learning environment support children in developing and applying their phonic knowledge. We aim for most children to be confident in applying Level 1+, Level 2 and Level 3 phonics at the end of EYFS. Children are encouraged to read daily at home through our whole school reading passport scheme, they will be sent home with two new books every Friday, one matched to the sounds they have learnt that week and one ‘shared story’.

Thinking Skills

As a Thinking Schools Academy Trust school, we promote thinking skills across the school. In EYFS we start by introducing the children to the thinking hats to support with their understanding of reflecting on their learning. These are introduced gradually so that the concepts are understood by the end of EYFS.

Assessment

When children start their journey at New Horizons Primary School, teachers make assessments of their abilities in relation to the different areas of learning and development. We conduct the DFE’s Reception Baseline Assessment during their first six weeks of school and use this alongside observations of the children to provide a basis for teaching and planning, using children’s prior learning and knowledge to plan learning which provides appropriate support and challenge. Throughout the year, Early Years staff work and play alongside children, capturing their learning and development through photographs and written observations. These are shared electronically, using the ‘Evidence Me’ app. Parents are able to view and comment on their child’s achievements through the app, and are encouraged to contribute observations at home too.

Each class teacher uses insight to keep a record of progress for each child against all 17 Early Learning Goals on a termly basis to identify any children who may not be making sufficient progress in specific areas so additional support can be put in place. At the end of the EYFS, 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 is moderated internally (referring to the Development Matters [guidance](#)) and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority upon request. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child.

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 their 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 any questions they may have. The children then have the opportunity to meet their teachers and explore the school environment during the summer term, at a 'Stay and Play' session 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 about starting school and have the opportunity to ask any questions while the child gets to know their teacher and teaching assistant in their own environment. Children then start school on a staggered entry basis, grouped by surname. This allows for smaller groups initially, gradually building 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

Staff respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year 1. At New Horizons, we aim to ensure that children's transition to the National Curriculum in Year 1 is smooth so they can continue their successful learning journey as they move into Year 1. During the summer term, children engage in PSHE circle time activities around transition and change, aimed at preparing children for the transition to their 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 days 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.

Working with parents and carers

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there's a strong partnership between staff and parents and/or carers. We do this by:

- Talking to parents/carers about their child before they start at our school.
- Inviting the parents/carers and their children to spend sessions with their teacher in the classroom before starting at school.
- Completing home visits from the class teacher and teaching assistant, just before the children start in school.

- Inviting all parents/carers to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school.
- Encouraging and supporting parents/carers to prepare their child for school by developing independence skills before they start school including toileting and dressing themselves.
- Encouraging parents/carers to attend meetings with the class teacher. In the first term this is to discuss how their child has settled into school and in the second term it is to discuss the child's progress so far.
- Encouraging parents/carers to contribute 'Wow' moment observations and achievements of anything that their child has done at home that can be celebrated in school through the use of our online learning journal Evidence Me.
- Encouraging parents/carers to read with and to their child and complete their child's reading diary.
- By operating an open-door policy where parents can speak to the class teacher briefly in the mornings or after school about any concerns or questions.
- Sending home regular information such as parent overviews showing the learning for the next half term.

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). We have a whole school Safeguarding and child protection [policy](#) which is followed from early years to year six.

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.