

# Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) policy

Mereside CE Primary Academy



|                           |                                                |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
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| <b>EYFS Lead</b>          | Rachel Harper                                  |
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| <b>EYFS Governor</b>      | Rachel Wakefield                               |
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*“All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years 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 provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential.” EYFS Statutory Framework 2026*

## Policy Statement

At Mereside, we recognise that the Early years Foundation Stage provides the foundations for children's future learning, development, well-being and success.

Our aim is to provide every child with a safe, nurturing, inclusive and stimulating environment in which they can develop as confident, capable and independent learners.

We know children learn best when they feel secure, valued and listened to, and when they are given opportunities to learn through a carefully balanced combination of child-initiated play and adult led learning.

Our EYFS is ambitious for every child. It is designed to build foundational knowledge, skills, vocabulary, confidence and independence, while recognising that children develop at different rates and will have different starting points.

We place particular importance on the prime areas of communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, physical development and the specific areas of early literacy and early maths as these provide essential foundations for later learning.

## 2. Statutory Framework and Legislative Context

This policy has been written with reference to the Early years Statutory Framework 2026

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a5f8e4fb00f3323bf1a23a1/EYFS\\_group\\_and\\_school\\_based\\_framework\\_from\\_September\\_2026.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a5f8e4fb00f3323bf1a23a1/EYFS_group_and_school_based_framework_from_September_2026.pdf)

- Safer Sleep Guidance 2026 <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/safer-sleep>
- Screen Use guidance 2026 <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/screen-use>
- Food and Nutrition guidance 2025 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-nutrition>
- Education Act 2002, s.175
- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- SEND Code of Practice

The EYFS sets the standards that school must meet to ensure that children;

- are kept healthy and safe
- develop the knowledge and skills they need for their future learning

This school will comply with all statutory EYFS requirements and relevant safeguarding legislation and guidance.

### 3. Principles of the EYFS

As stated in the Statutory Framework for EYFS, the EYFS is based upon four overarching principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

### 4. Aims

Our EYFS provision aims to:

- Give every child the best possible start in school.
- Develop confident, happy and independent learners.
- Build strong communication and language skills.
- Develop secure foundations in literacy and mathematics.
- Develop children's physical skills and healthy habits.
- Support children's emotional well-being and self-regulation.
- Develop positive relationships and respect for others.
- Foster curiosity, creativity and a love of learning.
- Provide an ambitious, inclusive, curriculum for all children.
- Identify additional needs at the earliest opportunity.
- Work closely with parents, carers and other professionals.
- Ensure children are safe, healthy and well cared for.
- Prepare children effectively for year 1 and beyond.

### 5. Structure of the EYFS

Our Early Years setting is comprised of two parallel reception classes; Wrens and Robins. Both classes have 30 spaces.

### 6. The EYFS Curriculum

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 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

## 7. Our Curriculum Intent

Our curriculum is based on the Educational Programmes in the Learning and Development Requirements as outlined in the latest version of the EYFS statutory framework that applies from September 2026. We also use the Characteristics of Effective Learning as a driver for the curriculum. It is informed by the non-statutory Development Matters document. We use the Read Write Inc phonics scheme and NCETM Mastering Number for early number.

It is a progressive curriculum based on the foundational knowledge and skills that our children need to make a strong start. The design of our curriculum aims to enable children to meet the early learning goals and to prepare them fully for the transition to Year One and beyond.

Carefully selected core texts which form the basis of curriculum delivery. We recognise the value of high-quality texts in providing meaningful contexts for learning and supporting the development of literacy, communication, vocabulary acquisition and wider curriculum knowledge.

We work closely with our subject leaders here at Mereside and with our feeder settings to ensure our curriculum helps facilitate smooth transitions in learning. The curriculum has a significant focus on consolidating the prime areas in the Autumn term because children need secure foundations in communication, language, physical development and PSED before they can fully access wider learning.

Our curriculum was created using our knowledge of our pupils and their developing needs. It reflects their interests, the school they belong to, the community they live in and the places and experiences they have.

We are reflective and adaptive in our approach to the curriculum. We do not expect every child to follow an identical learning pathway.

## 8. Planning

Staff plan activities and experiences for children that enable children to develop and learn effectively. In order to do this, staff working with these children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime areas as well the specific areas.

Staff also take into account the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experiences. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

In planning and guiding children's activities, staff reflect on the different ways that children learn and appropriateness of the teaching styles for young learners.

Our **Foundational Knowledge and Skills Progression** planning provides an overview of intent and progression in each area of learning across the three terms. This plan is then developed into three **medium term plans** which outline how we intend to implement the plans to enable children to progress and achieve in each area of learning. We know that learning is spiralled and we constantly return to previous learning, consolidating knowledge and skills.

We use the medium term planning and our observations of children's needs and interests to create our **daily plans**. This includes a careful balance of adult led planning, adult initiated planning (enhancements), Objective Led planning and In the Moment planning, which we use to develop learning through high quality interactions with children in Child Initiated play.

## 9. Teaching and Learning

Engagement is everything. Our children will only learn when they are secure, interested and involved. Our teaching must be appropriate to age and stage, meaning that teachers must consider the concentration spans of young children and ensure the children are active and participating. Each area of learning and development is implemented through an appropriate mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The children learn through their interactions with staff, the environment, both indoor and outdoor, and with each other.

We believe that high quality interactions between adults and children are vital in effective Early Years teaching. Adults carefully observe children's learning and where appropriate, join them to extend thinking, introduce vocabulary, model language, demonstrate skills and provide challenge. We use ShREC approach and Sustained Shared Thinking to sensitively guide and support their learning and develop their vocabulary and communication skills. Adults respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction.

The balance of adult led and child led learning is adjusted as the children progress towards year 1.

We use the Characteristics of Effective Learning as a Golden Thread that is woven through all our interactions and provision. We use the CoEL in discussion as a tool to plan and review child-initiated learning. As the year progresses, we encourage children to learn with greater independence, to problem solve, to review their learning, to collaborate and persevere at a task.

We enrich our teaching by regularly inviting visitors to school and taking our children on visits linked to our learning.

## 10. Continuous Provision

We plan our Continuous Provision both indoors and outdoors with great care, thinking about the skills and knowledge we want our children to develop.

We start the year with basic provision that all children can access at their own level. The basic provision is a paired down environment which includes lots of sensory play that the children will find soothing and familiar as they enter the school.

We add to the provision, providing resources to support their needs and interests. It reflects our progress through the year, e.g. we 'move in' to the home corner in September, we prepare for the arrival of a new baby/pet, we get the area ready for Christmas.

Through this journey we are ensuring that the environment provides both support and challenge for all learners. We adjust our provision in response to both the every day and periodic assessments we make and to reflect the children's interests. We do not remove resources from the setting as we believe the children need the reassurance of knowing that the provision is constant.

## 11. The Learning Environment

We provide an environment that is:

- safe
- welcoming
- inclusive
- inviting but not overwhelming
- well organised
- purposeful
- developmentally appropriate

Children are encouraged to take responsibility for resources, make choices, tidy and organise their environment.

The outdoor environment is an essential part of the EYFS and children are able to access it throughout the day. It does not replicate the indoor environment, instead children are encouraged to transport resources around the setting.

## 12. Assessment

At Mereside, ongoing, assessment for learning, is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning and next steps, many of them supported in the moment. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child starts reception, the class teacher will administer the **Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)**. Staff also complete a wider baseline to assess children across all areas of learning and help staff plan provision.

In December, March and July we assess learning against the **Foundational Knowledge and Skills Progression document** and use these as **Observational Checkpoints**. We make judgements regarding which pupils are on track and which pupils will need additional support to enable them to keep up and make progress. This is recorded on DCPro to enable staff to quickly analyse the attainment of groups and individuals. Staff identify barriers to learning and plan ways to overcome them.

We assess **phonics** knowledge and skills each half term using the Read Write Inc assessment tool to help staff identify next steps for whole class teaching and for individuals. Pupils are then grouped according to the assessments.

Staff also assess children's independent writing each half term using a **Developmental Writing Scale** based on Richard Gentry's "The Conventions of Writing Developmental Scale." This allows staff to track progress and identifies next steps in Writing. This is kept in a legacy book that moves with each child as they progress through the school.

Staff assess pupils' well-being and involvement using the **Leuven Scale** each half term.

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 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 (referring to the Development Matters [guidance](#)) and in partnership with schools in St Chad's MAT and other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.

Assessment is always used sensitively and considerately. It will not be used to create unnecessary paperwork and must not take adults away from their interactions with children.

## 13. Inclusion and SEND

We are committed to ensuring that all children have full access to the EYFS curriculum. Children with SEND will receive appropriate:

- adaptations
- scaffolding
- targeted teaching

- resources
- adult support
- environmental adjustments
- communication support

The class teachers work closely with the SENDCo, Mrs Bryant, parents/carers and external professionals where appropriate.

Early identification is prioritised.

## 14. Working with Parents/Carers

We recognise that children learn and develop best when there is a strong partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.

We start to build that partnership whilst the child is still in their pre-school setting. We invite parents into school regularly in the year before their child starts school.

Staff are available at the beginning and the end of each day to talk to parents and develop these important relationships. Parents are encouraged to meet with staff for 1:1 meetings when needed.

We invite parents and carers to Parent information sessions throughout the year. The sessions cover a range of themes and areas of learning. For example;

- Welcome to Reception
- Phonics
- Communication and Language
- Reading
- Writing
- Maths

The purpose of these sessions is to share with them how learning is supported in school and how they can support at home. The presentations are added to the website to reach a wider audience.

Parents and Carers are sent an EYFS newsletter at the start of each term. Staff send a 'This Week' letter to parents each week outlining the key learning covered in school, recently introduced vocabulary and ideas of how they can support at home. This letter provides opportunities for families to connect with their child's learning and make links with their home experiences therefore consolidating and strengthening the learning.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. The outcomes of the RBA are available for parents and carers as soon as the assessment window has closed. Parents are invited to three Parents Evening throughout the year and receive a written report in the summer term. EYFS profile helps to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

We invite parents in to share special occasions with us such as craft sessions, performances and sporting events.

Parents are encouraged to share information about their child's interests, development, experiences and needs.

## 15. Transition into Reception

We place great importance on making the transition into school as smooth as possible. At Mereside we receive children from many different pre-school settings and it is important that we do all that we can to learn about the children, begin to develop positive relationships with pupils and their families and give them a sense of belonging.

To do this we:

- invite families to open days in the Autumn/Spring term
- visit every pre-school setting to meet children and talk to staff
- invite all parents to a Starting School information meeting
- provide information on school readiness
- offer every family a home visit
- invite families to four school visits
- offer additional 1:1 visits to school in quiet times for children who need more support
- provide a First Day book for children to use over the summer
- invite parents/carers to a welcome session in the Autumn term
- survey parents to find out what we can do better

The SENDCo attends most of the events above to help with early identification of additional needs. Through this robust provision the children quickly begin to feel a sense of belonging and that we are theirs. Parents say they felt supported and staff feel well informed about the new intake.

## 16. Transition into Year 1

Reception and Year 1 staff work together throughout the year to ensure that;

- children's strengths are understood
- additional needs are communicated
- relevant assessments, particularly EYFSP, are shared
- children become familiar with Year 1 staff and routines
- learning experiences prepare children for the next stage

The transition will maintain appropriate EYFS principles while gradually preparing children for the expectations of key stage 1.

## 17. Safeguarding and welfare procedures

*"Children learn best when they are healthy, safe, secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the people caring for them." EYFS Statutory Framework 2026.*

At Mereside we take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well. We understand that we are required to:

- Promote the welfare of children.
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- Ensure that we monitor and rigorously act to ensure children have good oral health, recognising this to be a safety concern when they do not.
- Promote healthy eating and ensure that children are safe when eating  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6839b752210698b3364e86fc/Early\\_years\\_foundation\\_stage\\_nutrition\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6839b752210698b3364e86fc/Early_years_foundation_stage_nutrition_guidance.pdf)

- Support children with their intimate care in a safe, considerate manner, respecting children's dignity at all times.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Safeguard children, being alert to any areas of concerns in any area of a child's life and follow safeguarding procedures when concerns arise.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment are safe and suitable for purpose.
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning experiences tailored to meet their individual needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.
- Ensure that photos and videos taken for assessment and learning purposes are securely stored (only taken on school iPad/cameras and passwords applied to maximise security). Staff mobile phones are not used in the classroom when children are present.

This school will ensure that the 2026 statutory changes are reflected in EYFS practice. These include strengthened requirements relating to;

- safer sleep <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/safer-sleep>
- screen use <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/screen-use>
- safeguarding and child protection
- enhanced checks for volunteers
- employment checks
- disclosure of information from staff regarding their suitability
- banned dog breeds

Outside areas have a risk assessment that is shared with all staff. Class teachers conduct a daily risk assessment check alongside a half-termly audit. Throughout the year we maintain a focus on safety and managing risk. The children are involved on a daily basis in the processes that keep them safe, such as reporting damaged equipment, adjusting behaviour in reaction to a change in conditions and taking responsibility for their own role in keeping the learning environments safe.

We work closely with our pupil's families, understanding that to support a child effectively we need to consider the whole family.

Our safeguarding, welfare, intimate care procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy.

## 18. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by Rachel Harper every year.

At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing body.

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