



## Early Years Policy

**Date Adopted: November 2023**

**Date of Review: July 2026**

### Shared Vision

An exciting school where children are healthy and safe in a caring and supportive environment.

A happy, welcoming and inclusive school where communication is highly valued and everyone has a voice.

A school focused on high expectations of pupils' learning and achievements.

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

### Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides the curriculum framework for practitioners working with children from birth to the end of the Reception year. It is a distinct phase that provides rich and diverse opportunities for lifelong learning. Our aim at Swalecliffe Community Primary School is to provide a caring, safe and stimulating environment where every child feels empowered to develop as an independent learner. Therefore, our practitioners will provide opportunities that build upon children's experiences and interests to enable them to reach their potential in every aspect of their development.

At Swalecliffe Community Primary School we follow the curriculum as outlined in the latest version of the EYFS statutory framework.

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

## Teaching and Learning

At Swalecliffe Community Primary School we believe children learn best through real experiences and active learning. We know children learn at their highest level when at play; therefore, we do not make a distinction between play and work. We provide a daily routine for the children, which provides for a balance of Adult Directed, Adult Initiated and Child Initiated learning opportunities. The balance slowly tilting from predominantly Child Initiated to more that is Adult Directed as the year progresses and as the children make the transition into Year 1. We support children's learning throughout the Child Initiated and planned play activities, and in doing so we ensure children have opportunities to engage and thrive in all aspects and areas of learning.

We believe that it is vitally important for adults to support children's learning through play. Our "Stars of the Week" approach ensures that learning is personalised, by building on the child's interests-and encouraging them to reflect on what they have learned and how they may build on their skills. We hope that in this way our children will be intrinsically motivated to be lifelong learners.

We recognise the benefits of developing a wide and rich vocabulary with the children and place great importance on teaching early literacy skills through our teaching, the environment and resources and the quality texts we introduce them to.

## Starting School

We know that starting school can be a stressful time for both the children and the parents. Therefore, to support the smooth transition into school we plan to meet the needs of each child and their family through an induction programme which enables a happy entry into Reception and beyond and ensures well-being. In addition to this, our Family Learning Teacher supports those parents and children who find this time most challenging. This is in line with our ethos of Child First, Pupil Second.

It is the class teacher's role to ensure that all new entrants are made aware of important issues such as fire drills, first aid and safety rules. Extra assistance may be needed for some children but all practitioners will seek to promote and develop the children's independence.

## **A Unique Child**

We place high importance on developing children's physical and emotional well-being, and through early observation our skilled practitioners create an environment in which all our children can thrive.

We recognise that children start school with a wide range of skills, abilities and particular interests, and we understand that each child is a competent learner. We therefore start with the children, finding out about them before planning experiences to intrigue, challenge and extend their learning.

The school Inclusion Manager works closely with the Foundation Stage practitioners and families to develop awareness of equality of opportunity and to ensure that, where appropriate, we celebrate individuality.

We will use information from parents and pre-school settings to inform our knowledge and understanding of every child. In school, we will observe children and will frequently note down what we observe. We will analyse and review what we see or know about each child's development and learning, and then we will make informed decisions about the child's progress and the appropriate next steps.

We document and track each child's learning journey through their 'All About Me' books and we include observations, photos and examples of their work. We focus particularly on four children each fortnight asking parents to tell us what their children are currently interested in at home, so that we can incorporate their interests and ideas into our curriculum. We call them our 'Stars of the Week' and we encourage children and parents to contribute to their child's journal. We share the individual books with parents during parent consultations.

In our Reception classes, we conduct a Baseline Assessment in the first term, and then continue to use this knowledge of the children together with evidence collected in the children's book, to inform our judgements and to support completion of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. The children's books are passed to the Year 1 teacher as part of enabling a smooth transition into Key Stage 1. At a later date, Year 1 teachers pass the books onto the families to keep.

## **Positive Relationships**

At Swalecliffe Primary School we model and foster respect, empathy and caring relationships. We encourage understanding of self and a responsibility to others.

So that we can play and learn safely and happily at Swalecliffe CPS we will:

- Be happy
- Be healthy
- Be kind

- Be safe

We also recognise the huge contribution parents make to their child's learning and we work hard to develop and sustain links with parents. We actively encourage parents to be fully involved in their child's learning through our 'Star of the week' approach, which involves regular communication and meetings. Parents are also encouraged to visit their child's class and support the learning that is taking place. This may include helping children with reading, playing alongside them or sharing a particular interest and expertise.

## **Enabling Environments**

We aim to provide a rich and varied learning environment as we know this will evoke the children's curiosity and increase their motivation to investigate, explore and to become involved; extending their ideas and experiences. The learning environment will comprise of the inside and outside areas, both of which are of equal importance. Inside and outside areas, will therefore be available to the children and resources will be reviewed regularly in order to make the best provision for the children's learning and development. Children will have the freedom to move from one area to the other during their child initiated activities.

At appropriate opportunities, the adults will:

- Question, respond to questions and engage the child in extended conversations that support sustained shared thinking
- Extend vocabulary, knowledge and skills
- Encourage independence
- Add resources that stimulate, motivate and engage the learner
- Demonstrate / model and work alongside
- Help children to see links in their learning
- Support and encourage
- Encourage children to be problem solvers, problem setters and investigators
- Re-direct the play if necessary
- Help children to learn how to negotiate and resolve conflict
- Promote children's well-being
- Observe and assess learning
- Record judgments and plan for next steps in learning
- Provide feedback to children/other adults/parents

## **Assessment**



At Swalecliffe Community Primary School, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievements and interests. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child **starts reception**, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

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 other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority upon request.

## Safeguarding and welfare procedures

We recognise that 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. We follow safeguarding and welfare requirements to provide a welcoming, safe and stimulating environment where children are able to enjoy learning and grow in confidence.

We make sure that the appropriate statutory staff:child ratios are maintained in our setting to meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. We comply with infant class size legislation and have at least 1 teacher per 30 pupils.

We have at least 1 person with a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate on the premises and available at all times when children are present, including on outings. This PFA certificate is renewed every 3 years as required.

We promote good oral health, as well as good health in general, in the early years for example by talking to children about:

- The effects of eating too many sweet things
- The importance of brushing your teeth

We ensure the environment is safe and secure with a daily check inside and outside.

The rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our school's child protection policy.



## **Review of Policy**

This policy is effective from its review date and the Governing Body will ensure the policy is reviewed to take account of any statutory regulation or associated guidance or changes in policy by Kent County Council's policy.