



Hilltop School

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

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“Learning together; to be the best we can be”

1.0 Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At Hilltop School, children have the opportunity to start school from the age of 2 with the number of hours attended flexible to their needs. In partnership with parents and carers, we enable the children to begin the process of becoming active learners for life.

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Hilltop School.

2.0 Aims and objectives

In the EYFS setting at Hilltop we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start in their school life in order to enable them to develop their full potential and 'be the best they can be'.

We aim to support each child's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued by the staff looking after them
- Providing a flexible learning environment structured to support each individual child
- Offering a personalised curriculum based on the needs of each child
- Guiding all children through the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021 curriculum alongside highly personalised targets taken from individual Education, Health and Care Plans.
- Teaching them to communicate their needs and feelings by the appropriate means for each child
- Encouraging children's independence and decision-making, supporting them to learn through their mistakes
- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions different to their own
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community
- Developing children's understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously
- Understanding the importance of play in children's learning and development
- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children's personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn
- Providing experiences which build on children's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development
- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside
- Valuing and recognise the role of families and encourage a strong home school

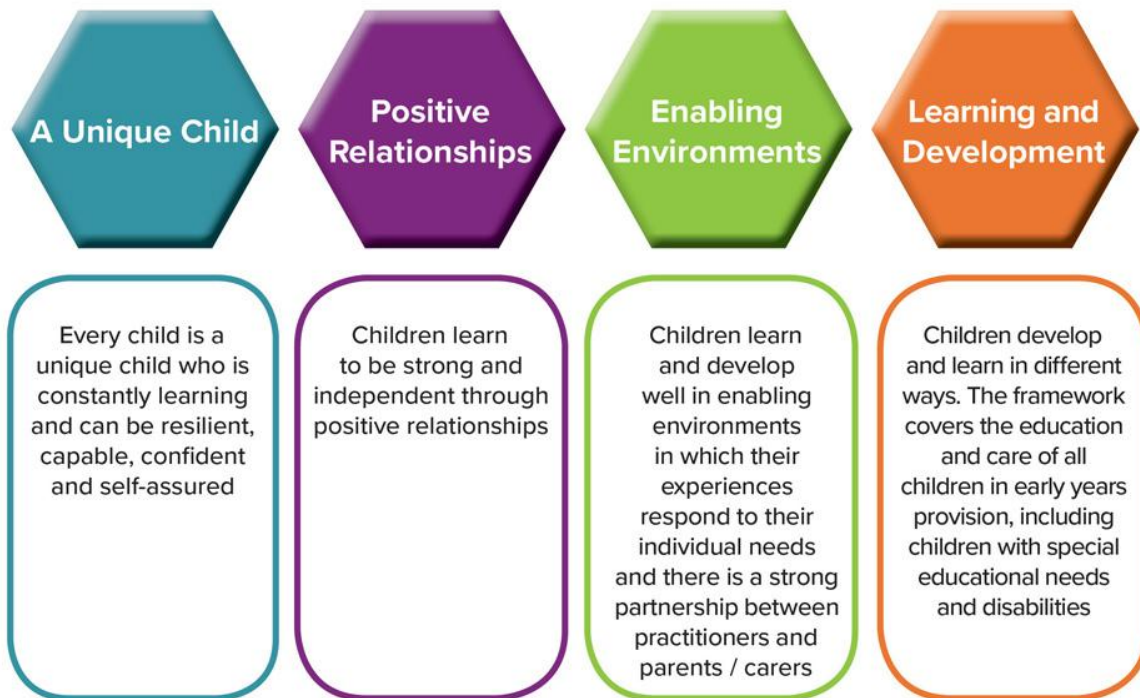
partnership

3.0 The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

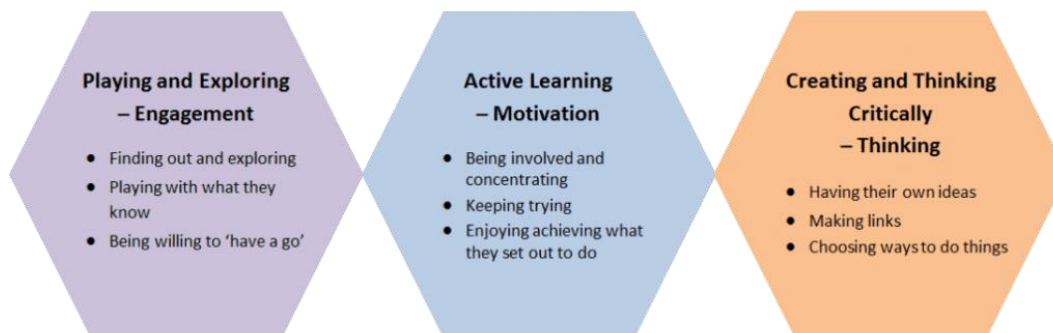
Teaching in the EYFS at Hilltop is delivered in accordance with the 'The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for groups and school-based providers 2025'

This document is a principled approach to Early Years education, bringing together children's welfare, learning and development requirements through four guiding principles:

The Four Guiding Principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage



The Characteristics of Effective Learning and the Prime and Specific Areas of learning and development are inter-connected and form how we plan and deliver our Early Years Curriculum at Hilltop. The Characteristics of Effective learning are:



The 7 Areas of Learning are used to deliver the appropriate teaching of knowledge, skills and understanding for all children. The Early Learning Goals are points within each of the seven areas that are developmental aims for children at the end of Foundation Stage 2. At Hilltop, it is recognised that children develop at very different rates and thus, may not fully meet each ELG by the end of their EYFS journey. Therefore, continued focus on the ELGs into Key Stage One and beyond is highly important.

The Nexus Early Years Curriculum believes that, learning begins with the prime areas from the EYFS Statutory Framework (2025), with communication sitting at its core, playing a pivotal role in enabling and developing skills across all learning areas.

The 'prime' areas of learning are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
 - Self-regulation
 - Managing self
 - Building Relationships
- Communication and Language
 - Listening, attention and understanding
 - Speaking
- Physical Development
 - Gross motor skills
 - Fine motor skills

The EYFS Statutory Framework (2025)' specific' areas of learning are:

- Literacy
 - Comprehension
 - Word Reading
 - Writing
- Mathematics
 - Number
 - Numerical patterns
- Understanding of the World
 - Past and present
 - People, culture and communities
 - The natural world
- Expressive Arts and Design
 - Creating with materials
 - Being imaginative and expressive

These areas of learning and development address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all areas of learning and development are all closely interlinked. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centered curriculum which allows children to make links between what they are learning. The specific areas of Literacy and Maths make up the outer core of the foundational skills of the Nexus Early

Years Curriculum. This means that children will begin working on skills and knowledge in these areas from the beginning, with deepening focus as their skills in the prime areas develop. These foundation skills are framed within contexts taken from the specific areas of Understanding the World and Expressive Arts & Design.

We divide our curriculum into the following areas:

- 1) **Essential/foundation skills & knowledge** (C&L, PSED, PD, Literacy, Maths – the circular areas of learning & development);
- 2) **Experiences, themes and contexts for learning** (UtW, EAD – the ‘frames’ for learning)

Children are provided with their own learning targets covering each of the Prime and Specific areas of the curriculum. These targets provide a focus for their learning and development appropriate to their needs and interests. Each child also has termly targets which are linked to their Education Health and Care plan (EHCP). These targets are discussed with families and reflect the needs of each individual. Children in EYFS access therapy programmes as part of their learning which include Physiotherapy, swimming, Speech and Language therapy, Sensory integration and input from the V.I and H.I. specialist teacher.

Our EYFS classrooms are set up to offer continuous provision, offering a range of learning opportunities including sand, water, creative, mark making, construction, ICT, small world, and reading areas. Each area is enhanced to provide opportunities for learning against children’s interests or the class theme.

At Hilltop, children are placed in our Early Years classes according to need. This ensures they are able to access the appropriate equipment and access the relevant therapies. We believe that Early Years education should develop positive dispositions and attitudes to learning in all of our young people regardless of their needs or abilities. Key aspects of this are helping each child to develop a positive sense of self, develop their communication and interaction skills, and therefore build a child’s confidence by providing motivating activities and encouraging learning and independence.

4.0 Active Learning through play

At Hilltop School we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our EYFS setting has an ethos of learning through play.

The EYFS Statutory Framework states that, ‘play is essential for children’s development, building confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals, and solve problems.’ At Hilltop school we recognise the importance of children’s play and promote the need for Grenier’s (2020) three types of play; free play, supported

play and guided play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

In the EYFS setting at Hilltop School practitioners provide free play, supported play and guided play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences which will support children to discover, explore, investigate, develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity, and help to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts. Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding.

5.0 Planning

EYFS use a long-term plan that runs on a cycle. Topics are engaging, progressive and relevant and aim to meet the interests and needs of the children.

Medium term planning takes place each half term and breaks down the long-term themes into more focused topics. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child-initiated activities indoors and outdoors. Educational visits within the local community and further afield are also planned to support children's learning within the classroom.

Short term planning ensures the delivery of the continuous provision and provides a focus for that week's learning. In order to support adult intervention, we use prompt cards which set out possible key questions to support staff interactions with children and provide a basis for their observations of learning.

6.0 Admissions

Families are encouraged and welcomed to visit the school at any point before the assessment of Special Education Needs (SEN) has been completed.

Upon receiving the Education and Health Care plan, the EYFS lead, or another appropriate member of staff specifically assigned to do so by the Senior Leadership Team, will contact the family to arrange a transition meeting, usually taking place at the family home or child's current setting.

Transition into school is personalised to meet the child and families needs. Each child has a transition meeting that can take place either at home, at school or via phone/teams and if appropriate, a visit to see them in their current setting. This allows us time to find out important information about the children and as a consequence, use this to help us in our planning and make the transition as smooth as possible. During the transition visit the families will meet the child's class teacher and will have the opportunity to discuss and share information. The transition process is a family centred and families are very welcome to accompany their child during their transition visits in

school. Please note that an accompanying adult must remain on site with the child in order to comply with appropriate health and safety regulations.

7.0 Assessment and recording

Progress check at age 2 It is a statutory requirement that takes place between the ages of 2 and 3. At Hilltop school practitioners will review a child's progress and provide a written summary of a child's development in the prime areas of learning. The progress check will identify the child's strengths and any area in which their progress is less than expected. If concerns are identified, school will work with relevant professionals and families to develop a plan to support the child's future learning and development. The Progress check enables us to ensure sensitive early intervention and identify help where needed.

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is a statutory assessment requirement which takes place at the start of a child's final year in the Early Years Foundation Stage (FS2). As a school, we use our in-depth understanding of our children's need to determine whether the material within the RBA is suitable. Whilst the RBA material is designed to be accessible to children with additional needs, in many cases, our children are unable to access the content provided. In this case, we will 'disapply' children on an individual basis. Where it is thought that a child could potentially access the materials, the RBA would be carried out within the first six weeks of the FS2 year. The assessments are short, practical, play based activities.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is a statutory assessment that takes place at the end of a child's FS2 year. It is only ever completed once and is used to inform national data information. The EYFSP does not affect or impact on a child's targets unless they are working at this level. Children are recorded as either 'emerging' or 'expected' against each ELG. Where children are emerging at the end of FS2, it may be appropriate to continue to work on steps from the Early Years Foundation Stage Progression Matrix in Key Stage 1 and beyond. To ensure children transition smoothly between key stages and continue to build on skills achieved in EYFS, the Hilltop Early Years Foundation Stage Progression Matrix and Hilltop School's Curriculum Matrices align.

At Hilltop School, children's individual Education and Health Care Plans and the Hilltop Early Years Foundation Stage Progression Matrix are used to support target setting, monitor and track progress and inform planning. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is completed at the end of the Foundation Stage. Each ELG is highlighted as either 'Emerging' or 'Expected.'

When children are new in school they are initially observed for a period of six weeks during all activities before they are baselined against the Hilltop Early Years Foundation Stage Progression Matrix. This information is then used to support target setting, identify gaps and promote progress over the year. Each term, the Early Years Foundation Stage Progression Matrix is updated to highlight progress and areas for development.

Evidence is gathered, monitored and recorded using the assessment tool Evidence for Learning. Each child has a Learning Profile where a record of progress in all the areas of learning and progress towards children's EHCP targets is kept. Staff recognise the importance of ongoing assessment and how it helps practitioners, carers and parents to recognise children's development, understand their needs and to plan activities to support. Staff use their own professional judgments and knowledge of individual children alongside observations to ensure progress is made. Staff make observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult focused activities and child-initiated play. Observations take place on a daily basis and are recorded using Evidence for Learning in the form of videos, photographs, samples of work and written observations. All staff are involved in observing children and use these observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. They are encouraged to provide information about the context of their observation, the level of independence involved and the next steps for learning. Observations are evaluated by the class teacher and cross-referenced to the Early Years Foundation Stage Progression Matrix to support target setting.

In order to maintain and ensure consistency in assessment, EYFS teachers meet to moderate Evidence for Learning observations and evidence and ensure all areas of the EYFS curriculum are covered. The EYFS leader also regularly meets with colleagues from other special schools to carry out Trust moderation.

8.0 Reporting to families and Parent partnerships

At Hilltop School we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework 2025. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development.

Reporting to families occurs on a daily basis both verbally and through written feedback in home/school diaries **or electronically via Dojo**. Each **early years** child is identified a keyworker who makes regular phone calls home to the families to discuss children's progress, address any worries and keep families up to date with relevant information. Hilltop school's family support team are also available to support families when needed. A newsletter is sent home at the beginning of each half term to inform parents of the topic for the half term and share key dates.

Formal meetings such as termly parent/carer meetings and yearly Annual reviews take place. The Annual review meeting involves discussions about children's progress against their EHCP targets and where appropriate new ones are created with the input from relevant professionals and parents and carers. The process also provides the opportunity to celebrate children's achievements and identify any areas of concern. At the end of each academic year Hilltop school complete an end of year report for all children, the report consists of photographs and a personalised written summary of learning and development over the year, celebrating all achievements and successes. Parents and carers are also encouraged to share special moments or achievements, no matter how big or small.

We value the role of parents as children's primary educators. Through questionnaires, home/school diary, informal chats and regular phone calls, we encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes) so that our ongoing planning reflects the children's needs and interests.

Parents are also invited to a range of events throughout the school year including Proud assemblies, coffee mornings, Harvest Festival, Christmas performances, Sports Day and a variety of fundraising events.

Our school has a friendly, open-door ethos and staff are available to talk to parents at the beginning and end of the day in person if they drop off their children or by telephone if the children arrive on school transport. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have.

9.0 Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements

It is important at Hilltop that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. At Hilltop School we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in [the EYFS Statutory Framework 2025](#).

We understand that we are required to:

- Promote the welfare and safeguarding of children- [refer to whole school safeguarding policy](#)
- Promote oral health and hygiene
- [Promote safer recruitment, including obtaining and providing references and ensuring our safeguarding policy includes procedures to ensure only suitable individuals are recruited- refer to whole school Safeguarding Policy and Trust's Recruitment and Selection Policy](#)
- [Ensure that all prolonged periods of absences are followed up and that additional emergency contact details are held by the school.](#)
- [Ensure effective whistleblowing procedure is in place- refer to whole school Safeguarding Policy and Trust's Confidential reporting and Whistleblowing Policy](#)
- [Ensure all trainees and students must be PFA trained to be included in ratios at the level below their study.](#)
- [Ensure effective safeguarding training is delivered and that the safeguarding policy includes how the training is delivered and how practitioners are supported to put it in to place- refer to whole school Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Ensure safe eating practices, including obtaining detailed allergy/intolerance information, having allergy care plans for those who need them, ensuring a Paediatric First Aider is present during mealtimes, closely supervising children for choking hazards, cutting food to safe sizes, and logging all choking incidents. Staff undertake annual Allergies, Anaphylaxis and Auto-injector' training.](#)

- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill
- Ensure sleeping children are frequently checked to ensure they are safe.
- 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
- Ensure that the environment and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children
- Ensure the correct procedures are followed in regards to using any electronic devices that have imaging and sharing capabilities in the setting and that written consent for photographs and videos is given by parents and carers.

There are systems in place to ensure that medicines and the systems for obtaining information **about a child's needs for medication are kept up to date. Medicines are only administered to a child in line with the school's policy. Please refer to our separate policies and procedures – Safeguarding and Child Protection, Supporting Children with Medical Needs, SOPS, Health and Safety and Risk assessments.**

Child Protection is covered by the whole school Safeguarding Policy.

Suitable People are ensured through the relevant whole school HR policies and procedures.

Staff qualifications, skills and training are ensured through the relevant HR and CPD policies and procedures. All EYFS classrooms have at least one qualified teacher and one Level 3 practitioner to lead learning and development. Supervision of staff who are in contact with families and children takes place regularly in order to provide support, coaching and mentoring and to ensure the wellbeing of staff. EYFS classes have adequate staff who are Food Hygiene trained and Pediatric first aid trained.

Key Persons are assigned to each child in an Early Years class.

Staff: child ratios - As a designated SLN (severe learning needs) specialist school, Hilltop maintains high ratios of adults to children in order to fully meet individual needs. Our current EYFS classes will consist of no more than 8 children and can have staffing numbers of up to 6 depending on the needs of the children in the class.

Health welfare requirements are covered by whole school health related policies.

Food and drink – At Hilltop our EYFS classrooms have kitchen facilities to ensure safe preparation of healthy snacks and drinks. Fresh water is always available. In order to encourage communication of needs, children may be encouraged to positively

engage with an adult using an appropriate form of communication to request a drink. Alternatively, children may have access to water bottles sent in from home if needed. Children are offered healthy snacks at appropriate points in the day. Where children have sensory needs relating to food and drink, staff will encourage and promote healthy eating and drinking using a small steps approach using motivational foods and drinks that are not high in sugar. Any allergies are highlighted by the class team and taken into **consideration when preparing snacks. Staff preparing food have completed Food Hygiene training and a PFA trained member of staff is also present when children are consuming food.**

Accidents and injuries are covered by whole school risk assessment policies and procedures. All child accidents and injuries are recorded using CPOMS. Parents are informed about the nature and cause of the injury in an appropriate way, it is school policy that this is done via telephone call.

Managing children's behaviour is covered by the school Behaviour policy and ethos. Hilltop school has a dedicated Behaviour Lead who can support classes where required and support in creating personalised behavior support plans.

The safety and suitability of premises, environment and equipment is covered by whole school risk assessment, premises and health and safety policies. Both our EYFS classrooms fulfil the minimum spatial requirements as set out in the Early Years Statutory Framework 2025. Both classes also have continuous access to outdoor areas.

Risk assessments are conducted following the whole school policy on risk assessments. All classes have a general classroom risk assessment, individual child risk assessments and individual child swimming risk assessments as standard. External visits are risk assessed by teachers and signed off by a Senior Leader.

As a specialist setting, both our Early Years classes pay full regard to the **SEND Code of Practice** 0-25 (2014).

Information and Records are covered by relevant whole school policies.

10.0 Inclusion

All members of staff have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered in the EYFS setting. All children, irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development within our EYFS setting.

At Hilltop School, all children and their families are valued. Children are treated as individuals and have equal access to all provisions available. All children are encouraged to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities.

11.0 Roles and Responsibilities

The following staff are subject to this policy:

Teaching Assistants and Practitioners will support and facilitate learning following the EYFS and whole school policies, forming positive relationships with children and engaging in high quality interactions throughout the school day.

Class teachers will plan, deliver and assess children according to the EYFS and other whole school policies. They will act as a key person for children and families so that positive relationships with both families and children are nurtured. Teachers will take a lead in engaging children in high quality learning experiences and interactions, providing a safe, organised learning space which supports the development of all learning areas.

Early Years Lead will review the EYFS policy as required and ensure that this is shared with staff at all levels. They will provide supervision for key members of staff and ensure that appropriate CPD is provided. The lead will ensure that curriculum planning is completed and covers all the required areas of learning and development and that there is evidence of a balance of adult and child-initiated activities. The lead will also ensure that families are kept updated on their child's progress and achievements. **The Early Years lead will have supervisions carried out by the trusts Early Years QA Officer.**

Headteacher will line manage the Early Years Lead, providing them with the resources and skills needed to ensure the EYFS policy is implemented.

Nexus MAT will performance manage the Headteacher and ensure local governance arrangements are in place and are effective. The Trust **Early Years QA Officer** will provide regular supervision to the Early Years Lead.