



Barcombe - Hamsey - Iford & Kingston - Plumpton

Skylark Federation

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Reviewed and Approved: May 2025

Next review: May 2028

Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth until the age of five years old. At Skylark Federation Schools, children join the Reception in the September after their fourth birthday. At Iford and Kingston CE Primary School, children can join the nursery from when they are two years old.

Principles

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

1. A Unique Child: This principle recognizes that every child is different, with their own unique learning style, strengths, and needs. Practitioners should respond to each child's individual interests and needs, creating opportunities for them to develop resilience, capability, confidence, and self-assurance.

2. Positive Relationships: Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships with parents, caregivers, and other adults. These relationships should be warm, loving, sensitive, and responsive to the child's needs and feelings.

3. Enabling Environments: Children learn and develop well in environments that provide opportunities and experiences that meet their individual needs. These environments should be stimulating, safe, and supportive, with strong partnerships between practitioners, parents, and the child.

4. Learning and Development: Children develop and learn at different rates, and it's important to acknowledge this. The EYFS acknowledges that children learn in different ways and at different rates, and all areas of learning and development are equally important. Practitioners should observe children's progress, plan activities that build on their learning, and provide appropriate support.

Aims

At Skylark Federation schools we:

- Provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring, and sharing environment, which is sensitive to the needs of the child, including children with additional needs
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant, and creative curriculum that will set in place firm Early Years values ahead of further development in Key Stage One and beyond.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Develop and work in close partnership with families, valuing their contributions and ensuring all children make good progress no matter their starting point.
- Provide opportunities whereby children experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development.
- Provide experiences for all children, whatever their needs.

Curriculum

ELGs are statutory assessment criteria used by early years practitioners to make a holistic, best-fit judgement about a child's development. They are benchmarks to assess readiness for Year 1.

The 17 ELGs are grouped into seven areas of learning:

1. **Communication and Language** (Prime Area)
 - Listening, Attention and Understanding
 - Speaking
2. **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** (Prime Area)
 - Self-Regulation
 - Managing Self
 - Building Relationships
3. **Physical Development** (Prime Area)
 - Gross Motor Skills
 - Fine Motor Skills
4. **Literacy**
 - Comprehension
 - Word Reading
 - Writing
5. **Mathematics**
 - Number
 - Numerical Patterns
6. **Understanding the World**
 - Past and Present
 - People, Culture and Communities
 - The Natural World
7. **Expressive Arts and Design**
 - Creating with Materials
 - Being Imaginative and Expressive

Within our nursery setting at Iford and Kingston CE Primary School, we follow Development Matters Birth to Five. See separate document for further details:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64e6002a20ae890014f26cbc/DfE_Development_Matters_Report_Sep2023.pdf

Early Learning Goal (ELG) Descriptors

Communication and Language

- Listening, Attention and Understanding: Children listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments, and actions.
- Speaking: Children participate in small group, class, and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Self-Regulation: Children show an understanding of their own and others' feelings and begin to regulate their behavior accordingly.
- Managing Self: Children manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet, and understanding the importance of healthy food choices.
- Building Relationships: Children work and play cooperatively and take turns with others.

Physical Development

- Gross Motor Skills: Children demonstrate strength, balance, and coordination when playing.
- Fine Motor Skills: Children hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing.

Literacy

- Comprehension: Children demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary.
- Word Reading: Children read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge.
- Writing: Children write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

Mathematics

- Number: Children have a deep understanding of numbers to 10, including the composition of each number.
- Numerical Patterns: Children verbally count beyond 20, recognising the pattern of the counting system.

Understanding the World

- Past and Present: Children talk about the lives of people around them and their roles in society.
- People, Culture and Communities: Children know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country.
- The Natural World: Children explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants.

Expressive Arts and Design

- Creating with Materials: Children safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools, and techniques.
- Being Imaginative and Expressive: Children invent, adapt, and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

1. Playing and Exploring – *Engagement*

- Finding out and exploring
- Playing with what they know
- Being willing to 'have a go'

This characteristic focuses on a child's curiosity and enthusiasm for discovery. It encourages open-ended play and experimentation.

2. Active Learning – *Motivation*

- Being involved and concentrating
- Keeping on trying
- Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

This is about persistence and resilience. Children are motivated to keep going even when challenges arise, and they take pride in their accomplishments.

3. Creating and Thinking Critically – *Thinking*

- Having their own ideas
- Making links
- Choosing ways to do things

This characteristic supports problem-solving, decision-making, and reflective thinking. Children learn to plan, test, and adapt their strategies.



Planning and Observations

Our planning is as follows:

1. Long-Term Planning

- Based on the EYFS framework and our three-year rolling curriculum.
- Covers broad developmental goals and themes over the year.

2. Medium-Term Planning

- Focuses on specific topics or interests over a few weeks.
- Incorporates seasonal events, cultural celebrations, or children's emerging interests.

3. Short-Term/ Weekly Planning

- Highly responsive to children's current needs and interests.
- Includes adult-led activities, enhancements to continuous provision, and next steps.

4. In-the-Moment Planning

- Spontaneous and based on real-time observations.
- Practitioners interact and extend learning as it happens.

Types of observations

1. Snapshot - Quick notes on something significant.
2. Narrative - Detailed account of an activity or interaction.
3. Photo/ Video - Visual evidence of learning.
4. Learning Stories - Personalised stories that reflect a child's learning journey.

What we observe

- Engagement in activities
- Use of language and communication
- Social interactions
- Problem-solving and creativity
- Characteristics of Effective Learning

Observations

Observations of children's play and learning are recorded within the school day. We use Tapestry, an online learning journal, to record children's voice, photos and videos to show their learning. Observations will include some or all of these:

- Date observation has taken place
- Some observations may be evidence for more than one subject area
- Characteristics of effective learning
- Child voice: examples of the language, questions, responses of the child whilst engaging at the chosen activity. Anything said by the child should be recorded in speech marks to show their own voice including any grammatical errors
- Photographic or video evidence of the child engaging in a task or photographs of work completed
- A next step or way forward, shared with families to encourage practice at home

Tapestry

Tapestry is used to create, and share observations made of the children's learning and as a communication tool for families. We appreciate that children are constantly learning and that this is not specific to the hours within a school day. We value observations shared from home of children's life experiences and hobbies and activities, which ultimately contribute to their overall learning. Permission is obtained from parents and carers upon starting Reception or nursery in line with meeting GDPR guidance and expectations.

Environments

All our federation schools have wonderful outside environments as well as well-organised classrooms, which are organised to allow children to explore and learn safely and securely. Each classroom has defined learning areas where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. These areas can be active, quiet, creative and imaginative. The areas provide a balance of continuous provision and adult directed tasks to promote independence as well as carefully planned tasks for the children to complete linked to areas of learning.

The outside areas have equal importance within the foundation stage and children can free flow between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Being outdoors offers the children opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales, as well as offering opportunities for physical activity, freedom and movement and promoting a sense of wellbeing. They can explore, use their senses, develop their language skills and be physically active. We plan activities and resources for both indoor and outdoor environments, enabling children to develop all areas of their learning.



Assessment

The Early Years Foundation Stage does not require practitioners to track children's progress towards the Early Learning Goals (ELG) at the end of Reception. However, as a school, we ask practitioners to assess the children in their class termly. During the summer term, a summary of these assessments is sent to the Local Authority for analysis. This data is also shared with the next teacher and with parents and carers during consultation meetings and in the child's end of year report.

Assessment in the foundation stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, photographic evidence, and planned activities. Assessment is completed regularly and involves all staff within the EYFS setting. The collection of assessment data in the foundation stage is a statutory requirement.

Baseline Assessment

During the first term in Reception, the teacher conducts a statutory baseline assessment of each individual child. The aim of this is to achieve an on-entry assessment of pupil attainment to be used as a starting point to their schooling. The assessment is practically and orally based and will take up to 20 minutes to complete with each child. These assessments allow practitioners to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children.

Transition

Transition into Nursery at Iford and Kingston CE Primary School

Children get a soft start and home visits to enable us to get know you and your child in their home setting.

Transition into Reception

New Reception parents and carers are invited to attend a presentation in the summer term to provide them with essential information for the next academic year. The transition process will include the following:

- Your child's class teacher will visit your child at their nursery or pre-school setting to meet them and their key workers to discuss your child as a learner. If a meeting cannot take place in person, a phone call will be made as an alternative communication.
- Each child and their parent/carers will be invited to attend stay and play sessions so they can spend time at school with staff in the environment.
- Home visits will be made to meet the children and families. These meetings will take place in September with the class teacher and teaching assistant.

When children join school in September, the following procedures will apply for them to gradually adjust to their new surroundings and establish positive relationships:

- Children will have a staggered start to ensure they become familiar with staff, routines, and environments before settling into a full-time start.
- Children will experience a morning session as well as a morning session *with* lunch before their first full day.

Transition into Year One

During the summer term, we begin to prepare children for transition into Year One and the Key Stage One curriculum. The transition period includes:

- Story sessions with their new teacher
- A change over transition slot with their new teacher
- A comprehensive handover between teachers at the end the year
- A family curriculum meeting at the start of the term

Safeguarding and Wellbeing

At the Skylark Federation we know that 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. We provide a high-quality, welcoming, and safe setting where children can enjoy learning and grow in confidence. We take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well, including:

- Safeguarding children
- Ensuring the people who have contact with children are suitable
- Promoting good health
- Supporting and understanding behaviour
- Maintaining records, policies, and procedures

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

At the Skylark Federation each school has a designated Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) for two days a week. and other providers (in group provision) are expected to identify a SENCO. We abide by the 0-25 SEND Code of Practice.

Partnerships

We believe in working in partnership with families, outside agencies and other teaching professionals. We value our partnerships and endeavour to actively maintain these by sharing information, ideas, expertise, and our knowledge. Within our role of enabling partnerships we:

- Meet weekly as a federation EYFS team to discuss assessments, planning, individual children, research and any other pertinent matters.
- Hold regular family workshops on relevant areas of children's development.
- Work closely with the Chailey hub for moderation groups to share practice and support colleagues across the local area.
- Moderate work with Reception teachers within the federation and Year 1 teachers in each school.
- Attend moderation provided by the local authority and take part in a cycle of external moderations.