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Foundation Stage and Learning in the Early Years Policy

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1. Introduction

The Trust intends and expects that all decisions around the use of Trust resources will be underpinned at all times by its vision and values:

Our aim:

To create centres of educational excellence that inspire all pupils to turn their potential into performance

To achieve this our schools will:

Provide a broad and balanced curriculum that allows pupils to develop their talents and ambitions

Deliver the highest quality learning opportunities facilitated by excellent teachers

Inspire our pupils to become confident, motivated and respectful individuals ready to make a positive contribution to society

The Trust will support our schools by:

Maximising the resources and expertise available to individual schools

Providing a platform for the sharing of excellent practice

Challenging and developing staff to turn their potential into performance

1.1. Aims and Scope

Early Years education at Red Oaks means an exciting and balanced curriculum that encourages exploration and independent learning. We always put the child at the centre of the learning, making learning enjoyable and accessible to all. Teachers respond to the children and plan accordingly. Therefore, the planning is fluid and dynamic and responds to the child meaning every child is an individual and our child initiated, response-based planning aims to provide them with opportunities to develop their abilities.

At Red Oaks we embody the principles of the new EYFS statutory framework (Sept 2026);

“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.

The EYFS sets the standards that all Early Years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children’s ‘school readiness’ and gives children the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

The EYFS is about what children learn, as well as how they learn. Effective practice is a mix of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other and through adult-guided learning.”

(EYFS framework Sept 2026)

In Red Oaks the EYFS seeks to provide:

• Quality and consistency, so that every child makes good progress, and no child gets left behind.

• A secure foundation through planning for the learning and development of each individual child and assessing and reviewing what they have learned regularly.

• Partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers.

• Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

At Red Oaks our overarching principles in the Early Years provision are:

• Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured.

• Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.

• 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. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.

•The Importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates.

1.2 Other Linked Policies

- Early Years Foundation Stage Assessment Policy
- Safeguarding
- Equal opportunities

2. Policy Statement

2.1. Policy Terms

What is the Early Years Foundation Stage?

The Setting

The EYFS unit consists of 2 combined F1 and F2 classes of children. The children range from 3-5 years of age. For the F1 children we offer 15 hour and 30-hour provision. For these children we offer two sessions, one in the morning between 8:30am and 11:30am and one in the afternoon between 12:00pm and 3:00pm. The 30-hour children attend all day with a lunch session at 11:45 am. Each session is staffed with 2 full-time class teachers, Nursery TA or Nursery Key worker Lead. In addition, there are other support staff in the sessions and this is dependent on the number of children. There is also specialist support for individual children with specific needs.

Beginning School

- Visits prior to admission are available to parents
- Home visits are carried out in June or July for all children in the FS who are new to Red Oaks. During these home visits parents are asked to complete a profile of their child
- A series of welcome events are held in the summer term prior to the children starting school as part of the induction process. Information is given about school procedures as well as an insight into what their children will experience.
- Parents are introduced to teachers and support staff
- The children attend induction sessions where they meet their teacher, support staff and class friends
- Links between Nursery and Reception are strong. We have joint assemblies/Nativities together and additional story times with staff in order to ease the transition process (see transition policy)
- Information on emergency contacts, permissions for websites and medical conditions is collected for each child and is updated regularly

After Admission

- Parents are invited to attend workshops based on; Play, Phonics, Reading, English, Maths, Speaking and Listening and the Personal Social and Emotional Development aspects of learning. These workshops are to give parents an idea of what a typical school day looks like in a Foundation Stage classroom and the wider school and also guidance and support of how to help them at home.
- Parents are invited to contribute to their child's learning through the school's assessment system SONAR and Class Dojo.
- All parents are encouraged to share books with their children at home through the use of the reading logs and on-line resources.
- Parents are invited to help at school with activities such as reading, cookery and school trips.
- Newsletters are circulated to parents regularly in addition to Dojo updates.
- The school website is regularly updated.
- Parents' evenings are held three times a year, but staff are always happy to listen to parents if they have any worries about a child.
- In addition, parents are invited in to termly open mornings where the children will involve them in the learning environment, e.g. A teddy bears tea party. 'Book Looks' and "Relative reads" where Writing Journals, Maths and Special books will be shared and parents will reflect on these alongside their child.

Curriculum

There are seven areas of learning and development in the EYFS and all of these areas of development are important and inter-connected. These areas are important in igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.

Within the 7 areas there are 3 Prime Areas which underpin all learning and skills:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Then there are 4 Specific Areas which will draw upon skills from the Prime Areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive Arts and Design

Each area of learning and development through planned and purposeful play delivered through a combination of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

"*Play is essential for children's development, building confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play and in taking part in play which is guided by adults*." (Statutory Framework for the Early Years, DFE, 2020)

The seven areas in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provide a framework for our planning which enables us to achieve our aims for the under-fives provision.

We ensure that all children experience a broad and balanced curriculum. Underpinning this are the Characteristics of Effective Learning;

Playing and Exploring, Active Learning and Creating and Thinking Critically.

Teachers and support staff plan together to ensure consistency across year groups.

The three stages of planning are:

- Long- term planning (LTP), which provides a broad framework for the curriculum to meet the needs of the Nursery and Reception Classes. This is drawn from the objectives that will be covered in each term.
- Medium-term planning, which specifies learning activities and learning objectives over each term. This is child focused and all stake holders are invited to contribute ideas to the MTPs.
- Short term planning, which focuses on the day-to-day details of teaching and learning and allows for adaptive teaching, revision and modification of learning activities informed by on-going assessments, and observations. At each stage there needs to be clear identification of the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes that are the focus for the intended learning both for individuals and groups.

The Environment

Children learn best in a stimulating but ordered environment where the opportunities for active learning are thoughtful and purposefully planned. It is organised into both indoor and outdoor working areas, where children have easy access to a full range of materials which they can choose to learn with. The Early Years staff provide a variety of different learning opportunities and these can include:

- Imaginative/Dramatic play
- Sound/Music
- Speaking and listening
- Art and Craft
- Maths/Science/Investigation
- Mark Making
- Construction
- Physical Play/Forest Schools (Indoor/outdoor)
- Malleable Materials
- Small World/Role play

Learning opportunities inside the classroom are also reflected in the outdoor classroom.

Appendices

3. GENERAL GUIDANCE AND PROCEDURES

Roles and Responsibilities

Effective teamwork is essential in providing an appropriate curriculum and environment for young children.

Role of the Foundation Stage Manager

Within the Early Years Team there is a designated Foundation Stage Manager, whose role includes:

- Managing the implementation of the Early Years curriculum including the interface between the EYFS and the National Curriculum.
- Over-seeing the drawing up and implementation of a FS policy
- Ensuring that ALL school policies and schemes of work address the needs of the youngest children
- Reporting regularly to the Headteacher, SLT and link governors about the achievements and planned developments for Early Years
- Being an advocate to the highest possible quality and practice for young children
- Training and evaluation

Role of the Teacher

The teacher has day-to-day management responsibility for:

- The children
- Non-teaching support staff
- The organising and smooth running of the Nursery/Reception class overall planning, assessment and evaluation of the curriculum and the children
- Creating links with colleagues in school, home, community and other agencies
- Maintaining strong links with parents
- Attending courses and updating themselves and the team on current practices
- Ensure assessment of all staff is accurate and direct targets for children and key groups

Role of the Support Staff

They will be accountable to the Nursery Lead /Reception teachers and:

- have a valuable and vital role within the team
- have a special knowledge and understanding of play and are able to present a range of activity in a supportive role
- have the skills to observe and report accurately
- alongside the teacher will ensure the smooth running and organisation of the room
- are able to play a part in training other teaching assistants/students
- are willing to attend courses to further personal skills and knowledge

Staff Training

We are always aiming to improve our teaching skills, knowledge and understanding and so ALL staff are encouraged to participate in local education authority courses and in house training. ALL FS and Year 1 teachers will be involved in EYFS and Trust led cluster moderation throughout the year.

Parental Involvement

Parents should be fully involved in their children's learning and we believe that a partnership between the home and early years setting contributes significantly to a child's social, personal and academic development. Children's experiences at home have a significant impact on achievement and parents have a key role to play in their child's learning. We provide opportunities for parents to come and help in the school and we value their opinions and suggestions.

The following opportunities for contacts with parents are:

- Parent consultations and advice (formal and informal)
- The school's assessment system SONAR and Class Dojo
- Reports
- Termly curriculum letters
- Parent help in school activities
- Parental involvement in homework activities such as reading and phonics.
- The school website; www.redoaks.org.uk
- Open mornings
- Staff greeting at the door
- Workshops and family learning events

Assessment and Record Keeping

At Red Oaks we are always observing the children as part of our ongoing assessment and moderation processes and entering this onto SONAR our assessment tool.

Initial Assessment

- Home/school booklet which is completed by the parent/s prior to the home visit
- RBA National Baseline
- On entry observations and informal assessments fed into SONAR

Ongoing Assessment

See Early Years Foundation Stage Assessment Policy

Special Educational Needs

We believe that all children are entitled to a learning environment in which they are encouraged to reach their potential in a supportive atmosphere which fosters a growth towards independent learning appropriate to their age and stage of development.

We aim to identify the children with special needs at the earliest possible stage and differentiate their activities accordingly. If we feel that differentiation and 'adaptive teaching' alone is not sufficient support then we have a SENDCo who can offer additional support.

Support and advice to staff, children and parents/carers are given by additional outside agencies e.g., Educational Psychologist, Learning Support Service, Speech Therapists and others outlined in the school's Special Needs Policy.

Equal Opportunities

All children, regardless of gender, ability/disability, belief, ethnic or social background, have equal access to the Early Years Curriculum.

Appendices 3.1

Safeguarding and Suitability

- **Enhanced DBS Checks:** Enhanced criminal records and children's barred list checks are now legally required for all volunteers, even if supervised.
- **New Staff Start Dates:** New employees and childminder assistants cannot start working—regardless of supervision status—until the provider receives the enhanced check and suitability confirmation.
- **Lower Reporting Threshold:** Providers must now notify Ofsted or their childminder agency of any allegations of "harm" (lowered from the previous threshold of "serious harm") regarding anyone living, working, or looking after children on the premises. [
- **Disclosures:** Updated rules specify what information providers must instruct staff to disclose regarding personal suitability to work with children.

Welfare, Sleep, Safer Eating and Safety

- **Banned Dog Breeds:** Registered childcare is strictly prohibited from operating on any premises where a banned dog breed is kept or present. (not applicable to us - but remain mindful of dogs on premises at all times)
- **Screen Use Guidance:** We must have regard to the Department for Education's screen use guidance, ensuring any technology use is intentional and never replaces active play, reading, or face-to-face interaction

- **Safer Sleep:** Explicit statutory wording for safer sleep requirements (covering bedding, positioning, temperature, and supervision) is now integrated directly into the main body of the framework rather than external guidance. (Please see below for specific additional staff guidance for safer sleeping at Red Oaks.) Appendices 3.2

- **Safer Eating and Weaning**
  The EYFS Sept 2026 introduces clearer, more detailed expectations for safer eating, weaning, allergy management, and supervision to reduce choking risks and ensure children’s mealtime safety. (Please see Appendices 3.3 below for more detail)

3.2. Additional Safer Sleep Policy for Children Aged 3 and above

(Aligned with DfE Safer Sleep Guidance, EYFS updates due September 2026)

1. Policy Statement

Our setting is committed to ensuring that all children, including those aged 3 years and above, sleep and rest safely. Although the DfE's detailed safer sleep requirements focus on children under 2, the guidance makes clear that children over 12 months remain at risk of SUDC, and unsafe sleep environments can lead to accidental suffocation or entrapment. We therefore apply safe sleep principles consistently across the EYFS, including for older children.

2. Purpose

This policy ensures:

· A safe sleep environment for children aged 3+.

· Compliance with DfE safer sleep guidance and EYFS safeguarding expectations.

· Consistent practice across all staff.

· Prevention of accidents linked to unsafe sleep spaces (entanglement, soft furniture, head covering).

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

· All children aged 3–5 years in the EYFS.

· All staff, students, volunteers, and visitors involved in supervising rest or sleep.

· All sleep, nap, rest, or quiet-time routines.

4. Key Principles for Children Aged 3+

Children aged 3 and above:

· Must sleep or rest in a safe, supervised environment.

· Must be within sight and hearing of staff at all times.

· Must have a sleep space that is clear, flat, firm, and free from hazards.

· Must not sleep on soft furniture (sofas, beanbags, cushions) where entrapment or suffocation could occur.

5. Sleep Environment Requirements

5.1 Sleep Position

· Children should be encouraged to lie on their back when settling.

· If a child naturally moves into another position, staff ensure the space remains safe and unobstructed.

5.2 Sleep Space

For children aged 3+, acceptable sleep spaces include:

· A bed, cot, or firm mattress on the floor.

· A designated rest mat that is flat, firm, and unobstructed.

Sleep spaces must not include: Sofas, Beanbags, Large cushions, Soft play equipment or any surface where a child could roll into gaps or become trapped.

(These risks are highlighted in DfE guidance on accidental suffocation and entanglement.)

5.3 Bedding

For children aged 3+:

· Use lightweight blankets only if needed.

· Bedding must be kept below shoulder height to prevent head covering.

· No loose bedding, pillows, toys, or comforters that could obstruct breathing.

6. Temperature & Clothing

· Children must not become too hot or cold.

· Remove coats, hats, and outdoor layers before sleep.

· Heads must remain uncovered.

7. Supervision & Monitoring

· Children aged 3+ must always be within sight and hearing during sleep or rest.

· Staff conduct frequent checks, ensuring:

- Normal breathing
- No head covering
- No entanglement in bedding
- Appropriate temperature

· Checks are recorded according to setting procedures.

8. If a Child Falls Asleep Unexpectedly

If a child aged 3+ falls asleep:

· In a pushchair, soft chair, or other unsafe space:

- Staff must move the child to a safe sleep space as soon as possible.
- If moving is unsafe (e.g., during transport), staff maintain close supervision until transfer is possible.

9. Children with Additional Needs

For children with: Medical conditions, Developmental needs and sleep disorders staff follow:

· Individual healthcare plans

· Professional medical guidance

· Risk assessments agreed with parents/carers

10. Staff Training & Responsibilities

All staff must:

· Read and understand this appendix policy.

· Know the risks of unsafe sleep for children over 12 months (SUDC, entanglement, soft furniture hazards).

· Follow DfE safer sleep guidance and EYFS safeguarding requirements.

11. Partnership with Parents

We will:

· Discuss individual sleep routines if necessary.

· Encourage safe sleep practices at home.

· Follow medical advice for children with specific health needs.

3.3 Safer Eating and Weaning

- **Individualised Approach:** Providers must discuss children's current stage of solid food introduction with parents, considering textures and developmental readiness rather than assuming based solely on age. Food should be prepared according to each child's abilities to chew and swallow safely particularly with children with known additional needs.

- **Supervision Requirements:** Children are within sight and hearing while eating. Staff are encouraged to face children, monitoring for signs of choking, inappropriate food sharing, or allergic reactions.

- **Allergy and Choking Risk Management**

  Food Preparation: Choking-risk foods should be prepared carefully to match the child's developmental stage. Items known to present high choking hazards must be avoided or cut appropriately and if present in lunch boxes parents will be informed.
  Allergy Awareness: Accurate allergy information must be clearly visible to the relevant staff and communicated to ensure safe mealtime practices for individual children as per their Health Support Plan.
  Staff Training: All staff should be trained in safe eating practices, recognising allergic reactions, and responding effectively to choking emergencies.

- **Mealtime Practices**

  Seating Arrangements: Children should be appropriately seated during meals and snacks to minimise risks and support safe eating.
  Shared Practices: Staff should ensure ongoing observation, intervene promptly if safety issues arise, and maintain consistent routines aligned with safe weaning (only specific children) and mealtime guidelines.

  Implementation Steps for Providers
  Review and update weaning and mealtime policies to reflect the EYFS 2026 requirements.
  Check that food textures, allergies, and safety protocols for each child are agreed upon with parents.
  Ensure all staff understand supervision responsibilities and positioning during meals.
  Maintain records of staff training and update emergency response procedures for choking incidents.