

Early Years Policy

Review date: September 2026
Date of next review: September 2028

Review history

Review Date	Reviewer	Approved by	Date approved	Implementation
September 2024	A Bartlett	Executive Board	March 2023	April 2023
September 2026	A Bartlett	Executive Board	July 2024	September 2024
September 2028	A Bartlett	Executive Board	September 2026	September 2026

Recent revisions

Issue No.	Date	Revisions made
1		
2	September 2024	No amendments
3	September 2026	Updated legislation, safeguarding, curriculum, monitoring and working with parents.

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the aims and objectives of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Curriculum for the North East Learning Trust

All Academies within the Trust, aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident, resilient, and independent. We value the individual child and work alongside parents, carers, and other professionals to meet their needs and to help every child reach their full potential.

As outlined in the EYFS Statutory Framework 'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five 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 together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.

2. Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- all children access an ambitious and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life.
- quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress, and no child gets left behind. We foster a “keep up” not “catch up” approach.
- a close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.
- every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.
- children enjoy challenging learning experiences, based on their stage of development as, informed by observation and assessment.
- there are rich opportunities for children to engage in activities that are both adult-initiated as well as child-initiated, supported by the adult where appropriate.
- a key person approach to develop close relationships with individual children.
- the provision of a secure and safe learning environment indoors and out.

3. Legislation

This policy is based on the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) effective from September 2025 and reflects the most recent updates to safeguarding, welfare, and curriculum requirements.

It also takes account of:

- The Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF), updated November 2025
- The Childcare Act 2006
- The Early Years Foundation Stage (Learning and Development Requirements) Order

The Trust ensures ongoing compliance with all statutory guidance and adapts provision accordingly.

4. Links to other policies

This policy should be read alongside the following Trust and Academy policies and procedures:

- Academy Behaviour Policy
- NELT Safeguarding Policy
- Academy Special Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Academy SEN Information Report

Policies are published on the Trust and Academy websites.

5. Structure of the EYFS

Early Years Foundation Stage in our Academies applies to children from 3 years of age to the end of the reception. Reception children join us at the beginning of the school year in which they are five. Key Stage 1 begins for our children at the beginning of Year 1. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is important in preparing children for later schooling. The EYFS sets out what is expected of most children by the end of the Foundation Stage.

6. Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the latest version of the EYFS statutory framework that applies from September 2021.

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

The curriculum is designed to provide children with the knowledge, skills and cultural capital they need to succeed in later learning and life. A strong emphasis is placed on communication, language development and vocabulary acquisition.

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which children explore, think creatively and are active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, resilience, and independence, as well as placing a focus on children's language and vocabulary skills. We emphasise a love of reading in our curriculum.

Learning is delivered through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, with carefully planned opportunities for progression. Staff use high-quality interactions to extend thinking and deepen understanding.

Staff assess children's progress through ongoing observation and use this to inform future planning. Children demonstrate increasing independence, confidence and readiness for Key Stage 1.

6.1 Planning

Staff plan activities and experiences for children that enable children to develop and learn effectively. To do this, staff working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime 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 experience. 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 include these in their practice.

6.2 Teaching

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Staff respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are planned by the adults. During children's play, early years practitioners interact to stretch and challenge children further.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for Year 1. In Reception there are daily phonics sessions using the Read Write Inc phonics scheme.

6.3 Assessment

Ongoing assessment 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.

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.

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.

The EYFS Profile also identifies whether a child has achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD). A GLD is defined as achieving at least the expected level within the early learning goals in the prime areas of learning (communication and language; physical development; and personal, social and emotional development) and the specific areas of literacy and mathematics.

Achieving a Good Level of Development indicates that a child has attained the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to support a successful transition into Key Stage 1. Outcomes are used to inform future planning, transition discussions and the ongoing development of provision across the Trust.

7. Working with parents/carers

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

Parents/carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. Parents meetings and the EYFS profile helps to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

Parental engagement is key to forming a successful home-school partnership. Parent/carers can be involved in a variety of ways:

- Parents/carers support will be positively encouraged and welcomed. This would include interacting and working with the children whilst they engage in activities within school or at home.
- We will offer workshops and parent/carer events throughout the academic year which will support the children's learning and provide opportunities for parental involvement.
- Communication with parents may include digital platforms, workshops and guidance to support learning at home, ensuring consistency between home and school.

8. Safeguarding and welfare procedures

Children's safety and welfare are paramount. The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children in accordance with statutory guidance, including the EYFS Statutory Framework (2025) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025.

Safeguarding procedures are detailed in the Trust Safeguarding Policy. This section outlines how those procedures are implemented in the Early Years context.

In line with the updated EYFS statutory framework (September 2025), the Trust has strengthened safeguarding procedures to ensure the highest standards of care:

- Safer recruitment practices are rigorously applied, including the requirement to obtain and check references prior to employment.
- Procedures are in place to follow up on prolonged or unexplained absence to ensure children's safety and wellbeing.
- Each child must have up-to-date emergency contact information, with systems in place to regularly review this.
- All staff, including trainees, receive appropriate safeguarding training, and the Trust ensures that staff are supported to implement this effectively in practice.
- Staff and students included in ratios must hold paediatric first aid (PFA) where required.
- Staff are deployed effectively across indoor and outdoor areas to ensure children's safety and wellbeing.

- Food and drink are prepared and managed safely, with clear procedures in place to identify and respond to food allergies and dietary needs; children are appropriately supervised during snack and mealtimes to ensure their safety and wellbeing.
- The Trust maintains clear whistleblowing procedures to enable staff to raise concerns safely.
- Children's privacy and dignity are carefully balanced with safeguarding considerations, particularly during intimate care routines.

The Trust follows current national guidance for early years nutrition, promoting healthy eating and balanced diets unless there is a clear and justified reason to make alternative arrangements.

The Trust works in partnership with external agencies, where appropriate, to support the health and wellbeing of children in EYFS, working closely with the pastoral team.

Good oral health and overall wellbeing are promoted through engagement with children and families to raise awareness of:

- The impact of excessive sugar consumption
- The importance of regular tooth brushing.

9. Inclusion

The Trust and its Academies are determined to meet the educational needs of all our pupils, to encourage independence and full participation in the life of the school. A number of pupils will, at some stage of their school career, experience some degree of special educational need.

Working within the guidelines of the Code of Practice, it is our intention that the educational needs of all pupils are identified, and provision made to meet these as early as possible. It is expected that all relevant information concerning children with special educational needs will be treated with the appropriate respect and confidentiality.

We value all our children as individuals irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability, or gender. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and supports them at their own pace so that most of our children achieve Early Learning Goals. We strongly believe that early identification of

children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents and outside agencies.

10. Transition

Transitions are carefully planned for, and time given to ensure continuity of learning. At any transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings, including nurseries and childminders. Children attend introductory sessions to Nursery and Reception to develop familiarity with the practitioners and the setting. They receive an EYFS pack which includes a Welcome to EYFS information booklet, and an 'All About Me' questionnaire.

Meetings will be used to explain routines, times and to answer any questions that may be asked of the setting. They will enable staff to interact with the child and provide him/her with a reference point for the formal start of their provision. Meetings will give an opportunity for both parents and school to discuss mutual expectations or support that may be offered.

In the final term in Reception, the Year 1 teacher will meet with the Early Years staff and discuss each child's development against the Early Learning Goals to support a smooth transition to Year 1.

11. Monitoring

It is the responsibility of EYFS staff to implement this policy consistently across the Trust.

Monitoring is carried out through:

- Regular learning walks and observations
- Moderation of assessment judgements within and across schools
- Review of children's progress and outcomes
- Ongoing professional dialogue aligned to the Ofsted inspection toolkit

Leaders ensure that monitoring focuses on the impact of provision on children's learning, development and wellbeing, and outcomes inform future improvement priorities.