Arrow Valley First School

Early Years Policy

Together we learn, grow and achieve.

Arrow Valley First School is a happy, thriving community where every child is valued and supported to succeed. We believe that **every child has every chance, every day,** to flourish—academically, socially and emotionally.

Date last reviewed: 7th October 2026
Next review: October 2028

Chair LAGB:

1. EYFS vision

At Arrow Valley First School, we believe that every child deserves the very best start to their educational journey. Our Early Years provision is built on a foundation of nurture, curiosity, and high expectations — where every child feels safe, valued, and excited to learn.

We create a warm, calm environment where children feel secure enough to take risks, ask questions, and be themselves. Central to everything we do are high-quality interactions between adults and children — conversations, questioning, and modelling that extends thinking, builds vocabulary, and deepens understanding. Our setting is rich in language, immersing children in new vocabulary, stories, and ideas from their very first day.

2. Our Aims

Through our Early Years provision, we aim to:

- **Nurture the whole child**, building emotional wellbeing, resilience, and self-worth
- **Provide a warm, calm environment** where children feel safe to explore and take risks
- **Deliver high-quality interactions** that extend thinking and deepen learning in the moment
- **Immerse children in rich language**, building vocabulary through talk, stories, and experience
- **Ignite curiosity** through engaging, first-hand learning experiences
- **Build strong foundations** - independence, resilience, and the ability to communicate and collaborate
- **Celebrate individuality**, responding to each child's unique starting points
- **Build strong partnerships** with parents/carers as children's first educators

- **Ensure smooth transitions** from Nursery through to Reception and beyond
- **Embed inclusion**, so every child is supported to thrive and belong

We want every child leaving our Early Years setting to be a confident communicator, a curious explorer, and a happy, secure individual — equipped with skills for life and ready for the next stage of their learning journey

3. Our Values

At Arrow Valley our school values are at the heart of all we do. Our culture teaches children that:

- We are **kind**
- We are **safe**
- We are **honest**
- We are **hardworking**
- We are **resilient**
- We show **respect**

4. Structure of our EYFS

At Arrow Valley our Nursery and Reception class form one Early Years Unit. The EYFS team comprises of a qualified teacher, Megan Miles, who is also our Early Years Lead and 3 achievement assistants, Mrs Woods, Mrs Fry and Miss Blantford. We offer both 15- and 30-hour provision for our Nursery children.

5. Curriculum Intent

Our Early Years curriculum is designed to give every child the knowledge, attributes, skills, and experiences they need to thrive now and in the future. It is ambitious, coherently sequenced, and rooted in the seven areas of learning set out in the EYFS framework, with a particular focus on the three prime areas as the foundation for all future learning.

We intend for our children to:

- Communicate confidently and clearly, developing spoken language, vocabulary, and listening skills that underpin all future learning

- Build secure early reading skills, developing phonological awareness and a love of books through systematic daily phonics teaching
- Develop mathematical understanding through rich, hands-on exploration of number, pattern, shape, and measure, with concrete and pictorial experiences laying firm foundations for later abstract thinking
- Regulate emotions and build relationships, developing the personal, social and emotional skills needed to cooperate, share, and manage feelings
- Develop physical control and coordination, including fine motor skills that prepare children for writing and self-care
- Explore and make sense of the world, developing curiosity about people, places, and the natural and man-made world around them
- Express themselves creatively, through art, music, movement, and imaginative play
- Build cultural capital, through rich, varied experiences that broaden horizons beyond children's immediate context and prepare them for life in modern Britain

Our curriculum is sequenced so that learning builds cumulatively — each new experience connects to what children already know, deepening understanding and preparing them for the next stage, whether that's Reception, Year 1, or beyond.

6. Implementation

Our curriculum comes to life through a balance of adult-led teaching and child-initiated learning, delivered within a carefully planned continuous provision that reflects the interests and needs of our children.

- **High-quality interactions** — practitioners use skilled questioning, modelling, and commentary to extend children's thinking and vocabulary in the moment, not just in planned sessions
- **A language-rich environment** — stories, rhymes, songs, and talk are woven throughout the day, with a strong focus on developing oracy and vocabulary
- **Continuous provision** — carefully resourced areas of learning that children can access independently, designed to provoke curiosity, embed prior learning, and offer challenge for all

- **Systematic phonics teaching** — delivered daily with fidelity to our chosen scheme Read Write Inc, building on secure phonological awareness developed in Nursery
- **Purposeful play** — both child-led and adult-guided, recognising play as the primary vehicle through which young children learn
- **Outdoor learning** — a rich, accessible outdoor environment used daily to support physical development, exploration, and real-world learning
- **Responsive planning** — practitioners use in-the-moment observation to adapt teaching, follow children's interests, and address emerging needs
- **Consistent routines** — predictable structures that build children's independence, confidence, and sense of security
- **Strong transitions** — carefully planned moves between Nursery, Reception, and Year 1, including visits, shared information, and consistent approaches
- **Inclusive practice** — adaptive teaching and additional support (e.g. SEND provision, EAL strategies) ensure every child can access and thrive within the curriculum
- **Partnership with parents** — regular communication, shared learning journeys via Class Dojo, and opportunities for parents to contribute to and extend learning at home

7. Impact

We measure the impact of our Early Years provision through a combination of formative observation, summative assessment, and the confidence, happiness, and readiness of our children.

- Ongoing formative assessment — practitioners use observation and knowledge of each child to assess progress against the Development Matters/EYFS framework continuously, not just at data points
- Progress from starting points — impact is measured by each child's individual journey, not just end-of-year attainment, recognising varied starting points
- Good Level of Development (GLD) — tracked and compared to national benchmarks, with a focus on closing gaps for disadvantaged and vulnerable children
- Readiness for Year 1 — children move on with the communication, independence, and self-regulation skills needed to access KS1

- Pupil voice and engagement — children demonstrate curiosity, confidence, and enthusiasm for learning, visible in their play, talk, and choices
- Closing the gap — targeted interventions and adaptive teaching within provision ensure SEND, EAL, and disadvantaged children make strong progress relative to their starting points

8. Characteristics of effective learning

Alongside the seven areas of learning, we place equal value on how children learn — not just what they learn. The Characteristics of Effective Learning underpin everything we do in our Early Years setting, shaping children into curious, resilient, and confident learners for life.

- **Playing and Exploring** — children investigate, engage, and "have a go," learning through first-hand experiences, sensory exploration, and purposeful play
- **Active Learning** — children concentrate, keep trying despite challenges, and take pride and satisfaction in achieving what they set out to do
- **Creating and Thinking Critically —** children develop their own ideas, make connections between concepts, and find new ways to solve problems

We nurture these characteristics through:

- **Skilled adult interactions** — practitioners model curiosity, ask open-ended questions, and give children thinking time rather than rushing to the "right" answer
- **A culture that values effort and process** — celebrating perseverance, resilience, and having a go, not just the end result
- **Rich, open-ended provision** — resources and environments that invite exploration, problem-solving, and imaginative thinking rather than a single "correct" outcome
- **Time and space to think** — children are given genuine opportunities to test ideas, make mistakes, and revise their thinking
- **Modelling metacognition** — practitioners narrate their own thinking aloud ("I wonder what would happen if…") to help children develop their own reflective habits
- **Consistent language of learning** — using shared vocabulary (e.g. "having a go," "trying a different way," "I'm stuck, what could I try?") across the setting so children internalise these dispositions

We believe these characteristics are just as important as academic outcomes, as they build the learning behaviours that support success not only in Reception and Year 1, but throughout children's whole educational journey.

9. Observations and planning

We use the EYFS supporting document 'Development Matters', to guide observations, assessment and planning. The prime areas of learning are central to all teaching and the specific areas of learning provide children with a broad curriculum and with opportunities to strengthen and apply the prime areas of learning. This is particularly important in developing language and extending vocabulary.

Planning within the EYFS consists of a yearly planning overview to ensure coverage and progression, medium term planning is based around half termly themes which follow a two-yearly rolling programme. This moves into short term and weekly planning.

These plans are used by the EYFS teachers as a vehicle of interest to deliver the children's next steps in learning, however, the teacher may alter these in response to the needs, achievements, and interests of the children.

Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. Practitioners consider the individual needs, interests, and development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development. These observations and discussions with children then lead the direction of the planning.

Staff share 'Wow' moments of children's progression with Parents/Carers through Class Dojo.

10. Assessment and recording systems

On entry to Nursery and Reception, the Early Years practitioners use their professional judgement, based on observations of individuals, to record the starting points for the children's level of development. Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. Children are observed in all areas of the curriculum and significant observations are recorded showing personal achievements.

Assessments are made across the seven areas of learning recording whether a child is at the expected level of development with practitioners drawing on their knowledge of the child and their own professional judgement against age related expectations. This information is used to shape future teaching and learning experiences for each child. We measure the percentage of pupils achieving age related expectations throughout the academic year, putting supportive interventions in place if needed. Class teachers use observations to make formative assessments which inform future planning and ensure that all children build on their current knowledge and skills at a good pace.

Summative assessments compare children's attainment to age related expectations using 'Development Matters'. This is tracked using the school's data system to ensure rates of progress are at least good for all children, including vulnerable groups. Our assessment judgements are moderated both in school and with other schools in our Trust. We also partake in Local Authority quality assurance sessions to ensure our school judgements are informed and validated.

11. Statutory requirements

Reception baseline assessment

Children will complete the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) within the first 6 weeks of joining Reception, regardless of when they join the class, unless they have been assessed previously. The RBA is an age-appropriate assessment of mathematics and communication and language, that is delivered in English. It is clearly linked to the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. The purpose of the RBA is to provide an on-entry assessment of pupil attainment to be used as a starting point from which a cohort-level progress measure to the end of key stage 2 (KS2) can be created.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, and no later than 30 June in that term, the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is completed for each child. Practitioners must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are not yet reaching expected levels (emerging) across the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. Each child's level of development is recorded as Emerging or Expected against the 17 Early Learning Goals.

12. Additional Support

Additional Support: We recognise the unique practice of nurturing the learning of young children with specific needs and we are aware of the importance of early intervention for children facing specific developmental/learning challenges.

Early intervention ensures all children can access every aspect of the school curriculum. Intervention can take different forms, such as supporting parents, school-based programs to improve children's learning potential, and additional support at school from appropriate staff (Teachers and Achievement Assistants). Support will be offered as soon as possible for children who have difficulty with their learning. We adapt and scaffold provision for all ability levels within school and, if deemed appropriate after discussion with parents/carers, seek support from other agencies.

The class teacher is responsible for identifying and planning for individual needs with help from the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo). Our experienced SEND Coordinator, Holly Adams, works closely with staff as well as parents and carers to ensure tailored support is available if necessary.

13. Inclusion

All children at Arrow Valley will be valued as individuals, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability, gender, or any other protected characteristic.

We recognise that vulnerability can take many forms and is often contextual and fluid rather than fixed. Staff are trained to identify and respond to the needs of children who may be vulnerable for a wide range of reasons, extending beyond SEND and protected characteristics alone.

Our Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy ensures the needs of every child are considered holistically. Staff are expected to consider the whole child and their family context when planning provision, support, and communication with families, and to raise concerns promptly in line with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Children with SEND will be identified as early as possible, with support implemented in partnership with parents, external agencies, and the SENDCO, who monitors and manages SEND provision within the EYFS setting. Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure full access to the curriculum and wider school life, in line with our SEND Policy.

14. Safety and welfare

At Arrow Valley First School, we meet all statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements as set out in the EYFS Framework 2025, ensuring every child is kept safe, healthy, and well cared for. This includes:

- **Safeguarding —** promoting children's welfare through robust child protection procedures, staff training, and vigilant safer recruitment practices, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026
- **Staff qualifications, training, and ratios** — maintaining appropriate adult-to-child ratios and ensuring staff hold relevant qualifications, with regular training and continuous professional development
- **Health** — promoting good health, including managing allergies and medical needs, administering first aid, and maintaining a clean, hygienic environment
- **Safe sleep** — following safer sleep practices for any children who nap, including appropriate supervision, safe sleeping positions, and regular checks, in line with current guidance. See safer sleep policy.
- **Safe eating** — supporting safe mealtimes through appropriate supervision, children are within sight and hearing of an adult at all times, awareness of allergies and dietary requirements, and guidance on choking hazards and age-appropriate food preparation
- **Medication** — administering medication only with written parental consent, following clear procedures for storage, administration, and accurate record-keeping
- **Intimate care** — ensuring intimate care (e.g. nappy changing, toileting) is carried out sensitively, consistently, and with dignity, following our Intimate Care Policy and safeguarding principles
- **Managing behaviour** — supporting children to understand expectations and manage their feelings and behaviour in developmentally appropriate ways

- **Safety and suitability of premises, environment, and equipment** — ensuring our indoor and outdoor spaces, furniture, and resources are safe, well-maintained, and fit for purpose
- **Special educational needs** — identifying and supporting children with SEND promptly, working closely with families and external agencies where needed
- **Information and records** — maintaining accurate, up-to-date records for each child, including learning journeys, attendance, and any safeguarding concerns, in line with GDPR

We regularly review our policies and practice to ensure they remain compliant with current statutory guidance and reflect best practice in early years care.

15. Partnerships with parents

At Arrow Valley we recognise the role parents/carers play as their child's first educator. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with our children and their families.

We do this by:

- Using Class Dojo as an information sharing tool between teachers and families. Enabling parents and carers to have a window to their child's learning.
- Running parent meetings throughout the year to help parents and carers in supporting their children at home. This includes an introduction to our RWI Phonics programme.
- Inviting parents/carers to stay and play events before their child starts school so they can become familiar with staff and the environment
- Having informal conversations with parents throughout the children's first few days in September in regards to settling in
- Holding parent/teacher consultation meetings, twice yearly, during which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress and next steps
- Sharing planning on the school website about learning taking place each half term
- Sending home phonetically decodable reading books as well as reading for pleasure books, encouraging parents to make comments in their child's reading diary
- Sending home online learning resources such as virtual classroom videos to enable parents/carers to support their child's learning
- Providing end of year reports to outline the progress and achievement made by each child

16. Monitoring and evaluation

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to follow this policy. The Senior Leadership Team will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring system. This policy will be reviewed at the start of each academic year and will incorporate the views of all staff concerned. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.