OTFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Early Years Policy

July 2026

Reviewed and Approved by	FGB
Date	July 2026
For Review	July 2027

OTFORD EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS) POLICY JULY 2026

Introduction

Otford Primary School is dedicated to providing a high-quality, early years' education, which gives children a secure and confident start to their school life, whilst nurturing a life-long love of learning. We strive to create a safe and happy environment, with motivating and enriching learning experiences, that enables children to become confident and independent. We value each individual child and work alongside parents and others to meet their needs. We aspire to support and promote children's holistic growth and development, with each child realising and exceeding their full potential.

We aim to develop a curriculum which reflects contemporary issues such as Black Lives Matters, ensuring sustainable development and growing up in a digital age. Our curriculum also aims to implement equality, citizenship and rights education. We recognise that children entering Early Years now need twenty first century skills where digital skills are central.

Aims

At Otford we believe that every child has the right to experience an outstanding Early Years education, that will provide them with a firm foundation for lifelong learning and development. We strive to ensure our Early Years provision:

- Addresses the children's social, emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development.
- Builds upon children's current level of development and takes what they already know and can do as their starting point.
- Provides a rich and stimulating environment through a wide range of planned, meaningful activities and experiences and an enabling environment that allows the children to make their own choices.
- Is fully inclusive regardless of gender, race, culture, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability or ability.
- Is a safe, secure and caring environment in which children become independent active learners.
- Ensures children are understood and supported in terms of their family, culture and wider community. Diversity is celebrated.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based upon 4 overarching principles:

- **A unique child.**
- **Positive relationships.**
- **Enabling environments.**
- **Learning and development.**

A Unique Child

At Otford we value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of differences. All children are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school. In our Foundation Stage we believe that all of our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning. In the EYFS setting, we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- Monitoring children's progress and acting to provide support as necessary.

It is important to us that all children 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.

Enabling Environments

Our Early Years Team are passionate in creating an inspirational setting which supports children's diverse motivations, interests and needs. We aspire to nurture children's independence and support children's learning by improving interaction and building on their interests throughout the learning environment. We recognise that the Early Years environment should be stimulating and challenging and one that values exploration and play. Our setting offers unique possibilities and daily opportunities for children to immerse themselves in exploration and enquiry and connect with other children and adults. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment, which is set up with targeted activities as well as planned continuous provision. The indoor classroom is set up in learning areas, where children can find and locate equipment and resources independently. The children are free to move between both inside and outside classrooms where they find different learning areas including water, wet sand, dough, paint, workshop, mark making, books corners, maths, small world, small construction, puppets, science, transient art and real-life role play. We have recently developed the classroom by incorporating a "Calm corner" which is a place where the children can independently go to regulate. We have also increased the use of individual visual timetables which are highly visible, with some adult support the children are able to use these themselves.

We continue to develop the outdoor environment by investing in new outdoor equipment which is led by the interests of the child. It is important the children are exposed to open-ended resources to inspire investigative thinking, role- play resources to promote story and imagination as well as natural materials to encourage creativity. Children can investigate through sand and water play, large construction, role play, den building and large-scale mark making. We also have a garden where children are able to explore digging and planting flowers, vegetables and seeds.

Our aim is to develop a language-rich environment which promotes and encourages the enhancement of children's communication and language development, considering both the physical and emotional environment, including positive and responsive interactions with adults. When children acquire strong language skills, this offers a gateway to most other forms of learning, as well as communicating their needs. Speech and language skills open the door to a wealth of other skills including problem-solving, social and personal development, and emotional regulation.

Learning and Development

We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are inter-connected. Features of effective teaching and learning that relate to the EYFS at Otford are:

- The partnership between staff and parents/carers, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- The understanding staff have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;
- The range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication;
- The carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards the Early Learning Goals throughout EYFS;
- The provision for children to choose activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;
- The encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management;
- The support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- The identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through photographic and written evidence and celebrating children's significant achievements. These are shared with parents and carers who can comment on their child's learning.

Effective Professional Dialogue

At our setting, practitioners recognise that high-quality interactions and professional dialogue are central to supporting children's language, communication, and thinking skills. Staff actively engage with children throughout play, modelling rich vocabulary, extending conversations, and encouraging children to express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Practitioners use open-ended questioning, sustained shared thinking, commenting, and attentive listening to promote meaningful back-and-forth interactions. During child-initiated and adult-led play, staff sensitively adapt their language to meet individual needs, giving children time to respond and building on their interests to deepen learning. Through warm, responsive relationships and purposeful interactions, practitioners support the development of confident communicators and foster a language-rich environment where every child feels valued and heard.

The Early Years Curriculum

The Early Years Curriculum is made up of seven areas of learning:

3 Prime Areas

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)
- Communication and Language (CL)
- Physical Development (PD)

4 Specific Areas

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

The Early Years Curriculum is based on the ongoing observations of the 3 prime areas and 4 specific areas and the three characteristics of effective learning. It consists of a level descriptor of the level of attainment, in relation to the areas of learning and a short narrative of how the child demonstrates the three characteristics of effective learning.

Within the final term of Early Years, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their child's progress

The Characteristics of Effective Learning

The Characteristics of Effective Learning underpin all learning in the EYFS and they identify how children learn through playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically. Throughout the EYFS we plan a range of activities which give children learning experiences and opportunities to work towards the Early Learning Goals and prepare them for the National Curriculum. Planned activities are appropriately differentiated to consider individual needs of children and to ensure that activities are closely matched to the children's abilities and stage of development. Teaching and learning take place within the inside classroom and in the outside environment. Within these areas there will be a range of activities and experiences that have a balance of adult led and child initiated and that cover all 7 Areas of Learning. The EYFS practitioners are required to enhance the continuous provision in the environment according to the children's interests and outcomes of informal and formal assessments.

Play and Exploring

Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. Play is the highest level of child development where children make the choice of what they want to do, how they do it and when to move onto something new. Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world.

They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They can think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own.

Active Learning

Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.
Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence they learn to make decisions. This provides children with a sense of satisfactions as they take ownership of their learning.

Creativity and Critical Thinking

When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, the discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions. Children should be given opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults can support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

None of these areas of learning and development can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other to support a rounded approach to Early Years' development. All the areas will be delivered through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

The statutory early learning goals outline the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS. By the end of the EYFS, some children will have exceeded the goals. Other children, depending on their individual needs, will be working towards some or all of the goals – particularly some younger children, some children with learning difficulties and disabilities and some learning English as an additional language.

Planning

The Early Years Foundation Stage framework (2021), sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. This forms the long-term planning for teachers. Medium-term planning identifies the intended learning, with outcomes, for children working towards the Early Learning Goals and beyond. Planning is theme based and are based upon all of the children's interests and stage of development. Ideas for themes and mini topics can develop throughout the year. The planning is based upon themes with discrete phonics, maths, writing and reading directed teaching. The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Cornerstones curriculum which delivers progressive learning opportunities for all children. These are used to support short term planning –weekly and daily.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Assessment is on-going which is integral to teaching and learning in each classroom. Children are assessed in a range of ways that informs teacher planning for individuals as well as for small groups and the whole class.

Baseline

During Autumn Term 1, baseline assessments, based on teacher judgement, information from pre-schools and families are used to form a baseline judgement. The reception baseline assessment is a statutory assessment that was introduced in September 2021. It must be completed in the first six weeks children start in reception and assesses children in mathematics, literacy and communication and language. This process does not involve any tests or pre-set tasks and is fully in line with good EYFS assessment practice. This process is designed to be formative in nature so that the information provides a baseline which directly informs and supports planning and next steps in learning. It assesses the Prime Areas and Specific Areas of learning and whether or not children demonstrate the Characteristics of Effective Learning – all critical indicators of future outcomes.

Ongoing Assessment

On-going assessments are carried out throughout the year using a mixture of informal observations, interactions with the children and by looking at samples of their learning. Children are observed indoors and outdoors and, in both child initiated and adult led activities.

Formal Assessment

On-going assessments are carried out throughout the year using a mixture of informal observations, interactions with the children and by looking at samples of their learning. Children are observed indoors and outdoors during child initiated and adult led activities. In addition to this, parents and carers are given the opportunity to meet with the Early Years Team through Open Classrooms and parent evenings where they will receive a summary of their child's progress, enabling school and parents to form a good relationship.

Transition

Transition from Nursery to Reception

In Early Years, we recognise the importance of a smooth transition from Nursery to Reception and Reception to Year 1. Staff understand the importance of these transition times and provide positive experiences and guidance for all at these crucial times. They aim to provide a seamless transition for all of our children so that their wellbeing, learning and development is not hindered.

The EYFS teachers either visit the children in their Nurseries/pre-school settings or hold telephone conversations with Key Workers near the end of the academic year. This enables the teachers to observe the children in their familiar setting as well as receive any information regarding the child's progress throughout their final year, in their current setting to ensure our teachers have a full picture of individual children and the class as a whole.

In Summer Term 2, parents are invited to attend an informal meeting lead by the Head Teacher and EYFS teachers about what to expect from the Reception year. Parents can then visit the two Reception classrooms and outdoor area, taking this opportunity to discuss with the class teachers any concerns or queries they have about their child starting school. The class teachers will also visit each child in their home in September which gives the parent and child the opportunity to discuss any concerns or answer questions. Each child will have received an All About Me book in the Admissions Booklet which can be completed with their parents over the summer break and returned to the class teacher when they start school in September.

Transition from Reception to Year One-

At our setting, we recognise the critical importance of supporting children as they transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) into Year 1. This period marks a significant change in a child's educational journey, and we are committed to ensuring it is a smooth and positive experience for every child. To support this transition, we implement a carefully planned program
me that helps children become familiar with their new environment and feel confident about the move. This includes:

Classroom and Outdoor Area Visits: Children are given opportunities during the summer term to visit their new Year 1 classroom and associated outdoor learning spaces. These visits allow them to explore the new environment in a supportive and familiar context, helping to reduce anxiety and build confidence.

Meeting the New Teacher: Children have the chance to meet and interact with their new Year 1 teacher ahead of September. These interactions may take place during story sessions, play-based activities, or informal classroom visits, allowing children to begin forming positive relationships before the start of the new academic year.

Familiar Routines and Continuity: We work closely with Year 1 staff to ensure that routines and expectations in the autumn term are developmentally appropriate and reflect the principles of the EYFS where possible. This helps ease the shift into more structured learning while continuing to nurture children's curiosity and independence.

Communication with Parents and Carers: We provide parents and carers with clear information about the transition process and offer opportunities to discuss their child's progress and readiness for Year 1. We encourage collaboration to ensure the individual needs of each child are met.

The goal of our transition approach is to maintain continuity in learning and emotional wellbeing, reduce anxiety, and help every child feel safe, valued, and ready to thrive in their new learning environment.

At Otford, the Reception Team have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. As a result of this, they are confident in their ability to successfully meet the individual needs of the children at the point of transfer and beyond. The Year One teachers understand the principles of continuous provision and how to ensure that this is challenging enough to meet the increasing needs of the KS1 curriculum. We understand that communication is the key to successful transition and we have a clear focus on developing communication between all involved; children, staff, parents and governors. The provision in Year 1 builds on the children's previous experiences in Early Years and provides rich opportunities for exploration and challenge. A Transition Booklet has been created which offers all of the information parents will need to have clear understanding of the Key Stage 1 curriculum and the expectations required. The new EYFS guidance focuses heavily on self-regulation. This involves children's developing ability to regulate their emotional responses, their level of focus and their ability to deal with daily challenges as well as become more able to empathise with others, thinking laterally to find solutions.

Welfare Arrangements

At Otford, we recognise the importance that all children in the school are 'safe' and take our child protection responsibilities very seriously. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. We teach children about boundaries, rules and limits and help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Taking risks is an important part of the EYFS, we not only provide children with opportunities to take risks but also teach them how to recognise and avoid hazards. The safety of the child is of paramount importance. The full Safeguarding policy is available to view on the school website.

Our aims:

- To provide a setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where the children can grow in confidence.
- All adults with access to our children will receive the appropriate level of Disclosure and Barring Service
- (DBS) checks
- All staff employed by the school will undertake regular Child Protection and Radicalisation, Extremism and Terrorism Awareness Training and are expected to follow the school guidance in following up a cause for concern.
- Staffing will be organised to ensure the safety of the children.
- All staff will be trained to the level appropriate to responsibility.
- All staff will receive training and address the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in an ICT environment.
- First aid will only be administered by trained personnel. Procedures are in place to inform parents/carers of accidents involving their child.
- Procedures are in place to ensure security of children and the safe release of children into the care of individuals named by the parent/carer.
- As a healthy school, there is a focus on emotional well-being, healthy eating and physical activity. Good health will be promoted and appropriate action will be taken when children are ill.
- Routines are in place to support children's growing understanding of personal hygiene.
- Manage children's behaviour effectively in a manner for the children's stage of development and individual needs. To ensure that all adults who look after children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so.
- Risk assessments will be undertaken and reviewed regularly.
- Premises, furniture and equipment will be regularly checked and repaired, washed etc as required.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.
- Policy documents will be available for parents and carers.

Partnership with Families

Otford Primary School acknowledges the importance of strong partnerships with families and actively encourages family involvement in school. We highly value the contribution that parents and carers make and seek to maintain an effective partnership between home and school. Parents and carers are the children's first educators and we are committed to working in close partnership with them in order to enable each child to achieve his/her potential. We aim to ensure that parents and carers are provided with detailed information prior to admissions enabling them to feel confident about the transition process. We ensure arrangements for settling in are flexible enough to give time for children to become secure and for practitioners and parents to discuss children's circumstances, interests, skills and needs at the start of the school year.

Children are treated as individuals and have equal access to all provisions available. In Early Years, families bring their children to the classrooms each day and are able to have informal discussions with the adults who teach them. If they require a more formal discussion they are able to make an appointment to speak to the class teacher after school. Families are kept informed about school activities and events through Termly News Letters and Class Dojo which is an instant social media App which parents can sign up to at the beginning of the new school year.

Teachers use class Dojo to send parents messages and instant photographs of their children when those WOW moments happen. Parents can comment on photographs and send the class teacher messages.

Children have individual reading records and phonic folders so that there is a partnership between home and school to support children's reading. Children have a profile that builds up a holistic picture of their progress and development over the year. Observations in their profile will capture key moments in all areas of learning and will focus on what the child can do rather than what they can't do. The profile will be shared with children regularly and adults will involve children in their own assessment by encouraging them to review their learning and communicate their ideas and thoughts. Parents have the opportunity to make comments and discuss the information during parent consultations. Families receive an End of Year report where the teacher makes a 'best fit 'judgement against the 17 early learning Goals (ELG) to report if the expected attainment has been reached by the end of the Reception Year.

Admission Arrangements

Our current Pupil Admission Number is 30, one Reception class of 30 children. Children are admitted to Early Years in the September following their fourth birthday and attend full time. Our classes are structured to ensure a balance of ages, Nursery they attended, Special Educational Needs and gender.

Senior Member of Staff Responsible: Helen Roberts (Headteacher)

Designated Member of Staff: Jacquelyn Hill (Early Years Leader)

Policy Agreed: July 2026

Risk Assessment: Managing Food in Reception Classes

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – Reception (ages 4–5) | Otford Primary School

This risk assessment covers the safe handling, preparation, serving and consumption of food in Reception classes, including snack time, cooking activities, food tasting and celebrations.

Hazard / risk	Who may be harmed?	Control measures
Food allergies and intolerances	**Children, staff**	**Obtain up-to-date medical and dietary information from parents/carers. Maintain an allergy register and individual healthcare plans. Inform all relevant staff and ensure emergency medication is accessible and in date. Check food labels and prevent cross-contamination. All Health Care Plans to have been seen by H Roberts and kept on file with S Carroll. All First Aiders aware.**
Choking on food	**Children**	**Provide age-appropriate food in safe sizes and textures. Cut grapes and similar round foods lengthways into quarters. Prepare hard fruit and vegetables appropriately. Remove stones and pips. Ensure children sit upright while eating, are supervised closely and are not allowed to run or play with food in their mouths. Paediatric First Aider present for snack and lunch they should have all the children in sight and be able to hear them during this eating period. All First Aiders and staff to be aware of this hazard.**
Poor hand hygiene	**Children, staff**	**Ensure children and staff wash their hands with soap and water before handling or eating food and after using the toilet. Use clean towels and reinforce good hygiene routines.**
Food contamination and food poisoning	**Children, staff**	**Clean and disinfect food preparation surfaces and equipment. Use clean utensils, keep raw and ready-to-eat foods separate, follow food storage instructions and check use-by dates. Keep food covered and dispose of contaminated or spoiled food safely.**
Incorrect food storage	**Children, staff**	**Store chilled foods at the appropriate temperature, follow the manufacturer's instructions and keep allergens separate where necessary. Do not leave perishable food at room temperature longer than recommended.**
Slips and falls caused by spilled food or drink	**Children, staff**	**Clean up spills immediately, keep walkways clear and ensure children sit safely at tables. Use stable cups, plates and suitable furniture.**

Cross-contamination between foods	**Children, staff**	**Use clean chopping boards, utensils and serving equipment. Wash hands between handling different foods. Keep allergen-containing foods separate and follow individual healthcare plans.**
Food brought from home or shared during celebrations	**Children, staff**	**Follow the school's food-sharing and packed-lunch policies. Check ingredients and allergens before serving. Do not allow children to share food, drinks or utensils.**
Special dietary, cultural or religious requirements	**Children**	**Record dietary requirements and communicate them clearly to all staff. Provide suitable alternatives and ensure children are not given unsuitable food.**
Inadequate supervision during snack or lunch time	**Children**	**Ensure an appropriate level of adult supervision is maintained. Staff should actively observe children while eating and drinking and know the school's choking response and emergency procedures. First Aider present in the room.**
Food-related illness or allergic reaction	Children, staff	Follow the child's healthcare plan. Recognise signs of an allergic reaction, act immediately and call 999 for suspected anaphylaxis. Record and report incidents in line with school procedures.
Children handling soil, plants or food during learning activities	Children, staff	Use safe, clean ingredients and equipment. Check for allergies before tasting. Wash hands after gardening and before eating. Do not allow children to taste unidentified plants, seeds or raw ingredients that may be unsafe.

3. Risk rating.

Hazard	Initial risk	Risk after controls
Allergic reaction	High	Low–Medium
Choking	High	Low–Medium
Food contamination	Medium–High	Low
Burns and scalds	Medium	Low

Cuts and injuries	Medium	Low
Slips and falls	Medium	Low
Inadequate supervision	High	Low–Medium

Risk ratings depend on the children, activities, environment and effectiveness of controls. A severe allergic reaction or choking incident can remain high consequence even when preventive measures reduce the likelihood.

4. Responsibilities

- **Class teacher:** Ensure food activities are planned safely and relevant risk assessments are completed.
- **Teaching assistants and other supporting staff:** Follow dietary instructions, maintain supervision and report concerns- all staff should be aware of statutory framework duirng lunch and in the hall.
- **Designated first aider / trained staff:** Respond to emergencies in accordance with school procedures and individual healthcare plans.
- **School leadership:** Ensure staff training, suitable facilities, policies and emergency arrangements are in place.

Written by Helen Roberts- October 2026