


# Early Years Policy

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## 1. Statement of intent

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A Child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life's chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. Parents want to know that the provision will keep their children safe and help them to thrive. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the framework that provides this assurance.

The intent of Voyage Education Partnership is to continuously encourage pupils to be independent, curious, creative and resilient learners who show respect for each other, their communities and the environment. We develop pupils' communication and language skills, ensuring that they know how to appropriately express themselves and feel heard.

By establishing effective and supportive relationships with pupils, the Academies within the Trust ensure that pupils feel valued as individuals, are empowered to meet their own needs and enjoy their learning experience across the wider curriculum providing multiple opportunities to achieve the early learning goals.

Every pupil deserves the best possible start in life, and we believe the support that the Trust offers enables pupils to do this. This policy outlines our commitment to ensuring our pupils have a secure and safe education, and that they can learn to the best of their abilities.

## 2. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to statutory guidance and legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Childcare Act 2016
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Education Act 2011
- DfE (2024) Early years foundation stage statutory framework - Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five
- 2023 Reception baseline assessment: assessment and reporting arrangements (ARA)
- [DFE Early years foundation stage profile: 2024 handbook](#) profile'

### 3. Our Aims and Principles

The Trust aims to support each pupil's welfare, learning and developmental needs by providing:

- **Quality, consistency and challenge**, so that every pupil makes good progress and no child gets left behind.
- Laying a **secure foundation** for future learning through learning and development opportunities which are planned around the individual needs and interests of each child, and assessing and reviewing regularly what they have learned.
- Creating a framework for **partnership** and collaboration between parents, carers and professionals in all the settings that the child attends.
- **Equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every pupil is included and supported.

The principles which guide the work of all Early Years practitioners are grouped into four themes:

- **A Unique Child** – Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- **Positive Relationships** – Pupils learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- **Enabling Environments with teaching & support from adults** – Pupils learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults who respond to their individual interests and needs and help to build their learning over time. Pupils benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and or carers.
- **Learning and Development** – Pupils develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. Practitioners teach children by ensuring challenging, playful opportunities and fostering the characteristics of effective early learning:
  - Playing and exploring
  - Active Learning
  - Creating and Thinking Critically

## 4. Learning and development

The EYFS specifies requirements for learning and development and for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The learning and development requirements cover:

- the areas of learning and development which must shape activities and experiences (educational programmes) for children in all early years' settings
- the early learning goals that providers must help children work towards (the knowledge, skills and understanding children should have at the end of the academic year in which they turn five)
- assessment arrangements for measuring progress (and requirements for reporting to parents and/or carers)

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape educational programmes and pupils' education. These are split into two groups: prime areas and specific areas. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

The prime areas are:

- **Communication and language**  
This area underpins all seven areas of learning and development. The academies provide pupils with the opportunity to experience quality conversations with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich and immersive language environment, and to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves.
- **Personal, social and emotional development**  
The academies help pupils to develop a positive sense of themselves and others to enable them to form positive and respectful relationships. Pupils develop social skills and learn how to manage and understand their own feelings and behave appropriately in groups, and to be confident in their own abilities. The academies support pupils to look after their bodies, including healthy eating.
- **Physical development**  
The academies provide opportunities for pupils to be active both indoors and outdoors, and to develop their coordination, control, and movement. Pupils are helped to understand the importance of physical activity and develop both gross and fine motor skills.

The specific areas are:

- **Literacy**  
The academies prioritise both language comprehension and word reading. They facilitate pupils ability to link sounds and letters, and to begin to read and write. To assist pupils in doing this, the school gives pupils access to a wide range of reading materials to develop a life-long love of reading.

- **Mathematics**

The academies provide pupils with the opportunity to develop their skills in counting, understanding, and using numbers, and working out simple addition and subtraction problems. They are supported to recognise the relationships in patterns and provide opportunities for building and applying understanding. There are opportunities for children to develop spatial reasoning skills including shapes, spaces, and measures.

- **Understanding the world**

The academies guide pupils to make sense of the physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe, visit, and find out about people, places, technology and the environment. Building knowledge and familiarity with a wider vocabulary.

- **Expressive arts and design**

The academies enable pupils to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials and provide pupils with the opportunity and encouragement to share their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities including art and music. Supporting development of children's artistic and cultural awareness by exposing them to quality and variety.

If a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, an academy will discuss this with the child's parents and agree how to support the child.

The academy will consider whether a child may have a SEND additional need that requires specialist support.

## 5. Learning strategies

- Every child has their own learning style, and we recognise the need to develop strategies that allow everyone to learn in the ways that suit them best.
- Staff members will engage in quality interactions with pupils to stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs.
- Pupils' interests will be used as a basis to develop and extend their skills and knowledge by relating learning intentions to pupils' own life experiences so they can make meaningful connections in their learning.
- All pupils will be encouraged to make and modify plans as a method of ensuring that they review and reflect on their own learning.
- Evaluations of individual pupils' learning will be used to inform future planning by ongoing observational assessment and through verbal interactions.
- Open-ended resources will be utilised to support exploration and critical thinking, as well as providing provocations to enthuse and motivate pupils.

- Learning aims will be shared with the pupils and parents – setting clear expectations for what pupils are expected to achieve.
- Children will have whole class & small group times which increase as they progress through the academy year, with times for daily synthetic phonics session, including shared reading & writing, and a daily maths session, which focuses on numbers and numerical patterns. Alongside these adult directed sessions, the adults will plan for and deliver a challenging continuous provision for the children to access during their child-initiated learning, in both the indoor and outdoor provision. Adults then facilitate the next steps of learning by extending these activities to ensure further challenge and consolidation. Enrichment opportunities are offered to support the children to make further meaningful connections in their learning.

## 6. Learning through Play Aims

- Play is essential to pupils' cognitive, imaginative, creative, emotional and social development. We aim to provide play experiences which have a balance between adult-led and child-initiated play, allowing pupils to explore their own ideas and apply what they have learnt in different situations.
- Pupils will be able to explore at their own pace but are given consistent boundaries.
- Staff members will be actively engaged in pupils' play. Children learn by leading their own play and by taking part in play that is guided by adults.
- Staff will stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and guiding their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning.
- Outdoor play is an important part of a child's development. Children are given daily opportunities to play and learn outdoors.
- Continuous provision is enhanced in the environment according to the children's interests and outcomes of informal and formal assessments so areas for development are identified and addressed in the provision.

## 7. Early Learning Goals

- The level of development children should be expected to have attained by the end of the EYFS is defined by the early learning goals (ELGs)
- The children will have access to a broad and balanced EYFS curriculum with a rich variety of experiences that will support individual children's development and their readiness for Year 1.

## 8. Inclusion and Equality

- All children are valued as individuals. Adults plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and supports them at their own pace so that as many of our children as possible can achieve and even exceed the early learning goals. Targeted intervention support is implemented at different times across the year to both support and extend out learners. This can be done 1:1 or in small groups dependent on the needs of the specific cohort.
- We strongly believe that the early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give each child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with both parents and outside agencies.

## 9. English as an Additional Language

- Staff will take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children whose home language is not English to develop and use their home language in play and learning.
- Pupils will have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS, ensuring they are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin Year 1.

## 10. Enabling environments

- The Trust and its schools recognise that the learning environment plays an important role in supporting and extending pupils' learning and development.
- The academies should ensure that pupils from all backgrounds are supported and given the opportunity to do well in accordance with our Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Arrangements are in place to support pupils with SEND, including ensuring that each Academy has a SENDCo.
- All staff members are responsible for ensuring that the emotional environment is warm and accepting of everyone.
- In order to create an environment in which pupils feel confident to try new things, staff members empathise with pupils, support their emotions and ensure they feel valued.
- Pupils have access to a range of learning environments, including indoor and outdoor activities daily.
- The indoor environment contains resources which are age-appropriate, well-maintained and accessible to all children.



- All indoor spaces are sufficiently maintained and appropriate for the activities planned in the spaces.
- By recognising the positive impact that outdoor learning can have on pupils' wellbeing and development; we ensure that pupils are given regular opportunities to work outside.
- Our outdoor provision incorporates both the prime & specific areas of learning, offering pupils the freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically active including but not limited to:
  - The use of natural materials.
  - Learning about growing and the living world.
  - Research and experimentation.
  - Playing with water.
  - Physical play and movement.
  - Imagination and creativity.
  - Construction and den building.
- Learning environments within the academy are well organised and suitable for group, individual and whole-class learning – with interactive displays and easily accessible resources utilised to encourage independence.
- Academy rules and expectations of behaviour are consistent throughout the different learning areas and pupils are aware of these.
- Educational visits are arranged in order to further expand pupils' learning experiences. Prior to a trip, a risk assessment of the space is carried out and it is ensured that the area is appropriate for the activity and pupils involved. Appropriate adult/children ratios are implemented at all times.

## 11. Parental engagement

Early years practitioners should make the following information available to parents (via school website, Weduc, Tapestry, newsletters, notice boards and teacher consultations as appropriate):

- How the EYFS is being delivered at the academy, and where parents can access more information
- The range and type of activities and experiences provided for pupils, including the setting's daily routines and how parents can share learning at home.
- How the academy supports pupils with SEND and how parents can discuss concerns with the academy
- What types of food and drink the school provides for pupils

- Details of how to access academy policies and procedures, including the following:
  - The procedure to be followed in the event of a parent failing to collect their child.
  - The procedure to be followed if a pupil goes missing
- Staffing arrangements, including the name of their child's key person (if applicable)
- The school is committed to working closely with parents and creating an ongoing dialogue in order to capitalise on pupils' school and home experiences.
- How to access systems such as Tapestry from home, in order for parents to be given the opportunity to co-construct learning priorities and record pupils' home learning and interests
- The school provides parents with the opportunity to join pupils in sessions on a regular basis in line with relevant Academy risk assessments and policies.
- How parents can develop ideas & strategies to enhance pupil's learning and chances of progressing well

## 12. Planning and assessment

- All EYFS assessment and EYFS profiles for each pupil, are carried out in accordance with the Trust's assessment statement of intent and associated Assessment Protocols for Primary.
- All EYFS staff members have due regard to the guidance outlined in the 'Early years foundation stage profile handbook'.
- Diversity and inclusion are at the heart of planning, ensuring provision is differentiated to allow every pupil access to learning at their stage of development.
- Staff observations and quality interactions are used to inform planning and create a picture of pupils' competencies.
- Staff members when assessing communication, language and literacy skills will assess a child's skills in English.
- When planning activities, the following aspects are taken into consideration:
  - Pupils' individual needs
  - Pupils' learning styles
  - Observable patterns of behaviour
  - The learning environment
  - The wider EYFS curriculum
  - Necessary resources
  - Provocations
  - The early learning goals.
  - Preparing for Year 1
  - Staff members' roles

- Staff members develop knowledge of pupils and their families and use this information to plan learning experiences.
- Timely and targeted intervention is provided, through the daily provision, to ensure that pupils make good progress and achieve their full potential.
- Data for groups of pupils is collected in order to inform the learning foci of the termly plan.
- On-going formative assessment, and where possible, daily evaluation meetings enable staff members to reflect on pupils' self-initiated learning and interests, helping to inform the provision plan for the next day.
- Staff members provide pupils with action-specific, concise, and positive feedback, allowing pupils to reflect on their own learning experiences.
- Formative assessment does not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with pupils, nor does it require excessive paperwork.
- To ensure all pupils can reach their full potential, EYFS staff members are alert to the general diversity of each child's interests, needs and inclinations, and reasonable adjustments are made to the assessment procedure, where necessary.
- The results of the EYFS profile are shared with parents and, where required, parents are given the opportunity to meet with the teacher who completed the profile.

### 13. Transition periods

- Pupils are supported by staff during transition periods.
- The Trust understands the importance of the transition process and, therefore, Academies will adapt practices appropriately to support pupils settling into their new learning environment.
- The academy may offer home visits and/ or come and play sessions during the summer term prior to pupils starting primary school.
- Internal transition should be a carefully planned process that focuses on a pupil's key relationships.
- Transition meetings between EYFS staff members and Year 1 staff members should be held during the Summer term.
- EYFS staff members provide the relevant Year 1 teachers with information regarding pupils, allowing them to accurately plan effective learning during Year 1.

### 14. Organisation

- Organisation of the classroom will be dependent on the PAN. The reception children attend full time. Throughout the day the pupils have opportunities to work as part of a whole class, in small groups and individually in adult led, adult directed and child-initiated activities.

- A child may be deferred from full time entry into the FS2 year following consultation with the class teacher, parent(s) and Headteacher and in line with the Trust Attendance Policy
- Pupils receive fruit as a snack provided by a Free Fruit scheme and also have access to fresh drinking water.
- Pupils receive 1/3 of a pint of semi skimmed milk each school day until their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday as part of a free scheme.
- All pupils are entitled to a free school meal in the foundation stage.

## 15. Safeguarding & Welfare

‘Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.’ (Statutory Framework for EYFS 2014 and EYFS Reforms 2021)

As a Trust, we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the EYFS Statutory Framework 2023, including suitable people, disqualification, staff taking medication/other substances, staff qualifications, staff:child ratios.

Academies will provide a setting that:

- Welcomes children in a safe and stimulating environment that promotes confidence.
- promotes good health.
- manages behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the pupil’s stage of development and individual needs.
- ensures that all adults who look after the pupils, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so.
- ensure that the setting, furniture, and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for.
- maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the pupils.
- provide training for staff that meets the needs of pupils e.g. intimate care for individual pupil care and needs.
- ensure that every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child.
- Ensures that all staff have read and understood the Trust Acceptable Use Policy

## 16. Roles and responsibilities

### 16.1 The Board of Trustees

The Trustees focus on three core functions:

1. ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction
2. holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance of staff.
3. overseeing and ensuring effective financial performance.

The trustees have a range of obligations under current legislation and statutory guidance.

### 16.2 Chief Education Officer

The Chief Education Officer, an executive leader, is responsible for monitoring the impact of the policy and will ensure that:

- the EYFS curriculum within the academies is meeting the needs of pupils.
- the curriculum within the academies promotes diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities for all.
- appropriate and timely information about the progress of pupils is presented to the Curriculum and Standards Committee
- the Headteacher is held to account for whole school performance.
- Ensure specialist support can lead on the Observe, Reflect and Act moderation process.
- Work collaboratively with senior leadership teams and other leading practitioners in developing, implementing and evaluating policies and practice that lead to school improvement.
- Ensure the vision of the Trust is implemented in all academies.
- Support research and evaluate innovative curricular practices and draw on research outcomes and other sources of external evidence to inform quality EY practice

### 16.3 The Headteacher will:

- Hold the EYFS Lead to account.
- Ensure staff members understand the academy's systems for recording pupils' profile outcomes.
- Ensure accurate data is submitted to the Trust and LA.
- Ensure staff members clearly and accurately record EYFS profile information.
- Ensure that staff members responsible for data collection and submission understand the nature of EYFS profile data.

- Accurately input data on the MIS
- Check data against information provided by staff members.
- Ensure that the systematic phonics programme is regularly reviewed and monitored.

#### **16.4 The Early Years leader will:**

- Hold the EYFS team to account.
- Ensure that all staff members have received, and adhere, to the policy.
- Support staff development by providing regular Professional Development opportunities.
- Ensure that parents are continuously kept informed regarding the achievements and progress of pupils, through a named staff member if the academy wishes.
- Maximise parental engagement and community involvement.
- Regularly monitor the effectiveness of the systematic phonics programme with the Academy Phonics Leader

#### **16.5 EYFS practitioners will:**

- Ensure that the pupil(s) they support receive learning tailored to their needs.
- Engage with parents to support them in guiding their child's development at home.
- Help families with more specialist support, where required.
- Help pupils become familiar with the school and acting as a point of contact for pupils and their parents.
- Act in accordance with this policy at all times.
- Deliver a high-quality, systematic phonics programme which is used to teach phonics in discrete daily sessions at a brisk pace with accurate and regular assessment.
- Have a firm understanding of child development and age-appropriate needs.
- Develop planning that challenges pupils and meets their individual needs.
- Encourage pupils to effectively communicate in a variety of ways and work collaboratively.
- Ensure that the environment is appropriate and safe, as well as being supportive of their learning.
- Provide learning experiences which adhere to the EYFS statutory framework.
- Identify any areas of concern relating to pupils and their learning, development, and emotional needs.
- Ensure that appropriate measures are in place to safeguard pupils.
- Take charge of their own personal development, including undergoing additional training, to benefit pupils and the provisions in place to support pupils.

## 17. Links to other policies

- Assessment Statement of Intent
- Trust Primary Assessment Protocols
- Behaviour Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Equality and Diversity Statement

## 18. Equal Opportunities

Voyage Education Partnership is committed to a policy of celebrating diversity, promoting equality of opportunity, providing an inclusive workplace, and eliminating any unfair treatment or unlawful discrimination. This overriding objective applies to all policies and procedures relating to staff and pupils. The Trust will always comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and associated guidance produced by the Department for Education.