

# Yorke Mead Primary School

## Early Years Policy

September 2025



### *Our School Vision Statement*

*BRINGING LEARNING to LIFE*

*We are a school dedicated to creating an environment where children are able to grow into happy, well-rounded individuals with a love of learning through which they can achieve to the best of their abilities.*

*We want our pupils to enter the wider world as*

- Happy, positive individuals*
- Responsible citizens who make a positive contribution*
- Confident, resilient, healthy & life-long learners.*

## ***DARE TO...***

**D - Determination**

**A - Ambition**

**R - Resilience**

**E – Enjoyment**

**T - Trust**

**O - Openness**

## **Rationale and Ethos**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) states that: 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 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.

## **Aims of the Curriculum at Yorke Mead**

The curriculum at Yorke Mead is intended to ensure each child:

- Develops high self-esteem, confidence and a true feeling of self-worth
- Develops a lively, enquiring mind and life skills so that he/she will have the ability to experiment, investigate, take risks, challenge, discriminate and make informed choices
- Is enriched, motivated and challenged by a broad and balanced curriculum and recognises the value of all areas of learning, including literature, sciences, the arts and humanities.
- Is valued for their individual contributions, recognises their role and develops a positive attitude towards everyone in the life of the school and community.
- Develops the positive skills and attitudes necessary to work both independently and collaboratively.
- Will be given equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of school life, with high expectations and ambition for every child and appropriate levels of challenge and support to enable them to achieve.
- Develops an understanding and respect for other races, cultures, gender, people with disabilities, religions and associated points of view.
- Understands the importance of and develops responsibility for keeping themselves physically and emotionally healthy
- Acquires a set of moral values and attitudes including honesty, respect, sincerity, trust and personal responsibility.
- Is supported in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Is equipped with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life

## **Principles of the Early Years Curriculum**

Four guiding principles shape practice in the Early Years:

- Every child is a ***unique child***, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents/carers.
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

## **Curriculum Design**

Our curriculum at Yorke Mead follows the 7 areas of learning (Three 'Prime areas' and four 'Specific areas') Prime areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These are:

- Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations
- Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food
- Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

The Four specific areas are:

- Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest
- Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measure
- Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment
- Expressive arts and design involve enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

### **How the Early Years curriculum meets the needs of children at Yorke Mead**

#### **Outdoor learning**

At Yorke Mead we think it is essential that young children get regular and frequent opportunities to explore and learn in the outdoor environment. (See out outdoor learning policy)

#### **Mindfulness**

We believe that successful learning takes place when a child feels safe, happy and secure which is why a happy and healthy mind-set is developed from the beginning on the Foundation Stage. We take part in twice daily mindful activities each day in nursery and reception. These range from listening to mindful stories, reflecting on mindful music or taking part in gentle yoga sessions.

#### **Child – initiated learning ('Dare To' learning)**

We believe that play is essential for children's development and children are given twice daily opportunities for Child Initiated Learning (CIL). Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is

important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them. During this time, adults will engage with the children following their interests and fascinations.

### **Reading**

Enjoying books and reading stories is crucial in the development of children. It helps with their ability to understand words, use their imagination and develop their speech as well as being something they really enjoy. We endeavour to ensure that children are read to daily. This will include stories, poems and information books. We begin learning to 'read' in nursery with exploring and developing speaking and listening (phase 1 phonics) and continue with learning individual letter sounds (phase 2 phonics). In reception, children continue learning individual letters sounds and move on to digraphs and trigraphs (phase 2 and 3 sounds) We use the Little Wandle letters and sounds programme to help children learn. In nursery children will only be given an individual reading book when they are able to demonstrate that they have started to read, this is not a common achievement at this stage of their development. All children in reception are given an individual book within the first few weeks of attending school. This may be a book with no words to encourage the skill of storytelling and language development or it may be a book containing words and pictures. Children are encouraged to read every day at home and at least twice a week in school. Children read the same book three times in order to gain fluency and understanding of what they are reading. The first read is focused on decoding, the second read is focused on fluency and the third read on comprehension.

### **Gross and Fine motor.**

Children have daily opportunities to develop gross motor skills through 'wake and shake' dance sessions, weekly PE lessons and daily opportunities to be physically active in our outdoor area. It is crucial to help develop children's fine motor skills and children take part in daily 'busy fingers' session where they complete activities to help strengthen muscles.

The gross and fine motor skills are often associated with fundamental skills that children need to be successful in school such as the correct hold of a pencil, letter formation, how to hold and use scissors etc. These fundamental skills are a key element of future success and are tracked and developed carefully.

### **How the Early Years curriculum supports children's spiritual, moral, cultural, social development**

**Spiritual** – This is about helping children understand themselves, their relationships with others and their place in the world. It includes helping children develop a sense of awe and wonder, cultivating an appreciation for the beauty and mystery of the world we live in.

**Moral** – In early years children follow the three school rules: Be safe, Be kind, Be responsible. Children learn about honesty, compassion and respect including other values that guide their behaviours.

**Cultural** – This involves helping children to recognise, respect and value their own cultures and that of others. We celebrate the differences and similarities that exist between different groups and cultures. Some of this is through learning about the festivals of major faiths and some is learned through stories, arts and crafts and discussion. We endeavour to read books that reflect all the cultures and minority groups within the class and beyond.

**Social** – In early years, children learn to consider the thoughts and feelings of their peers through their daily interactions and play. We focus in our class and school community. We teach the children to respect for their peers and for their equipment, learning about how to be polite and supportive towards others.

A brief overview of how the Early Years curriculum supports the development of the whole child. Please read this in conjunction with the school document 'Personal Development at Yorke Mead'.

<b>SMSC</b> Spiritual, Moral, Social & Cultural Development	<b>British Values</b>	<b>Character Education</b>	<b>Cultural Capital</b>	<b>5 Ways to Wellbeing</b>
The EYFS offers many opportunities for SMSC development including developing self-awareness, self-confidence and self-esteem.	British values are intertwined with the EYFS. E.g. children take part in book votes to choose the story of the day. Children are taught to follow the rules of the school. We encourage children to treat others as they wish to be treated, to be inclusive and tolerant of others	We follow the school agreed 'Jigsaw' scheme. We encourage independent and resilient learners in 'Dare To' learning. All learners benefit equally from what we offer. We want all children to feel as if they belong to the class and school community and valued.	Cultural capital in early years builds from the exciting and stimulating experiences that are offered every day. We use what we know about the children and regular observations to develop their experiences and learning.	We build positive relationships, have regular opportunities to physical activities, learn new skills and pay attention to being in the present moment through mindful ness sessions.

### Organisation and planning

#### Planning

Teaching and Learning in the Foundation stage is based on an understanding of how children learn. We believe children learn best through:

- Play
- First hand experiences which are well thought through and meaningful
- Interacting with others in a cognitive and reflective way
- Being physically active
- Having their own interests valued, developed and extended.

Teachers plan using the long term plans to ensure coverage of curriculum content over the course of the year. Weekly plans are made that take into account all 7 areas of learning and ensure progression of skills and ideas. We aim to value children's own ideas by incorporating them into our weekly and daily plans.

#### Assessment for Learning

Assessment and learning go hand in hand. We use a variety of assessments in both Nursery and Reception including:

- Observations
- Dated examples of work
- Photographs and 'child speak' quotes
- Teacher focus activities.

Each child has their own 'learning journey' folder and, in reception, children also work in an 'adult led' book. Parents' contributions are valued through 'wow cards' and 'sparkling moments' sheets

that show children's achievement and progression at home. Parents spend time looking at these learning journeys at regular intervals throughout the year.

### **Inclusion**

Teachers set high expectations for all pupils. They will use appropriate assessment to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work for all groups, including:

- Currently higher attaining pupils
- Pupils with low prior attainment
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Pupils with SEN
- Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)

Teachers will plan lessons so that pupils with SEND can actively participate in all areas of learning.

Teachers will also take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. Lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities help pupils to develop their English, and to support pupils to take part in all subjects.

The importance of effective communication and language skills means this is given the highest priority from the onset in early years.

Further information can be found in our statement of equality information and objectives, and in our SEN policy and information report.

### **Safeguarding and Safe Practice**

In all areas, at all times, staff at Yorke Mead are aware of safeguarding responsibilities and health and safety. Some aspects of learning naturally require greater need to be aware of planning for safe practise than others. Where there is any form of risk to children, staff will have completed a risk assessment to manage this risk and ensure procedures minimise or remove the risk. The school has a number of generic risk assessments to cover those aspects where risk will be evident at all times including one for the Early Years Outdoor learning environment.

There are times when children may be more likely to disclose a safeguarding concern. Should there be a concern or disclosure from a pupil, staff will always follow the school safeguarding policy.

### **The role of the Early Years subject leaders**

Subject Leaders from across the school will ensure that the school curriculum is implemented in accordance with this policy. The teachers working in the Early Years take responsibility for one or two areas of learning and liaise with the subject leaders to ensure that:

- All required elements of the Early Years curriculum have aims and objectives, which reflect the aims of the school and indicate how the needs of individual pupils will be met.
- Long term planning is available for Early Years to support individual teachers in their planning
- Standards within Early Years are monitored, meet the expectations and that the head teacher and phase leader is informed of any concerns around this.
- Resources required to deliver the Early Years curriculum are available and accessible to staff.

- The policy and practise within Early Years is updated to reflect current educational research in consultation with the Head teacher, SLT and governors.
- Supporting staff to have the pedagogical understanding necessary to successfully teach the Early Years curriculum, and any required training is brought to the attention of the senior leadership team.
- The school's procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements
- Where appropriate, the individual needs of some pupils are met by permanent or temporary disapplication from all or part of the EYFS, allowing the most appropriate individual curriculum needs to be met in consultation with the Head teacher and school SENDCo.
- Proper provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with SEND policies.
- Link governors are kept up to date with policies and procedures linked to Early years.

**This policy should be read in conjunction with the Yorke Mead Curriculum Policy. The following sections are as listed within this policy:**

- Legislation
- Roles and responsibilities
- Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

### **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the headteacher, senior leadership team and governor curriculum team. At every review, the policy will be shared with the full governing board.

### **Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Personal development
- Early Years outdoor learning policy
- Assessment policy
- SEN policy and information report
- Equality information and objectives
- Inclusion Policy
- Relationships Education, Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) and Health Education Policy
- Pupil Premium Policy

### **Appendices**

- Long term plans for Nursery and Reception
- Outdoor learning policy