



Play Days Early Years Foundation Stage Policy Statement



Introduction

At Play Days Academy & Nursery, our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) policy is designed to create a nurturing & stimulating environment where every child can thrive. Our curriculum policy aligns with the principles outlined in the EYFS framework, emphasising holistic development, including physical, emotional, social, & cognitive growth.

Aim

Our aim is to provide a high-quality education that fosters a love of learning, promotes emotional wellbeing, & encourages strong attachments. We believe that children learn best through play & exploration, enabling them to develop essential skills for lifelong learning.

The EYFS advocates 4 main themes

1. **The Unique Child** - Every child is a unique individual, with their own interests, abilities, & learning styles. Every child is capable of achieving their potential when provided with the right support & opportunities. It stresses the importance of recognising and respecting each child's uniqueness. Key staff will explore each child's lived experience, 'Cultural Capital', i.e a child who lives in a flat, may not have equal opportunity to develop their physical skills, knowing this will help staff to plan for that child's specific gaps in learning opportunities & focus this in their planning.



2. **Positive relationships** - Strong, supportive relationships between children, key staff & their friends are crucial for effective learning. This theme emphasises building trust & communication, fostering a sense of belonging. Positive relationships help children develop social skills and emotional security, which are essential for their growth.



3. **Enabling Environments** –we are a pro-risk setting, children are encouraged to explore indoor & outdoors with their bare feet; to climb, run & explore outdoors. Permitted in correlation with alert staff, who carefully assess the Risk & Benefit of each learning opportunity provided. Children are active participants in investigating, identifying & minimising hazards & risk to build resilience & confidence



4. **Learning & Development**- Outlines the importance of providing rich learning experiences that address the seven areas of learning & development. Highlighting how children learn & develop through play, exploration, & interaction, ensuring they receive a well-rounded early education that prepares them for future learning.

Emotional Wellbeing — Our Foundation

Emotional wellbeing & self-regulation underpin every other area of learning. A child who does not feel safe cannot be curious; a child who cannot yet manage a big feeling cannot listen, share or persevere. We therefore treat wellbeing as the first curriculum priority in every room, every day — not as pastoral care that sits alongside learning, but as the condition that makes learning possible.

Our practice rests on:

Professional Love & attunement — emotionally available, ‘mind-minded’ adults who tune in to each child.

Key Person & Buddy Key Person — in the absence of the named key person, every child has a buddy so that someone special is always present.

Emotion Coaching — we connect before we correct; behaviour is communication & we seek to understand it, not simply manage it.

Feelings Thermometer, persona dolls, Golden Rules, Brilliant Buddies & the Noise-o-meter — the everyday tools that make feelings visible & expectations achievable for every child, whatever their communication level.

Our full approach is set out in our **Behaviour & Emotional Support Policy 2026**.

Curriculum Framework

Our EYFS curriculum is structured around the seven areas of learning: 3 Prime & 4 Specific

The three prime areas are core foundational skills- that are fundamental & underpin all future learning

1. **Communication & Language**: This area emphasises the importance of listening, speaking, & understanding language. It lays the foundation for effective communication skills & social interaction.
2. **Physical Development**: This focuses on both gross, fine motor skills, helping children develop coordination, control, self-care & healthy physical habits.
3. **Personal, Social, & Emotional Development (PSED)**: This area supports children in building relationships, understanding their emotions, & developing social skills, which are vital for navigating their environment & future interactions.

The four specific areas of learning build upon, the skills developed in the prime areas, enabling children to acquire a comprehensive skill set that prepares them for future learning.

1. **Literacy**: Developing reading & writing skills.
2. **Mathematics**: Understanding numbers, shapes, & measures.
3. **Understanding the World**: Exploring the environment, society, & technology.
4. **Expressive Arts & Design**: Encouraging creativity through art, music, & imaginative play.

The Guidance We Use

The EYFS statutory framework is our legal baseline. Alongside it we use the non-statutory guidance that supports it:

Development Matters (DfE, updated September 2023) — for the broad developmental picture across birth to three, three & four-year-olds, & children in reception.

Birth to 5 Matters (Early Years Coalition) — for its developmental Ranges, which suit a setting with a wide spread of starting points.

What to Expect in the Early Years Foundation Stage: a guide for parents — the current parent-facing guide, which replaced 'What to Expect, When' in 2021.

We hold our own internal analysis of what these documents expect at 36–48 & 48–60 months. We are clear that a four-year-old in our pre-school room sits at the upper end of the three & four-year-old band, not in the reception band — & we describe children to parents & to schools accordingly.

All 7 areas of learning are promoted in our pre-school room

These areas are woven into everyday activities, giving children opportunities to engage in meaningful experiences that support their overall development.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We recognise & understand the importance of '*Process over Outcome*', identifying & celebrating, not only, what children learn but also *How they learn!*

The Characteristics of Effective Learning, which include:

- **Playing & Exploring**
- **Active Learning**
- **Creating & Thinking Critically**

By encouraging these characteristics, we facilitate an environment where children feel confident to explore, engage, and express their thoughts.

Partnership with Parents

We recognise the vital role of parents & caregivers in a child's development. Our policy includes open communication, parental engagement, & collaborative efforts to support each child's learning journey. We encourage parents to participate in their child's experience at nursery & share insights that will inform our approach to their child's learning.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Our staff is trained to assess & monitor children's progress in accordance with the EYFS requirements. This ongoing assessment helps us tailor our curriculum to meet individual needs & ensures that each child is progressing appropriately.

Assessment at Play Days is observational, formative & proportionate. We complete the statutory progress check at age two, share observations & next steps with families through our Nursery in a Box parent portal, & use targeted support meetings, arranged at the earliest opportunity, whenever a gap is identified.

Our SENCO leads the graduated approach. We do not assess children against reception-year expectations, & we do not describe a child as behind for not meeting them.

Conclusion

At Play Days Academy & Nursery, we are dedicated to nurturing each child's unique potential while promoting emotional wellbeing & fostering strong attachments.

By following our EYFS policy & curriculum, we aim to create a safe & enriching environment for all children.

These characteristics promote meaningful engagement & encourage children to become curious, resilient, & independent learners, which are crucial traits for lifelong learning.

The EYFS framework reflects a holistic approach to education, integrating learning with play, & highlighting the importance of nurturing environments to foster optimal development during the critical early years of a child's life.

Helping Hands • Happy Hearts • Healthy Minds



Reviewed September 2026

Imelda Rylatt

