



William Gilpin Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Approval	Board of Governors	Chairman	Melissa Ashcombe
Headteacher	Dan Genn	Ratification	FGB 26.01.2026
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Introduction

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At William Gilpin C of E Primary School, we greatly value the important role that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development.

It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

The EYFS is for children from birth to five years of age. The final year of the EYFS is referred to as the reception year. All children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning.

It is the privilege of the practitioners working in Early Years Foundation Stage to take on the task of building upon that prior learning and experience. The William Gilpin Early Years Foundation Stage team work effectively together to support children's learning and development.

This document outlines the philosophy, aims and principles of early years teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Year Reception (R)). The document underpins practice in all areas of provision.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

“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 age 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.

The EYFS sets the standards that all early year’s providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children’s ‘school readiness’ and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.” (Department for Education (DfE), 2024)

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- The Unique Child;
- Positive Relationships;
- Enabling Environments;
- Learning and Development.

The Unique Child: At William Gilpin C of E Primary School, we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. Through our carefully planned curriculum, we aim for children to develop the values of courage, compassion and community through the love of Christ. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Positive Relationships: We recognise that children learn to be independent, confident learners from secure relationships with their peers and adults. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Enabling Environments: Additionally, we believe that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observation we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs, before planning challenging, achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

We also plan and consider the Learning Environment. The Year R area is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas of the environment where the children can be active, as well as areas where the children can be quiet and rest. The environment is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

Learning and Development: The early learning goals and the educational programmes are set out in the "Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage" document (DFE, 2025).

The seven areas of learning and development are:

Prime:

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

Specific:

- Mathematics (M);
- Literacy;
- Understanding of the World (UW);
- Express Arts and Design (EAD).

We believe that once the children are secure in the Prime areas of learning they will be prepared to access the Specific areas.

However, all areas are important to ensure the development of the 'whole child'. We aim to deliver all the areas through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The balance of these activities changes as the year develops and children's concentration skills grow.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Our planning shows how the principles of the EYFS are put into practice and is always informed by observations we have made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning needs. All practitioners who work in the Foundation Stage at William Gilpin C of E Primary School are involved in making observations of the children's new learning.

The planning within the EYFS is based around the children's interests and development needs. These plans are used by the EYFS team as a guide for weekly planning; however they may alter these in response to the needs (achievements, next steps and interests) of the children.

We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of recorded observations (written or photographed) as well as teachers' professional judgement.

These observations are used to inform the end of Foundation Stage assessment against the Early Learning Goals and the Characteristics of Effective Learning (DfE, 2024). Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written report against the Early Learning Goals to parents. The parents are given the opportunity to meet the Foundation Stage team at various points throughout the year for shared learning events. There are also two opportunities for parents to meet their child's class teachers on more formal occasions.

Staffing and Organisation:

At William Gilpin C of E Primary School, we have one reception class that can admit up to 15 children per class. The class has a full time class teacher and often an additional adult, providing the statutory 1:15 ratio. The children have a classroom base but can have free-flow during between the class and the outdoor learning throughout each day.

Learning through play:

“Play is essential for children’s development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.” (“Early Years Foundation Stage”, DfE, 2025). At William Gilpin C of E Primary School we support children’s learning through planned play activities, and decide when child-initiated or adult-led play activities would provide the most effective learning opportunities. We believe that it is important for adults to support children’s learning through play, by getting involved in the play themselves and modelling by example.

Induction to Reception:

During the summer term, children who will be starting school in September are invited to a range of transition events including stay and plays, home visits, social stories, parent meetings and visits to their classroom.

Parents/guardians are given a pack which outlines the reception curriculum and school routines, along with other necessary documentation.

The Early Years Leader visits the main feeder pre-schools to share information on the children attending William Gilpin. Where visits are not made, phone calls are made to discuss the children. Transfer records from all pre-school settings inform reception practitioners about the new intake. Teachers visit our main feeder pre-schools to read books and build relationships with the children. Enhanced transition is an option for children to may find it more challenging to settle. Enhanced transition includes extra visits to school (after school to ensure it is quieter) and an extra home visit. Transition Partnership Agreement meetings are held for children with additional needs.

The aims of this transition are to:

- Build relationships with children and families
- Allow the children to adjust and feel secure in their new environment;
- Allow the practitioners to get to know the children individually and establish good relationships with both children's and parents/carers;
- Allow the reception teacher to carry out initial assessments.

Reception to Year 1 Transition:

In our mixed Reception (Year R) and Year 1 class, teachers work collaboratively to ensure that all children experience a smooth and developmentally appropriate transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) into Key Stage 1. The structure of the mixed-age class allows

children to become familiar with routines, staff and expectations throughout both years.

- Children in Reception and Year 1 are encouraged to develop independence when dressing and undressing and when organising their personal belongings, with support tailored to individual needs.
- Reception practitioners introduce longer and more structured activities during the summer term to prepare children for Year 1 learning, while still maintaining a strong play-based approach.
- Children regularly interact with all adults working across the mixed Year R/Year 1 environment through shared routines, assemblies, and whole-school activities, allowing for gradual and familiar transitions.
- End-of-year EYFS assessments against the Early Learning Goals, along with the Characteristics of Effective Learning, are shared and discussed with all staff working in the class.
- Teachers meet in July to discuss individual children's progress, interests, and pastoral needs, ensuring continuity of provision as children move from Reception into Year 1 within the class.
- Reception children are already familiar with the Year 1 staff, environment, and routines, reducing the need for additional transition days. Where helpful, children may spend time engaging in focused learning within the Year 1 curriculum before the end of the year.
- Learning areas in the classroom (e.g., role play, writing table, construction, small world) are designed to meet the needs of both Reception and Year 1 learners, ensuring a balance of play-based and more formal learning opportunities.

Home/School Links:

We recognise that parents/guardians are the child's first and most enduring educators.

When parents/guardians and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. A successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise.

We aim to develop this by:

- Writing a weekly email summarising the learning that has taken place that week.

- Operating an “open door” policy, whereby parents/guardians can come and discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner.
- Encouraging parents/guardians to listen to their child read each night and to comment on reading progress in a home/school reading diary.
- Discussing children’s individual targets with parents/guardians’ parents’ evenings two times a year.