Early Years Policy 2026/27

Date approved: September 2026(in response to the changes of the Early Years Handbook)

Review date: September 2027.

This policy is reviewed annually.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies: Teaching and Learning, Child Protection, Safeguarding, Prevent, Administration of Medication, Intimate Care, safe sleeping, and Mobile Phones & Cameras in Early Years and Foundation Stage.

This policy is based on requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for group and school-based providers that applies from September 2026.

Please also refer to the Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage, (revised and applicable from September 2026) and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook

Hyperlinks: Early years foundation stage profile handbook - GOV.UK (applies from September 2026)

EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers (updated September 2026)

Structure of our EYFS

From September 2026 we have a nursery class (which accepts children from aged 2) and a Reception class.

We currently have a Reception class of 30 children.

Mrs Emma Noden is our EYFS lead teacher, she works Monday, Tuesday and alternative Wednesdays.

Mrs Emma Johnson Pickering is the class teacher on Thursday and Friday and alternative Wednesdays.

Our class Teaching Assistant is Mrs Anna Freeman (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday)

Mrs Amy Donnelly is our teaching assistant on a Friday

Mrs Lisa Murphy is also our teaching assistant on a Wednesday afternoon.

We also have a nursery class which can have up to 20 children in each session. We adopt a ratio of 1:5 for our 2ear old pupisl and 1:8 for our 3 year old pupils.

Mrs Cindy Ingham is the HLTA in the classroom she works Monday – Friday

Mrs Amy Donelly, Emma Hadden and Lisa Murphy are level 3 TA's working alongside Cindy daily.

Safeguarding statement of intent

Safeguarding all our children is of paramount importance to us therefore, all necessary risk assessments are carried out prior to any activity. Enhanced DBS checks are carried out when recruiting new staff or volunteers. When welcoming visitors we check whether they have a DBS and carefully monitor their contact with children according to the regulated activity rules in the DBS guidelines. We are a "Safer School" and at least one member of staff and governors who are involved in the recruitment process have attended "Safer Recruitment Training." New staff are made aware of all the related Safeguarding documents including the Child Protection policy as part of the induction process and all staff receive Child Protection Awareness training regularly.

See section 3 of Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage – revised September 2026

We promote good oral health, as well as good health in general, in the early years by talking to children about:
- The effects of eating too many sweet things

- A healthy and balanced diet and exercise
- Sensible amount of screen time
- The importance of brushing your teeth
- Having a good sleep routine
- Being a safe pedestrian

The rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our Safeguarding policy. Child absence procedures are outlined in our Attendance and Punctuality policy.

The rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our Safeguarding policy.
Child absence procedures are outlined in our Attendance and Punctuality policy.

Paediatric First Aid requirements

In line with the statutory framework, there is always at least one member of staff who is paediatrically first aid trained on site and available when the children are present and on outings.

Food and drink and safer eating

We ensure that staffing arrangements meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. Our meals and snacks are healthy, balanced and nutritious and are always prepared in a way that avoids choking. Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible to the children. We ensure that children are adequately supervised, especially when eating. This includes ensuring that whilst eating children are always in sight and hearing of a member of staff. There is also always a member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate during eating times. All staff involved with preparing and handling food receive training in food hygiene. This is all in line with the Safer Eating requirements as part of the EYFS Statutory framework for group and school based providers from September 2025.

Before children are admitted to our Early Years class we must obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies and intolerances that the child has, and any special health requirements. We will then share this information with all the staff that are involved in the preparing and handling of food. At each mealtime and snack time providers must be clear about who is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child.

We will prepare food in a way to prevent choking. This guidance on food safety for young children: Food safety - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK (education.gov.uk) includes advice on food and drink to avoid, how to reduce the risk of choking and links to other useful resources for early years providers.

Safer sleeping procedures:

In line with safer sleeping guidelines (Early Years Foundation stage Framework 2026, section 3.86) Early years staff are appropriately safe sleep trained, please refer to the safe sleep procedures document and also safe rest and sleep monitoring document.

Toileting and intimate care:

In line with guidelines (Early Years Foundation stage Framework 2026, section 3.88) there are adequate numbers of toilets for the children attending the setting. Nappy changing in the nursery class is carried out a key points during the day and at other times if necessary. There is a clean, hygienic space for this to be carried out in and privacy needs are met whilst also complying with safeguarding procedures.

Introduction:

1.1 *"*All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years 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 provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential*." (Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage – published September 2026)*

1.2 *"*The EYFS sets the standards that all early years 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 right foundation for good future progress through school and life. *"(Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage – published September 2025 . Page 7)*

1.3 The aims of our EYFS setting (reception class) are guided by the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation stage 2026. This outlines that the foundation stage should enable children to become ready for school and that "school readiness" should be achieved. As is also specified in the same document the "EYFS seeks to provide":

• *"Quality and consistency in all early years settings, so that every child makes good progress, and no child gets left behind. "*

• *"A secure foundation through planning for the learning and development of each individual child, and assessing and reviewing what they have learned regularly. "*

•*" Partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers. "*

•*" Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.* "*(Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage – published September 2025. Page 7)*

These are fundamental to the practise in the EYFS at Hodnet Primary School.

We also aim to:

- Establish a safe, happy and nurturing environment where children are happy to accept challenges, take risks and embrace school life.

- Create learning experiences which reflect children's interests and strengths as a starting point, where children's learning ideas are valued and respected. This will encourage children to be motivated and excited to learn and become confident and independent lifelong learners.

- Develop a language rich environment where conversations with peers and adults are encouraged and sustained in order to develop vocabulary, imagination and conversion skills.

-Create positive relationships where children feel they are valued, safe and respected.

<u>The Curriculum</u>

2.1 The Early Years phase at Hodnet Primary School aims to provide a broad, balanced, differentiated and inclusive curriculum which meets the needs of children in the class in terms of social, emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development within an enabling environment.

2.2 Throughout the EYFS we plan and create experiences which enable us to deliver the educational programmes as detailed in the *Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage 2026 (pages 9, 10, 11)*. These experiences give children varied, interesting and innovative learning opportunities; they give the children chances to work independently; accepting challenges and work with adults (both the teachers and teaching assistants in the class room). These learning experiences may take place in the indoor and outdoor classroom; children are able to access learning outdoors through our "free flow" classroom environment. We also aim to deliver learning experiences which help children develop key skills during our forest schools, gardening sessions, visits and experiences of the real world.

2.3 Our curriculum enables children to learn and develop skills in 2 main themes: prime areas and specific areas.

Prime areas:

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

Specific areas:

Literacy.
Mathematics.
Understanding the World (UtW)
Expressive Art and Design (EAD)

In the Early years classrooms we have a purposeful learning environment where children are able to access these areas of the curriculum in their own playing to learn time, independently. During this time the adults who work in the classroom will scaffold, model, guide and teach new skills whilst being involved in the children' play. There is also a balance of specific guided learning time, in all these areas which ensure that children are taught the skills, knowledge and attitudes in order to develop as a learner.

From September 2018 we have developed a creative curriculum approach using some of the principles of the Reggio Emilia education philosophy. The children's learning opportunities will be planned around their key interests and specific areas of development. See the new curriculum overview.

Please also refer to Hodnet Early Years key curriculum documents:

Hodnet Primary School Early Years Curriculum (adapted September 2026)

Hodnet Primary School Early Years Long term plan for reception class and long term plan for nursery class – 2026/27

Hodnet Primary School Early Years key Milestones document (adapted September 2026)

Hodnet Primary School Early Years phonics overview (in line with Twinkl phonics scheme)

Hodnet Primary School Early Years Maths Mastery document and Nursery mathematics document

Hodnet Primary School Early Years Core rhymes documents for nursery class and reception class

Hodnet Primary School Early Years Core texts document for nursery class and reception class

Hodnet Primary School Early Years Core experiences document for reception class and nursery class

Assessment for learning

3.1 Assessment for learning is a vital aspect of the EYFS practise at Hodnet School, this is managed in three ways. When children enter the school adults working alongside them will assess their current level of skills in all of the curriculum areas, this will be recording on a working document which will provide information for developing children's next steps for learning. In Reception class this will be informed by the National Baseline assessment, which will be carried out by the class teacher. Practitioners will use phonics tracker to assess children's level of progress in phonics, which is a key part of our Early Years curriculum. We will also converse with children's previous setting practitioners and adults at home in order to inform these observations. When children enter our setting at 2 years of age key workers will carry out the 2 year check inline with current guidance.

3.2 In Reception class assessments will be recorded on working documents called "Check point documents", staff will identify children who are on track to reach the Early Learning Goal at the end of the academic year.

Those children who will need extra support to reach this will be identified, strategies in order to support will be identified on these documents and then actioned in the classroom.

3.3 *Feedback in adult focus activities* - when children are working with an adult on a focused activity the adult will discuss the progress the child has made and together they will decide on the way in which the child can take their learning further and make steps of progress. Children will see the adults that they are working with as learners alongside themselves; they will talk alongside the child in order to make decisions.

3.4 *Observations and independent learning* - Children will have the opportunity to work independently on adult initiated tasks and child initiated tasks, the adults working alongside them will make observations of the children's progress whilst interacting with them. From these observations adults will plan opportunities for children to develop skills in the next step for learning. These may not necessarily be documented, staff will have valuable discussions with each other regarding the best ways to support the next steps and the best plans for individual children will be made. When it is seen as valuable to the child's development staff will use Tapestry Online Learning Journey to communicate this with each other and with parents if applicable.

3.4 *Self-Assessment* - A significant aspect of the EYFS practise is that children become aware of their own learning and are able to take charge of it, thus self-assessment and reflection is an important aspect of our practise. Children have regular opportunities to speak to their peers and adults working with them about what they are doing and evaluate their progress, setting themselves challenges and objectives for the future.

3.5 *Sharing with parents and carers* – adults at home will be kept up to date with their children's progress through regular updates on our online learning platform Tapestry. We will address any learning and development needs with adults at home on a regular basis through professional discussions between parents/guardians and key workers.

Safety

4.1 Children's safety and welfare is paramount. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We have stringent policies, procedures and documents in place to ensure children's safety.

Playing for learning

5.1 We feel that play is a fundamental element of the way in which young children learn and make progress. Through play children will develop skills and experiences which enable them to acquire skills which are vital in the development of the specific and prime areas of learning. Sometimes their play will be supported by other children and sometimes it will be supported by an adult but it is never meaningless or pointless.

Monitoring and Review

6.1 It is the responsibility of the early year's foundation stage teachers to follow the principles stated in this policy. There is a named governor responsible for the EYFS. This governor has the opportunity to discuss EYFS practice with each practitioner and to provide feedback to the governing body, raising any issues requiring discussion. The head teacher and subject coordinators carry out monitoring of the EYFS through observation and discussion as part of the whole school monitoring.

Sustainability in the Early Years

7.1 We aim to teach children about sustainable living and also model this in the classroom we create. Our ethos is to reuse where ever possible, using recycling items for modelling and cardboard packaging for craft

activities as much as possible. We will only laminate items when really needed and keep printing and paper usage to a minimal state. We will always keep in mind the intent of the activity and the impact it will have before printing items off and setting up an activity. This year we will become more mindful of water play and when water play is happening we will think of how we can use this “grey” water after the event in order to water plants etc.

Children will learn about the environment around them and how to look after it, they will be taught about respect for living things and their environment.

We will keep food activities where edible items are used a play resource minimal so that food is not thrown away after we have used in

This policy was prepared by E.Noden (Early Years Lead) and approved by the Local Governing Body. It will be reviewed annually.