



**PATHFINDER
SCHOOLS**
Inspiring greatness

Early Years Policy

Applicable to:	All staff in all Academies and Central Support Services including individuals employed by the Trust, contractors and agency staff. All Members and Trustees.
Development and Consultation:	This Early Years Policy has been developed to support professionals working within Pathfinders EYFS settings to apply the statutory framework.
Dissemination:	Policy will be available via the Trust Central Team
Implementation:	Policy to be used in all Pathfinders Reception and Nursery settings
Training:	Training to be provided via moderation and conference activities
Review Frequency:	Every three years. Will be reviewed earlier if statutory guidance or legislation changes.
Policy Author:	Kim Duff
Executive Policy Owner:	Kim Duff Deputy CEO of Pathfinders
Approval by:	Pathfinders Trust Board
Approval date:	February 2024
Next review due:	February 2027

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy aims to ensure:
 - 1.1.1 That all children in the Early Years foundation stage in every Pathfinders School and Nursery access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them a range of knowledge and skills needed for rapid progress in the early years, through our schools and for life.
 - 1.1.2 Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress, and no child gets left behind
 - 1.1.3 Close partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers.
 - 1.1.4 Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

2. Policy Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all schools and Nurseries within the Pathfinders Trust
- 2.2 This policy is based on requirements set out in the Early years Foundation Stage Statutory framework for group and school-based providers Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five. 8 December 2023 (Effective: 4 January 2024)
- 2.3 It is the responsibility of all individuals in the Trust to familiarise themselves with this policy and comply with its provisions.

3. Legal and Regulatory Framework

- 3.1 This Policy takes its legal framework from the following legislation and statutory guidance: This policy is based on requirements set out in the 2023 Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It is subject to change in light of any changes in the legislation.

4. The Trust's policy on the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 4.1 Purpose - This policy has been written to outline the philosophy, aims and principles of early years teaching and learning in all Pathfinders Trusts Schools and Nurseries. The document, along with a wide range of other supporting documentation, is to be used as a guide and framework to support the individual Pathfinder settings.
- 4.2 Aims - The Early Years phase in primary Schools secures the foundation for learning, development and care of each individual child to ensure their future personal and academic success. At Pathfinders we work to secure the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage for every child:



With the aim is to enable every child to fulfil their full potential and that no child will be left behind. All children will be taught the learning behaviours that will be the foundation required for them to succeed in their primary and secondary learning and beyond.

4.3 In a Pathfinders early years setting these learning behaviours will be achieved through:

- High expectations for learning from all stakeholders
- Clear routines and procedures that help build self- assurance for children and a love of learning
- The formation of strong partnerships with parents /carers
- An individualised approach to assessing children across the range of early learning measures, providing a relevant and stretching curriculum offer, which includes provision of pastoral care
- Compliance with Trust guidance on healthy food and lifestyles
- Purposeful and challenging experiences
- An enabling environment
- Inspiring teaching that will enable the children to display a thirst for knowledge and understanding

4.4 Every Pathfinders Early Years learning phase must:

- Give the children security and confidence learned within an atmosphere of respect for others
- Provide support and teaching that extends the knowledge, skills and understanding of every child helping them to overcome any barriers to learning
- Develop a strong sense of self and high levels of confidence in each child
- Ensure that all children feel included, secure and valued
- Work in partnership with parents/carers to support the children's rapid development, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially
- Work with partner agencies including the diverse Early Years settings that children have transferred from
- Build upon what the children already know and can do, and extend their interests to encourage a positive attitude towards learning;
- Deliver the curriculum using varied approaches and teaching methods with relevant and exciting content that matches the different needs of young children
- Encourage the children to learn for themselves by providing opportunities for them to engage in activities planned by the teacher and those they plan or initiate themselves
- Allow time for the children to become engrossed, work in depth and complete activities
- Develop basic skills and mastery through well-structured activities.

4.5 Organisation

4.5.1 Pathfinders Schools and Nursery settings follow the framework and curriculum as detailed in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage [December 2023]

4.5.2 Please see also – Pathfinders EYFS Intent statement and Curriculum Documentation

4.5.3 Pathfinders Schools also use the Non-Statutory guidance of Development Matters and Birth to 5 Matters

4.6 **Admission**

4.6.1 All children must be offered full-time learning in Reception from the first day of the September term.

4.6.2 Induction programmes (which may include visits to children's homes, settings or in settings) are seen as an essential part of the transition period so that staff can fully understand the relationship between the child and the parent/carer and build on this aspect of the child's learning, as well as any pre-school experiences that the child has received.

4.6.3 The recommendation is that home visits and/or setting visits are completed before the end of the Summer Term prior to the child starting in the Reception class as an integral induction programme.

4.6.4 Pathfinders Nursery settings will also complete induction meetings and visits and build a programme appropriate to the unique child in line with their starting date or term.

4.7 **Inclusion/Equal Opportunities (Including SEN)**

4.7.1 Children will be taught to respect the cultural differences and abilities of all the children and their families and to recognise feelings involving other people.

4.7.2 When appropriate, advice and guidance will be sought from outside agencies and professionals to support individual children.

4.7.3 No child will be excluded or disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability, gender or ability.

4.7.4 The staff will differentiate the work to meet the abilities and aptitudes of the children, offering support and extension work as required.

4.7.5 In the case of children with special needs, reference must be made to the SEND Policy.

4.7.6 All children will be given equal access to and are encouraged to participate in all curriculum activities.

4.8 **Assessment**

4.8.1 The progression and development of all the children will be monitored in alignment with the Trust's assessment calendar and procedures.

- 4.8.2 Observations of learning, summative assessments, regular moderations of children's work will be recorded then analysed to reflect on the progress made and follow up needs identified.
- 4.8.3 Online learning journals (e.g., Tapestry) fully document each child's daily achievements and are used to record evidence of progression.
- 4.8.4 Online learning journals play a vital role in ensuring that every child's learning can be made available to parents/carers and support their involvement and partnership in their child's learning.
- 4.8.5 At the start of EYFS a Pathfinders Baseline Assessments will be made on each child over the first full three weeks at the start of the Autumn Term using high quality observation-based assessments across all areas of learning. A holistic assessment will then be made by practitioners.
- 4.8.6 In addition the National statutory Reception baseline assessment will be used to assess language, communication and literacy and mathematics within the first 6 weeks of children starting school.
- 4.8.7 Staff must provide an overview of the EYFS profile which summarises and describes children's attainment at the end of the EYFS. It gives:
- The child's attainment in relation to the 17 early learning goal (ELG) descriptors
 - A short narrative describing the child's 3 characteristics of effective learning.
- 4.8.8 Practitioners' assessments are primarily based on observing a child's daily activities and events. Practitioners should note the learning that a child demonstrates spontaneously, independently, and consistently in a range of contexts. Moderation takes place three times during the academic year to ensure consistency of judgement. This is facilitated by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer EYFS Strategic and moderation records are kept.
- 4.8.9 **Relevant documents:**
- > Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five (December 2023)
 - > Guidance on exemptions for early years providers- EYFS learning and development requirements: exemptions for providers
 - > Early Years Foundation Stage profile handbook- Guidance on completing the Early Years foundation stage assessment- 2023 to 2024 academic year.
 - > Birth to 5 Matters Non-Statutory guidance for the EYFS
 - > Development Matters Non-Statutory guidance for EYFS

4.9 **Learning in Early Years**

- 4.9.1 The early years phase must provide the potential for learning in every activity and situation that arises. The aim is to provide a secure and stimulating environment in which children flourish and are able to learn to make sense of the real world. Children will feel valued and in turn this gives them the confidence to become active learners. The activities devised must provide first hand experiences through learning and

discussion where children are encouraged to interact with their peers, to move with purpose and explore a wide variety of learning situations.

- 4.9.2 To facilitate this there must be well-planned and clearly defined areas of provision and a wide range of activities, resources, and materials available supported by adults modelling the learning, these are the non-negotiables in our schools and nurseries.
- 4.9.3 Opportunities must be provided for sustained activity, as well as spontaneous, self-chosen activities. Therefore, to support this there must be learning environments that are language rich in order to stimulate the children to develop good speech and language and communication skills. This will ensure that the children will become skilful and confident communicators.
- 4.9.4 Every child within the setting is entitled to quality teaching and learning that includes taught learning behaviours to ensure that at the end of the early years phase they will be school ready. The 'Characteristics of Effective Learning' are central to ensuring that quality teaching and learning is taking place. These underpin learning and development across all of the prime and specific areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner.
- 4.9.5 Each staff member will ensure that all children will receive valuable adult time and that there are effective interactions between children and adults which upgrade their quality of play and learning.

4.10 **Non- Negotiables in Early Years Planning**

- 4.10.1 The philosophy behind the planning, is that practitioners develop and scaffold children's knowledge as well as their skills as they journey through their time in the nursery and school. Each school creates a Long-Term Curriculum Map and adapt to meet the contextual needs of their community and children.
- 4.10.2 Medium planning is created as a supportive 'basket of ideas' and provocations, that are adapted and tweaked based on the needs and interests of the children and the possibilities of the setting and local area. The MTP may be supported by purchased schemes by individual schools.
- 4.10.3 All planning is firmly rooted in sound EY practice and provides links with Development Matters. Supported by a rich text and language environment, as well as planning that supports a Talk for Writing approach. Within each theme, there is ample room for enquiry-based learning and for independent learning; for children to ask questions, research together and develop their own lines of enquiry, as a class, group or individual; and for practitioners to support spontaneous and significant moments.

4.11 **The Learning Environment**

- 4.11.1 The enabling environment provides stimulating resources which are accessible and open-ended so that they can be used, moved, and combined in a variety of ways. The list in Appendix One is a guide of the resources examples for areas which are purposeful, comprehensible and enable our children to be independent in their learning.

4.11.2 Examples of children's work will be captured in books, to ensure that progress from the baseline for every child is clearly visible. In addition to this, observations in all forms will be maintained on the on-line learning journal.

4.12 Learning Behaviours

4.12.1 These must be intentionally taught and modelled so that they will stand each child in good stead for their future. These behaviours must focus on the ability to actively listen, take turns, learn appropriate behaviour for all contexts, take risks, understand failure, adopt a growth mindset, follow direct instructions, show respect to self, others and the environment. These are aligned with each schools values and are a feature within the Characteristics of Effective Learning within the EYFS.

4.13 School Ready

4.13.1 At Pathfinders we have a holistic view of school readiness we believe it ensures that children will thrive and have the skills for life of learning. Our ethos is that the Early Years is the foundation of a lifelong journey of learning and ensuring every child is moves on to the next stage equipped with an active and robust tool box to be a successful and reflective learner. School readiness (underpinning and seen in the Prime areas within the EYFS) are crucial and central to our Early Years practice .

4.13.2 Although at Pathfinders we are ambitious about for every child and school readiness, we acknowledge that every child is unique as they build their own unique tool box to engage with learning as process.

4.14 Outdoor Education in the Early Years

4.14.1 Opportunities to learn outdoors are essential for the development of all children. The outdoors offers experiences and provocations that cannot be replicated anywhere else.

4.14.2 All strands of learning can be developed through both planned and child-initiated play. All schools must offer children a sustained time outdoors to play and develop their learning. This is imperative for the vital development of the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning'.

4.14.3 To ensure that this learning takes place all year round; children need to have access to appropriate clothing such as wellington boots and waterproofs for inclement weather.

4.14.4 Outdoor learning contributes to and promotes a positive response to personal health, safety and well-being. It helps children gain an awareness of the need for sustainable relationships between people and the environment and encourages the growth of self-esteem, cooperation with others and personal responsibility.

4.14.5 In a Pathfinders Early Years setting the outdoor area must:

- > Give children the freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically active. Provide opportunities for large mark making and writing and include writing resources such as chinks, paintbrushes with water, pencils and

clipboards. Reading opportunities in the forms of signs, labels and simple stories and sequences.

- > Provide opportunities for mathematical development such as opportunities for counting natural objects, comparing of length and weight with real life objects such as sticks and stones. Be able to solve problems using mathematical knowledge and understanding.
- > Include a quiet area for activities such as reading and observation.
- > Provide opportunities for large scale construction and gross-motor development through sports equipment and other open-ended resources.
- > Include an area for sensory mud/water play and ideally access to water.

4.14.6 In Pathfinders Schools it is recommended that children must be involved in purposeful physical learning for 25% of the day.

4.15 Training/Professional Development

4.15.1 The early year's staff are supported and encouraged to continue their development and the aim is that all early years' teachers and support staff, through training and experience, will observe and respond appropriately to the children, building upon their knowledge and understanding of how children develop and learn.

4.15.2 The trust understands and knows the impact a high-quality workforce has on outcomes in the Early Years. To this end the trust is committed to strive for the highest quality of Early Years staff through a continual cycle of review, training, implementation, and evaluation. This is supported by CPD, training, coaching, visits and working with experts in the Early Years Field.

4.16 Health and Safety

4.16.1 Priority will be always given to children's safety.

4.16.2 The school staff will be responsible for teaching and implementing safety rules and practices.

4.16.3 Activities, equipment and EYFS sites must all comply with safety advice and all settings must carry out risk assessments and daily/weekly checks to ensure that equipment/site is not hazardous to children and does not compromise their safe play.

4.16.4 This includes specific risk assessments such as choking if small items are to be used within a setting.

5. Policy Status

5.1.1 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. The Trust may alter or adapt this policy, and any components of it, at any time provided it notifies the Chairs of the Local Governing Bodies.

6. Record keeping

6.1.1 Early Years records are held online (including learning journals) by trusted partners e.g. online journal software companies.

6.1.2 Publication of online materials is restricted to users only and in all settings, families who sign up are required to complete a contract that lays out conditions of sharing their child's journal with others i.e. on social media.

6.1.3 All other materials e.g. photographs and assessment information (formal and informal) are held in accordance with the Trust Data Protection Policy.

6.1.4 The Trust will retain records evidencing compliance with this policy, as set out in the Trust's Data Retention Policy.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1.1 Each setting Pathfinders School has a Headteacher whose role it is to ensure that this policy is enacted. This is usually delegated to the early Years lead.

8. Reporting and Consequences of Non-Compliance

8.1.1 All Schools are supported by the Central Pathfinders Team who, with the Deputy CEO, DOSI, CEO and Trustees provide support and challenge so that every Pathfinders Early Years setting operates at the highest possible standard and achieves the very best outcomes for its children.

9. Related Policies

Statutory policy or procedure for the EYFS	Where can it be found?
Safeguarding policy and procedures	See Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Procedure
Responding to illness	See Supporting Pupils with medical conditions
Emergency Evacuation procedures	See Health and Safety policy
Parents failing to collect a child and missing children	See Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.
Procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints See Complaints Policy	See Complaints Policy
Procedures for intimate care and changing	See Intimate Care Policy

Appendix One: Checklist for Early Years Environment:

Learning Environment:	Rag Rating	Notes & Next Steps
<p>Maths- Numicon, balance scales, number lines, dominos, dice, money, sequencing cards, 2D and 3D shapes, measuring apparatus, measuring jugs of different sizes, clocks, calculators, timers, Jigsaws, Multilink/Unifix, sorting equipment, Number tracks and squares, Plastic/magnetic numbers, Number rhymes and songs (CD/tape), Peg boards, Abacus, Clocks, Number and information books, counting objects, Measuring containers, maths games</p>		
<p>Writing- Range of writing tools, clipboards, alphabet frieze, Hole puncher, staplers, scissors glue, Sellotape, stencils, rulers, paper clips Assorted paper, card, envelopes, postcards, gift tags, parcel labels, writing books/pads – lists, gummed labels/Post-it-pads Phonic resources to help with linking letters to sounds and recalling tricky words etc. Opportunities for writing must be available in all other areas of the environment</p>		
<p>Reading- Book corner, a range of fiction and non-fiction texts, Wide range of books - picture, fiction and rhyme, sound books, lift the flap books, non-fiction, multicultural/different needs, sensory, comics and catalogues, big books, homemade/photo books, books linked to themes or topics of interest, dual language books, instruction leaflets, recipe cards/books, Atlas, road/street maps. Rhyme and story CDs and resources</p>		
<p>Teaching input area- Visually clear with large interactive screen, alphabet frieze, number line. Space for whole class to be together</p>		
<p>Fine Motor skills – Tweezers, pipettes, threading, malleable materials, scissors, pegs and pegboards</p>		
<p>Block play/construction play – wooden blocks, a range of developmentally appropriate resources. Large wooden blocks e.g. community playthings, Small wooden bricks. Purchased construction kits e.g. Lego, Duplo Small selection of play people, vehicles and animals Selection of natural / reclaimed materials Space to display finished models and those in progress</p>		
<p>Creative- Painting easels, Selection of collage materials (recycled, natural and bought) e.g. corks, plastic lids, feathers, bottle tops, straws, , string, wool, ribbon, tissue, coloured matchsticks, etc. Variety of different paper types and sizes - card, wrapping paper, greeting cards, crepe paper. Range of junk modelling materials - yoghurt pots, foil containers, variety of boxes, cardboard tubes, trays, egg boxes etc. Painting and printing materials - finger paints, sponges, powder / ready mix paint, different size and shape brushes, combs. Mark making resources - pencils, crayons, felt tips. Joining equipment - Sellotape, glue, paper clips, paper fasteners, stapler, scissors, hole punch, string.</p>		

<p>Imaginative- Role play, small world, Train track and train, farm, animals, people, zoo, dinosaurs and dinoworld, cars, other vehicles and garage, castle/knights, puppet theatre, pirates, space exploration, polar animals, play mats, doll's house, Books, Photographs of real-life situations, Different surfaces e.g., Sand pit/builders, tray/grassed area/digging area, Natural materials e.g. stones, pebbles, twigs, grass</p>		
<p>Investigation - Magnets, magnifying glasses, torches, cameras, colour resources, mirrors, simple non-fiction books, bug viewers, selection of different materials such as shiny and dull, hard and soft, A range of living things e.g. mini-beasts, plants, twigs, buds, pets, plant</p>		
<p>Snack- area as appropriate for each setting</p>		
<p>Learning walls references – behaviours for learning, tidying up routines, key words, child examples, pictures and child voice.</p>		
<p>ICT – Programmable toys, cameras, tablets, pc's iPad, walkie talkies, lightboxes etc</p>		
<p>Music/Sound-Xylophone, Variety of bells, Variety of drums and beaters (also hands), Jingle sticks, Tambourines, Triangles, Variety of shakers, Maracas – choice, Cd player, Headphones, Story cd's – with matching books, Rhymes and songs, Songs and music from other cultures, Wide range of music i.e. jazz, classical Ribbons, Materials, Recycling materials for making instruments/sounds/music</p>		
<p>Water- aprons, Containers of differing sizes for pouring, Graded containers, Watering cans, water wheels, siphon/ sponges Containers with holes/sieves, Floating and sinking objects Hosepipe, Transparent plastic tubing of different thicknesses and lengths. Animal sets/ Boats and play people, Kitchen utensils – whisks, spoons, scoops, pipettes, sieves, tea strainers, Plumbing equipment – guttering, water pipes, tubes, u-bends, Fishing nets.</p>		
<p>Sand- Dust pan and brush; Sand wheels; Funnels, variety of sizes; Sieves and colanders; plastic bottles and plastic/metal bowls; Small world – cars, trucks, people, dinosaurs, animals by colour; Platforms with holes to hold funnels whilst pouring; Spoons/scoops Natural objects Measuring spoons; Measuring jugs; Funnels , variety of sizes different levelled</p>		
<p>Physical development- climbing and balancing apparatus, large wooden blocks, open-ended resources including guttering, large tubes, ropes, tarpaulins and sheets, sports equipment, moveable and adaptable apparatus, nook for reading, clipboards, easels, mud kitchen</p>		