



EARLY YEARS POLICY

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to achieve to their full potential. A child’s experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. When parents choose to use early years services they want to know that the provision will keep their children safe and help them to thrive. The Early Years Foundation Stage is the framework that provides that assurance.”

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

Department for Children, Schools and Families 2012

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. In our school, children can join us in the Nursery at any time from the age of 3 months or in the Reception class in the September after their fourth birthday.

Principles

- The Early Years Foundation Stage is based upon four principles:
- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

This policy explains how our practice at Leweston School is underpinned by these four principles.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Leweston School we are wholly committed to laying secure foundations for future learning and development. During the early years of a child’s life they prepare for their lives as a whole and, as such, the learning that takes place in the EYFS must reflect the widest possible range of experiences and not be viewed as only preparation for the next stage of formal education.

All children begin school with a wide variety of experiences and learning and it is the privilege of the adults working in the foundation stage to accept the task of building upon that prior learning experience. This is done through a holistic, child-centred approach, where our skilled staff team work closely with parents and carers to tailor opportunities to meet the necessary ‘Next Steps’ in development for each individual child.

Aims

- Provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring, loving and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of each individual child. Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum which responds to the children’s own interests in order to provide the foundations for life-long learning.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.



- Enable choice and decision-making to foster our children's independence, creativity and self-confidence.
- Work in close partnership with parents and guardians and valuing the contributions of all those who are important in the lives of our children.
- Provide opportunities for children to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development, encouraging every child to become the best possible version of themselves.

A Unique Child

At Leweston School we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. 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.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals within our school and all children are treated fairly, regardless of race, gender, religion or abilities. All children and their families are truly valued within our school. At Leweston School we believe that all our children matter and we aim to make them feel loved and welcome every day. We give all our children every opportunity and our dedicated support to achieve their best. We do this by getting to know every child really well and carefully planning for their learning in response to their needs. In the Early Years we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children.

Welfare

It is important to us that all children in our school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them to understand right and wrong. We provide children with choices and adequate freedoms in order to enable them to develop these important life skills. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. At Leweston School we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and we take these obligations seriously.

At Leweston School we:

- Promote the welfare of children
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs
- Ensure that all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs



- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe, efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children

Positive Relationships

At Leweston School we recognise that children learn to be strong, confident and independent from being in secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We recognise and respect that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education through:

- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts school
- Offering both parents and children the opportunity to spend time in Nursery before starting school, as drop-in/settling sessions or through Parent and Toddler Forest school mornings
- Operating an open-door policy for parents with any queries including telephone and email contact as required
- Sharing regular observations, photos and videos with parents via the online learning journal, Tapestry, and valuing the ongoing contributions to this from parents
- Writing to parents on a regular basis to inform them about learning that has been taking place in each class or unit
- Offering at least one parent/teacher consultation evening per year from TC2 onwards
- Inviting parents in to a session alongside their child at least once a year in Nursery
- Offering parent seminars to enable parents to best support their child's learning at home
- Sending a detailed report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in the Early Years, known as the EYFS profile
- Providing a short interim report on progress for all Reception children in the December each year, and a detailed full report on progress in all seven areas of learning at the end of the academic year
- Developing a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents

All staff involved in the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them.

Enabling Environments

At Leweston School we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Staff working in the EYFS use observations as the basis for planning. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning.



The staff use the children's interests to plan for themes and take the lead from the children as to where they want their learning to go. This fostering of the children's interests develops a high level of motivation for the children's learning.

The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are usually taken from the Birth to Five Matters document, but where children exceed expectations in some areas, objectives from the National Curriculum (2014) for Prep One are sometimes used. We hold very high expectations for our children and many children will be ready for this additional extension and breadth of education as they progress through the Reception Class. We make regular assessments of the children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations. At the end of the Reception Year the children's progress is recorded on to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Each child's level of development is recorded against the 17 Early Learning Goals.

The Learning Environment

All the Nursery and Reception classrooms are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet, creative etc. All classrooms have direct access to an outdoor classroom area, which is also creatively resourced to ensure that children can access all areas of learning when choosing whether to be indoors or outside. The free-flow that is possible between the inside and outside environments has a positive effect on the children's development and we believe that all children should be able to choose their preferred location for learning. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

Learning and Development

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

Prime Areas:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Specific Areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World

- Expressive Arts and Design

Achievement in all areas is supported by the development of the central characteristics for learning;

Characteristics of Learning:

- Playing and Exploring
- Active Learning
- Thinking Creatively and Critically

We deliver learning for all of the areas through purposeful play and learning experiences, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

Learning Through Play

“Children’s play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level”

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences which help them make sense of the world. They practice and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

At Leweston School we do not make a distinction between work and play in the Early Years. Children learn through planned play activities and staff decide when child-initiated or adult-led activities would provide the most effective play opportunities. Play in the EYFS is a carefully tailored, observed and planned process with clear links to learning opportunities. As children progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, our skilled practitioners introduce more structured learning as they deem it appropriate, in order to ensure that our children experience a great breadth of additional opportunities so as to enhance their early education. These include instruction in languages, PE, swimming and Music as children move into the Reception Class. The format of this instruction remains largely informal, enabling children to develop their skills in a play-based, engaging manner.

Prevent Duty

Under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, we have a duty to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism (Prevent duty). Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation remains part of our school’s wider duty to safeguard children and young people. “Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism....Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.” (KCSIE, July 2015).

We are alert to any possible signs which contribute to vulnerability such as family, friends or online influences as well as any changes in behaviour which could indicate a child may be in need of help or protection. We carry out risk assessments of vulnerable children and young people accordingly, work in partnership with other



agencies and the family, and ensure staff are suitably trained and supported in keeping with our LSCB procedures. Further detail can be found in our British Values Policy.

Oral Health

Under the new Early Years Foundation Stage, we are now required to promote “good oral health of children”. This has been introduced following research by Public Health England that suggests that 1 in 5 children aged 5, have experienced tooth decay. An on-going programme will be implemented across the setting, as follows.

Early Years staff will:

- Insist on water rather than juice or squash in children’s water bottles
- Implement an oral health week each year
- Upload a Tapestry post with latest oral health advice to encourage awareness
- Invite a dental nurse to speak with the children
- Be good oral health role-models e.g. healthy, tooth-friendly snacks in front of the children
- Use CPOMS to alert the Head of any oral hygiene concerns

Nursery staff will:

- Encourage children to use an open cup as soon as they are physically able
- Encourage parents to support their children to use an open cup at home when appropriate
- Be able to advise parents when children should start brushing their teeth and when they should visit a dentist (i.e. as soon as their first milk teeth appear for both)

School will:

- Encourage catering to lower sugar levels where possible and provide smaller portions of sugary puddings
- Use sugar-free medicine
- Display oral health awareness posters throughout the school

Child Attendance and Absences

In reference to the Early Years Foundation Stage update (2025) we are now expected to follow up on unexplained child absences in a timely manner. Each child will have a minimum of two contacts, and parents and/or emergency contacts will be contacted for any unexplained absences. Prolonged absences will also be closely monitored and absences will be logged regularly.

Food, Nutrition and Mealtimes (incl. Choking Prevention Measures)

In reference to the Early Years Foundation Stage update (2025) we have put in extra safety measures, including additional choking prevention measures, to further protect children.

Staff will:

- Always be positioned to see children's faces clearly at any time when food is offered.
- Closely monitor allergies across the setting and be aware of allergy plans.



- Hold (or have pending) a full Paediatric First Aid qualification to understand fully how to manage choking incidents, and how to spot and treat anaphylaxis and allergic reactions.
- Have no assumptions about children's competency with solid foods and to be really clear with parents about the stage children are at with their weaning.
- Communicate with the kitchen staff to ensure food is prepared safely to prevent choking - cutting fruit and vegetables into batons rather than chunks for example.
- Confidently follow the 2025 Nutritional Guidance for children aged 0-5 years.
- Not allow food sharing.

Last Reviewed: August 2025

Next Review: August 2026