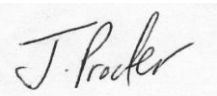




FEDERATION

Review cycle	1 / 2 / 3 years	Date: September 2026
Approved by	Executive Headteacher	
Changes made in this review cycle	2025: Edits made regarding the 2025 framework updates, and to reflect the changes made to planning documents. Updates to safeguarding, nutrition and handwriting. 2026: Addition of screen use, updates to areas of Safeguarding, safer sleep, forest school and nappy changing (intimate care).	
Linked policies	Teaching and Learning Book & Marking Policy Computing Policy Staff Safeguarding Induction Policy Safer Sleep Policy Intimate Care and Toileting Policy EYFS Screen Use Policy	
Signed		Date:

Position	Executive Headteacher	
Date of next Review	September 2027	

Introduction

Early Years Education is the foundation upon which children build the rest of their lives. The provision within the Pioneer Federation is based on the understanding that children learn best when they learn through a means of making connections, play and adult interaction. Planning is developed across the federation that allows for rich child initiated learning, alongside well-planned and highly intentional adult directed learning experiences.

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of Early Years across the Pioneer Federation.

The Nature of Early Years Education

In this policy, the Early Years education refers to children **from the age of 3 to 5 in the Nursery and Reception classes**. This is referred to in the Foundation Stage curriculum, which also covers pre-school settings 'Birth to Five'. Early Years education is centered on the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of the individual child, with no area standing in isolation from the others.

Weaving throughout the EYFS curriculum across our settings are three **Characteristics of Effective Learning**.

- **Playing and Exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- **Active Learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- **Creating and Thinking Critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

The EYFS has four guiding principles:

- Every child is a **Unique Child** who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- We provide an environment that develops **Positive Relationships**, encouraging children to be strong and resilient.
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments with teaching and support from adults**, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time.
- Children benefit from a **strong partnership** between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- We have an awareness and knowledge of the fact that children develop and learn at different rates and this must underpin our planning and the way in which we interact with children and extend their learning.

Entitlement

The Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework (which includes areas of learning and development) have been updated and were published by the government in July 2025. These areas of learning are used when observing, assessing and planning for a child’s individual needs.

There are seven areas of learning, which have sub sections to focus learning. The seven areas are also split into two categories, **Prime Areas** and **Specific Areas**.

- 1. The **three prime areas** apply to all children and provide the solid foundations for accessing other areas of learning. These areas are designed to facilitate and extend learning, igniting curiosity and enthusiasm.

The prime areas are:

The specific areas are:

Personal, Social and emotional development.

Self- Regulation
Managing Self
Building Relationships

Physical development

Gross Motor Skills
Fine Motor Skills

Communication and language.

Listening, Understanding, Attention and

Literacy

Comprehension
Word Reading
Writing

Mathematics

Number
Numerical
Patterns

Understanding the World

Past and Present
People, Culture and Communities
The Natural World

Expressive Arts and Design

Creating with Materials
Being Imaginative and

Planning, Implementation and Play

Throughout the EYFS team, learning and play is planned and adapted around the skills and progression of each cohort. Shared planning creates learning experiences and opportunities to work towards the Early Learning Goals and prepare them for the National Curriculum and lifelong learning. Teaching and learning will take place within the classroom, outside areas and in the local area, with engagement to the local history and communities.

Each child is viewed as a unique individual, with specific needs being met in appropriate ways, according to their stage of development. Individuality is encouraged, independence is fostered, and each child is encouraged to achieve their best. Adults are aware of the importance of language, oracy and vocabulary, and keep this in the forefront of their minds throughout all engagements.

We believe that play, both indoors and outdoors, is the fundamental way in which young children learn, providing opportunities for fun, challenging learning. When playing, children behave in different ways. Sometimes their play will be boisterous, sometimes they will describe and discuss what they are doing, and sometimes they will be quiet and reflective as they play. Through play, children will be developing skills across all the inter-connected Prime and Specific areas of learning, working towards the Early Learning Goals.

In a secure environment with effective adult support, guidance and directed teaching, children will be able to,

- Explore, develop and represent learning experiences that help them make sense of the world
- Practise and build up concepts, ideas and skills
- Learn how to control impulses and understand the need for rules
- Be alone, be alongside others or co-operate as they talk to rehearse their feelings
- Take risks and make mistakes
- Engage with the local community and local history

- Think creatively and imaginatively
- Communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems
- Express fears to relieve anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations

Adults in the setting will support play and learning by:

- Planning and resourcing a stimulating environment
- Supporting children's learning through planned play and directed teaching
- Extending and supporting children's spontaneous play
- Extending and developing children's language and communication in their play.
- Listening to all forms of children's communication and their ideas and taking these into account when developing play and planning.
- Narrating children's play.
- Exposing children to a wide range of stories, poems and genres of text.
- Encouraging children to use a range of vocabulary.
- Asking questions about children's play.

Safeguarding

Early Years settings throughout the federation follow the 'Child Protection and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy', which includes the guidance for safeguarding children up to the age of five, set out in Section 3 of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (September 2026). The safeguarding policy is updated annually in line with KCSIE. As a federation, our safeguarding approach is based upon an understanding of the local context and an attitude of 'it could happen here'. The Pioneer Federation schools aim to build a community around each school and, through this, ensure that the wellbeing of that community is of highest priority. As Early Years providers, settings are committed to providing the foundations of safe behaviours, good health and high expectations for each child.

Within the settings, ratios are adhered to at all times. Adults also maintain up to date enhanced DBS (including volunteers), and paediatric first aid training.

Health & Nutrition

Each school is aware of any children's special health and dietary requirements prior to starting their school, and caters to these needs in line with the individual school's meal provider and parents, and will continue to work closely with families to support children with allergies or intolerances.

In the event that food is provided by a practitioner, such as snack time, practitioners are responsible for ensuring that the food provided meets the needs for all children. Snack time includes healthy snacks for the children, with open discussions surrounding good health and wellbeing. Parents have the opportunity to provide their own healthy snack for their child if preferred, and these foods are checked by a practitioner before they are given to the child at school; this ensures that food does not trigger any school allergies or present as a potential choking hazard. During lunch times, EYFS children have access to a free hot meal daily, provided by the school's catering. If pupils choose to have packed lunches, we encourage parents to provide a varied and well-balanced lunch box.

During meal times, we ensure that children are adequately supervised, with a member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate. Children are always within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating.

Safe Sleep

Sleep and rest play an essential role in supporting children's development, emotional regulation, and overall wellbeing. To ensure safe sleep and appropriate rest opportunities for some children, 'Safer Sleep Policy'

Intimate Care

We are aware that children on school entry may still need the use of a nappy. We work with parents towards toilet training, unless there are medical or other developmental reasons why this may not be appropriate at the time. We provide nappy changing facilities and exercise good hygiene practices in order to accommodate children who are not yet toilet trained. We see toilet training as a self-care skill that children have the opportunity to learn with the full support and non-judgemental concern of adults. See Intimate Care Policy, and Nappy Changing Policy.

Where a child has particular needs (eg wearing nappies or pull ups regularly or has continence difficulties that are more frequent than the odd 'accident') staff within Pioneer schools work to build effective relationships with parents and carers and work with parents to develop an appropriate plan for managing continence or other needs that require intimate care with care, dignity and respect.

Screen Time

Pioneer Federation recognises that relationships, play and communication are the most important ways young children learn and develop. Screen use throughout our EYFS provision is limited, purposeful and always supported by an adult. All screen time for children aged 2-5 within settings, is limited. Where screens are used in school, they are carefully planned to support specific learning and development outcomes and never replace high-quality interactions, active play or time outdoors. See 'EYFS Screen Use Policy' for more information.

The Role of Parents

Prior to starting Reception, the parents of pre-school children will receive the Early Years Policy, information packs including the school prospectus, and the DfE 2026 'Starting Reception' guidance. Children and parents are invited to a variety of 'Stay and Play' sessions (which vary across the federation) in the final term of the year before they begin school. Additionally, an individual meeting with parents and child is arranged during the first week of autumn term either in school or as a home visit (Term 1).

Parents are required to complete admission forms prior to starting, to provide important information about their child; including any medical, SEN, or additional information or needs. This allows the setting to prepare for a safe and comfortable transition for all children, catering for any dietary, accessibility and/or behavioural needs. These conversations may involve other parties, such as alternative provisions, SENCOs, pre-school providers or medical professionals to best meet the needs of the child.

Parents are encouraged to work in partnership with staff and become involved in their child's education throughout their time at school. The Foundation Stage Profile is discussed at regular intervals, including parent's evenings, and parents are regularly informed of their child's achievements. Parents are also encouraged to contribute through a range of strategies', which may differ between schools. These contributions may include discussions around the children's achievements outside of the school environment, show and tell, celebration assemblies, and termly questionnaires. Parents are also invited into school throughout the year to share the children's learning journeys with them.

Parents are also encouraged to engage with home learning, including regular reading and phonics practice at home, in line with the federation reading policy. Home reading tasks are carefully chosen to include the sounds and tricky words that the children have been taught, together with other books of the child's choice. Individual settings may also suggest termly tasks, aimed at engaging children with our topics and learning outside of the school environment. A weekly 'learning summary' is digitally sent home to summarise the planning for the week ahead, together with a detailed outline of the phonics planning.

Admission

Children are admitted in September for school, on a full-time or part-time basis, depending on a professional discussion between parent and teacher; this may also include a quickly staggered admission system to settle the children comfortably. To further support transition into the school community, a buddy system is used, pairing the new Reception children with Year 6 children. Buddies help school starters to line up, manage the lunch hall, form new friendships, and support them in the playground.

Children in Nursery are admitted throughout the year, following their second birthday or when parents choose to start nursery. This transition is developed and planned in partnership with parents around children's individual needs.

Adaption & Inclusion

At Pioneer, we promote equality of access to the whole curriculum for all learners. The EYFS team is aware of the physical, sensory, cognitive and emotional development and needs of all learners. When planning learning objectives, a variety of activities and experiences are planned to meet the needs of different learners.

In accordance with the school policy of special educational needs, and regard to the 0-25 SEND Code of Practice, early intervention and appropriate strategies are put in place to help a child to thrive within the environment, to manage or to overcome their particular needs. Discussions surrounding pupils and any special or additional needs they may have will be ongoing throughout the pupil's education, in constant liaison with parents, and may include a multi-faceted approach with outside agencies and providers. This is in order to ensure that the pupil is receiving the best possible care and support.

Planning

Planning follows the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, guided by the Revised 2023 'Development Matters'; the skills outlined in this document have been aligned to progress throughout the year, aiming to reach a good level of development for all. Curriculum plans are developed alongside the education programmes and practitioner knowledge of the cohort, child development, and wider learning opportunities. Long term, termly and weekly plans ensure activities and all areas of learning are covered both outside and inside of the classrooms. Each school within the federation engages with designated outdoor learning/forest school sessions, and prioritises the need for explorative, nature led play and learning to enhance the learning and development of their cohort. In addition to formal planning, staff across the federation will take account of individual cohort and pupil interests and passions, and will adapt the environment and learning to utilise these interests and engage pupils in play and learning.

Each term, the EYFS curriculum follows a themed topic or 'big question' - both of which are introduced through engaging experiences and stories, and ended through celebration. These termly plans are progressive in their nature, where skill sets for each area of learning are broken down and developed upon as the year progresses.

Each week within our Medium Term Plan is broken down into the seven areas of learning, to ensure each area holds inherent value, as well as being part of a cross-curricular approach to learning. This plan acts as a **guidance** to all staff members, following key texts, songs, supportive activities and learning goals, which are to be adapted for the individual cohort; the plans act as a working document throughout the term, for staff to collaborate and share expertise and ideas.

Teaching and Nursery assistants are consulted, advised and kept informed of planning and work closely with teachers to assess, monitor and deliver learning objectives.

Assessment, Reporting and Recording

Class Teachers, teaching assistants and Nursery staff are continuously observing and assessing the reception children. Records of observations and assessments are recorded within the children's learning books; Mathematics, Literacy and a 'Learning Journey', as well as primarily through the practitioner's own knowledge of the child. These observations are used as an 'assessment for learning' tool to inform planning and future learning and development. The EYFS team uses both summative and formative assessment trackers on Arbor to assess children who are 'on track' to meet the end of age assessments in Nursery and the Early Learning Goals in Reception. Staff use assessment guides such as Development Matters and Birth to 5, to support discussions, assessments and next steps.

Moderation style discussions take place within the federation and with local schools and nurseries to check that all assessment judgements are secure. The end of year report to parents/carers is a summary of the data collected throughout the year. It informs the parents/carers of whether the children have met or not met the end of year Early Learning Goals, the progress they have made, and the next steps the children need to make in order to develop even further. Reports will also include a summary of the children's Characteristics of Learning. Once these reports have been presented, parents have the opportunity to discuss them at the end of year reports meeting.

These reports and assessments also form the basis of transition discussions and support into Year 1. When children are moving from Nursery onto School, the child's Key Person completes a 'moving on assessment' form to inform the child's new settings of their strengths and areas of development.

Learning Journeys

As a federation, we have made the decision to use physical and/or digital learning journeys to celebrate and record children's learning achievements in EYFS. These recordings support staff in retaining evidence of progression for each child, as well as securing against loss of access to knowledge due to staff moving/leaving or illness; there is an expectation that these Learning Journeys also provide a resource for anyone to be able to pick up and gather a child's ability or assessment in an area of

learning. The evidence accumulated contain examples of children's work with adults, independent work, observations, pupil voice, photos, and whole class or school events such curriculum days. These are individual to each child, and reflect their own learning journey and interests.

The evidence held for each child should cover the broad and balanced EYFS curriculum. There should be an equal balance of evidence from staff working within the class and there may also be evidence from wider school staff and home. The amount and quality of evidence should be of the highest standard of presentation (see book policy) and this standard/amount/variety should calibrate across the federation. This consistency is important for moderation activities across Pioneer.

EYFS teachers are given the professional courtesy to ensure that a good range of evidence is provided for each pupil to help formulate judgements of progress and achievement. If leadership are concerned about the range and quality of evidence provided by a staff member, they may define a set amount of evidence needed for that staff member over a period of time.

Children in our Reception and Nursery classes regularly get to enjoy and review their learning journeys and often choose pieces of learning to include. The work within the child's Learning Journeys is shared with their school peers, buddies, and their parents at various points in the year, and enables them to see and celebrate the progress in pupils' learning.

Curriculum Books

As a federation, we also use individual Literacy and Mathematics books to track and record children's progress in these specific areas, and adopt these once the child is ready for this step. Once ready, these books will contain a variety of photographs, written work, observations and 'wow' moments. Work within our curriculum books will be representative of the individual child and their ability. The varying level of support needed for each child and their work will be indicated to support further assessment and evidence of progress.

Mathematics books will follow the teaching and provision of the White Rose Education scheme, as followed from Nursery (Rising 5's) to KS2 in the federation. These books should show a clear progression and mastery of concepts, aiding staff judgement, assessment and transition into year 1. These books should also show both adult and child-led work, observations and pupil voice, both inline and outside of the White Rose scheme.

Literacy books should include evidence of both adult and child-led work, observations and pupil voice. Vast amounts of pupil work within Literacy books will evidence phonics learning, reference to a variety of texts, and written work, as well as a clear development of handwriting and punctuation skills. Handwriting within the federation holds high expectations (see Handwriting policy), and the foundations for fast, accurate and efficient handwriting will begin in the Early Years. Provisions hold high emphasis on the development of gross and fine motor skills, in order to support children's development of a comfortable tripod grip and the formation of both lower and upper-case letters, which should be seen across the curriculum books and learning journeys.

Continued Professional Development (CPD) and Networking

All EYFS staff attend relevant training courses, related to curriculum developments and termly meetings are held with the teachers across the federation. The EYFS Lead works closely with the early year's team across the federation to share and develop CPD. Within these discussions, practitioners share their own expertise and findings, and these discussions often lead to federation wide professional development.

The Role of the Head teacher and the Early Years Leader

The Early Years Leader will work alongside the Executive Head/Head of School to inform all school and nursery staff of any new developments and changes in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Policies and framework will be reviewed as part of the school development plan.

Curriculum Area Leaders

Across the pioneer federation, our middle leaders work with teachers to develop their subject and pedagogical knowledge to enhance the teaching of the curriculum.

Within Early years, we are passionate about developing other teachers and middle leader's knowledge of the EYFS curriculum. We actively encourage teachers to spend time within EYFS and review our provision as part of their subject leadership, sharing ideas and effective early years practice. Each subject has an overview, which highlights the progression of skills and knowledge from EYFS through to UKS2, showing alignment and progression with the National Curriculum.

Policy: EARLY YEARS POLICY

Date: September 2026

Review: September 2027

Co-ordinator: Katy Taylor