

# Ridgeway Farm CE Academy

## Early Years Policy



**Approved by:**

Academy Council

**Date:** November 2022

**Last reviewed on:**

November 2024

**Next review due by:**

November 2026

## Rationale

*“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their 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.”*

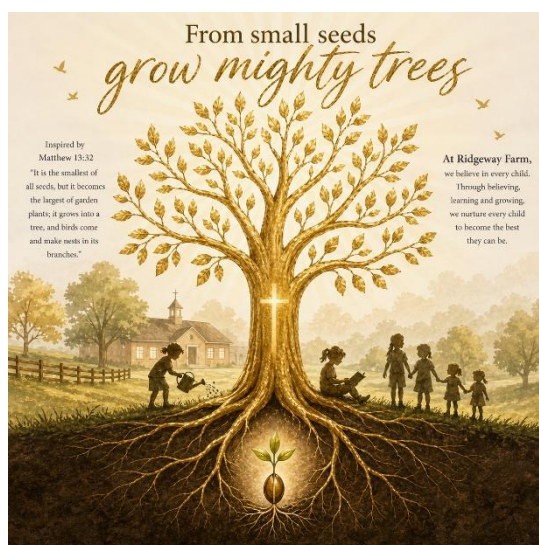
— Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, Department for Education

### **Matthew 13:32**

*“It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches.”*

*At Ridgeway Farm, we believe that every child begins their journey as a small seed with enormous potential. Through believing in themselves and others, learning each day, and growing in confidence, knowledge and faith, our children flourish from the moment they enter Reception until they leave us as strong, resilient and compassionate individuals.*

*Our vision is for children to become “mighty trees” — deeply rooted in Christian values, with the strength to stand tall, the confidence to flourish, and the compassion to provide shelter, comfort and support for others. We want our children to make a positive difference in their local and wider communities, equipped with secure roots that keep them strong and upright throughout life.*



## Believe

At Ridgeway Farm, we believe that every child is a unique child, created in God’s image, who deserves to feel safe, valued and loved. We are committed to providing a nurturing, inclusive and stimulating environment where children feel a strong sense of belonging and are encouraged to develop confidence, independence and resilience.

We believe that high-quality early education should inspire curiosity, creativity and awe through meaningful play, rich first-hand experiences and positive relationships. Our Christian values underpin all that we do, helping children learn how to show kindness, gratitude, respect and responsibility towards one another and the world around them.

We value the importance of strong partnerships with families and recognise parents and carers as children’s first educators. Together, we work to provide the very best start to school life, laying strong foundations for future learning, wellbeing and success.

We believe in the power of our indoor and outdoor environments to support exploration, problem-solving, language development and physical growth. Through these experiences, children begin to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for lifelong learning.

## **Learn**

Our Early Years curriculum follows the current statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and is designed to ensure all children develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to thrive.

We recognise the four guiding principles of the EYFS:

- Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- 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 develop and learn at different rates.

Our curriculum is built around the seven areas of learning and development.

Prime Areas

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

Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

These areas are carefully planned, sequenced and interconnected to ensure children experience a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum.

### **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

At Ridgeway Farm CE Academy, we recognise that how children learn is just as important as what they learn. The Characteristics of Effective Learning underpin all teaching and learning in Reception and support children in becoming confident, independent and resilient learners.

The three Characteristics of Effective Learning are:

- Playing and Exploring – children investigate, experience things first-hand and ‘have a go’
- Active Learning – children concentrate, keep trying when they encounter difficulties and enjoy their achievements
- Creating and Thinking Critically – children develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and choose ways to do things

These characteristics are carefully nurtured through our provision, interactions and curriculum design to ensure children develop strong attitudes towards lifelong learning.

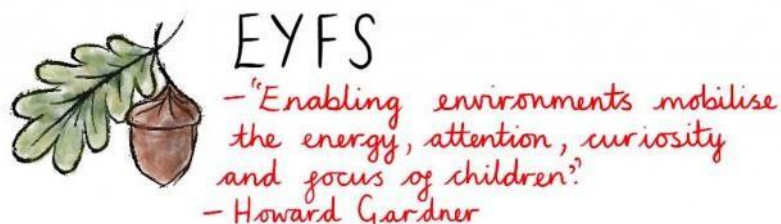
Play is at the heart of learning in Reception. Through a balance of adult-led teaching and child-initiated learning, children explore, investigate, practise and apply new skills both indoors and outdoors. We encourage children to see child-initiated play as “choosing their own learning,” helping them to become active, independent learners.

High-quality interactions are central to our teaching. Staff carefully observe, model language, ask thoughtful questions and provide opportunities for children to deepen their thinking and make meaningful connections. Vocabulary development is prioritised across all areas of learning to ensure children become confident communicators.

Reading is a key driver of our curriculum. Through high-quality texts, ‘Book Talk’, daily story time, nursery rhymes, phonics, guided reading and home reading opportunities, we foster a lifelong love of reading while building strong early literacy skills.

Mathematics is taught through daily exploration of number, pattern, reasoning and problem-solving, both through direct teaching and meaningful real-life experiences such as cooking, shopping and routines.

We place great importance on transition. Carefully planned routines, environments and expectations support children as they settle into Reception and prepare confidently for the move into Year 1.



## **Grow**

The impact of our Early Years provision is seen in children who are happy, engaged and motivated learners. They demonstrate curiosity, independence and resilience, and approach new challenges with confidence and enthusiasm.

Children develop strong communication and language skills, positive relationships and the ability to manage their emotions and behaviour effectively. They learn to work collaboratively, solve problems creatively and show kindness and respect to others.

Our children leave Reception with secure foundations across all areas of learning and with the attitudes and dispositions needed for future success. They make strong progress from their starting points and are well prepared for the next stage of their education, often achieving a Good Level of Development.

Most importantly, they leave with a love of learning, a belief in themselves and the confidence to continue growing into the mighty trees we know they can become.

## **Assessment in the EYFS**

Assessment in Reception at Ridgeway Farm CE Academy is formative, ongoing and rooted in professional knowledge and high-quality interactions. Practitioners use observation, professional dialogue and purposeful recorded observations to develop a secure understanding of each child's learning and development.

Online observations are used sparingly to capture significant moments of learning and support communication with parents and carers. Floor books are used to document shared learning journeys, children's thinking and lines of enquiry across the EYFS areas.

Assessment is used to inform teaching, identify next steps and ensure all children make strong progress from their starting points. We believe assessment should be purposeful and proportionate, supporting learning while protecting valuable time for high-quality interactions with children.

Statutory assessments, including the Reception Baseline Assessment and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, are completed in line with national requirements. See separate Assessment in the EYFS policy for more information.

### **Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)**

Within the first six weeks of starting Reception, all children complete the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) in line with Department for Education requirements.

The RBA is a short, practical assessment carried out by the class teacher and focuses on early mathematics, literacy, communication and language. It is used to form a starting point for measuring progress across primary school and is not used to label, track or place children.

The assessment is completed in a relaxed and supportive environment where children feel comfortable and secure.

## **Parents as Partners**

At Ridgeway Farm CE Academy, we recognise that parents and carers are children's first and most enduring educators. Building strong, positive partnerships between home and school is central to the Early Years Foundation Stage and has a significant impact on children's learning, wellbeing and development.

We value the knowledge parents and carers have of their child and work closely with families to ensure every child feels safe, supported and understood from the very beginning of their school journey. During transition meetings, parent consultations and ongoing communication, families are encouraged to share important information about their child's interests, experiences, strengths and individual needs. This helps us to plan meaningful learning experiences and respond effectively to each child as an individual.

Parents and carers are encouraged to share 'WOW' moments and achievements from home so that children's learning can be celebrated both in and beyond school. We keep families informed through regular communication including curriculum overviews, newsletters, parent meetings, open sessions, workshops and informal daily conversations where appropriate.

We also provide guidance and support to help parents continue learning at home, strengthening the partnership between school and family and ensuring children are fully supported in their development.

### **Liaison and Transition**

We recognise the importance of effective transition into Reception and throughout the Early Years journey. Strong links are established with pre-schools, nurseries and other early years providers to support a smooth and positive start to school.

Where possible, Reception staff visit children in their pre-school or nursery settings and work closely with previous providers to gather information, records and reports. This helps us to understand each child's starting points, interests and individual needs, ensuring continuity of care and learning.

Carefully planned transition arrangements help children to feel secure, confident and ready for the next stage of their education, including the move from Reception into Year 1.

### **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

At Ridgeway Farm CE Academy, we are committed to ensuring that all children have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. We recognise that some children may require additional support to access learning and provision successfully.

Practitioners carefully observe and assess children's development to identify any emerging needs at the earliest possible stage. Where additional support is needed, appropriate provision is put in place promptly and in partnership with parents and carers.

We work closely with the school SENDCo and, where appropriate, external agencies and specialists to ensure children receive the support they need. Parents and carers are involved throughout the process and are valued as key partners in decision-making and planning for their child.

### **Equal Opportunities and Inclusion**

We believe that every child has the right to feel valued, respected and included. We are committed to providing an inclusive environment where all children can thrive, regardless of background, ability, culture, language, religion, gender or family circumstances.

Our curriculum reflects and celebrates diversity and promotes respect, understanding and belonging. We actively challenge stereotypes, discrimination and prejudice, ensuring that children experience positive representations of themselves and others.

We make reasonable adjustments where necessary to ensure all children can fully access the curriculum, environment and wider school life.

### **Safeguarding, Welfare and Safety**

Children's safety, wellbeing and welfare are at the heart of everything we do. We provide a safe, secure and nurturing environment where children feel protected, valued and able to learn confidently.

Our curriculum supports children in learning how to stay safe, make responsible choices, develop independence and begin to understand and manage risks appropriately.

We follow all statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements as outlined in the EYFS framework and ensure that robust policies, procedures and training are in place to protect all children. This includes child protection, health and safety, supervision, attendance, first aid, medical needs and site security.

We promote children's good health through healthy routines, physical activity, hygiene practices and clear procedures for illness, accidents and the administration of medicines.

Please refer to our separate Safeguarding, Child Protection, Health and Safety, and Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs policies for further information.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Early Years Foundation Stage Leader, Senior Leadership Team and Governors are responsible for monitoring the quality of provision and ensuring this policy is implemented effectively.

This includes reviewing teaching and learning, assessment, safeguarding, curriculum provision, and children's outcomes to ensure the highest standards are maintained.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if statutory guidance changes, to ensure continued compliance with the EYFS framework and the needs of our children and families.