



## Harden Primary School

### Early Years Policy 2025

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	<b>Print name</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
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<b>On behalf of Governing Body</b>	Jenni Mayo	J Mayo	1.10.2025

At Harden Primary School, we inspire children to immerse themselves fully in meaningful learning experiences. We are dedicated to nurturing aspiration, independence, determination, creativity, and collaboration in every learner. Our school provides a safe and supportive environment where children feel confident to take risks and embrace challenges.

At Harden, learners are empowered to take ownership of their learning journey, building the skills and resilience they need to succeed both in school and beyond.

### **Aims of the Early Years**

We believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start to their school life, both emotionally and intellectually.

For them to develop their full potential, we aim to:

- Recognise all pupils as unique and special.
- Understand that pupils develop in different ways at different times.
- Provide a safe, secure and caring environment where pupils feel happy and valued.
- Foster and nurture self-confidence and self-esteem by developing an awareness of their own identity and role in the community.
- Teach them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- Encourage independence, decision-making and learning through mistakes.
- Develop social skills, values and codes of behaviour to work together harmoniously.
- Support pupils to develop care, respect and appreciation of beliefs, cultures and opinions that are different to their own.
- Understand the importance of play.
- Provide learning experiences that reflect pupil's personal interest and curiosity to develop their natural desire, interest and excitement in order to motivate them to learn
- Provide experiences that build on previous knowledge in order to challenge, stimulate and extend learning
- Provide effective learning opportunities in a range of high-quality environments with quality first teaching

### **Early Years Curriculum**

Our Early Years setting follows the curriculum set out in the most recent EYFS statutory framework, effective from September 2025. The EYFS identifies seven areas of learning and development, all of which are equally important and interconnected. Among these, the three prime areas are recognised as crucial for sparking curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, while also building the foundations for children to develop relationships, grow in confidence, and thrive.

At Harden Primary School, we believe the environment plays a vital role in supporting and enriching children's development. Through careful observation, we assess each child's interests, stage of development, and learning needs, enabling us to plan purposeful, engaging, and achievable activities that extend and challenge their learning. Every child is encouraged to develop essential skills, acquire new knowledge, and deepen their understanding through the seven areas of learning and development, ensuring a broad and balanced foundation for future success.

**The prime areas are:**

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

**The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:**

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

The seven areas of learning form the foundation for planning each child's experiences and progression. We provide rich opportunities that enable children to work towards the Early Learning Goals and ensure they are well prepared for the transition into the National Curriculum. Learning takes place both within the classroom and in the outdoor environment, where children engage in a wide variety of activities, supported by adults as well as through independent exploration.

**Characteristics of Effective Learning**

The EYFS also emphasises the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning, which underpin how children learn and engage with the world around them. Our staff carefully plan with these in mind, recognising the importance of children's attitudes, curiosity, and capacity to play, explore, and think critically.

The three key characteristics are:

- **Playing and Exploring:** children investigate, experience new things, and show willingness to 'have a go'.
- **Active Learning:** children concentrate, persevere when faced with challenges, and take pride in their achievements.
- **Creating and Thinking Critically:** children generate and develop their own ideas, make connections between concepts, and apply strategies to solve problems.

### **Active Learning through Play**

Through play, children explore, experiment, and develop meaningful learning experiences that help them make sense of the world around them. Play provides opportunities to practise and build on ideas, develop self-control, and understand the importance of rules and boundaries. It also enables children to think creatively, both independently and collaboratively, while communicating, problem-solving, and sharing ideas with others.

At Harden Primary School, we provide purposeful play opportunities across all seven areas of learning, ensuring a balance of adult-led, adult-initiated, and child-initiated activities to support and extend every child's development.

### **Role of the Key Person**

Each child is assigned to their class teacher as a key person, ensuring that care and support are tailored to meet individual needs. This role helps every child feel secure, settle confidently into the setting, and build strong, trusting relationships with both staff and parents/carers. Alongside the class teacher, our Early Years Practitioners also act as key people, working in partnership to provide consistent care and guidance.

#### **At Harden Primary, our practitioners:**

- Prioritise children's safety and wellbeing.
- Observe and understand each child's development, assess progress, and plan next steps in learning.
- Identify and respond to any need for additional support.
- Nurture a positive sense of identity and belonging, celebrating each child's individuality and culture.
- Value and respect all children and families equally.

#### **Practitioners at our school support and extend children's learning by:**

- Providing stimulating, challenging, and playful opportunities across all prime and specific areas of development.
- Embedding and promoting the Characteristics of Effective Early Learning.
- Offering high-quality interaction and meaningful engagement.
- Planning and guiding activities through a balance of child-initiated, adult-initiated, and adult-directed experiences.
- Reflecting on and responding to the different ways in which children learn

## **Enabling Environments**

In line with the EYFS framework (2025), we recognise that children learn and develop best in enabling environments, where their experiences are tailored to meet their individual needs.

### **Enabling environments:**

- Value every individual and celebrate diversity.
- Place a high importance on learning and development.

### **They provide:**

- Stimulating and inclusive resources that reflect the cultures and communities of all children.
- Rich opportunities for learning through play and playful teaching.
- Supportive spaces where children feel confident to take risks, investigate, and explore.

## **Parents as Partners**

At Harden Primary School, we aim to build strong, positive relationships with all parents and carers, founded on mutual respect and a shared commitment to each child's wellbeing and education. We value parents and carers as children's first educators and as active partners in the ongoing learning journey. When parents and practitioners work closely together in the Early Years, children's development and progress are significantly enhanced.

Parental partnership begins with practitioners visiting children in their pre-school, nursery, or home settings. These visits allow staff to learn about each child's interests, experiences, and needs in a familiar environment, helping to build a holistic picture of the child while establishing a strong, trusting relationship with both the child and their family.

Before starting, all parents and children are invited to visit the setting several times to help them become familiar with daily routines and expectations. At the beginning of the academic year or on entry throughout the year parents are also invited to attend information sessions designed to support children's learning both at school and at home.

Ongoing communication is maintained through termly parent meetings, where progress and next steps are discussed. In addition, parents are warmly welcomed to attend workshops, celebration events, assemblies, and learning experiences throughout the year. We also encourage parents to arrange private appointments with staff at any time to share concerns or seek additional support.

## **Equal Opportunities**

At Harden Primary School, we are committed to promoting anti-discriminatory practice for all children and families. We celebrate and value the diversity within our wider community and strive to ensure that every child feels respected and included. We actively challenge attitudes and behaviours that promote discrimination, fostering a culture of respect and

equality. Our approach supports all children in developing the understanding and skills they need to thrive in a diverse society. For further details, please refer to the whole-school *Equal Opportunities Policy*.

## **SEND**

All children are entitled to an education that enables them to:

- Achieve the best possible educational outcomes, and
- Develop as confident young learners, able to express their views and prepared for a smooth transition into compulsory education.

At Harden Primary School, we have clear systems and processes to identify and support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Early identification is crucial in order to provide timely and effective support, ensuring that children with SEND receive the help they need to achieve the best possible long-term outcomes. We are committed to working closely with parents, carers, and external agencies to meet each child's needs and maximise their progress. For further details, please refer to the whole-school *SEND and Inclusion Policy*

## **Teaching**

At Harden Primary School, we are committed to providing high-quality, first-class teaching for all pupils, ensuring that every child receives the support, challenge, and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential.

## **Planning**

At Harden Primary School, all areas of learning and development are carefully planned for and made accessible to children across both indoor and outdoor environments. Learning opportunities include a balance of child-initiated and adult-focused activities, designed to engage and extend children's thinking and skills.

Planning is informed by ongoing observations of each child's learning, enabling practitioners to identify next steps and provide tailored teaching that addresses individual needs and any gaps in development.

All observation, planning, and assessment are designed to support children in progressing towards the Early Learning Goals, ensuring they are well prepared for the transition into the National Curriculum by the end of the Reception year.

## **Assessment**

At Harden Primary School, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. Practitioners observe children to identify their levels of achievement, interests, and learning styles. These observations are used to inform planning and ensure learning experiences are tailored to each child's needs. Staff also consider observations shared by parents and carers, recognising their vital role in understanding the child's development.

Within the first six weeks of starting Reception, children undertake the Statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA, September 2025). This provides a starting point to monitor progress throughout the Early Years.

At the end of the EYFS, practitioners complete the EYFS Profile for each child. Children are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development, or
- Not yet reaching expected levels

The profile is informed by ongoing observations, discussions with parents and carers, and reflective professional judgement. Results are shared with families, ensuring they are fully involved in their child's progress. Assessment judgements are moderated internally, with reference to the Development Matters guidance, and externally in collaboration with other local schools to ensure consistency. EYFS Profile data is submitted to the local authority as required.

Observations take place daily, capturing significant moments of learning. These are evaluated to identify next steps and discussed in regular progress and assessment meetings. Key learning experiences, next steps, and "wow moments" are recorded using the JUNIPER app, providing a clear picture of a child's developmental stage in relation to the Early Learning Goals. This system also shares meaningful information with parents and carers.

All observation and assessment practices are rigorously monitored both internally and externally by the senior leadership team, the local authority, the EXCEED cluster group of schools, and specialist consultants when necessary, ensuring high-quality, consistent assessment and effective support for every child.

## **Transition**

Starting school can be a challenging experience for young children. At Harden Primary School, we carefully plan transitions to ensure each child settles quickly, confidently, and happily.

Our approach is tailored to the individual needs of each child and includes:

- Home, nursery, and pre-school visits by practitioners to understand the child's interests, experiences, and needs in a familiar environment.
- Opportunities for children and parents to visit the school setting before starting, helping them become familiar with routines, rules, and the learning environment.
- Information sessions for parents to support their child's learning and wellbeing both at home and at school.
- Ongoing communication between parents, carers, and practitioners to share knowledge and provide reassurance throughout the transition period.

These carefully planned steps ensure that every child feels secure, valued, and ready to thrive in their new school environment, laying the foundation for a positive start to their learning journey.

### **Safeguarding**

Safety is paramount and Harden Primary School has a robust and effective Safeguarding Policy to ensure the children in our care are protected. *See whole school Safeguarding Procedures and Child Protection policy*

Safety and security is a high priority at our school and it is important that all children in our care are safe. Our requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2025 are as follows:

- To promote the safety and welfare of the children in our care.
- To promote good health and prevent the spread of infection by taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- To manage the behaviour of the children in our care in a way that is appropriate for their individual needs and stage of development.
- To ensure that adults who have access to children, or who look after children are suitably vetted and trained.
- To ensure that the setting is fit for purpose and that furniture and equipment is safe.
- To maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe and efficient management of the setting.
- To prevent risks to children through detailed risk assessments for all environments the children use (including educational visits) and individual children with specific needs.

## **Ratios**

Staffing arrangements must meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. Providers must ensure that children are adequately supervised and decide how to deploy staff to ensure children's needs are met. Providers must inform parents and/or carers about staff deployment, and, when relevant and practical, aim to involve them in these decisions. Children must usually be within sight and hearing of staff and always within sight or hearing.

Only those aged 17 or over may be included in ratios (and staff under 17 should be always supervised). Students on long term placements and volunteers (aged 17 or over) and staff working as apprentices in early education (aged 16 or over) may be included in the ratios if the provider is satisfied that they are competent and responsible.

Reception classes in maintained schools and academies are subject to infant class size legislation. The School Admissions (Infant Class Size) Regulations 2012 limit the size of infant classes to 30 pupils per school teacher while an ordinary teaching session is conducted. 'School teachers' do not include teaching assistants, higher level teaching assistants or other support staff. Consequently, in an ordinary teaching session, a school must employ sufficient school teachers to enable it to teach its infant classes in groups of no more than 30 per school teacher.

## **Outings**

Children must be kept safe while on outings. Providers must assess the risks or hazards which may arise for the children and must identify the steps to be taken to remove, minimise and manage those risks and hazards. The assessment must include consideration of adult to child ratios. A full risk assessment is completed in line with school policy. *See Educational Visits Policy.*

## **Staff Qualifications**

The daily experience of children in early years settings and the overall quality of provision depends on all practitioners having appropriate qualifications, training, skills and knowledge and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. We ensure that all staff receive induction training to help them understand their roles and responsibilities. Induction training includes information about emergency evacuation procedures, safeguarding, child protection, the equality policy, and health and safety issues. We support staff to undertake appropriate training and professional development opportunities to ensure they offer quality learning and development experiences for children that continually improves.

Appropriate arrangements are in place for the supervision/appraisal of staff who have contact with children and families. Effective supervision/appraisal provides support, coaching and training for the practitioner and promotes the interests of children.

Supervision/appraisal should foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork and continuous improvement, which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues.

Supervision/appraisal should provide opportunities for staff to;

- discuss any issues – particularly concerning children’s development or well-being
- identify solutions to address issues as they arise
- receive coaching to improve their personal effectiveness

At least one person who has a current paediatric first aid certificate is on the premises and available at all times when children are present, and accompany children on outings.

The number of children, staff and layout of premises are taken into account to ensure that a paediatric first aider is able to respond to emergencies quickly.

We ensure that staff have sufficient understanding and use of English to ensure the well-being of children in their care. For example, staff are in a position to keep records in English, to liaise with other agencies in English, to summon emergency help, and to understand instructions such as those for the safety of medicines or food hygiene.

### **Positive Relationships**

At Harden Primary School, we are committed to promoting positive behaviour in all children, ensuring that every child is respected, valued, and treated as an individual. We recognise that clear boundaries for behaviour are essential to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, staff, and the wider school community. For further details, please refer to the whole-school *Positive Relationships Policy*.

### **Food Hygiene**

All snacks provided at Harden Primary School are healthy, balanced, and nutritious. Fresh water is available at all times, and children are encouraged to access the snack area independently throughout the session. Any dietary requirements are carefully recorded and displayed in appropriate areas to ensure children’s safety. Children are supervised while eating and drinking, and support is provided to promote independence and self-care skills.

### **Safety of Premises**

At Harden Primary School we ensure our premises, including overall floor space and outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided on the premises. We comply with requirements of health and safety legislation (including fire safety and hygiene requirements).

We take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children, staff and others on the premises in the case of fire or any other emergency and have an emergency evacuation procedure.

We have appropriate fire detection and control equipment (for example, fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire blankets and/or fire extinguishers) which are in working order and checked regularly. Fire exits are clearly identifiable, and fire doors are free of obstruction and easily opened from the inside.

**Smoking**

We do not allow smoking in or on the premises when children are present or about to be present.