SACRED HEART SCHOOL

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Reception Policy

Policy owner	EYFS / Reception Lead
Applies to	Reception children and staff
Statutory framework	EYFS Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers (effective 1 September 2026)
Approved by	Headteacher / Governing Body (24th November 2026)
Review date	November 2027

This policy should be read alongside the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, SEND Policy, Behaviour Policy, Attendance Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Online Safety Policy and relevant curriculum policies.

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1. Policy Statement

At Sacred Heart School, we recognise that the Early Years Foundation Stage is a distinct and important stage of education. Our Reception provision provides a safe, nurturing and ambitious environment in which every child can develop the knowledge, skills, vocabulary, confidence and independence needed for future learning.

We recognise that children enter Reception with different experiences, starting points, interests, strengths and needs. Our curriculum is therefore responsive while maintaining clear high expectations. We combine purposeful play, adult-led teaching, guided learning and carefully planned continuous provision so that children learn through both direct teaching and meaningful exploration.

This policy reflects the statutory requirements of the EYFS framework for group and school-based providers that came into force on 1 September 2026, together with current Department for Education guidance. The statutory framework sets mandatory standards; non-statutory guidance such as Development Matters is used to support professional planning and assessment.

2. Statutory and Guidance Framework

Our EYFS provision is underpinned by the following:

- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers, effective from 1 September 2026.
- Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage used as non-statutory curriculum guidance.
- Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) arrangements applicable to the 2026–2027 academic year.
- Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) statutory assessment arrangements.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education and other current safeguarding requirements.
- The Equality Act 2010, SEND Code of Practice and relevant school policies.

Where statutory guidance is updated, the school will review this policy and associated procedures to ensure continued compliance.

3. Aims

- To provide every child with a secure, welcoming and stimulating start to school.
- To build strong relationships with children and families.
- To develop communication, language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development as foundations for learning.
- To provide a rich curriculum across all seven areas of learning.
- To develop confident, resilient, independent and curious learners.
- To ensure children with SEND, disadvantaged children, children learning English as an additional language and children with other individual needs are appropriately supported.
- To identify gaps and barriers to learning early and respond through high-quality teaching, targeted support and appropriate external advice.
- To maintain a safe, healthy and inclusive environment in which children can learn and play.

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4. The EYFS Principles

Our practice is informed by the four overarching principles of the EYFS:

Principle	How this looks in Reception
Every child is a unique child	Children are respected as individuals. We recognise different starting points, interests, strengths, cultures, experiences and needs.
Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships	Adults build warm, consistent relationships, model respectful behaviour and provide predictable routines and clear boundaries.
Children learn and develop well in enabling environments	Indoor and outdoor spaces are carefully organised to promote exploration, independence, talk, creativity, problem-solving and sustained shared thinking.
Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates	Assessment informs teaching without creating unnecessary paperwork. Adults adapt provision, interactions and support to meet children's developmental needs.

5. Curriculum Intent and Organisation

The Reception curriculum is designed to build from children's prior experiences and to secure the knowledge and skills needed for future learning. We plan deliberately across the seven areas of learning, while recognising that high-quality EYFS practice is interconnected.

- Communication and Language is prioritised throughout the day through conversation, stories, vocabulary teaching, questioning and sustained shared thinking.
- Physical Development is developed through daily movement, gross-motor opportunities, fine-motor experiences, handwriting, self-care and access to outdoor learning.
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development is embedded through relationships, routines, emotional literacy, self-regulation, independence and positive behaviour expectations.
- Literacy includes systematic phonics, high-quality texts, comprehension, vocabulary, mark making, handwriting and purposeful writing.
- Mathematics includes daily teaching, practical exploration, mathematical talk, representation, reasoning and opportunities to apply learning in provision.
- Understanding the World develops children's knowledge of people, communities, places, nature, the past, technology and the wider world.
- Expressive Arts and Design provides opportunities for music, movement, role play, art, design, materials, imagination and creative expression.

Planning may be organised through themes, core texts, children's interests and real-life experiences. Themes are not treated as the curriculum itself: statutory knowledge and developmental progression remain the priority.

6. Teaching, Learning and Pedagogy

We use a balanced approach comprising intentional adult teaching, guided learning, purposeful play, continuous provision and child-initiated exploration.

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- Adults explicitly teach important knowledge and skills, including phonics, early mathematics, vocabulary, handwriting and key concepts.
- Adults model language, thinking, social interaction and practical skills.
- Children have sustained opportunities to practise and apply new learning independently.
- Provision is enhanced in response to observed interests, misconceptions and next steps.
- Adults use open questions, prompts, comments and modelling to extend thinking rather than directing every aspect of play.
- Children are encouraged to revisit and consolidate learning over time.
- Indoor and outdoor learning are valued as complementary parts of the curriculum.

7. Continuous Provision and Learning Environment

The Reception environment is organised so that children can access resources independently, make choices, collaborate with others and revisit learning. Resources are purposeful, accessible and appropriate to children's developmental needs.

- Role play and imaginative play
- Reading and book-sharing spaces
- Writing and mark-making opportunities
- Mathematics and problem-solving resources
- Construction and small-world play
- Creative and malleable materials
- Fine-motor activities and tools
- Investigation and Understanding the World experiences
- Indoor and outdoor physical development
- Quiet spaces for regulation, reflection and conversation

Adults regularly review provision to ensure that it reflects current curriculum priorities and provides appropriate challenge without overwhelming children.

8. The Seven Areas of Learning

Communication and Language

We develop listening, attention, understanding, speaking and vocabulary through high-quality interactions, stories, rhymes, discussion, role play, explicit vocabulary teaching and sustained shared thinking.

Physical Development

Children develop gross- and fine-motor control, coordination, strength, balance and spatial awareness. We support self-care, healthy routines, handwriting readiness and safe use of tools.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

We support children to develop self-regulation, confidence, positive relationships, independence, emotional understanding and respect for others.

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Literacy

Children develop a love of books and language alongside systematic phonics, comprehension, mark making, handwriting and purposeful writing.

Mathematics

Children develop secure understanding of number, numerical patterns, shape, space and measure through daily teaching, practical experiences, representation, reasoning and application.

Understanding the World

Children explore people, families, communities, cultures, places, nature, technology and the past through first-hand experiences, books, visitors, observations and investigations.

Expressive Arts and Design

Children explore materials, music, movement, role play, art, design and imagination. They are encouraged to develop ideas, express themselves and respond creatively.

9. Phonics, Reading and Writing

Phonics is taught systematically through the school's chosen validated program, ***Smart Kidz the Code***. Reception children receive regular, structured phonics teaching and have frequent opportunities to apply taught sounds and graphemes when reading and writing.

- Phonics is supported by oral blending and segmenting, sound discrimination and explicit grapheme–phoneme correspondence teaching.
- Children are given decodable reading material matched to the phonics knowledge they have been taught.
- Children experience a wide range of high-quality books beyond decodable texts to develop vocabulary, comprehension, enjoyment and a love of reading.
- Writing develops from meaningful mark making through increasingly controlled letter formation, spelling of taught words and independent composition.
- Fine-motor development, pencil control and handwriting are explicitly supported.
- Adults model writing for real purposes across the provision, including lists, labels, messages, captions, signs and imaginative role-play writing.

10. Mathematics

Mathematics is taught daily and reinforced through routines and continuous provision. Teaching develops secure understanding rather than premature formal recording.

- Counting, cardinality and subitising
- Composition and comparison of number
- Number bonds and relationships
- Numerical patterns
- Shape, space and measure
- Mathematical vocabulary
- Reasoning, problem-solving and explanation

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11. Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of teaching. Staff use professional observation, discussion, children's work and interactions to understand what children know, remember and can do.

- Baseline information is gathered from transition information, conversations with families, observations and the Reception Baseline Assessment where applicable.
- Assessment is used to identify starting points, plan teaching, adapt provision and identify children who may need additional support.
- Staff avoid unnecessary recording and ensure assessment does not take children away from meaningful learning.
- Parents and carers are kept informed about children's development and are encouraged to share information about learning at home.
- The EYFS Profile is completed at the end of Reception in accordance with statutory arrangements. Judgements are based on practitioners' knowledge of the child and the statutory Early Learning Goals.

12. Reception Baseline Assessment

The Reception Baseline Assessment is administered in accordance with the Department for Education's current assessment and reporting arrangements. It is a statutory assessment for eligible Reception pupils and is completed within the required assessment window.

RBA is not used to label children or determine the quality of individual teaching. It provides a starting point for measuring progress at school level. Staff continue to use their broader professional assessment of children's development to inform teaching.

13. Early Learning Goals and Good Level of Development

The Early Learning Goals (ELGs) describe the level of development children are expected to attain by the end of Reception. They cover the prime areas and the specific areas of literacy and mathematics, together with Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

The EYFS Profile records whether children have met the ELGs. The term 'Good Level of Development' is used in national assessment reporting to describe children who have achieved at least the expected level in the relevant prime and specific ELGs. The Profile is not a curriculum checklist and does not replace the wider assessment of each child's development.

14. SEND and Inclusion

Sacred Heart School is committed to inclusive EYFS practice. Children with SEND are supported through a graduated approach, working with families, the school's SENCO and external professionals where appropriate.

- Reasonable adjustments are made to the environment, routines, communication and teaching.
- Provision is differentiated through adult interaction, resources, grouping, visual support and appropriate scaffolding.
- Children are not expected to conform to a single developmental pathway.
- Where concerns arise, staff record and discuss observations with the SENCO and parents/carers.

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- Support plans and external advice are implemented consistently and reviewed.

15. Safeguarding and Child Protection

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff follow the school's Child Protection Policy and current statutory safeguarding guidance.

- Staff maintain appropriate supervision and accurate knowledge of children's whereabouts.
- Concerns about a child's welfare are reported immediately through the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and know the designated safeguarding arrangements.
- Safer recruitment and suitability checks are followed in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Visitors, volunteers and students are appropriately supervised and subject to the school's safeguarding procedures.

16. Specific 2026 EYFS Statutory Changes

The following changes introduced by the EYFS framework effective from 1 September 2026 are incorporated into Sacred Heart School's EYFS practice.

2026 change	Policy response	Evidence / related policy
Safer sleep requirements are now explicit within the EYFS framework	Where children require sleep/rest, staff follow the school's safer-sleep procedures and current DfE requirements. Individual needs and parental information are considered.	Safeguarding / Health & Safety / Medical Needs procedures
Providers must have regard to screen-use guidance	Screen use in Reception is purposeful, age-appropriate and limited. It does not replace active play, interaction, books, physical activity or first-hand experiences. Staff follow current DfE guidance.	Online Safety Policy / EYFS practice
Banned dog breeds and registered childcare premises	The school follows the statutory restriction relating to registered childcare and banned dog breeds and escalates any relevant safeguarding or premises concern through school procedures.	Safeguarding / Premises procedures
Updated reporting wording: allegations of 'harm'	Any allegation of harm by a person living, working or caring for children is acted upon immediately under safeguarding procedures and reported to the appropriate authority where required.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Enhanced criminal-record requirements for volunteers and restrictions on new employees starting before checks	Recruitment, DBS and suitability procedures are followed before staff or volunteers undertake regulated activity, in line with statutory requirements.	Safer Recruitment Policy

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Updated suitability disclosure requirements	Staff are reminded of their duty to disclose information relevant to their suitability to work with children.	Safer Recruitment / Staff Code of Conduct

17. Health, Safety, Wellbeing and Physical Activity

Children's physical and emotional wellbeing is central to our provision. Children have regular opportunities for movement and active play and are taught safe use of equipment and spaces.

- Children have access to indoor and outdoor physical opportunities.
- Fine-motor activities support hand strength, dexterity and pencil control.
- Healthy eating, hydration, toileting and hygiene routines are promoted.
- Risk assessments are completed and reviewed for activities, equipment and the learning environment.
- First aid and medical procedures follow the school's current policies.
- Staff support children's emotional regulation through co-regulation, predictable routines, calm spaces and sensitive adult interaction.

18. Behaviour, Relationships and Self-Regulation

We use a relational approach based on high expectations, consistent boundaries, positive reinforcement and adult modelling, please refer to Sacred Heart's Behaviour Policy. Children are taught to recognise emotions, communicate needs, solve problems and develop strategies for managing feelings.

- Adults model respectful language and behaviour.
- Children are taught routines and expectations explicitly.
- Behaviour is understood in the context of the child's developmental stage and individual needs.
- Any safeguarding concern arising from behaviour is followed up through safeguarding procedures.

19. Equality, Diversity and Belonging

Every child and family is valued. Books, resources, displays and experiences reflect diverse families, cultures, communities, identities and experiences. Children are encouraged to notice similarities and differences respectfully and to develop a positive sense of belonging.

Planning and provision are adapted to remove barriers to participation. Staff challenge stereotypes and discriminatory language in an age-appropriate way.

20. Parent and Carer Partnership

Parents and carers are children's first and most enduring educators. We work in partnership with families to understand children's experiences, interests, strengths and needs.

- Transition information is shared before children start Reception.
- Families are encouraged to share information about children's interests, routines, achievements and needs through Sacred Heart's online platform – Tapestry.

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- Parents receive information about the curriculum and ways to support learning at home. Weekly signposts, curriculum letter and curriculum overview. Tapestry also informs next steps in learning.
- Communication is maintained through the school's agreed channels.
- Parents are informed promptly when staff have significant concerns about a child's development or welfare, subject to safeguarding requirements.

21. Transition

Transition into Reception is carefully planned to help children and families feel safe, informed and welcomed. Children are offered three visits to Reception before the summer holidays, both with and without their parents, to help them become familiar with the new environment, adults and routines. A parent meeting takes place before children start, with a follow-up meeting after they have settled in. A social story is also sent home to support children's understanding and preparation for the transition. Children begin with a staggered two-day start, allowing them time to adjust gradually and build confidence in their new setting.

Transition to Year 1 is supported through close communication between Reception and Year 1 staff, including the sharing of relevant assessment information to ensure continuity of learning and support. Children are gradually prepared for changes in routines, expectations and learning approaches. Throughout the year, the timetable is adapted progressively to reflect a more Year 1-style structure, with this transition becoming a key focus during Summer 2. The overarching theme for Summer 2 is **'Change and Journeys'**, supporting children to explore change, reflect on their learning journey and develop the confidence and independence needed for the move into Year 1.

22. Dedicated Safeguarding and Welfare Procedures: Safer Sleep, Rest and Eating

Safer sleep and rest – please also refer to Sacred Heart's Safer Sleep Policy

Sacred Heart School recognises its responsibility to provide safe arrangements for any child who needs to rest or sleep during the school day. The Reception environment is not routinely used for children's sleep; however, where an individual child requires rest or sleep due to their age, health, disability or individual needs, staff will follow the school's risk assessment and current EYFS safer-sleep Policy.

Staff will obtain and follow relevant information from parents/carers and, where appropriate, health professionals to ensure that the child's individual needs are understood and supported.

If a child falls asleep unexpectedly, they will remain under the supervision of an adult. In usual circumstances, staff will allow the child to rest for approximately 15 minutes before gently attempting to wake them. Staff will monitor the child's wellbeing throughout this period. If the circumstances are unusual, for example, if the child appears unwell or unusually tired, staff will contact parents/carers to inform them and discuss the appropriate next steps. If there are concerns about the child's condition or difficulty waking them, staff will follow the school's medical and emergency procedures immediately.

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Paediatric First Aid Training

All staff working within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Sacred Heart School are paediatric first aid trained. This ensures that staff have the knowledge and skills to respond appropriately to medical emergencies and support children's health, safety and welfare throughout the school day.

Supervision During Eating

Children must always remain within the sight and hearing of a member of staff while eating. Staff will position themselves to ensure that children can be observed clearly and, wherever possible, face the children while supervising.

Snack is eaten together as a whole group on the carpet, with children sitting in a circle facing the supervising adult. Staff will actively supervise throughout snack time and remain alert to choking risks, allergic reactions, unsafe eating behaviours and attempts to share food.

At lunch children will eat while seated safely and will be encouraged to remain seated throughout eating times. Staff will model safe eating habits and support children to develop positive attitudes towards food and mealtimes. During snack and lunch, staff will actively supervise rather than simply being present. Staff will monitor children's eating, respond promptly to concerns, model healthy eating and appropriate table manners, and support children to develop independence with opening containers, using cutlery and clearing away safely.

Children are expected to bring a water bottle to school as part of their daily uniform. Water bottles will be accessible to children throughout the school day. Teachers will plan regular opportunities for children to drink water, including during transitions and at appropriate points throughout the daily routine, ensuring that children are encouraged to stay hydrated.

Choking Prevention

Sacred Heart School is committed to reducing the risk of choking and ensuring that children eat safely at all times. Food and snacks will be prepared and presented in a way that minimises choking risks and is appropriate to children's age, developmental stage and individual needs.

All staff working within EYFS are paediatric first aid trained and will remain vigilant during snack and lunchtime, actively supervising children while they eat. Staff will follow current Department for Education (DfE) and NHS guidance, alongside the school's food safety and safeguarding procedures.

Children will be encouraged to sit safely while eating, remain seated throughout mealtimes and avoid rushing or sharing food. Staff will monitor children's eating behaviours and respond promptly to any signs of choking or difficulty swallowing.

Any choking incident requiring intervention will be recorded in accordance with school procedures, and parents/carers will be informed. The incident will be reviewed to identify any contributing factors, assess potential recurring risks and implement any necessary changes to practice to help prevent future incidents.

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Allergies and Dietary Needs (see Sacred Heart's separate Allergen Policy)

Staff will be aware of all children's recorded allergies, intolerances, medical conditions and dietary requirements to ensure that appropriate precautions are in place at all times. Relevant information will be accessible to staff supervising snack and lunchtime and will be displayed in the designated location.

Food must not be shared between children, and staff will follow the school's allergy, medical and emergency procedures to minimise risks and respond appropriately to any concerns. Staff will remain vigilant for signs of an allergic reaction and take immediate action in accordance with the child's individual medical needs and school procedures. Parents/carers should inform the school of any changes to their child's allergies, dietary requirements or medical conditions so that records can be updated.

Permission for Photographs

Photographs of children will only be taken, displayed or used in accordance with the school's photography and consent procedures. Parental permissions will be recorded and displayed in the designated area of the classroom, where they are accessible for all staff to check before taking or using photographs.

Staff must ensure that photographs are used only for authorised purposes and that children's privacy and confidentiality are respected at all times. Any concerns regarding photographic consent or the use of images must be raised with the appropriate member of school leadership.

Staff Training, Support and Monitoring

Sacred Heart School is committed to ensuring that all staff undertaking safeguarding and welfare responsibilities are supported through appropriate policies, training and monitoring. Staff are expected to understand and follow the school's procedures consistently, maintain up-to-date knowledge and raise any concerns promptly. Procedures and practice will be reviewed regularly to ensure that children's safety, health and wellbeing remain central to all aspects of provision.

Intimate Care and Toileting (see Sacred Heart's separate Intimate Care Policy)

Sacred Heart School is committed to ensuring that all children receive intimate care in a way that protects their dignity, privacy, safety and individual needs.

An individual intimate care plan will be drawn up for each child requiring ongoing assistance. This will be carefully planned and agreed in consultation with parents/carers and, where appropriate, the child. The plan will outline the support required and the procedures to be followed to ensure that care is provided consistently, sensitively and in accordance with the school's intimate care and safeguarding policies.

Intimate care arrangements will be monitored and reviewed regularly, and whenever a child's needs change, to ensure that school policies and procedures are followed and that both children and staff feel comfortable with the agreed arrangements.

No child will be excluded from Sacred Heart School because they are not yet toilet trained or continue to wear nappies. The school will work in partnership with parents/carers to support toilet training, unless medical, developmental or other individual circumstances mean that this may not be appropriate at that time.

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Staff are expected to change children when necessary, ensuring that children are not left wet or soiled and that their dignity and wellbeing are maintained. Staff will work closely with parents/carers when developing and reviewing intimate care plans to ensure that the child's needs are understood and met appropriately.

Sacred Heart School promotes inclusion, equality and respect for every child. All intimate care arrangements will be carried out in accordance with the school's policies, safeguarding procedures and the Equality Act 2010, ensuring that no child is disadvantaged because of their toileting needs, disability or individual circumstances.

22. Staffing, Professional Development and Quality Assurance

All adults working in Reception contribute to the quality of provision. Staff have a shared understanding of the EYFS curriculum, safeguarding expectations and children's individual needs.

- Staff participate in relevant EYFS, safeguarding and curriculum training.
- Planning and provision are discussed regularly.
- Leadership monitors the quality of teaching, assessment, environment and children's outcomes.
- Moderation supports consistency in assessment judgements.
- Policy and practice are reviewed in response to statutory updates, inspection guidance, school priorities and professional reflection.

23. Monitoring and Review

The EYFS / Reception Lead, senior leadership and governing body monitor the implementation and impact of this policy through learning walks, observations, planning reviews, assessment information, staff discussion, pupil voice and parent feedback.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where statutory requirements change.

24. Related Documents

- EYFS Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers – effective 1 September 2026
- Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Reception Baseline Assessment – Assessment and Reporting Arrangements 2026
- EYFS Profile – Assessment and Reporting Arrangements
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Attendance Policy
- First Aid / Medical Needs Policy
- Equality and Diversity / Equality Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Whole School Allergen Policy

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- Safer Sleep Policy

Appendix 1: Reception Curriculum Overview

Curriculum strand	Core provision	Examples of Reception practice
Communication & Language	Daily high-quality interaction	Storytelling, vocabulary, discussion, listening games, role play
PSED	Relationships and self-regulation	Routines, emotions, turn-taking, independence, collaborative play
Physical Development	Daily gross/fine motor	Outdoor movement, climbing, bikes, dough, threading, cutting, handwriting
Literacy	Daily phonics and reading	Phonics, decodable books, shared reading, mark making, purposeful writing
Mathematics	Daily maths	Counting, subitising, comparison, composition, pattern, shape and measure
Understanding the World	First-hand exploration	Nature, family/community, past and present, technology, investigations
EAD	Creative expression	Music, art, design, dance, role play, imaginative play

Appendix 2: 2026–2027 Policy Review Checklist

- ☐ Current September 2026 EYFS statutory framework checked
- ☐ Safer sleep requirements reflected in practice and procedures
- ☐ Screen-use guidance considered and staff expectations communicated
- ☐ Safeguarding policy cross-referenced and updated
- ☐ DBS / safer recruitment procedures checked
- ☐ Reception Baseline Assessment arrangements checked for the current academic year
- ☐ EYFS Profile arrangements checked
- ☐ SEND and inclusion procedures checked
- ☐ Parent information updated
- ☐ Staff training needs identified
- ☐ Policy reviewed by EYFS Lead and SLT
- ☐ Governing body approval recorded

Appendix 3: Key DfE Sources

Department for Education. Early years foundation stage statutory framework – group and school-based providers. Current version effective from 1 September 2026.

Department for Education. Changes to the EYFS framework from 1 September 2026.

Department for Education. Reception Baseline Assessment: Assessment and Reporting Arrangements 2026.

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Department for Education. Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Additional 2026 Welfare Checklist

- ☐ Reception snack and lunchtime arrangements ensure children remain within sight and hearing of staff while eating.
- ☐ Staff know which children have allergies, intolerances or individual dietary/medical requirements.
- ☐ Choking-prevention and food-preparation procedures are understood by relevant staff.
- ☐ Any child who may need to sleep or rest has an appropriate individual risk assessment and agreed arrangements.
- ☐ Safer-sleep requirements are reflected in the school's EYFS procedures, even though Reception children are normally over 12 months.

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