



Cornerstone Multi Academy Trust

EYFS Policy

Introduction

This policy describes how the Cornerstone Academy Trust implements the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (Appendix 1). It sets out how the Academy takes a holistic approach to children's well-being, education and health. The EYFS refers to children from birth to five years of age. At Cornerstone Academy Trust, this policy refers to children between the ages of 2 and 5.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the full range of policies for the Academy Trust.

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Our Mission

The Cornerstone Academy Trust creates and promotes a challenging learning environment that inspires children to achieve high standards and become life-long learners. The Trust has high expectations, builds children's confidence, and ensures success for all.

We seek to foster creative thinkers, inquisitive questioners, avid problem solvers with flexible skills, who are successful communicators. Children learn to collaborate effectively at all levels, including working with our international partners and are able to adapt to the needs of a diverse and fast changing society.

Our motto across The Cornerstone Academy Trust (TCAT) is "Fortune Favours the Brave" and our values include individual liberty and respect for other religions and cultures. These are discussed explicitly with the children during assemblies, and they are reinforced during class time.

Our Vision for EYFS

At TCAT, we recognise that all children are unique and special. We understand that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates – physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally. We will provide experiences which build on children's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development. We will encourage children's independence and decision-making, supporting them to learn through their mistakes. At the heart of education is positive relationships between the adult and the child. This dynamic creates the environment for learning to take place. We believe that it is important for parents and schools to have a strong and respectful partnership. This sets the scene for children to thrive in the early years.

Our vision for the EYFS at Cornerstone is summed up in this mantra:

"NURTURING AMBITIOUS LEARNING FOR EVERY CHILD"



At the Cornerstone Academy Trust we aim to:

- Deliver the standards for the learning, development and care of young children as set out in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Support the development of active and inquisitive learners encouraging children to be imaginative, creative, curious and critical thinkers.
- Ensure teaching nurtures, engages and motivates children.
- Ensure the provision offers rich, varied and imaginative learning experiences.
- Ensure that learning and development is planned around the needs and interests of the children and informed by the use of on-going observational assessment.
- Ensure that every child makes good progress and no child is left behind.
- Create the framework for partnership by working with parents, professionals and other settings that the child attends.

The experiences we offer our children are based on the following four guiding principles:

- Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

Unique Child

We believe that every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

We meet the needs of all our children by:

- Providing a safe, secure and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is respected and valued.
- Ensuring all staff have the necessary skills and understanding of child development.
- Using observational assessment, summative assessment analysis and our knowledge of the children to plan opportunities that build upon and extend their knowledge, skills, experiences and interests.
- Developing confidence to foster a positive sense of their own identity and culture.
- Providing a welcoming environment where all children and their families feel valued and respected.
- Using age-appropriate ways to seek the views of all children through observing, listening and sensitive discussion.
- Monitoring children's progress and providing additional support when necessary.
- Seeking advice from external agencies where appropriate.



Positive Relationships

We know that children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.

We meet the needs of all our children by:

- Ensuring parents/carers are aware of who their child's key person is when starting at Nursery.
- Working with parents/carers right from the start to find out about their child's needs, feelings and interests.
- Ensuring effective induction and transition processes to support the child and their family.
- Developing effective partnerships with families by offering regular opportunities for them to talk about their child's learning and development and the progress they make.
- Providing an environment that is supportive, sensitive and responsive to each child.
- Setting clear processes for age-appropriate behaviour management.



Enabling Environment

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 meet the needs of all our children by:

- Encouraging children to communicate and talk about their experiences.
- Providing carefully chosen resources in the Continuous Provision Areas that children can freely access and that continue the children's learning and development.
- Developing children's independence and decision making.
- Providing an environment that is underpinned by the characteristics of effective learning.
- Using the outdoor environment to enhance learning and development.
- Using materials and equipment that reflects both the community that the children come from and the wider world.



Learning and Development

At the Cornerstone Academy Trust, we consider the individual needs, interests, and development of each child in our care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development. We know that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape educational programmes in all early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and interconnected.

The seven areas of learning and development are made up of three prime areas and four specific areas:

Prime Areas

These areas are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving. They are:

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

Specific Areas

Children are also supported in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The Specific Areas are:

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



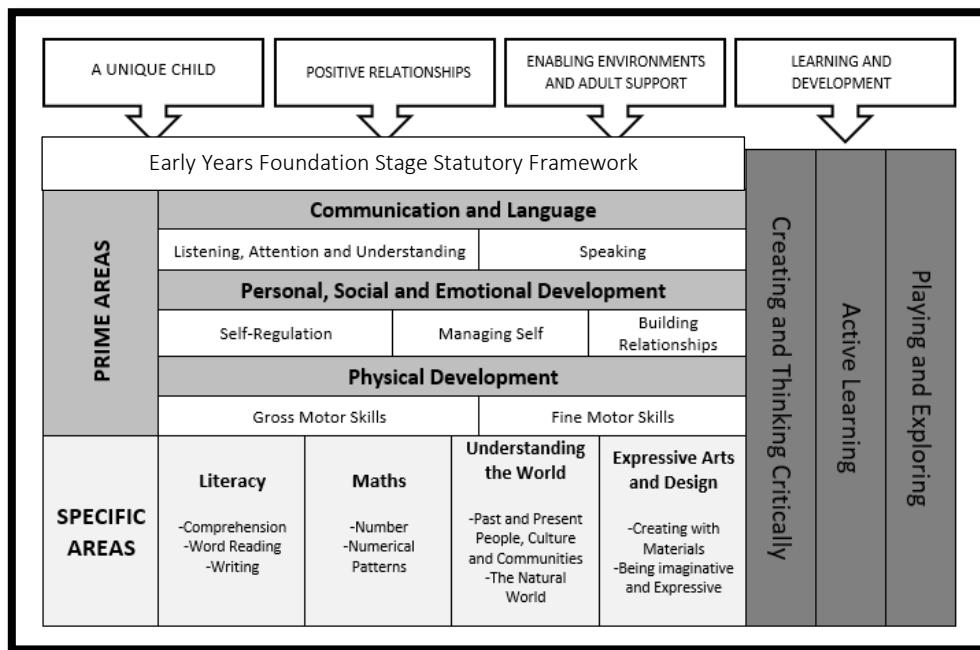
Educational Programmes

At TCAT, the Educational Programmes provide the core of our EYFS Curriculum. (See Appendix 1: Page 8). In planning and guiding what children learn, we reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust our practice appropriately.

When planning focused teaching sessions or engaging in play, we consider the individual needs, interests, and development of each child in our care, which we use to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning which underpin our practice are:

- 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

Each of these areas is interconnected and interdependent, and all are equally important in supporting children's overall development and learning.



Early Reading

Our chosen Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) approach is Read, Write Inc.

Library

Children in the EYFS regularly visit the school library where they are supported to choose a variety of books to take home by their teachers and the librarian. The Library is open during times in the day so parents and carers can visit with their children too.

Physical Education

We follow a progressive PE plan in the Early Years which lays the foundations for the Year 1 curriculum. Children will receive:

- One discreet PE lesson a week, where Reception children get changed.
- Daily access to adult led activities and/or Continuous Provision Areas designed to support physical development in both gross and fine motor skills.

MFL

Our Trust's chosen additional language is Spanish. Our policy for MFL is based on the Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages.

In Reception, children are taught:

- To count to 10
- To know a range of basic greetings (Hello, how are you, my name is..)
- Common Colours
- Days of the week

In Reception, the children learn Spanish through stories, songs, poems and rhymes in the language.

Computing

Children in the EYFS at Cornerstone are exposed to a range of Technology to enhance their learning and develop key skills through the use of iPads in Nursery and a bank of Surfaces in Reception. In the Early Years, the foundations for the rest of the Cornerstone Computing Curriculum is built.

We teach children how to recognise and use simple tools on a computer and use technology purposefully to create digital content, with programs such as Mini Mash and Purple Mash. Children are taught the foundations of trackpad skills, digital drawing, digital painting, digital sounds, digital photography, keyboard skills and are introduced to robotics.

It is an integral part of our curriculum at Cornerstone to model and teach children how to use technology safely and respectfully, keeping personal information private; identify where to go for help and support when they have concerns about content or contact on the internet or other online technologies. In addition to constant modelling, children in the Early Years take part in E-Safety Week annually.

Adult Interaction Model for EYFS

At TCAT, we guide children's development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning. Our interaction model is split into three methods.

Direct Teaching

Leading discussion, shaping ideas, listening and responding to children, direct teaching of concepts, skills or knowledge. This can occur during whole class inputs, small group activities or 1:1 sessions and is planned for.

Enhanced Provision

Introducing new ideas and resources to the environment, role modelling possibilities, settling a clear framework for children's use, providing time for exploration. This occurs when the adult has an agenda for the interaction.

Continuous Provision

Playing alongside children to observe and identify their interests and learning which takes place through sensitive interaction and supportive intervention. This occurs through conversation, role modelling behaviours, responding to and suggesting ideas, making connections to previous ideas, thinking aloud, narrating activities, and asking questions.

At TCAT, we value play and understand that it is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. We ensure that children's learning continues during play by providing carefully planned learning environments which feature Continuous Provision Areas. The range of resources which are freely accessible to children are progressive and purposely chosen to ensure that children's learning and development continues when leading their own play, and when taking part in play which is guided by adults.

Assessment

At Cornerstone, we believe that assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves staff knowing children's level of achievement and interests, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. In our interactions with children, we respond to our team's day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share.

In Nursery, we use the Observation Checkpoints from Development Matters (Appendix 2) to guide us to make judgements about whether children are on track or not at various assessment points throughout the year. We have developed our own Checkpoints to use in Reception Classes as they are not provided in the document.

Using evidence collected through observations, team discussions, work samples, and summative assessments, we track children's progress. We also complete a regular Provision Gap Analysis to identify areas of the provision which need to be adapted for the specific cohort.

Children who we identify as not being on track are quickly provided with targeted provision which is designed to enable them to keep up with their peers. 'Notice and Mentor' planning documents and timetables are completed weekly by the teaching team. These are working documents which help to track progress against the set objectives. 'Notice and Mentor' sessions can be delivered 1:1 or in small groups by any member of the EYFS team.

Progress check at age two

When a child is aged between two and three, we review their progress, and provide parents and/or carers with a short written summary of their child's development in the prime areas. We identify the child's strengths, and any areas where the child's progress is less than expected. (Appendix 1: Page 18). Where possible, the progress check and the Healthy Child Programme health and development review at age two (when health visitors gather information on a child's health and development) should inform each other and support integrated working.

Assessment at the start of the reception year – the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is a short assessment, taken in the first six weeks in which a child starts reception. We follow the statutory guidance for the administration of the RBA. See Appendix 1: Page 45)

As the RBA is delivered, we simultaneously complete our own baseline assessment to enable us to identify and meet the needs of children who are not on track to meet age related expectations. This allows us to adapt our provision to reflect the needs of the cohort.

Assessment at the end of the EYFS – the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)

In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, and no later than 30 June in that term, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their attainment against expected levels, and their readiness for year 1.

Each child's level of development is assessed against the early learning goals (Appendix 1: Page 11). We indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). This is the EYFS Profile. We share the results of the Profile with Parents or carers alongside the end of year Report and send the EYFS Profile results to the local authority. When children move to Y1, a copy of the Profile Report is given to their new teachers to assist with the planning of activities.

Other Assessments

Phonics Assessments – These are completed in line with our SSP expectations.

Language Link – This is administered within the first half term and the children that are flagged as 'Red' or 'Amber' will retake 6 months after the first assessment date.

PASS – Perceptions and Attitudes online test completed within the first six weeks of term and again at the end of the year.

Mathematics Assessments – To be completed in September, Autumn 2, Spring 2, and Summer 2.

Through analysis of the results of our assessments, including daily informal observations, if there are significant emerging concerns, or an identified special educational need or disability, we will involve the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) which are led by Teresa Cavallo, the Trust's Head of Children's Services.



Inclusion and Diverse Needs

In our Trust, diversity is celebrated. Individual children are enabled to reach their full potential through differentiated approaches to learning and through careful observation, progress tracking and assessment. We strive to offer equal access to the curriculum and equal opportunities to experience success to all of the children in our care. All children feel

that all activities are open to them. Resources reflect the diverse cultures in our world as well as those represented within the school. (See also our Equality Policy and our SEN/ALN Policy).

Safeguarding and Welfare

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. At TCAT, we take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well. We promote good health; manage behaviour; and maintain records and procedures. Cornerstone Academy Trust has a Safeguarding Policy and its provisions apply to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Staff:Child Ratios

Within our Early Years settings across the Trust, we work within the adult:child ratio of at least:

Two year olds	1:5
Three and over in a provision where person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status or another suitable Level 6 qualification is not working directly with the children	1:8
Three and over in provision where person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status or another suitable Level 6 qualification is working directly with the children	1:13
Reception Classes Children aged four and over in reception classes in maintained schools are subject to infant class size legislation. Infants should be taught in groups of no more than 30 per school teacher (subject to permitted exceptions). In this context 'School teachers' do not include TAs, higher level teaching assistants or other support staff.	1:30

Risk Assessment

At TCAT, risk assessments identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis, when and by whom those aspects will be checked, and how the risk will be removed or minimised is explained in the Trust's policy.

Safer Eating

The Cornerstone Academy Trust promote safer eating practices for all children in line with the EYFS Statutory Framework (2025).

In Nursery and Reception, snack times take place as whole-class group sessions. Children sit forward facing, with a teacher seated at the front of the classroom to ensure clear visibility and effective supervision. Additional adults support snack times as required to maintain safe practice and ratios.

Children with food allergies are seated at a designated table during snack times, clearly identified with their allergen card. A first aid trained adult supervises this table to ensure appropriate foods are eaten, prevent food sharing, and respond immediately to any allergic reaction. All relevant staff are familiar with children's dietary needs and individual health care plans.

Intimate Care

The Cornerstone Trust has an 'Intimate Care Policy' which details our role in Early Years and how we appropriately care for the children we are responsible for in the Early Years. Intimate care within the Early Years is supporting a pupil with dressing/undressing, providing comfort or support for a distressed or sick pupil, assisting a pupil requiring medical care, who is not able to carry this out unaided and finally cleaning a pupil who has soiled/wet him/herself, has vomited or feels unwell.

Sleep Policy

The Cornerstone Academy Trust's Sleep Policy sets out our approach to meeting the sleep needs of children in our Early Years care. We provide a calm and secure environment that supports healthy sleep habits, recognising the vital role of rest in children's development and wellbeing. We work closely with families to understand and support each child's individual sleep routine, recognising the importance of consistency between home and nursery.

Parent Partnerships and our Local Community

We recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education through the use of Evidence Me.

- Quality observations of key learning moments are sent home in a time sensitive manner to ensure optimum potential for discussion in the home.
- At the end of the academic year nursery children's parents and carers receive a full portfolio of the year with a paragraph about Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning at the beginning of the portfolio. Parents receive an end of year Report in Reception.
- Parent Postcards - These are observations that parents have written about their child's learning at home. Staff can either approve or decline the observation.
- We regularly analyse engagement data to identify families who are not participating with the process and aim to check in with them in person.



At TCAT, we also develop and maintain positive relationships with parents and carers by:

- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts school at our open afternoons and induction meetings.
- Arranging opportunities for children to spend time in the class for an induction visit prior to starting in September.
- Providing information about commencing the Early Years Nursery or Reception classes.
- Outlining the school's expectations.

- Providing induction meetings for Reception and Nursery parents/carers to meet with staff to discuss school routines, expectations and to answer any questions parents/carers may have.
- Operating an open door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns. Conversely, if Foundation staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them.
- Sharing children's experiences with families through Facebook, OneNote, Evidence Me and school newsletters.
- Publishing a Termly Curriculum Plan detailing the areas of learning and the overarching theme of the half-term.
- Inviting parents to attend meetings about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics, reading and mathematics.
- Offering three parent/teacher consultation meetings for Reception children per year at which their child's progress is discussed.
- Providing virtual key worker – parent meetings for Nursery children which are available to book all year round.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in Nursery and Reception.
- Parents are invited to a range of activities throughout the school year such as, Christmas productions and sports day etc.
- Offering opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school on a volunteer basis to assist with the children's learning e.g. hearing readers.
- Incorporate visits by members of our local community. These have included doctors, dentists, the fire brigade, authors, artists and members of religious communities.

Transitions

On entry to the Trust, the class teacher/s gather information from the child's parents, previous setting or school and by observation and baseline assessment.

On transfer from Cornerstone schools to a state maintained school during the EYFS, the class teacher will share information about the child's progress and attainment with the new school.

Continued Professional Development

The daily experience of children and the overall quality of provision depends on all members of staff having appropriate qualifications, training, skills, knowledge, and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. At TCAT, we ensure that all staff receive induction training to help them understand their roles and responsibilities when they join us.

We support our staff to undertake appropriate training and professional development opportunities. These are either delivered by the Trust or by using outside providers to ensure staff are able to offer quality learning and development experiences for children that continually improves.

We aim to offer our team effective supervision which provides support, coaching and training for the staff which in turn promotes the interests of children. At Cornerstone, we foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork and continuous improvement.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS teacher to understand and adhere to the principles stated in this policy. The Phase Leader for the Trust, alongside the Leadership team will monitor implementation of this policy.

Appendices

Appendix 1

[**EYFS Statutory Framework \(September 2025\)**](#)

Appendix 2

[**Development Matters - Non-statutory curriculum guidance**](#)

Appendix 3

[**Birth to Five Matters - Non Statutory Guidance**](#)