



Warden House Primary School

Parents' Guide to the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

We hope that your child is enjoying their first term at Warden House. We are certainly having a great time getting to know each of them individually. We have been really impressed with the way in which the children have settled into their new classes and routines.

What is the Early Years Foundation Stage?

The **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** is how the Government and Early Years Professionals describe the time in your child's life between birth and age 5.

This is a very important stage as it helps your child get ready for school as well as preparing them for their future learning and successes. From when your child is born up until the age of 5, their early years' experience should be happy, active, exciting, fun and secure; and support their development, care and learning needs.

What is the EYFS Framework – why do we have one?

The EYFS Framework exists to support all professionals working in the EYFS to help your child, and was developed with a number of early years experts and parents.

It sets out:

- The legal welfare requirements that everyone registered to look after children must follow to keep your child **safe** and promote their welfare
- The 7 areas of **learning and development** which guide professionals' engagement with your child's play and activities as they learn new skills and knowledge
- Assessments that will tell you about **your child's progress** through the EYFS
- Expected levels that your child should reach at age 5, usually the end of the reception year; these expectations are called the "**Early Learning Goals (ELGs)**"

There is also guidance for the professionals supporting your child on planning the learning activities, and observing and assessing what and how your child is learning and developing. As part of your child's learning journey, staff observe your child during their play to monitor their progress across the seven areas of learning. We then scaffold and help your child according to their individual stage of development.

What does it mean for me as a parent?

How my child will be learning

Your child will be learning skills, acquiring new knowledge and demonstrating their understanding through **7 areas of learning and development**.

Children should mostly develop the **3 prime areas** first. These are:

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

These prime areas are those most essential for your child's healthy development and future learning.

As children grow, the prime areas will help them to develop skills in **4 specific areas**. These are:

- Literacy (reading and writing);

- Mathematics;
- Understanding the world; and
- Expressive arts and design.

These 7 areas are used to plan your child's learning and activities. The practitioners teaching and supporting your child will make sure that the activities are suited to your child's unique needs. This is a little bit like a curriculum in primary and secondary schools, but it's suitable for very young children, and it's designed to be really flexible so that staff can follow your child's unique needs and interests.

All the areas of learning are linked to topics that we choose, based on the children's interests, so they vary every year. Past topics have included 'Fairy tales', 'People who help us', 'Dinosaurs', 'Minibeasts' and 'Space', as well as seasonal focuses on Autumn, Spring, Christmas, Easter, Chinese New Year etc.

Children in the EYFS learn by playing and exploring, being active, and through creative and critical thinking which takes place both indoors and outside.

As a mum or dad, how can I help with my child's learning?

Parents often underestimate what they can do to support their child's development, but all the fun activities that you do with your child at home are important in supporting their learning and development, and have a really long lasting effect on your child's learning as they progress through school.

Even when your child was very young and was not yet able to talk, talking to them helped them to learn and understand new words and ideas. If you make the time every day to do some of the following things with your child it will make a real difference to your child's confidence as a young learner.

We would love to hear what your child does at home – after all, home is one of the most important learning environments – and we will be asking you to contribute to your child's learning journey profile soon by telling us these things.

If your child does any drawings, writing or creative work at home, please encourage them to bring it in to show us. We would very much like to take a copy of this for their 'learning journal' books.

How is my child's progress tracked?

In school we use an online learning journey programme called 'Tapestry' to record significant steps in your child's development. Teachers and TAs both take photos and record observations from their time with your child, and these are added onto Tapestry. More information will be sent home about this after half term, and you will also have the opportunity to sign up to Tapestry yourself, to read observations and even add them yourself so we can find out what your child is up to at home!

How else can I find out how my child is getting on?

It is important that you and the professionals caring for your child work together. You need to feel comfortable about exchanging information and discussing things that will benefit your child. These conversations will either be with your child's class teacher or **"key person"**.

If you have any queries or worries, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher. Please also let us know of any achievements your child makes at home as we would love to be able to celebrate their success in school as well.

There are 2 parent consultation evenings during the school year, and at the end of the Reception year you will receive a written report detailing your child's achievements and progress, and areas for development.

Final assessment

At the end of the EYFS – in the summer term of the reception year in school – teachers complete an assessment which is known as the **EYFS Profile**. This assessment is carried out by the reception teacher and is based on what they, and other staff caring for your child, have observed over a period of time.

Another important part of the EYFS Profile is your knowledge about your child's learning and development, so do let your child's class teacher know about what your child does with you: such as how confident your child is in writing their name, reading and talking about a favourite book, speaking to people your child is not so familiar with or their understanding of numbers.

All of the information collected is used to judge how your child is doing in the 7 areas of learning and development. Finding out at this stage how your child is doing will mean that the teacher your child has in their next school year – Year 1 – will know what your child really enjoys doing and does well, as well as helping them decide if your child needs a bit of extra support, what that support should be and if they are already getting it.

The school will give you an end of year report of your child's progress, including information from his or her EYFS Profile.

Where can I go for further information?

Attending parent workshops and 'stay and play' sessions will give you more insight into the way your child learns at school, and how you can help support them.

You may also want to find out what is on offer at **your local children's centre**.

You can find the **Early Years Foundation Stage** which includes the early learning goals at www.foundationyears.org.uk. The foundation years website also includes a range of resources and contacts.

A day in the life

You may be a bit confused by hearing about 'COOL' time and 'teacher' time, so here is a brief rundown of our day.

Daily routine

Much of our routine is designed to develop your child's independence, and you are already supporting us in this by encouraging your child to do things for themselves; for example putting away their own coat, book bag etc in the morning.

The children love using our magnetic whiteboard to 'self-register', by moving their name to indicate they are in school and support in name recognition from day 1. They then have the opportunity to share a story with a friend whilst waiting for their classmates to arrive.

COOL time (Choose Our Own Learning)

This is where the children plan, do and review their own activities ('COOL' time). They are free to move between the 2 classrooms, as well as the outdoor area. During this time the adults play with the children and observe the learning taking place, to record significant steps in their online learning journey (Tapestry). During afternoon sessions, children are encouraged to choose when they would like a snack and milk, allowing them to gain further independence. At the end of the session we talk about what they have enjoyed doing or found out, and some children like to show models or pictures they have made. This develops their speaking and listening skills, as well as confidence, and encourages them to really think about what they have been doing and how they can challenge their own learning. Hearing about other children's experiences may also encourage them to try something new.

Teacher directed time

This is where we teach the class skills and model how to do activities, in preparation for focused group work / independent activities. This includes daily Phonics lessons and 3 x weekly guided reading sessions. Sometimes the

children will work in groups, so we can best match activities to their needs, and other times we may support more independent working – it depends on the learning objective of the session. Children tend to think of this as ‘work’ time, although we plan practical, play based activities as far as possible, as young children learn best in this way.

We like to end the day with a story and songs, and then everyone organises themselves independently, ready to go home – it’s always a hectic time finding book bags, coats, water bottles and giving out letters!

Ways to make a difference at home.

There are some key areas of development which we would like you to support your child with. Some may sound basic but they really will make a huge difference....and will actually save **you** time and energy too!

Independence skills

- Your children should be dressing themselves every day, even if you have to help with tights and buttons at first – but these are both skills that will be mastered with lots of practise and encouragement.
- Children must be responsible for their own belongings, including remembering their book bags and water bottles, and for carrying them to school.
- Please make sure your child is able to put their own coat and shoes on – a good tip is to put the hood on first like Batman, then the arm holes are in the right place!
- Make sure your child is **completely** independent when using the toilet. If this is a problem please speak to a member of staff.

Other skills

- Always read with your child **every day**, even if it’s just for 5 minutes. This is good habit will help to develop their listening, speaking, vocabulary and storytelling skills.
- If your child is interested in ‘writing’ please encourage them to write down the first sounds they can hear in a word, e.g. ‘c’ for cat. Praise any mark making efforts, even if it looks like squiggles (and it will at first!) and ask your child to ‘read’ it back to you.
- Play lots of number recognition and counting games. You don’t need expensive games or lots of equipment, just making counting part of your daily routine, e.g. counting stairs as you go up to bed.
- Please do use the ideas we send home for ‘Letters and Sounds’. We give these out on a Friday and cover that work during the next week, so if you share it with your child they get a head start when we teach it in school! You’ll soon find they love playing schools with you and showing off what they have learnt.

Most of all, we hope you will enjoy sharing in this exciting time of your child’s life. You will be amazed how quickly they learn and develop during their first year at school. Our regular parent workshops and ‘stay and play’ sessions will provide you with a great insight into your child’s school life.