



EARLY YEARS POLICY

2026-28
Draft

Penbridge Infants School
Part of the Thinking School's Academy Trust
Date of determination May 2026
Review Date May2028

Penbridge Infant School - Early Years Policy

Introduction

At Penbridge Infant School Early Years staff work together to create a happy, nurturing and stimulating learning environment, which enables every child to be able to reach their full potential. We strongly believe that by working closely with parents and carers that Early Years at Penbridge Infant School should provide every child with a feeling of security, being valued and the confidence to explore new learning. When children start at our school they are starting their 'all through' education with TSAT (Thinking Schools Academy Trust) and will move on to Penbridge Junior School for Year 3 and then The Portsmouth Academy for Year 7.

The Reception year is the first year of compulsory schooling and the last year of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). At Penbridge Infant School we believe that it is a unique, special and vital year of schooling that sets the foundations for later school life. The EYFS applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. In our school all children join us on a phased introduction at the beginning of the school year in which they turn five. Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. *'The standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well, and are kept healthy and safe.'* (DfE)

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

<u>A unique child</u> Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self assured.	<u>Positive relationships</u> Children build independence through strong partnerships among practitioners, parents, and carers.
<u>Enabling environments</u> Development is supported by environments and adults responding to individual needs.	<u>Learning and development</u> Learning and development of children will happen in different ways and at different rates, and all areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected.

The Unique Child

At Penbridge Infant School we recognise that every child has the ability to be a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We know that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced both by their school and home environments. We carefully observe how each child learns to gain an understanding of the characteristics they develop to become effective learners. We use questioning, praise and encouragement to develop a positive attitude to learning and high self-esteem. During their first year at school, children are taught to be observant, curious, determined, imaginative risk takers who work well with others to problem solve. Children begin to understand how to be resilient learners and are encouraged to 'have a go' at new activities and challenges.

Inclusion

All children and their families are valued within our school. We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate because of differences. All children at Penbridge Infant School are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or stage of learning. We teach the children that practise and effort lead to learning and improvement. Teachers plan activities that enable all children to access the learning and to achieve highly, staff adapt activities to meet the varying needs of all children. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning. In the EYFS we have realistic and challenging expectations and meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests and develop their self-esteem and confidence through a creative curriculum and learning environment.
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies, making adaptations based on children's learning needs.
- Providing a wide range of opportunities and environments to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively.
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which each child's contribution is valued.
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide targeted support as necessary.

It is vital that all children in the school are safe. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards both in the real and virtual world.

Positive Relationships

At Penbridge Infant School we are a Relational School and we recognise that children learn to be confident and independent through the development of secure relationships. We develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families. As a Relational School our staff work hard to build a relationship with all children and their families through stay and play sessions, home visits, greeting families in the morning and offering workshops.

Parents/Carers as Partners

We recognise the important role parents/carers play in educating their children. We do this by:

- Talking to parents/carers about their child before they start at our school.
- Inviting the parents/carers and their children to spend sessions with their teacher in the classroom before starting at school.
- Offering home visits from the class teacher and teaching assistant, before the children start in school.
- Inviting all parents/carers to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school.
- Encouraging and supporting parents/carers to prepare their child for school by developing independence skills before they start school including toileting and dressing themselves.
- Encouraging parents/carers to attend meetings with the class teacher. In the first term this is to discuss how their child has settled into school and in the second term it is to discuss the child's progress so far.
- Providing parents/carers with long observations in each area of learning during the school year and a written report on their child's attainment and progress as well as providing next steps.
- Encouraging parents/carers to contribute 'Wow' moment observations and achievements that their child has done at home that can be celebrated in school through the use of our online learning journal Tapestry.
- Encouraging parents/carers to contribute comments on their child's reading in their reading diary.
- By operating an open door policy where parents can speak to the class teacher briefly in the mornings or after school about any concerns or questions.
- Sending home regular information such as knowledge banks for the learning for the half term. We include key vocabulary that will be used to promote oracy at home and at school.
- Supporting and encouraging parents to develop their child's cultural capital

e.g. <https://50thingstodo.org/> and using the school's cultural passport to allow children to experience essential knowledge that will prepare them for future success.

Enabling Environments

At Penbridge Infant School we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Both the indoor and outdoor learning areas provide an engaging environment matched to the children's interests which in turn provides opportunities for child-initiated learning. We provide stimulating resources which are accessible and open-ended so they can be used, moved and combined in a variety of ways. We adapt resources and planning accordingly as pupils play and interests develop.

Planning

Teachers work together using the school's Sequential Planning Document as well as long and medium term plans to produce weekly plans on what will be covered in each area of learning. Teachers focused weekly plans link to prior learning and observations of children and this is shared with all EYFS staff. We aim to plan fun and inspiring activities with learning opportunities that provide challenge which are appropriate to the development of individual children and that support the children's imagination and development of child-initiated learning experiences.

Assessment

We conduct the DfE's Reception Baseline Assessment within the first six weeks of pupils being in school and use this as well as observations of the children to provide an informative basis for teaching and planning. We also complete a Trust Baseline using observations. Throughout the year, Early Years staff play and interact alongside pupils and undertake regular, informal observations of the children. These may be in the form of photographs and group observations or more detailed observations, these are shared with parents on Tapestry. Parents/carers and other significant adults in a child's life are also encouraged to contribute observations too. Teachers record pupils' progress against all 17 Early Learning Goals on a termly basis. This is to determine which children are on track and those not yet on track so that additional support can be put in place. At the end of the academic year, the class teacher makes an informed judgement as to whether each pupil has met the expected level of development for each of the 17 Early Learning Goals. Parents are informed of their child's attainment in each of the 17 ELGs.

Moderation

Class teachers moderate their observations and judgements internally in school on a termly basis. Other teachers and colleagues in Year 1 and Year 2 frequently contribute to this process. Class teachers also take part in external moderation with other Trust schools and other nearby schools in Portsmouth.

Classroom Organisation and Resources

The organisation of the classrooms reflects the importance that is placed on children learning through play and first-hand experience, developing independence and having opportunities to initiate their own activities. Resources are clearly labelled using visuals and words so that children can independently access resources.

Transition into school

Teachers attend a Portsmouth City Council transition meeting and meet colleagues from nurseries and Early Years settings where prospective pupils currently attend so that staff are aware of the needs of each child.

Pupils and their parents attend informal transition afternoons at Penbridge Infant School. Half of each class attend any one session so that teachers and staff can get to know both pupils and their parents/carers. At the first session, parents/carers stay with their child in the classroom. Children get the opportunity to play with classroom resources and teachers speak to parents/carers and hand out further information about starting school and a reading book to promote a love of reading. At the second session, if pupils and parents/carers are happy, parents/carers stay on the playground while staff play alongside the children in the classroom and get to know children further.

Teachers visit most nurseries and Early Years settings to meet prospective pupils in a familiar setting and spend time playing with them and getting to know them, as well as discussing any specific concerns or information with nursery staff. Where a pupil is coming from a nursery out of area then a telephone call will be made to the nursery manager by the class teacher. In some cases, nurseries and early years settings, parents/carers or healthcare professionals may advise a more gradual or extended transition programme for individual pupils. At Penbridge Infant School, we want all our pupils to have a happy and a positive experience of starting school and we will always work closely with nurseries, parents/carers and health care professionals to provide a transition that caters for the individual needs of every child starting school.

Home visits

Teachers and teaching assistants conduct home visits prior to pupils starting school. This allows pupils and parents/carers to see staff in a non-threatening environment and for parents/carers to raise any concerns that they may have about their child starting school. If parents/carers would prefer not to have a home visit, a meeting in school will be arranged instead.

Starting school

Children start at school on a part-time basis initially. By starting pupils on a part time basis in small groups, staff are able to spend a greater amount of time getting to know each individual pupil and making them familiar and secure with the school environment and routines.

Learning and Development

At Penbridge Infant School we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected. Any concerns that parents have can be discussed with the class teacher and/or the SENCO.

The Curriculum

The curriculum for the Early Years forms the foundations for learning. There are seven areas of learning. The three prime areas of learning are:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

This area helps children develop a positive sense of themselves and others; forming positive relationships and developing respect for others; developing social skills and learning how to manage their feelings; understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and have confidence in their own abilities, that children will develop resilience and perseverance when facing challenges. Children will be supported in self-regulation strategies to support positive behaviour.

Communication and Language

Children will be given lots of opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; to speak and listen in a range of situations. Children will be taught how to ask and answer questions. Children will re-tell familiar stories and discuss stories, nonfiction, rhymes, poems and use role play to support this. Children will be encouraged to take part in class and small group discussions.

Physical Development

This area looks at how children develop their gross and fine motor skills. Children will be taught the importance of physical activity and to demonstrate strength, balance and co-ordination. When looking at health and self-care children will learn how to make healthy choices in relation to food and that children can manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs to include dressing and going to the toilet.

There are also four specific areas of learning, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied:

Literacy

The children are taught phonics daily as this is the route that most children use to learn to read and write. Our phonics scheme is All Aboard. Children will be given access to a wide range of reading materials to ignite their interest and develop a love of reading. Children are taught how to use phonics as their main strategy when spelling. Children will be taught to read and write common exception words. The children will be given engaging activities to encourage them to write for a variety of purposes. We use Drawing Club which engages the children in stories and helps develop their vocabulary. From the spring term we introduce daily handwriting sessions.

Mathematics

Children will be provided with opportunities to develop and deepen their skills in understanding number. Children will be taught to count, compare and explore numbers and patterns. Children will develop an understanding of composition, subitising and recalling number facts, including doubles. Children will be given opportunities for reasoning activities. Children will calculate simple addition and subtraction problems; and to learn to describe shapes, spaces and measures.

Understanding the World

Children will make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment. Children will be given the opportunity to explore different technologies.

Expressive Arts and Design

Children will explore and play with a range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play and design and technology.

These areas are delivered throughout topics. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities. The EYFS classes share an outdoor area with Little Thinkers Nursery and it is used all year round in all weathers. Being outdoors encourages learning in different ways. It offers the children more opportunities to be creative and explore on a larger scale as well as to be physically active linking the indoors and outdoors together.

Thinking skills

As a Thinking Schools Academy Trust school we promote thinking skills across the school. In EYFS we start by using the thinking hats to support the children with their understanding of reflecting on their learning. These are introduced gradually so that our youngest children understand these concepts. Reception then move on to using some of the maps and keys that are most relevant to our youngest children.

Screen time

We are aware that many children have experiences of screen time before attending school. We use an interactive whiteboard to deliver lessons such as phonics and maths. We also use this for physical activities such as yoga demonstrations. We limit screen time and we ensure that any time in front of a screen is purposefully selected by staff to engage children in learning.

Safeguarding our children

We adhere to our Trust and school safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of all children. We value strong partnerships with families and work collaboratively to support our pupils. In Year R, we maintain strict staff-to-child ratios; children are adequately supervised at all times, with heightened vigilance during snack and lunchtimes. We ensure that a sufficient number of staff hold valid Paediatric First Aid (PFA) qualifications to meet statutory requirements on-site and during outings.

Intimate Care and Toileting

We understand that children starting Year R develop independence at different rates, and we actively support their toileting needs with dignity and respect.

Dignity and privacy: Intimate care is always carried out sensitively, ensuring the child's privacy while maintaining a safe environment. We ask parents to complete an intimate care plan with staff.

Safeguarding and reporting: Two members of staff are always aware when intimate care is taking place, the second adult is within hearing or sight distance to ensure transparency. All instances of intimate care or accidental changes are logged, and parents are informed.

Partnership: We work in close partnership with parents to establish consistent routines for children requiring structured toileting support.

Responding to the needs of our children

As a school we understand that our children coming into school may have had different experiences. This may mean that children start school without the speech and language input or intervention that they may need. As a school we promote high quality oracy skills as we know that some children may need support with their speech, language or vocabulary. As a school we will work alongside parents/carers and other professionals to give our children the best possible opportunities no matter their starting points as we know that children who have high oracy skills will become successful learners. Our Reception staff are starting the ELSEC project to support communication and language.

To be reviewed: May 2028