

Eden Academy Trust

Together for better

Early Years Teaching and Learning Policy

September 2026

To work together to ensure the whole Eden Trust community can reach their ambitions and full academic potential.

This means we will...

- Provide the very best curriculum; that inspires, motivates and broadens the skills, knowledge and experiences of every child.
- Provide the very best learning environments for our children to be taught in
- Provide equal opportunity – **all** children who attend our academies **will** succeed.
- Work together to develop the very best practice for our children to benefit from
- Raise the expectations of and aspirations for our children and the wider community we serve.
- Develop the 'whole child'
- Inspire our children to achieve the very best.
- Value children's rights and ensure they are at the heart of everything we do.

The way we work in our Schools reflect a series of core values and concepts that are so important to the Trust.

We work with **empathy, kindness** and **care**.

We work with **integrity, humility** and the highest levels of **professionalism**.

We **work together** to **share the responsibility** and tackle the problem.

We never forget the '**Why...**' and we **always show the Heart!!**

As well as this, as a trust, we uphold and teach pupils about British Values which are defined as :

- Democracy
- Rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual Respect
- Tolerance

Outstanding teaching and learning principles at Eden Academy Trust

It is the responsibility of the class teacher to ensure that all groups of learners make outstanding progress over the academic year. This will be achieved by :

Outstanding teaching and learning typically includes the following features:

- High expectations for all learners, regardless of background or ability.
- Clear learning objectives that are understood by students and revisited throughout the lesson.
- Engaging and well-planned lessons that are appropriately paced and structured.
- Differentiation to meet the diverse needs of all learners.
- Strong subject knowledge demonstrated by the teacher.
- Effective questioning that promotes thinking, discussion, and deeper understanding.
- Active student participation with opportunities to collaborate, explore, and take ownership of learning.
- Formative assessment used throughout the lesson to adapt teaching and support progress.
- High-quality feedback that is timely, specific, and helps students improve.
- A positive, respectful classroom climate that fosters curiosity, confidence, and resilience.
- Promotion of independence and critical thinking skills.
- Rich opportunities for oracy, where learners are encouraged to articulate their thinking clearly and listen actively to others.
- Use of varied teaching strategies and resources, including technology where appropriate.
- Visible progress over time, with learners knowing what they are learning and why.
- Reflection and evaluation of teaching to continuously improve practice.

Outstanding teaching and learning in Early Years

At our setting, we are committed to providing an enriching and supportive environment where every child can thrive. Our approach is grounded in the following principles:

Child-Centred Approach

We believe that every child is unique and deserves to be valued and respected. Our child-centred approach ensures that activities and interactions are tailored to meet each child's individual needs, interests, and abilities, fostering confidence and a love for learning.

Play-Based Learning

We recognise that children learn best through play. Our curriculum includes a balance of structured and free play opportunities that support the development of critical thinking, communication, creativity, and social skills.

Inclusive Practice

We are proud to offer an inclusive, welcoming environment for all children, regardless of race, gender, disability, or background. We ensure that every child can participate fully and feel a sense of belonging within our setting.

Partnership with Parents

We value parents and carers as the primary educators in their children's lives. Strong partnerships with families are key to our approach. We maintain open and regular communication to support each child's development and well-being.

The Early Years Curriculum

We follow the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** framework, which sets national standards for the learning, development, and care of children from birth to five years old. Our curriculum is designed to foster curiosity, independence, and a lifelong love of learning.

Children learn through a balance of purposeful play, adult-led teaching, and child-initiated exploration. The seven areas of learning and development are:

- **Personal, Social, and Emotional Development**
Promoting confidence, emotional resilience, social interaction, and self-awareness.
- **Physical Development**
Developing fine and gross motor skills through active play, movement, and coordination tasks.
- **Communication and Language**
Enhancing listening, understanding, and speaking skills, and expanding children's vocabulary.
- **Literacy**
Introducing early reading and writing through phonics, storytelling, and mark-making activities.
- **Mathematics**
Building early numeracy skills such as counting, understanding shapes, patterns, and simple problem-solving.
- **Understanding the World**
Encouraging curiosity about people, places, communities, and the natural world.

- **Expressive Arts and Design**

Fostering creativity through art, music, movement, and imaginative play.

Each area is delivered through planned, purposeful play, combining direct teaching with rich opportunities for children to explore and learn through their own interests. Staff carefully observe and respond to children's development through warm, positive interactions.

Reading and Phonics

As part of the Eden Academy Trust, we follow the Little Wandle programme — a systematic synthetic phonics scheme designed to help children become fluent, confident readers.

- **Nursery:** Children are introduced to *Foundations for Phonics*, focusing on listening skills, oral blending, and sound awareness.
- **Reception:** Children receive daily discrete phonics sessions and participate in at least three reading practice sessions each week using books matched to their phonics knowledge.

Phonics Assessment

Children in Reception are assessed every three weeks using the Little Wandle assessment tool. These regular assessments help staff identify any gaps in learning and ensure timely support and intervention where needed.

Writing and Handwriting

Handwriting

In Nursery, children begin developing their fine and gross motor skills through daily, targeted activities, with continued support beyond Nursery if needed. To support the development of pre-writing skills, children take part in Dough Disco and Squiggle While You Wiggle sessions each day.

Children in Reception are taught handwriting four times a week using Little Wandle Handwriting. The sessions help children develop correct letter formation from the beginning of their writing journey. Correct letter formation is also targeted in writing books if letters aren't formed correctly.

Literacy

In Nursery, children begin to develop their early literacy skills through regular exposure to Story Dough. This fun and imaginative approach supports oracy, creative thinking, and the development of fine motor skills. By shaping and moulding dough to represent characters, settings, and story events, children are encouraged to explore language, build their vocabulary, and express their ideas confidently through storytelling and play.

Children in Reception take part in Drawing Club, an engaging approach that combines storytelling, vocabulary, drawing, and early writing. Drawing Club is rooted in high-quality picture books, traditional tales, and animations, and integrates skills from across the curriculum — including fine motor, literacy, imagination, and Maths.

Drawing Club lessons follow this structure:

- Get-up, stand-up vocabulary – Introducing new vocabulary with actions.
- Sharing the story – Engaging with the chosen book, tale, or animation.
- Teacher modelling – Demonstrating drawing linked to the story.
- Small group work – Groups of up to six children work with an adult to explore and create.

Teaching of Maths in Early Years

In the Early Years, Maths is taught through practical, hands-on experiences, following the EYFS Statutory Framework and Development Matters guidance. The focus is on:

- Number
- Numerical patterns
- Shape
- Space
- Measure

A typical Maths lesson includes:

- **Revisit** – Reinforcing prior learning through number songs, action-based counting, number recognition, or previously taught concepts.
- **Teach** – The main teaching input to introduce or deepen understanding of a concept.
- **Apply** – Children demonstrate understanding using practical resources and real-life contexts.

Maths Assessment

Assessment is ongoing and takes place throughout each lesson. The class teacher should identify children who may require additional support. Daily assessment should inform future teaching, with adaptations made as needed to meet the needs of all learners.

General Presentation

Teachers must write the long date in Writing books in the top left corner which is underlined with a ruler.

Children should be encouraged to record directly in to their books rather than using pre-made sheets; however, if adult-made resources are to be used, they must be trimmed to size and stuck into books.

Books should be labelled with the child's name; teacher's name; and subject.

Marking and Feedback

Staff must mark children's work using a green pen. Live marking and verbal feedback is encouraged as much as possible. Staff will use the agreed marking codes to provide feedback to children.

LO – Learning objective	Tick	Wobble	Cross
	The learning objective has been achieved.	The learning objective is not secure.	The learning objective has not been met

If a child receives a wobble or cross code, the teacher must provide a follow-up action for the child to complete.

Teachers should also indicate how the work has been completed using the following codes at the bottom of the piece of work.

I	The work has been completed independently by the child with no adult support.
AS	The work has been completed independently by the child with the support of an adult.
IS	The work has been completed by the child with the support of a scaffold.

VF – is used to illustrate that verbal feedback has been given e.g VF – using finger spaces.

In Maths, teachers will carry out Assessment for Learning (AfL) during the 'Apply' section of the lesson to determine whether children have met the learning objective. If a child has not achieved the objective, further support should be provided through small group work or 1:1 intervention.

Assessment in Early Years

At Eden Academy Trust, we believe that regular, thorough, and meaningful assessment is essential to understanding each child's development and ensuring they receive the support they need to thrive. Our assessment approach is purposeful, balanced, and aligned with the EYFS framework.

We use a combination of formative and summative assessments to gain a holistic understanding of every child's progress, development, and achievements.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is ongoing and embedded in daily practice. It informs planning, supports next steps, and helps staff to respond to each child's emerging needs and interests.

- **Observations**
Staff make regular informal observations of children during play and interactions.
- **Planned Observations**
Staff may also plan specific activities to assess progress in targeted areas.
- **Learning Journals**
Every child has a personal portfolio where staff upload observations, photographs, and examples of work. This celebrates achievements and tracks developmental milestones.

Note: There is no expectation for the number of entries per child. High-quality, meaningful interactions with children are our priority. Over-documenting can sometimes disengage the child from the moment.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessments provide a snapshot of a child's learning and progress at key points throughout the year.

- **Baseline Assessment**
Conducted within the first six weeks of entry to Nursery or Reception, this helps establish each child's starting point across various areas of learning.
- **Termly Key Focuses**
Following the baseline assessment, each child is assigned three individual key focuses for the term. These targets are based on the child's current developmental stage and are designed to support and extend their learning across the EYFS areas. Practitioners use high-quality interactions within the continuous provision to scaffold and enrich learning linked to these focuses. All key focuses are clearly displayed within the setting, ensuring that all staff are aware and can support each child's progress consistently throughout daily provision and play-based learning.
- **Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)**
A statutory, age-appropriate assessment of Mathematics, Literacy, and Communication and Language completed within the first six weeks of Reception.
- **Progress Reviews**
At the end of each term, summative assessments are completed using teacher judgement and observational evidence. These reviews reflect on progress across the seven areas of learning.
Attainment data is recorded in our Management Information System (MIS), Arbor.
 - Nursery: Children are assessed against the seven areas of learning.
 - Reception: Children are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs).
- **Two-Year-Old Progress Check**
In line with EYFS requirements, we conduct a progress check for children aged between 2 and 3 years, where possible in collaboration with parents/carers and health visitors or Early Years Practitioners. This identifies any areas where development is less than expected and supports early intervention.
- **End of EYFS – Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)**
In the final term of Reception, a statutory EYFS Profile is completed. This assesses each child's attainment against the Early Learning Goals and provides a well-rounded summary of their development and readiness for Year 1.
A written report is shared with parents, outlining progress in each area of learning and providing an overall picture of the child's achievements.

Working in Partnership with Parents

At Eden Academy Trust, we recognise that children learn and develop best when there is a strong, trusting partnership between parents/carers and staff.

We actively involve parents and carers in the following ways:

Transition Visits

All parents/carers and children are invited to visit our Early Years setting before their official start date. This allows staff to begin building relationships, understand the child's interests and needs, and discuss their development with the parent/carer.

Open Communication

Parents are encouraged to speak with their child's class teacher or key person at any time if they have questions or concerns. We value open, two-way communication and aim to be approachable and responsive.

Daily Informal Contact

Staff are available for brief conversations with parents/carers at the beginning and end of each session, providing ongoing opportunities to share updates, successes, or concerns.

Parent Workshops

Termly workshops are held to help parents/carers understand the Early Years curriculum and discover practical ways to support their child's learning at home.

Weekly Learning Overviews

Each week, staff share a summary of classroom learning via Class Dojo, helping parents stay connected with what their child is learning.

Parent Baseline

Parents and carers are encouraged to complete a 'My Journey Begins...' document prior to their child starting in our setting. This valuable information-gathering tool provides insight into each child's current interests, dislikes and comfort preferences. It also includes a range of developmental statements that allow parents/carers to identify what their child can already do. This helps us to build a holistic picture of each child and ensures a smooth and personalised transition into Early Years.

Home Learning Contributions

Parents are encouraged to share photos, comments, and observations of their child's learning at home. This builds a fuller picture of the child's development and achievements.

Termly Key Focuses

Key learning focuses are shared with parents termly using Class Dojo portfolios. This enables parents/carers to support specific skills or areas of development at home.

Key Person System

In our 2-Year-Old Provision and Nursery, each child is assigned a Key Person.

Outstanding classrooms at Eden Academy Trust

The Classroom Environment

The learning climate we create in school is crucial. Learners are affected not only by the physical environment which surrounds them, but also by our own expectations and attitudes.

At Eden Academy Trust, we strive to create school environments that are welcoming and impressive, making a more pleasant environment for all. Clean and tidy classrooms contribute to a good climate. All staff should take responsibility for our physical environment, including shared areas of the school such as corridors and communal areas.

We believe that a classroom setting needs to be **constantly adapted to suit the needs of the pupils**. A learning environment is forever 'under construction.' It's important that staff take the time to reflect upon the learning environment they create for their pupils to bolster the teaching and learning provision on offer.

As the surroundings in which children learn can significantly influence their educational performance and well-being, classroom environments are extremely important. The layout and resources within the classroom all play a vital role in shaping the children's learning so please ensure you have:

- Appropriate resources clearly labelled and accessible to promote independence.
- Classrooms must be tidy and welcoming, resources should be stored away, clothing should be on pegs or in trays, tables should be straight and tidy with minimal clutter.
- Teachers' desks should be clutter free to set an example to pupils.

Displays

It is important that there is a consistent approach to displays across our whole school and each classroom has the necessary information displayed to support and aid our pupil's learning.

At Eden Academy Trust, we believe displays should, wherever possible:

- Have a clear content and purpose;
- Ensure reflection of a broad and balanced curriculum
- Maintain balance between celebration – pupil's work and information - to support learning;
- Be current - all work on display is up to date and represents pupils currently in the class, or on roll at school;
- Ensure that all pupils are represented;
- Where possible, include use of relevant books and artefacts;
- Display pupil's original drawings, writing and other representational work
- A clear explanation of the pupil's learning
- Contain key vocabulary relating to the topic. This should be appropriate for the developmental age of the children.
- Use fonts linked to the handwriting policy
- Have individual pieces of work backed and labelled with the child's name;
- Have a title and be backed and edged with a border
- Use neutral backing paper/fabric and borders to meet the needs of all pupils
- Reflect the diversity of cohorts within your class and meet their specific needs.

Teachers must always maintain the quality and the displays in classrooms and around school and update these regularly to reflect the learning taking place at that time.

The Use of Working Walls

Working walls are used to support children's learning by acting as an aide-memoir to discussions and relevant prior learning, a learning model or a resource through the display of e.g. high-quality language, sentence starters or calculation strategies. Classroom displays should be adapted and changed frequently displaying key vocabulary and visual aids to prompt the children's ongoing learning. Examples of the pupil's work, ideas and questions should be displayed to help with the children's understanding about their learning journey in a topic.

To ensure working walls have the highest possible impact, they should:

- Be relevant to the curriculum being taught at the time (after which they should be replaced)
- Be clearly presented, with their purpose understood by all learners
- Be referred to throughout the lesson
- Where possible, be created with the pupils during the lesson as this helps ensure children link them to their learning and use them to support independent working

Non-Negotiables Classroom Displays/Resources

The following should be displayed in all classrooms across the school:

- Children's Help Poster, Safe Circle Class Poster, Safeguarding Charter for Children, The Safeguarding Team Poster, Restorative Practice Poster and the School Vision and Values Poster should be placed where they are clearly visible.
- The following policies must also be displayed in classrooms: Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy – For Pupils, Child on Child Abuse Policy – For Pupils, Complaints Policy – Child Friendly.
- The School's behaviour board should be clearly seen and easy to access for the children to move their names, preferably at the front of the classroom.
- Every class should display a visual timetable using the 'Widgit' symbols. This should be changed daily so children know the plans for the day.
- All classrooms should have a reading area available for all pupils to access during the school day.
- An English working wall display that contains some examples of pupil's work, key features of the text type being covered, key vocabulary from the text(s) being covered.
- Little Wandle Grow the Code Chart in the Early Years and intervention rooms.
- In EYFS, there should be a number line displayed.
- An engaging, and where possible, interactive Zones of Regulation display/area should be accessible to all children.
- All classrooms should also have sensory resources for children to access when necessary.
- A safe space, e.g. calm corner, teepee etc. for children to regulate in, if required. This is a non-negotiable in our 'In school provision' classes.

All classrooms should have natural, muted colours and materials as part of the environment and displays to create a calming atmosphere.

All staff should minimise sensory clutter that can cause distractions. Classrooms that have an abundance of colourful posters, decorations, and visual learning tools covering every inch of the walls, can be overwhelming.

How to minimise sensory clutter:

- Displays – use natural colours, limit bright colours. Don't have too much on display.
- Surfaces – limit clutter on desks. Have specific places for equipment and belongings.
- Storage – labelled areas.

- Avoid covering every inch of the walls in the classroom. Stick to display boards only.
- There should be good natural light in classrooms with blinds open and windows display free. Blinds should only be closed if they stop the glare from direct sunlight onto the whiteboard/pupils.
- Staff should be aware when ventilation is needed.

Storage

Exploring the use of neutral colours and natural materials as part of storage for resources can have a powerful impact. In Early Years neutral, pale coloured containers alongside wood or woven baskets mean that the resources become the most eye catching and, therefore, seem more valued.

Staff should consider the placement of resources around the classroom and, where possible store these away to avoid a cluttered classroom space. Pupils' books should be highly valued and stored neatly when not in use. All loose items, such as water bottles should be stored tidily in baskets. Every individual/group of tables should have a storage container holding the resources that are used by pupils regularly throughout the day. These should not be too full.

Home Learning

At Eden Academy Trust, we believe that any home learning should be purposeful and not too burdensome on parents/carers. With this in mind, children in Early Years will take a Library book home to share together with parents/carers. Children in Reception are expected to read their Phonics book at home, at least three times a week.

Social and Emotional Learning

All children come into school on a morning to a Soft Start activity to help them prepare them for the school day ahead. 'Soft Start' is a slow and gentle start to the school day. During this time, children are to complete low stakes, calming activities focused around the development of social skills, oracy and pupil wellbeing. This will provide time for the teacher to work with any children who need support to regulate ready for the day ahead. It also means that any children that are late do not miss out on any vital learning.

In Early Years, we deliver weekly Jigsaw PSHE sessions as part of our structured approach to personal, social and emotional learning. In addition to this, we implement a dedicated PSED skills programme to further support and develop children's social and emotional growth within our setting. This dual approach ensures that children build strong foundations in emotional literacy, resilience, positive relationships, and self-awareness, in line with the EYFS framework.

Morning Meetings

Morning Meetings take place every morning after the Soft Start. Morning meetings allow staff to:

- Reiterate our school vision and values and golden rules
- Explore the British Values
- Identify how children are feeling linked to the Zones of Regulation
- Reminder of Safeguarding procedures
- Timetable for the day