



# Early Years Curriculum



At Willowbrook, our Early Years curriculum is shaped by the needs of our community and the principles of the EYFS. We recognise that many children arrive in the Early Years with well below age-related expectations, particularly in the prime areas of Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Physical Development. These barriers can impact children's confidence, independence, self-regulation and readiness to access the wider curriculum. Our curriculum balances security and challenge, ensuring children feel safe while engaging with new learning.

At Willowbrook, we prioritise foundational skills through a language-rich environment, purposeful play which has structured routines that build early communication, physical development, and early literacy and maths. We also explicitly support executive functioning skills—such as attention, working memory, planning, and self-regulation—through consistent routines, modelling, and carefully designed learning experiences. Together, these approaches help children develop the secure foundations they need for future learning.

Our intent is that every child will:

- Develop confident communication skills, with a growing vocabulary and the ability to express needs, ideas and feelings.
- Build secure relationships, emotional resilience and positive self-esteem.
- Become curious, motivated learners who can engage purposefully with others and with learning.
- Be well prepared for transition into Key Stage 1, with the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed to access the wider curriculum.
- Have regular movement to ensure the development of their gross and fine motor skills.



Children's well-being, inclusion and individual starting points are central to our practice, ensuring all children make strong progress from their unique baseline. Starting school or nursery is an exciting and important milestone. At Willowbrook, our transition process is designed to give every child and family a positive start, with support tailored to individual needs. At the end of Reception, we also ensure a smooth transition into Year 1 by introducing key Year 1 routines during the final weeks of the year.

We have created and continue to develop a supportive and inclusive environment where children are encouraged to try new things, take risks, and develop independence. High expectations are shown through positive language, consistent routines, and activities that challenge children appropriately while still being developmentally suitable.

We maintain strong, collaborative partnerships with parents by communicating regularly, involving them in school life, and working together to support each child's learning and wellbeing.



### Creating a language rich environment

- Staff use the ShREC approach (Share attention, Respond, Expand, Check) to ensure high-quality interactions that consistently extend children's language and thinking.
- Vocabulary development is prioritised across all areas of provision, with explicit teaching of vocabulary, which is modelled, revisited and embedded through stories, routines and continuous provision.
- The learning environment is language-rich by design, with continuous provision planned to promote talk, collaboration and imagination. Adults actively engage in play to introduce and reinforce vocabulary linked to current learning and children's interests.
- Drawing Club supports oral storytelling, imagination and sentence structure, enabling children to rehearse ideas verbally before recording them through mark-making or drawing.
- Planned opportunities for sustained shared thinking enable children to extend sentences, ideas and understanding.



### Focus on personal, emotional and social skills

- Clear routines and consistent expectations support children to feel safe, secure and confident.
- Adaptions made to these routines to ensure that all children succeed.
- Adults explicitly teach self-regulation, turn-taking, resilience and independence.
- The Zones of Regulation supports children to identify emotions, understand feelings and develop strategies to manage behaviour and emotions.
- Positive relationships are fostered through responsive adult interactions.



### Developing physical development

- Rich and varied environment that supports both gross and fine motor skills.
- Daily access to high-quality outdoor spaces where they can climb, balance, run, and explore, helping them develop strength, coordination, and confidence.
- Indoors, we offer activities that build fine motor control, such as mark-making, construction, threading, and tools for early writing.
- Staff model safe movement, encourage independence, and plan targeted activities for children who need additional support.

At Willowbrook, we aim to give children a life-long love of learning through providing a caring, nurturing and vibrant learning environment in which our children thrive. We believe that all children can succeed and that by creating a language rich learning environment that encourages communication and interactions between children and with adults, this will support our children to maximise their learning outcomes.

Our values act as the foundations of our school.

- **Respect** Children are taught that being respectful is about treating others how they would like to be treated. They learn that it is important to have good manners, help others and accept differences.
- **Community** Children are taught to help, support and care for each other. Children at Willowbrook are taught that community is about being loyal, trustworthy and responsible.
- **Curiosity** Children are encouraged and given time to be curious about the world around them. By asking questions and exploring new things the children learn, adapt and develop their creativity.
- **Resilience** Children are taught to be independent and take risks in their learning. They learn to be courageous and to persevere, even when they feel like giving up!
- **Compassion** Children learn that compassion is about caring for others and wanting to help them. It's about being kind and forgiving mistakes. Children are shown how important it is to understand the feelings of others.
- **Aspiration** Children are encouraged to dream big and work hard to achieve their goals. They learn how to stay focused and try their best, even when things are tough. Children are confident in their learning and take pride in everything they do.



We provide a nurturing environment that supports strong relationships and encourages every child's curiosity, confidence, and independence. Our EYFS classrooms are calm, well-organised spaces with thoughtfully presented resources that promote independence and meaningful learning. Long periods of continuous provision allow children to deepen their play, practise skills, and engage in high-quality interactions with staff. Indoor and outdoor areas offer different learning opportunities, with outdoor provision supporting larger-scale movement. All adults hold high expectations and help children care for their learning environment.