



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy and Handbook

At ISH our vision is to develop a community of caring, compassionate, honest, open-minded global citizens who enjoy learning in critical and creative ways.

We strive to develop a positive sense of self and engage with our world on a local and global scale.

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Our Early Years vision:

As an Early Years team, we believe that children learn best when they feel safe, are happy, and when they are building meaningful relationships with the people around them. This is at the very heart of everything we do in Group 1.

We encourage our children to be expressive, communicative, collaborative and resilient in their learning. We are consistently adapting the learning environment to reflect the needs and interests of each child, so we can help them to develop, apply and practice these skills.

We want our children to experience the magic and joy of learning through play, whilst building relationships and developing skills that help prepare them not only for their school journey, but as they take their steps into the wider world.

1. The importance of play in Group 1

Play contributes to the development of children's academic outcomes as well as essential skills including collaboration, communication, confidence, content, creative innovation and creative thinking'. (Developing life skills through play - Cambridge University Press 2019, p6).

Play is the most effective way for our children to learn in a meaningful and purposeful context. Play allows children to: take ownership of their learning and follow their curiosities, develop their communication skills, build relationships, problem solve and experience joy in their achievements. The children in Group 1 spend most of their day in play to ensure that they can develop and practice these skills.

2. Curriculum

2.1 Areas of learning

In Group 1 we follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. Our curriculum is built around the seven areas of learning.

Our three prime areas are:

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

Our four specific areas are:

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

We recognise that all seven areas of learning are important and inter-connected. In Group 1, we place special emphasis on the three prime areas of learning. It is important that children build strong foundations in communication and language, personal social emotional development and in physical development. These are integral to our day in Group 1. This is so we can help build children's curiosity for learning and help them develop meaningful relationships with others. Having a good understanding of the prime areas helps prepare our learners to better access the four areas of specific learning.

We plan for and encourage our children to access all seven areas of learning both inside the classroom and outside, where we have direct access to our own Early Years space.

Our EYFS curriculum is enhanced by including trips around the local area, visits from parents to share special celebrations and visits from people to share their experiences in their jobs.

2.2 Teaching and Learning in the Early Years is based on four key principles:

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

A Unique Child

Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

We recognise that every child is unique and is on their own individual learning journey. We ensure that we spend time getting to know children when they join Group 1, to learn more about their interests and where we can help them progress in their learning.

Children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Considering what we know about the child, we plan for exciting learning moments that appeal to the child's interests, whilst also ensuring they are progressing in their individual learning journey.

Positive Relationships

Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.

Children in Group 1 frequently move between the four learning spaces in free flow. This is when the children take ownership of their learning and choose where to play, who and what to play with. This provides children with many opportunities to build positive and meaningful relationships with children in all the Group 1 classes, as well as the adults in Group 1.

Enabling environments

Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and carers.

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through informal observations, we assess the children's interests and learning needs before planning exciting and challenging activities and experiences to extend their learning.

Learning and Development

Children develop and learn in different ways.

We have three classrooms in Group 1 as well as a dedicated outdoor learning area just for Group 1. Our learning environments are organised to allow children to explore and learn safely. There are areas where the children can be active, explore, lead their own learning whilst building and developing relationships.

2.3 Characteristics of effective teaching and learning

The EYFS includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning and EYFS teachers plan activities with these in mind. The characteristics highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them. We use these characteristics to plan with and for the children.

The three characteristics 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

2.4 Teacher led moments

We have small teacher led moments in our week for Maths, Phonics and English learning, two to three times a week. We teach a skill, often at the beginning of the day, and the children then have time to explore and practice these skills in play throughout the rest of the week.

2.5 Streaming

As we have children joining us throughout the year, we stream for Maths, Phonics and English. This means that when a child joins us, we assess where they currently are in their learning, and they are placed into a group that matches their current ability level. This is to ensure that when children join us, they follow a progression of learning that is appropriate to their needs and will allow them to progress in their learning journey during their time in Group 1.

3. Transition to Group 1

We recognise that starting a new school is an important step for both children and parents. We want your children to feel safe, welcomed, and happy in their new learning environment.

3.1 Home visits

In the first week of school, we offer an optional home visit. The aim of the home visit is to introduce ourselves to children in an environment that is comfortable and familiar to them. This helps with the transition from home to starting a new school.

The home visits usually last between 20 - 30 minutes, and two members of the Group 1 team will visit. One teacher will play with the child, and one teacher will be able to talk with you about key information about your child, so we get to know them as well as possible before they join. We will also be able to answer any questions you may have.

The Early Years lead will be in touch before your child's start date to ask if you would like to have a home visit. The home visits will usually take place in the days before your child joins Group 1. When we have a lot of children joining at one time, it may be that your child attends school and then a home visit happens a few days later. This is still beneficial as it reinforces and strengthens the link between home and school for children.

If you have just moved to the Netherlands or to a new home, it may be that a home visit is not purposeful. If this is the case, we will be in touch with an alternative suggestion to a home visit.

3.2 Items to bring on your first day

Things to bring on your first day of school 😊

	Rainboots	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Indoor shoes (such as slippers or crocs)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Snack box	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Lunch box (needed on Monday)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Water bottle	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Spare clothes in a bag with your child's name clearly labelled: 2 pairs of socks 2 underpants 2 trousers/shorts 2 tops	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please remember to label all items with your child's name.		

3.3 Joining Group 1 on the first day of the academic year – Wednesday 27th August 2025

Children follow a soft start when they join Group 1, to ensure the transition from home to school is smooth in the first week.

Children's first day in Group 1 will always take place on a Wednesday. If your child is joining Group 1 on the first day of the new school year, please see the table in appendix 1 for information on the first week of school.

3.4 Joining Group 1 throughout the academic year

Children can start in Group 1 on the first Wednesday after their fourth birthday. This means we will have a large number of children joining us throughout the year.

Children's first day in Group 1 will always take place on a Wednesday. If your child will join Group 1 between Wednesday 3rd September 2025 and June 2026, please see the table in appendix 2 for information on the first week of school.

3.5 Joining a class

At the beginning of the academic year, we have two classes in Group 1: Olive class and Juniper class. For children who join us on or from Wednesday 3rd September, they won't be officially assigned to a class yet. When assigning children to a class, we consider a balance of boys and girls, languages spoken, nationalities and a variety of abilities.

On Friday afternoon, at the end of the first week, you will hear from the EY lead via email which class your child will join from Monday in the following week.

Before your child joins Group 1, the EY lead will write to you with information as to what the first week will look like for your child.

3.6 The first day

Parents are very welcome to stay and join the children in their play on their child's first day from 8:05 – 10:00. This is also a nice opportunity to meet other parents who also may have new children starting on the same day also.

Please do feel free to come into all the classrooms and our outside area through Juniper class, where you can explore, look around and play with the children.

3.7 The first week

The staggered start into Group 1 is purposefully created to ensure children have a smooth transition into Group1 and develop a positive association with school. Whilst we recognise that some children may have come from another school setting, we ask every child to take part in the soft start, for children to build a positive association with their new school, as they adapt to a new environment, teachers and friends.

If class teachers notice that some children are finding the initial days a challenge, they will call to let you know and suggest collecting children earlier than planned, if this is necessary.

3.8 Time spent in Group 1

Students may start in Group 1 the day following their fourth birthday. Students who turn four after 1 October will be placed in Group 1 for two years.

4. Parent and teacher partnerships

We recognise the importance of parents as children's first educators. We believe they have a significant role to play in the lifelong education of their child. We take every opportunity to work in collaboration with parents and carers, to create and maintain partnerships and to establish strong links between home and school.

4.1 Stay and play mornings

We value the relationships we build with parents and want children to see that these relationships are valued. On the first Monday after each half term, we invite parents in for a stay and play morning from 8:05 – 9:00.

The aim is to help children settle back in after the break, and to also share with you first-hand how your child learns through play. We will send questions to parents ahead of the stay and play morning which can be used to guide conversations with children.

Please see appendix 3 for the stay and play mornings in 2025 – 2026.

4.2 Parent/Teacher meets

Parent/Teacher meets take place three times throughout the school year. The first meeting in September will have a social and emotional focus only, where parents and teachers share their observations of how the children are settling in.

If your child joins Group 1 throughout the academic year, your child's class teacher will be in touch to offer a parent/teacher meet to share how your child has been settling in. This will be offered to parents once your child has been in school for three weeks.

4.3 Exit Points

At points in the year, we will invite parents into the classroom to celebrate the learning the children have been taking part in. We will provide a set of questions for parents and carers to ask ahead of time, to help guide conversations.

4.4 Parent information sessions

Throughout the year, we will write to parents with information about sessions that we will hold related to Group 1. These might be linked to play, subject learning, assessment or transition to Group 2.

4.5 General information

It is helpful to know if there are changes to a child's routine at home that may impact a child's social or emotional wellbeing. If a parent or family member is away, if someone is ill or if there is something that is causing a change to a child's daily routine, please let your child's class teacher know as soon as possible.

5. Communication

5.1 Toddle

Toddle is our platform which we use to communicate with parents.

- Each Friday we send home a message to parents. This contains important notices, upcoming dates of events and a summary of the learning that has been happening in Group 1, along with some photos of the week.
- Throughout the school year, you will also receive individual photos of your child as they are learning. Parents are also encouraged to comment on their child's online Toddle portfolio. We really value the sharing of experiences children are having outside of school, and this further strengthens the connection between home and school.
- At the beginning of each new half term, you will receive a Curriculum Overview. This will indicate what the children will be learning in the upcoming half term.

5.2 ManageBac

We take the register each day at 8:15 using ManageBac. If your child will be late, absent, has an appointment or will be collected by someone other than yourself, please add a note on ManageBac. Please report these on ManageBac, rather than sending emails to your child's class teacher. This is so that if the class teacher is absent, the person in the classroom is aware of any important messages.

If your child requires one full day or more off school, please refer to www.internationalschoolhaarlem.nl/absenteism.nl for a request form.

5.3 Change of information whilst your child is in Group 1

Please contact administration@internationalschoolhaarlem.nl if you have a change of address and/or contact number. Please also inform the administration team at this email address if there are any changes to your child's health since admission into Group 1.

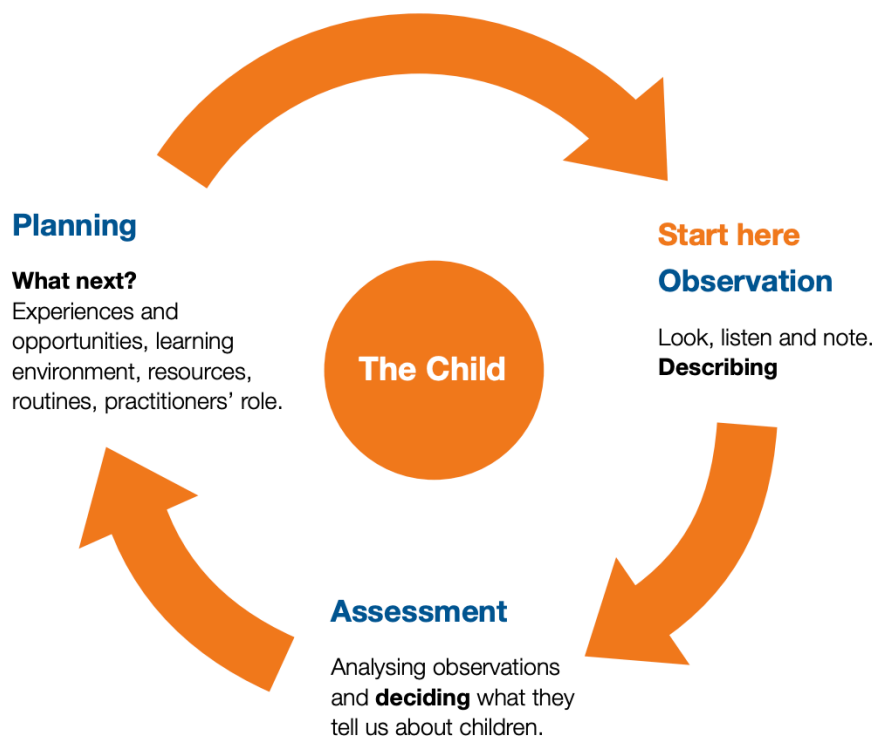
5.4 Illness

If your child is unwell, please add a note in ManageBac letting the school know. Please also see our school guide with regards to illness and for more information as to when children can return to school if they have been unwell.

6. Assessment

As practioners, we can learn so much from watching and interacting with our learners through play. Play provides us with valuable information as to what our children's interests are and what their next steps can be.

We always begin with the child and follow this cycle:



The Development Matters Framework (DFE, 2012)

Observations of the children are shared through Seesaw. Once every two weeks you can expect to see a photo linked to a prime or specific area of your child's learning. Here parents can observe their child's progress throughout the year and contribute to the journal with any learning done at home.

Throughout the children's time in Group 1 we make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.

At the end of Group 1, children are assessed against the ISH Early Learning Goals, indicating whether they are at the expected levels of development or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). If a child is 'emerging' in one of the ISH ELG's, this is not a cause for concern. Each child is on their own individual learning journey and progresses at their own pace. If a class teacher has spotted an area of learning where children may need extra support or guidance, they will communicate this with you ahead of the ELG's assessment being shared.

7. Reporting

Some children will remain in Group 1 for up to two years due to their age. To ensure that all assessment information is shared with parents appropriately, parents will receive reports throughout their child's time in Group 1. These will look different in the first and second year, to reflect the learning journey of the child.

7.1 Reporting in a child's first year in Group 1 (if they are remaining in Group 1 for up to two years):

Children who are in Group 1 for the entire academic year will receive three reports at various points in the year. However, if your child joins us after the school year has begun, it may be that they receive two reports, or one. This depends on when your child has joined Group 1. Your child's class teacher will communicate with you about whether your child will receive a report or not, depending on the length of time they have been in school at the point of sharing reports.

7.2 Reporting in a child's last year (or only year in Group 1):

If your child is in their last/only year in Group 1 they will receive the three reports mentioned above throughout the year, in addition to an Early Learning Goals assessment report at the end of the academic year, when they leave Group 1. Children will receive an 'emerging' or 'expected' outcome linked to the ISH Early Learning Goals.

8. Inclusion

We believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their potential by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning. In Group 1 we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children.

In Group 1 we understand that each child is an individual and will progress at their own pace. Children who require support with an aspect of their learning will be supported through a range of strategies which are implemented by the classroom teacher. Please see our

inclusion policy for more information.

9. Independence

9.1 Independence in school

We encourage our children to be independent in their day as much as possible. Before joining Group 1, please ensure that your child can complete the following independently, without adult support. Children should be able to:

- Put on and take off their coat, including using zips and buttons
- Put on and take off their shoes (velcro or slip-on shoes are recommended. Shoes with laces are not advised unless children can independently tie these)
- Open and close snack and lunch boxes and water bottles
- Feed themselves
- Wash their hands
- Put on socks and tights
- Use the toilet alone

9.2 Toileting

We require children to be toilet trained on entry into Group 1. This means that they can recognise when they need to use the toilet and can independently clean and wipe themselves.

We understand that accidents can happen with young children. If accidents become a frequent occurrence, we will meet with parents to review and monitor this over a period of time. If accidents persist, children may be asked to attend school for reduced hours, until their accidents have stopped, and children have revisited toilet training at home.

In the case of a child who has soiled themselves, children are talked through the process of cleaning themselves. If this is not possible, the school will contact parents and will expect them to assist with intimate care of their child.

10. Transition to Group 2

In the summer term, we will begin to prepare the children who will move to Group 2 in the next academic year for this change. Those moving to Group 2 will be mixed again into new classes. When assigning children to a class, we consider a balance of boys and girls, of languages spoken, nationalities and a variety of abilities. Children are involved in this process.

For those moving up to Group 2 in the next academic year, we begin to prepare them for moving to Group 2. This involves:

- Circle times to identify emotions

- Visits to the Group 2 classrooms when they are empty
- Group 2 teachers visit Group 1
- A step-up morning. This is when the new classes come together and meet their new class teacher in their new Group 2 classroom.
- Children receive a letter before the summer break from their new class teacher.

In the summer term, a Group 2 teacher and the EY lead will hold a parent information session about the transition from Group 1 to Group 2.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1

Soft start: week 1 for new students starting on Wednesday 27th August 2025

	AM	PM	After school
Wednesday	8:05 – 10:00 <u>First day of school</u> Stay and play morning for new children with parents <i>Please bring snack</i>		EY team on home visits
Thursday	8:05 – 10:15 (Without parents) <i>Please bring snack</i>		EY team on home visits
Friday	8:05 – 11:45 (Without parents) <i>Please bring snack</i>		EY team on home visits
Monday	8:05 – 12:15 (Without parents) <i>Please bring snack and lunch</i>		EY team on home visits
Tuesday	8:05 – 12:45 (Without parents) <i>Please bring snack and lunch</i>		EY team on home visits
Wednesday **	8:05 – 12:15 Full day (Without parents) <i>Please bring snack</i>		

** Every Wednesday is a short school day for all primary students. The school day runs from 8:05 – 12:15.

Appendix 2

Soft start: week 1 for new students joining between Wednesday 3rd September 2025 to June 2026

	AM	PM	After school
Monday			Home visit
Tuesday			
Wednesday	8:05 – 10:00 First day of school Stay and play morning for new children with parents/carers <i>Please bring snack</i>		
Thursday	8:05 – 10:15 (Without parents) <i>Please bring snack</i>		
Friday	8:05 – 11:45 (Without parents) <i>Please bring snack</i>		
Monday	8:05 – 12:15 (Without parents) <i>Please bring snack and lunch</i>		
Tuesday	8:05 – 12:45 (Without parents) <i>Please bring snack and lunch</i>		
Wednesday	8:05 – 12:15 Full day (Without parents) <i>Please bring snack</i>		

Regular times after the soft start on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday:

8:05	School gates and school doors open
8:15	Registration and start of the lessons. Parents leave school

10:15 – 10:30	Break time with Group 2 and 3
11:45 – 12:45	Lunch time (30 minutes to eat and 30 minutes of play outside with Group 2 and 3)
14:30	Class dismissed, end of the school day. Dismissal time on Wednesdays is at 12:15

On these days, please ensure children have a snack and lunch.

Appendix 3

For the academic year 2025 - 2026, the stay and play mornings will take place on the following dates:

Monday 27th October 2025

Monday 5th January 2026

Monday 2nd March 2026

Wednesday 6th May 2026

12. Reference list

- Developing life skills through play - Cambridge University Press 2019, p6
- Development Matters 2012, p2, p3
- Development Matters 2021, p13
- Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage 2021, p8