



# **Teaching Learning and Assessment**

in the

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

January 2019

To be reviewed January 2021

## Aims

- To give each child a safe, happy and positive start to their school life
- To enable each child to make good and even outstanding progress whatever their starting point
- To nurture children's belief in themselves as strong, independent learners;
- To foster a deep love of learning
- To enable children to learn and develop holistically, whether emotionally, socially, physically, spiritually and intellectually
- To offer each child a wide range of exciting first hand learning experiences, igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning
- To establish solid foundations which set children up for life and help them become "school ready"
- To build warm partnerships with each family, working together to support each child's development

## Curriculum

Abercromby Nursery School follows the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum as outlined in the "Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage" (Department for Education) document, effective from April 2017. This clearly defines what must be in place in an early years setting in two strands:

- in terms of the safeguarding and welfare requirements,
- and what we teach, as outlined in the learning and development requirements.

This policy details how we apply this statutory document within the specifics of our setting.

## Overarching Principles

"Four guiding principles should shape practice in early years settings. These are:

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**
- 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/or carers
- **children develop and learn in different ways** (see "the characteristics of effective teaching and learning" at paragraph 1.9) and at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities."

(Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage p6)

## Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements

"Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. The safeguarding and welfare requirements ... are designed to help providers create high quality

settings which are welcoming, safe and stimulating, and where children are able to enjoy learning and grow in confidence.” (Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage p16)

The welfare requirements set out what the school must have in place with regard to: safeguarding children; ensuring the suitability of adults who have contact with children; promoting good health; managing behaviour; and maintaining records, policies and procedures. At Abercromby Nursery School, we take rigorous steps to make sure each element of the safeguarding and welfare requirements is adhered to, with yearly audits. Any actions identified are followed up swiftly, so the school is confident that it meets all the requirements at all times.

See also the following policies as examples of how the safeguarding and welfare requirements are met:

- Behaviour policy
- Child protection policy
- Code of conduct for adults
- Data protection policy
- Illnesses and injury policy
- Intimate care policy
- Medication policy
- Mobile phone and camera policy

### **Learning and Development Requirements**

The statutory framework sets out how working in partnership with families, we promote the learning and development of all children in our care, ensuring they are ready for the next stage of their education. Our approach is based on the best available evidence on how children learn and reflects the broad range of skills, knowledge and attitudes children need as foundations for good future progress.

The EYFS learning and development requirements comprise:

- the seven areas of learning and development and the educational programmes (described below)
- the early learning goals, which summarise the knowledge, skills and understanding that all young children should have gained by the end of the Reception year
- the assessment requirements (when and how practitioners must assess children’s achievements, and when and how they should discuss children’s progress with parents and/or carers)

### **The 7 Areas of Learning and Development**

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape our educational programmes. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children’s curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, the prime areas, are:

- Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities
- Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations
- Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food

We must also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest
- Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measure
- Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment
- Expressive arts and design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide 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

### **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

In planning, guiding and assessing children's activities, staff at Abercromby reflect on the different ways that children learn; we aim to encourage children to see themselves as active agents in their own learning. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning 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

### **Key Person Role**

Each child and family is assigned a key person as they start. In our busy setting with many different adults, this is their own special grown up, who takes responsibility for building a warm, trusting relationship with the child and their family and helping settle the child in. We place relational pedagogy at the heart of all we do. Sometimes children will choose who they

want their key person to be! We make every effort to make sure children are happy with their special grown up.

The key person gets to know each of their children extremely well and gathers evidence of their learning and progress (see the Assessment sections below). They use this in depth knowledge to tailor every child's learning and care to meet their individual needs. The key person works hard to engage with and support families in a two way relationship, so that the learning taking place between home and Nursery is continuous and seamless. Key persons also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate.

See also "Settling In and Key Person policy".

### **What Teaching Looks Like in Early Years**

When thinking about how we teach the children in Abercromby Nursery School who may be aged from 2 years old to 5 years old, we use the Ofsted definition of teaching:

"Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities: communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment adults provide and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitor their progress." (Early Years Inspection Handbook, April 2018 p35)

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. We believe children learn best through playful, fun experiences; this may be initiated by them, or initiated and/or guided by adults. Children do not distinguish between play and learning. For our children play is the very business of learning. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others.

Our aim is that children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play that is guided by adults. Practitioners respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction and making sure there is a balance between activities led by children, and activities led or guided by adults.

Practitioners are not bystanders in activities initiated by children, but have a crucial role to play; by observing what the child is doing, identifying the learning that is taking place, supporting and extending language development and providing further resources to enhance the child's line of enquiry. As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults, but there will still always be extended time for sustained child initiated learning.

## **The Learning Environment**

Careful thought is given to the learning environment, inside and outside. We recognise that the layout of the children's resources and space is of utmost importance for a successful curriculum to be delivered.

Continuous Provision is the resources and experiences available to the children every single day. It is vital to have high quality resources on offer as the quality of the resources send out strong messages to the children about the importance of taking care of their Nursery. High quality equipment will also aid in developing rich learning opportunities for the children.

With this in mind, we use a workshop approach, both inside and outside. Open ended resources are placed in easy to reach, clearly labelled baskets or containers, on open shelving, so the children can see what is available to them. Each area (e.g. the water area is one area) is meticulously resourced and planned for in terms of maximising the different learning opportunities that can happen there. Everything has a place and the children have the chance to choose their own resources to use as they wish. They are able to move them from one area to another to follow lines of enquiry. Children are taught the importance of looking after their learning environment and replacing resources when finished with.

Enhancements are added in addition to the Continuous Provision that is available to children every day. Enhancements are added for a short time, in response to identified learning needs and interests. This may be a fire engine small world play after a visit from Firefighters, or a tray with different magnets to explore when children have shown a fascination with them, or collections of different real 3D shapes to help children explore the concept of 3D shapes.

Displays are another important element in the learning environment. We aim that all our displays are celebratory, interactive and informative, showcasing the learning that is taking place and acting as a provocation to further learning.

Outside We believe that "being outdoors has a positive impact on children's sense of well-being and helps all aspects of children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It gives children first-hand contact with weather, seasons and the natural world. Outdoor environments offer children freedom to explore, use their senses, and be physically active and exuberant." (EYFS principles into practice card 3:3 2008)

Children at Abercromby have access to our large and well resourced garden for a large proportion of each day. They are encouraged to explore in all weathers, whether sunny, rainy or snowy; learning to prepare for the different elements is seen as an important learning experience in its own right. Learning outdoors is planned for and resourced within the same principles as the inside learning environment.

## **Planning**

At Abercromby Nursery School we aim to be intentional and strategic in planning for children's learning and progression, whilst also being flexible in responding to children's needs and interests. We have 4 layers of planning that are all interlinked and build on each other.

Individual Child Planning happens on a daily basis as practitioners respond to children in the moment, supporting their learning through e.g. language development or getting out extra resources to support a child's interest or line of enquiry.

It also follows on from half termly Focus Observations, where next steps are identified for each child. This is then followed up in a "Next Steps" observation outlining the progress the child is making towards these identified steps. These next steps are discussed by the room team in informal meetings after school each day and in the weekly planning meetings and inform planning for the next day and week ahead.

Short Term Planning is carried out on a weekly basis and is informed by the weekly room planning meeting. There is a strong reflection element where staff identify what is going well, what needs attention and any particular children who need planning for in some way. It will take account of broader themes outlined in the Medium Term Planning and how these may be delivered. Possible adult directed and guided activities are identified for the week ahead, along with any enhancements that will be added to the provision.

Medium Term Planning is carried out half termly. The cycle begins by reflecting on the previous half term and the learning that has taken place, identifying what has gone well and what needs attention. Tracking data identifies priorities for provision in terms of weaker areas and the kinds of experiences children need to address any gaps in learning. This happens on various levels - such as individual children, vulnerable groups and whole cohorts. Medium Term Planning takes account of the different seasons, festivals and children's current fascinations and interests. Themes are planned for on a one page overview sheet which identifies the various directions learning can go, depending on the children's response, outlining enhancements including visitors and outings.

Long Term Planning is informed by our School Development Plan. It consists of the Development Matters statements, which give an overview of the knowledge and skills that children will be developing at different ages. It also includes our Continuous Provision plans, written for each area of the learning environment, which identify the resources, organisation, possible learning outcomes and types of adult interaction that will support children's progress.

## **Assessment**

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and then shaping learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. This forms the observation – assessment – planning cycle.

Assessment includes formative assessment which comprise the ongoing observations and assessments of the child's continuing progress and summative assessment which marks the overall progress made at distinct points in the year.

## **Formative Assessment**

Evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS is collected using the Tapestry Online Learning Journal system, where observations can be uploaded, using narrative, photos and video. Observations are a mix of incidental observations made of "wow" moments of learning, and

longer planned Focus Observations made half termly. Each staff member has their own school iPad, which is used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning. These observations are then linked to the Development Matters statements and the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Leuven scales can also be used to identify the child's involvement and well being.

Families can log on at home and see what their child has been learning, comment on what they've seen and also upload moments of learning that have happened with them, building a full picture of each child's capabilities.

All this evidence is used to track a child's progress in their individual Pupil Progress Profile. We now use the "What to expect when" statements, produced by 4children in 2015, to track progress, rather than using the Development Matters statements (also known as Early Years Outcomes). They describe the same learning but are written from the point of view of the child as "I can" statements in plain English. This makes them easier for all to understand, especially as many of our parents have English as an Additional Language.

### **Summative Assessment**

Our tracking system assesses whether each child is working at age related expectations and is therefore on course to achieve a Good Level of Development, the statutory assessment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is assessed in the Summer Term of the Reception class.

On entry to Nursery, a starting Nursery observation is carried out by the key person, which gives a snapshot of where the child is, on starting Nursery. This is used to inform the baseline assessments in the Pupil Progress Profile. Then at regular points in the year, at the end of each term, pupil progress meetings are held, where each key person will work with the Head Teacher to enter each child's data into our Tracking system. The data collected informs us about each child's progress, whilst also identifying vulnerable groups and priorities in areas of learning. This is then fed back into planning systems on a child, group and class level.

### **Progress Check Aged 2**

This is a statutory assessment we have to make when a child is aged between two and three. The key person reviews the child's progress and provides families with a short written summary, of their child's development in the prime areas. This progress check identifies the child's strengths, and any areas where the child's progress is less than expected. If we have any concerns that a child is not making the progress that we feel they should be, a targeted plan is developed to support the child's future learning and development. This will involve families and other professionals as appropriate (for example, our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator [SENDco] or health professionals). Key persons also discuss with families how the summary of development can be used to support learning at home.

### **Partnership with Parents and Carers**

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are fully involved in everything we do at school. We begin this process with Home Visits for all new starters, a truly valuable time of getting to

know our children and families in the comfort and security of their own home, identifying together where the child is in their development and building a picture of their unique home circumstances (see Home Visit policy). The family's key person will continue that process of building warm relationships so that families feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting.

The Head Teacher holds induction and welcome meetings for all new families, helping them to understand how life in a Nursery School runs to benefit their child and how they can get involved and support us – and also how we can support them. We plan a parental involvement session every half term, from Stay Play and Learn sessions usually on a theme, to e-safety coffee mornings. We do everything we can to support our families in their understanding of this stage of education, and what they can do at home to help their children. Tapestry is a valuable tool in helping families to see just what their child is getting up to on a daily basis and for staff to see what families are doing at home.

Once a term we organise a consultation day for families to come in and have a meeting with their child's key person, celebrating the progress made and identifying next steps together for learning.

### **English as an Additional Language (EAL)**

We have about 60-70% of children whose home language is not English. We embrace the different languages and cultures represented in our school community. Many of our families will have parents who have little spoken English. We encourage families to help their children continue to develop in their home language. At Abercromby we understand the importance of developing good speaking and listening skills which underpins all future learning. We are focussed on communication and language development so that children will reach a good standard in English during their time with us. We are part of a research project based on URLEY (Using Research tools to improve Language in Early Years) which is helping us develop a sharp focus on what we can do to facilitate language development. In addition, all staff have been trained in Signalong, a valuable tool which supports all children's communication skills.

When assessing communication, language and literacy skills, staff will assess children's skills in English. If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, we explore the child's skills in the home language with parents and/or carers, to establish whether there is cause for concern about language delay. If a concern is identified, we may use an intervention programme such as the Derbyshire Language Intervention. If this does not address the delay, then we work with the appropriate agencies to support the child's language development.

### **Inclusion**

All children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties or disabilities, gender or ability should have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development. We actively teach children to appreciate everyone from every walk of life and avoid gender stereotyping, challenging any expression of prejudice or discrimination, by children or adults.