



# **Teaching Learning and Assessment**

in the

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

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## 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, encompassing emotional, social, physical, spiritual and intellectual development
- 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 and trusting partnerships with each family, working together to support each child's development

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Abercromby Nursery School follows the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum as outlined in the "Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage" document, (Department for Education published in March 2021 and effective from September 2021). This clearly defines what must be in place in an early years setting, in three strands:

1. The learning and development requirements
2. Assessment
3. The safeguarding and welfare 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 p21)

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 (available on our website) 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 as to 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 and they are all important and inter-connected. The educational programmes describe the activities and experiences that children in our setting should encounter. 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 described in the following educational programmes:

- Communication and language development  
The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.
- Personal, social and emotional development  
Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.
- Physical development  
Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated

and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

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

- Literacy development

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).

- Mathematics

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes.

- Understanding the world

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.

- Expressive arts and design

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to

communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

## **Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning**

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

- 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 even 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, along with a secure understanding of child development, to tailor every child's learning and care, to meet their individual needs, sequencing the early years curriculum for them. 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 people 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 2 to 5 year old children in Abercromby Nursery School, 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 teaching and learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitor their progress." (Education Inspection Handbook, September 2021, section 333)

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 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 twofold; 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.

However, 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 and experiences to support 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 organisation of 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 this sends out strong messages to the children about how we value the range of rich learning opportunities open to them.

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.

As resources are open ended, each child will use them in a different way according to their level of development. For example, a 2 year old in a water tray might be exploring pouring,



filling and emptying into different sized containers. Two 4 year olds, with similar resources, could be working on making magic potions together, discussing what their potions will do, developing a story.

Enhancements are added as an 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 could 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 objects 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 providing 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. Indeed, learning to prepare for the different elements e.g. by pulling on waterproofs, 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, sequencing the curriculum for each individual child.

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 the six monthly Spotlight observations, where next steps are identified for each child. This is then followed up in the Spotlight review, 2 months later, 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 e.g. feeding through from a Spotlight assessment. It will take account of broader themes outlined





in the Medium Term Planning and our overarching Curriculum Maps, and how these may be delivered. 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. Analysis of progress identifies priorities for provision in terms of weaker areas and the kinds of learning experiences children need to address any gaps in their knowledge. This works on various levels, such as individual children, vulnerable groups e.g. those children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) 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 Curriculum Maps for each room, giving a helicopter view of the whole year. This framework summarises what we are planning to introduce across each of the 7 areas of learning in each half term, but allows for children's interests and learning needs. Our philosophy is that we are co-constructors of children's learning and development. To aid our planning for each age and stage, we are guided by the statutory educational programmes outlined earlier, and the non-statutory documents "Development Matters" and "Birth to 5 Matters". Long term planning also includes our Continuous Provision plans, written for each area, 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 development, interests and learning styles, and then shaping learning experiences for each child and so sequencing the curriculum for them. 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 and attainment made at distinct points in the year e.g. Spotlight Assessments.

### **Formative Assessment**

Key people are continually observing and getting to know each of their children very well. Much of this formative assessment of the child will not be recorded, but each key person will be able to talk in depth about each child's level of development and characteristics. This deep knowledge of the child will support the key person to plan next steps for them – see the planning section above.

Significant evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS is collected using the online Learning Journal system, where incidental observations can be uploaded as a "story", using narrative, photos and video, capturing a full and rounded picture of a child's learning and

competencies. Each staff member has their own school iPad, which is used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning.

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.

### **Summative Assessment**

Progress and attainment is captured using the OPAL (Observation of Play and Learning) framework. On entry to Nursery, a starting point observation is carried out by the key person, which gives a baseline of where the child is, against milestones for their age.

Then when children have a full or half birthday they are assessed against new milestones for that age during a "Spotlight" assessment. The child's interests and learning needs are also captured and uploaded to Learning Journals. Next steps for learning are then fed back into the planning e.g. if a child has not met a particular milestone, then learning experiences will be planned to support them. A review process, 2 months after the Spotlight, is an integral part of each Spotlight assessment, celebrating progress made with any next steps.

Key people share all observations with their children and as children work towards their next steps, new knowledge and skills are celebrated, so children develop their metacognition and ability to see themselves as competent learners.

Families can access Learning Journals at home and key people will use the Spotlight assessment as an opportunity to consult with families about their child's learning, developing effective partnership working.

Pupil progress meetings are held through the year, where the SLT and key person discuss each child's progress and attainment. Gaps for individual children, vulnerable groups and cohorts of children are identified so the curriculum can be planned and sequenced to meet those learning needs.

We use the Leuven Scales of Well Being and Involvement to track children's wellbeing and involvement at the beginning of each term. This enables us to identify those children who may need additional support and intervention to develop their wellbeing and ability to focus.

The TROLL assessment (Teacher Rating of Oral Language and Literacy) is also used at the same points in the year each child has their Hanen conversational style identified. This identifies children who are vulnerable in their language development so we can provide language support, interventions and referral on to specialist agencies as appropriate. It also identifies which aspects of language development are weakest so we can develop our provision in response.

### **Progress Check Aged 2**

This is a statutory assessment we must 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. With permission this is shared with

our local children's centre. 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 [SENCO] or health professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists). Key people 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). During the pandemic, we are asking families in to the school instead, for this important "getting to know you" opportunity. 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 operates 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. Again, during the pandemic we have had to adapt these meetings and hold them online via Zoom. We do everything we can to support our families in their understanding of this stage of education, empowering them to help their children. The Learning Journals platform is a valuable tool in helping families to see what their child is getting up to and for staff to see what families are doing at home.

## **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 children have parents who have little or no spoken English. We encourage families to help their children develop proficiency 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 has helped 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 and SEND**

We welcome all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties or disabilities, gender or ability. We believe that all children, 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. We have processes in place that help us identify when children are not making the expected progress and may have SEND. Please see the [SEND policy](#) for more detail on our philosophy and approach to children with SEND.