



Wheatlands Primary School

Early Years Policy 2024

At Wheatlands Primary we follow the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (September 2023) Within this framework there are four guiding principles which shape our practice.

These are:

1. **Every child is a unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured.
2. Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
3. Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments** with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
4. Children **develop and learn 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 (SEND).

EYFS learning and development requirements

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the latest version of the EYFS statutory framework that applies from September 2023.

The EYFS framework encompasses seven areas of learning and development that are equally important and interconnected. However, 3 areas known as the **prime areas** are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social, and emotional development.

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics

- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Throughout their time in the Reception Year, our children partake in an ambitious curriculum that is designed in a sequential way to ensure progress towards the end of reception goals. These goals are defined as Early Learning Goals (ELGs). The descriptors for these can be found in the appendix.

As previously outlined our curriculum incorporates learning through play, learning by adults modelling, by observing each other and through guided learning and direct teaching. It is also important to highlight that our plans are flexible to allow us to respond quickly to children's new interests and/or needs.

Weaving throughout the EYFS curriculum at Wheatlands are three **Characteristics of Effective 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

These elements underpin how we reflect on each child's development and adjust our practice accordingly. Supporting children in their individual learning behaviour and observing the context of children's play is essential.

'What children learn is important, but how children learn is even more important if they are to become learners in today's society.'

How Children Learn, Nancy Stewart (2011)

A Unique Child

At Wheatlands Primary School we recognise that every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from practitioners; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration assemblies and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning. Nursery and Reception children earn house points for their hard work, good behaviour and positive attitudes. House points are collected and counted weekly, this allows the children to work towards a shared goal and feel a sense of involvement with the wider school community. In Reception, the children also take part in a weekly whole school 'Good Work' assembly where certificates are handed out each week for a specific learning focus.

Inclusion

At Wheatlands Primary School we value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of differences. All children are treated fairly, regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school.

We give children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the EYFS we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who

are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children’s knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children’s learning needs;
- Making sure our provision and topics are based on children’s current interests and fascinations.
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- Working in small groups to ensure all children can access learning.
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- Monitoring children’s progress and acting to provide support as necessary.
- Using structured conversations to set realistic targets alongside the children’s parents.
- Providing opportunities to explore different cultures, customs and lifestyles.
- Sharing a home learning platform with families which allows parents/carers to keep up to date with what is happening in the classroom and also provides suggestions of practical activities the children can try at home to further enhance their learning;
- Assigning each child a key person in Nursery to ensure every child’s individual needs are catered for.

Welfare

It is important to us that all children in the school are safe. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. (See Child Protection Policy)

“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.”

(Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2023)

We understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2023. We understand we are required to:

- Promote the welfare of children.
- Promote good health, good hygiene and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children’s stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure staffing arrangements are organised to ensure safety and to meet the needs of the children.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Ensure visitors and parent helpers wear appropriate ID badges.
- Ensure outdoor and indoor spaces, furniture, equipment and toys, are safe and suitable for their purpose.

- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

We endeavour to meet all these requirements through:

- Using the school's Child Protection Policy;
- Having secure premises;
- Using the school's SEND policy;
- Ensuring that all necessary paediatric first aid qualifications are up to date.
- Providing children with fresh drinking water and a healthy snack;
- Ensuring our premises are smoke free;
- Using the school's behaviour policy;
- Having anyone who works directly with children DBS checked;
- Following the staff to child ratios set out in the statutory framework;
- Carrying out a risk assessment each year and whenever necessary;
- Planning to meet children's needs;
- Keeping up to date records of children in our setting;
- Following the school's Educational Visits Policy.
- Using the school's Intimate Care Policy.

Positive Relationships

At Wheatlands Primary School we recognise that children learn to be strong, confident and independent from being in secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents/carers have played, and their future role, in educating their children. We do this through:

- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school.
- Offering both parents and children the opportunity to spend time in the Nursery before starting school.
- Providing sessions for parents/carers before beginning Reception;
- Operating an open-door policy for parents with any queries.
- Offering parental consultations each term at which the teacher and the parent/carer discuss the child's progress and where parents can view their child's workbooks.
- Using structured conversations to set meaningful targets for the children in partnership with parents/carers
- Providing Reception parents/carers with a written report on their child's attainment at the end of each academic year;
- Facilitating a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents/carers: parental engagement sessions, seasonal performances (Reception children), sports day and workshops to support parents when helping their child at home;

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. At our school the children are all linked to a 'Key Person' in Nursery who helps ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs. The

'Key Person' helps the child become familiar with the setting, offers a settled relationship for the child within a Nurture Group and builds positive relationships with parents and carers. It is the Nursery teacher's responsibility to support all teaching assistants in their role as a 'Key Person' and ensure that every child's learning and care is tailored to their needs.

Professionals as Partners

At Wheatlands Primary School we recognise the importance of working closely alongside other professionals in order to fully support our children and their families from birth.

We do this through:

- Working closely with professionals from Inclusion Support, Speech and Language, School Nurse and Health Visitors to fully meet the additional needs of our children.

Enabling Environments

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable enhancements, activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

The Foundation Stage classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. Equipment is clearly labelled and accessible to children. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The classrooms are set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. Careful thought goes into the resources available within continuous provision and enhancements to ensure that children are challenged within their child-led play at each stage of their learning and development.

The Foundation Stage has its own outdoor areas which Nursery children can access on a free-flow basis. The Reception children also have access their own outdoor area on a timetabled session with an adult. The Reception children also have the opportunity to play on the school playground during lunchtimes and can use of the climbing equipment on occasions throughout the week for additional gross motor development.

Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that help the children to develop in all 7 areas of learning.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

At Wheatland's ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Foundation Stage staff use observations as the basis for planning. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. Staff also consider observations shared by parents and/or carers on Seesaw. Our knowledge of the children and their current level of achievement, interest and learning styles then lead the direction of the planning. The staff use the children's interests, alongside seasonal change and celebrations, to plan for authentic learning experiences through a variety of themes. All EYFS staff have access to iPads and record observations which contribute to the children's termly data. Planning and Progress meetings are held regularly to discuss where children may have gaps in their learning and how to suit planning to the needs of individual children.

In addition to this, the children lead the short-term activity planning on a day-to-day basis. This fostering of the children's interests develops a high level of motivation for the children's learning. At times planning may be added to or edited in retrospect to meet the requirement of individual children, particularly during child-initiated activities.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child starts reception, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Development Matters document which work towards the Early Learning Goals as set out in the statutory guidance. We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information, alongside Galileo Trust Checkpoint documents, to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations. At the end of the EYFS, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child.

The profile is moderated internally (referring to the Development Matters guidance and agreed Trust Checkpoint documentation) and in partnership with other Galileo schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.

Learning and Development

We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are inter connected.

Play

“Children learn as they play. Most importantly, in play children learn how to learn.”

O. Fred Donaldson, Ph.D., play researcher

Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations. Our timetable ensures that there is a balance of child-initiated and adult led play-based activities.

“Play provides the natural, imaginative and motivating contexts for children to learn about themselves, one another and the world around them. A single moment of sustained play can afford children many developmental experiences at once, covering multiple areas of learning and reinforcing the characteristics of effective learning.”

(Teaching and play in the early years – a balancing act 2015.)

Active Learning

“Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.”

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfactions as they take ownership of their learning.

Creativity and Critical Thinking

“When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.”

Children should be given opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults can support children’s thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

Fundamental British Values in the Early Years

Fundamental British values are embedded within our everyday practice in EYFS through our daily routines and planned purposeful play activities.

Democracy

As part of our work to support our children’s Personal, Social and Emotional development, we plan many opportunities for turn taking, sharing and collaboration. In our Nurture groups or classes, we have regular discussions where we encourage the children to listen to each other’s ideas and where everyone’s input and questions are valued.

We encourage the children to share their feelings and staff support the children in their play to accept and value the views of others and know that their views count.

Rule of Law

A large part of our work in EYFS involves supporting the children to understand their own and other’s behaviour and its consequences and learn to develop right from wrong. We work alongside the children to create rules and codes of behaviour and ensure that children understand that rules apply to everyone e.g. our tidy up routines.

Individual Liberty

Supporting the children to develop a positive sense of themselves is central to our work in EYFS. We organise activities and the learning environment in a way that helps the children develop their self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities. We allow children to make choices about their own learning and support them to take risks to develop their self-confidence and self-awareness and allow children to explore the language of responsibility.

Mutual Respect and Tolerance

In EYFS we carefully plan experiences and visits that support children in acquiring a tolerance, appreciation and respect of their own and other cultures. We believe it is vital that children are engaged with the wider community to develop respect and tolerance for others. For example church visits, library visits and visitors from the children’s own and other communities. We regularly discuss and learn about

the many different festivals and celebrations that occur through the year and look closely at the similarities and differences between these celebrations and the celebrations children take part in at home.

When working alongside the children, staff encourage and explain the importance of tolerant behaviours such as sharing and respecting each other's opinions. Staff are encouraged to promote diverse attitudes and challenge stereotypes through use of resources, planned activities and stories that value the diversity of children's experiences.

Admissions

We follow Redcar and Cleveland Local Authority's admissions policy for allocating places. We have places for 78 Nursery children on a part time basis. Admission to our Reception class must be applied for by completing the Local Authority's application form.

Role of Governors

Governors determine, support, monitor and review school policies. They support the use of appropriate teaching strategies by allocating resources effectively. They ensure that the building and equipment is safe. They monitor pupil attainment across the school and ensure that staff development and performance management ensure good quality teaching.

Evaluation and Review

Written: June 2022

Reviewed September 2024

Next review: September 2025

Appendix 1

The Early Learning Goals (2021)

Communication and Language

ELG: Listening, Attention and Understanding

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions
- Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding
- Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.

ELG: Speaking

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary;
- Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate;
- Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

ELG: Self-Regulation

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly
- Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate
- Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.

ELG: Managing Self

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge;
- Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly;
- Manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet and understanding the importance of healthy food choices.

ELG: Building Relationships

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others
- Form positive attachments to adults and friendships with peers
- Show sensitivity to their own and to others' needs.

Physical Development

ELG: Gross Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Negotiate space and obstacles safely, with consideration for themselves and others;
- Demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing;
- Move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping and climbing.

ELG: Fine Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases
- Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paintbrushes and cutlery
- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

Literacy

ELG: Comprehension

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary
- Anticipate – where appropriate – key events in stories
- Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role-play.

ELG: Word Reading

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs
- Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending
- Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.

ELG: Writing

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed;
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

Mathematics

ELG: Number

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Have a deep understanding of number to 10, including the composition of each number;

- Subitise (recognise quantities without counting) up to 5;
- Automatically recall (without reference to rhymes, counting or other aids) number bonds up to 5 (including subtraction facts) and some number bonds to 10, including double facts.

ELG: Numerical Patterns

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Verbally count beyond 20, recognising the pattern of the counting system;
- Compare quantities up to 10 in different contexts, recognising when one quantity is greater than, less than or the same as the other quantity
- Explore and represent patterns within numbers up to 10, including evens and odds, double facts and how quantities can be distributed equally.

Understanding the World

ELG: Past and Present

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society
- Know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- Understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling.

ELG: People, Culture and Communities

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps;
- Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, non-fiction texts and – when appropriate – maps.

ELG: The Natural World

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants;
- Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter.

Expressive Arts and Design

ELG: Creating with Materials

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function;
- Share their creations, explaining the process they have used;

- Make use of props and materials when role playing characters in narratives and stories.

ELG: Being Imaginative and Expressive

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher;
- Sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs; Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and – when appropriate – try to move in time with music.