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| Early Years Policy |
| Policy Number: |
| Date of Issue: Spring Term 2022 |
| Review Date: Summer Term 2025 |

Fellside Community Primary School

We provide an inspiring, caring environment in which we are all challenged and supported to maximise our potential

Fellside Community Primary School

Early Years Policy

Mission Statement

Ensuring every member of our school community is inspired to fulfil their potential and is successfully prepared for their future.

Fellside Learning Values

In the autumn term 2015, staff agreed on a set of principles that we seek to promote to further develop Fellside children's understanding of the characteristics of effective learning. We aim, over time, to ensure children are better equipped to accurately assess themselves as learners and set pertinent goals for self-improvement.

These values underpin both our curriculum and our ethos, and they are central to the tenets of daily life at our school.

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| Curiosity | We aim for children to show curiosity in their learning; to ask questions and take risks. |
| Commitment | We encourage children to give 100% effort and to be prepared to practise. |
| Confidence | We want Fellside children to be brave in their learning; to be excited to try new things. |
| Creativity | Using imagination; pushing boundaries; suggesting new ideas and being resourceful – all part of daily life at Fellside. |
| Collaboration | We encourage tolerance, working together as a team and asking for and offering help. |
| Challenge | Learning from mistakes and sometimes finding things difficult is all part of being a learner. |
| Change | Acceptance of helpful criticism so we can learn from it and ensure that we keep improving. |

Colloquially, we refer to these values as 'The Seven Cs'

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to describe the philosophy which underpins the Early Years provision in our school and how it is planned and delivered. It is intended to act as a reference point and to inform teachers, parents, governors, LEA officers, inspectors and other interested parties who have right of access.

Rationale

At Fellside Community Primary School we strive to ensure all children have developed high level of skill across all areas of learning which equip them appropriately for the rest of their school life. We ensure that our children experience a broad curriculum with a good balance of adult led and child-initiated activities to ensure the best outcomes for all pupils. The characteristics of effective learning are at the heart of our Early Years. They highlight the importance of playing and exploring, active learning and thinking critically. We strive to provide experiences and opportunities which allow children to develop and master these skills.

Curriculum Intent in the Early Years

At Fellside, the EYFS curriculum is designed to encourage independent, inquisitive and happy learners. We recognise children's prior learning and starting points, and create a holistic curriculum that capitalises on real-life experiences and builds strong foundations for their future. Our Early Years foundation stage curriculum is specifically designed to provide children with important foundational skills and knowledge that will later be enhanced and embedded in Key Stage 1 and beyond. Every child is recognised as a unique individual. We acknowledge and promote children's interests to provide them with the opportunities to follow their imagination and creativity and their curiosity for the natural world around them through a careful balance of adult-led and child-initiated teaching and learning. In Reception, our 7Cs Learning Values and our Character Compass are also introduced and we invest time into helping children to recognise their personal goals and aspirations for themselves and for their learning. The characteristics of effective learning in the EYFS thread through all areas of learning and are a fundamental part of children's development at Fellside. As such, our curriculum is designed to provoke motivation, engagement, making links to learning and problem solving.

Aims

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage states that 'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.'

At Fellside Community Primary School, our central aim in Early Years is for our pupils to develop a positive foundation for life-long learning. We achieve this by promoting and supporting the four key principles in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework, as follows:

Unique Child

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

Positive Relationships

Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.

Enabling Environments

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.

Learning and Development

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).

To achieve these principles at Fellside, we

- Endeavour to ensure that all children and their families feel safe, valued, included and respected.
- Promote parents as partners in their child's learning.
- Help children to feel secure and develop relationships with a key-person.
- Promote a safe, yet challenging, rich and varied indoor and outdoor learning environment.
- Provide children with the opportunities to play, to engage in active learning and to think creatively and critically.
- Ensure that all seven curriculum areas of the EYFS Statutory Framework are given coverage and that planning is based on the interests of children.

Equal Opportunities

This policy operates in-line with our Equal Opportunities Policy.

In the Early Years, we are committed to providing effective learning opportunities for all pupils. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls; children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND); children who are more able and children from all differing social and cultural backgrounds, including those of different ethnic groups and diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Meeting the needs of all children and providing equality of opportunity is achieved 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.
- Providing a wide-range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them learn effectively.
- 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 taking action to provide support where necessary
- Providing opportunities to explore different cultures, customs and lifestyles.

Safeguarding

'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.' (EYFS Statutory Framework – September 2021)

We are fully committed to our legal obligation to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the EYFS Statutory Framework. These include the following outcomes:

- Promoting the welfare of children
- Promoting good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill
- Managing behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs
- Ensuring all adults who look after children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so
- Ensuring that the premises, furniture and equipment are safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensuring that every child received enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs
- Identifying children who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and taking appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe both at home and in our setting
- Maintaining records, policies and procedures required for safe, efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children

Keeping Safe

It is of vital importance 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. We encourage children to take risks and highlight the importance of keeping themselves safe by teaching them how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children.

Intimate Care and other Safeguarding Measures

Intimate care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children are able to carry out themselves. Depending on a child's age and stage of development, they may require some support (for example dressing, assistance whilst using the toilet and changing underwear following toileting accidents). Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child.

In addition, we seek to provide the highest levels of safeguarding requirements in the following ways:

- Having at least one paediatric first-aider
- Providing children with fresh drinking water, milk (in Nursery) and fresh fruit/healthy snacks
- Following statutory staffing ratios set out in the EYFS Statutory Framework
- Following school policies in relation to child protection, SEND, behaviour, educational visits and e-safety
- Maintaining accurate and up-to-date records on children, including written permission from parents concerning who may collect their child from school/nursery at the end of the session/school day.
- Ensuring all visitors to Fellside respect our smoke-free environment
- Ensuring the security of the environment through observation and regularly reviewed risk assessments

Curriculum Implementation

Pupils learn through a balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities and challenges. The weekly timetables are carefully structured so that children have opportunities for rigorous directed teaching, including in mathematics and phonics every day. Children are also provided with opportunities to explore, be challenged and engage with the provision that is available to them in the indoor and outdoor classrooms, both which are set up to support development of all aspects of the EYFS curriculum. Half-termly topics, broad themes that are progressive across Nursery and Reception classes, capitalise on the resources available on site and within the immediate locality. Topics such as 'Me and My World' and 'Growth and Change', for example are designed with enough flexibility to be able to capitalise on children's interests, and they (and our other topics) afford many opportunities to

promote development of relationships; communication and language; and gross/fine motor skills.

Attaining skill in early reading and phonics is at the heart of our curriculum. Children follow a highly engaging synthetic systematic phonics programme (Little Wandle for Letters and Sounds) to support them in meeting strong outcomes in reading with the expectation that almost all children will then go on to pass the Year One phonics screening check. Ours is a rigorous and sequential approach aimed at promoting the foundations for fluency and comprehension. A raft of high-quality texts (including poetry and songs) has been carefully selected to integrate our 'reading for pleasure' agenda. High quality guided reading sessions in Reception class is enhanced further by provision of fully decodable phonics reading books for use as home readers.

We promote a mastery approach in mathematics in Reception with an emphasis on acquisition of key skills in number, calculation, shape, space and measure so that pupils develop deep understanding alongside demonstrating understanding of mathematical language. Pupils learn through games and tasks using concrete manipulatives which are then rehearsed and applied to their own learning during exploration and in adult directed activities. These collaborative and practical mathematical experiences are carefully designed to help pupils remember the content they have been taught and to support them with integrating their new knowledge across the breadth of their experiences and into larger concepts. Teaching mathematics in such a kinaesthetic, practical way supports children in their latent skill in problem solving, able to demonstrate resilience and justification when learning. This approach ensures children are well prepared for their learning journey through Key Stage 1 and beyond.

Our inclusive approach means that all children learn together, however we also use a range of additional interventions to support the learning of children who may not be reaching their potential, or to move children who are experiencing difficulties to make progress. 'Keep up' phonics sessions, additional guided reading sessions, support in handwriting and 1:1 sessions to address misconceptions in mathematics are examples of typical interventions that are a feature of our curriculum implementation.

The Learning Environment

Both our Nursery and Reception classrooms permit children to explore and learn in a safe and secure way. Both rooms are clearly organised into distinctive learning areas where children are able to access equipment and resources independently. Nursery and Reception children have the opportunity to move between their classroom and the outdoor area regularly and on a daily basis. Being outdoors enables the children to approach their learning in different ways and often on a different scale to when indoors. At Fellside, we also benefit from a covered soft-play area where both Nursery and Reception children can access various opportunities to engage in gross motor development activities, as well as music and role-play and large scale mark-making on our chalk-wall – all during inclement weather.

Organisation and Management of Learning in Early Years

Within Early Years, the daily routine for teaching and learning consists of small group activities, whole class learning and independent choosing time. In the latter, children make choices about activities to engage with, recognising that learning is a social, interactive process. There is a balance of adult-led, adult-initiated and child-initiated activities, delivered through indoor and outdoor play. As children progress to Reception class, adult-led activities incorporate increasingly structured literacy and mathematics work which is planned according to the needs of the children. Our 'plan, do and review' process affords children the opportunity to reflect on how their plans have come to fruition; to work with others; and to accomplish their goals. In so doing, their play becomes more purposeful and focused.

Planning Teaching and Learning

At Fellside, we are committed to planning around the needs, interests and assessment outcomes of the children.

- **Long Term Planning**

This provides a strong framework for working with our 3-5 year olds. We base our planning within the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum – a statutory document which details the range of experiences and learning opportunities to which children are entitled. Using the *Birth to 5 Matters* (2021) guidance materials (non-statutory), we deliver the curriculum through a range of broad topics, each incorporating children's interests. Our continuous provision delivers the foundation for our long term plans. Of course, our curriculum incorporates references to seasonal change, cross-cultural celebrations and festivals and associated visits and visitors to add context, depth and to bring learning to life.

- **Medium Term Planning**

These cover a half-term's teaching and learning. Topics are planned carefully to ensure continuity and progression throughout Early Years, but also to enable staff to respond to children's interests.

- **Short Term Planning**

Reflection meetings take place daily. Children's interests and needs are discussed and next steps, learning objectives, adult-led activities, resources and enhancements to our continuous provision are identified. Planning is set out on weekly planning sheets with learning differentiated to suit groups of children accordingly.

Curriculum Impact

The impact of our Early Years curriculum is that we have bright, articulate, happy and well-rounded children who are well on their way to continuing their educational journey in Year 1 when they complete their Reception year. They have a secure understanding of mathematical and scientific concepts; they are on their way to achieving fluency when reading and possess a love of stories, songs and rhymes. Their learning is 'dovetailed' to that which awaits them in Year 1, thereby

providing a trajectory for consistent progress. Fellside children also learn to value the investment they make in friendships and they begin to embody our school values, reflect our aspirations for their future and for the next stage of their education.

Assessment and Record-Keeping

During the first term in Reception, the teacher assesses the ability of each child using a baseline assessment tool. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is the nationally employed assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the Foundation Stage, and to summarise their pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs in each of the 17 areas of the EYFSP.

Early Years staff make regular assessments of children's learning and use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Methods of observation include the following:

- Observational jottings, noting significant achievements of children
- Planned, focussed observations and analysis
- Photographic evidence

Observations are evaluated widely between Early Years staff to ensure that all adults benefit from knowing the emerging picture of children's learning and development.

The collection of assessment data against outcomes in the Foundation Stage Profile is a statutory requirement. The teacher keeps progress records and learning journals which record examples of each child's work. These progress books contain a wide range of evidence that we share with parents at each parental consultation meeting. We also use a digital platform ('Evidence Me') which supports efficient assessment and logging of observational outcomes of learning. This is also used effectively to communicate outcomes to parents (and them with us).

Tracking grids are updated three times annually: on entry; at the mid-year point; and at the end of the summer term. We use the broad development ranges in Birth to 5 Matters to chart development and progress in Early Years. These have been aligned to overlap with age-bands, but there is a clear emphasis on the fact that individual children develop at different rates.

At the end of the final term in Reception we send a summary of these assessments to the Local Authority and DfE for analysis. The child's next teacher uses this information to make plans for the year ahead. We share this information too at parental consultation meetings and in the end-of-year report.

Learning Journey Portfolios

Throughout each child's time in Nursery and Reception Class, a Learning Journey portfolio is created for them. Containing a collection of different documents – photographs, examples of mark-making, drawings, captions, observations and annotated notes – this book becomes a record of achievement, the aim of which is to build a unique picture of what a child knows, feels and can do well; their particular interests and their preferred learning style. In both Reception and Nursery classes, the Learning Journeys are readily accessible to children and are shared regularly with parents.

Within the final term of Reception Class, a written summary of children's key characteristics of learning and their level achievement measured against the Early Learning Goals is given to parents/carers. This data is, of course, shared with the Year 1 teacher so that he/she can devise relevant 'next steps' in learning and the school's Senior Leadership Team for the purposes of school self-evaluation and monitoring.

The Role of the Key Worker in Early Years

The member of staff in Early Years who has special responsibility for the education, development and welfare of a particular group of children is known as a 'key worker'. In our Nursery and Reception classes, the key worker is the class teacher, supported by the teaching assistants (TAs) and higher-level teaching assistants (HLTAs). However, in the interests of ensuring all staff focus on observations and assessments within smaller groups, classes are divided into two key worker groups, alternated half-termly.

At Fellside, we believe there are many beneficial aspects of a key worker relationship, including the following:

- Development of a secure, trusting relationship between staff and children and their parents.
- Interaction with children at a developmentally appropriate level
- Ease of communication between staff and parents/carers
- Settling new children into the setting with support and familiarity

The Role of Parents and Carers as Partners

Our aim is for parents to be partners with us in their children's learning and to be fully informed of their progress. Valuing their contribution, we actively seek to encourage and support parents and carers in guiding their child's development at home. We seek to provide an 'open door' policy, with staff available for liaison with parents and carers at the beginning or end of a school day/nursery session to address any queries, immediate needs or concerns. More formal arrangements for discussion are offered to parents through our parental consultation meetings, during which staff provide a detailed verbal report outlining children's progress, current targets and 'next steps' in learning.

At the end of each academic year, a written progress report is given to all parents/carers. As well as this, during their time in Early Years, parents will be invited to attend the following events:

- Welcome meeting for parents of new starters in Nursery/Reception
- Parent consultation meetings (in the autumn and spring terms)
- Class assemblies/Christmas productions
- Summer sports day
- Curriculum based workshops in support of home learning (e.g. mark making, early reading and phonics)
- Occasional 'open sessions' within the classroom

In addition, in order to strengthen home/school links, we see to provide further support:

- Offering 'drop in' sessions before each child starts Nursery and induction days prior to Reception class start
- Providing suggested home activities in Nursery and more formal homework in Reception
- Informing parents of curriculum topics, learning objectives and 'next steps' targets
- Providing children with a library book (in Nursery and Reception) and a reading book (in Reception), together with a home-school reading diary giving parents the opportunity to support their child's reading development.
- Welcoming parents as volunteer helpers in classes and to contribute to our 'Mystery Reader' sessions.

The Role of Professionals as Partners

At Fellside Community Primary School, we recognise the importance of building close working relationships with a variety of other professionals in order to fully support our children and their families. These may include the following:

- Working with health professionals (e.g. health visitors, school nurses etc.)
- Working with specialist support services (e.g. Early Years Assessment and Intervention Team, Speech and Language Therapy teams etc.)
- Liaison with feeder nursery schools/childminders
- Liaison with our wrap-around care provider, Fellside Fun Club

Transitions

We recognise that starting school or Nursery can be a difficult time for young children. Aiming to ensure children settle quickly to their new environment, we work hard to provide smooth transitions – from home to Nursery; Nursery to Reception Class; and Reception to Year 1.

A variety of planned activities and strategies are employed in support of transition as follows:

- Visits to other setting by Nursery and Reception staff
- Visits to the 'next class' (i.e. Nursery to Reception and Reception to year 1) to meet the teacher and gain familiarity with a new environment
- Staff joining children in their 'old' classroom (i.e. Year 1 teacher visiting children in Reception and Reception teacher visiting Nursery)
- Special days where Early Years children join together to work
- Employment of Year 6 'Buddies' to support children moving into Reception (particularly to support during lunchtime)
- Staggered start in September, building up to full time schooling in Reception and building up to five sessions in Nursery.
- Induction mornings/afternoons for Reception class pupils in the summer term before they commence school in September

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of those working in Nursery and Reception classes to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Head Teacher, Senior Leadership Team and Early Years Leader will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure its effectiveness and that it continues to meet the needs of children, staff, parents and governors.

Promotion of British Values

Observance of British Values is at the heart of everything we do in the Early Years.

- **Mutual Respect and Tolerance of Different Faiths and Beliefs**
We firmly believe in an ethos of inclusivity and tolerance where views, faiths, cultures and races are valued and children are fully engaged with the wider school community. We teach children to have an understanding of – and respect for – their own and other cultures; to explore the similarities and differences between traditions, practices and customs through sharing celebrations and experiences; we promote diversity and challenge to stereotyping and discrimination; and we encourage tolerance to ensure children respect one another's opinions and practise.
- **Democracy**
Democracy in the Early Years context involved decision-making, turn-taking and collaboration in children's play. We make sure that children know that their views count; that they value each other's opinions, and we provide opportunities for children to talk about their feelings. We encourage children to make choices together, for example by showing hands to choose an activity.
- **Individual Liberty**

To support understanding of the 'individual liberty' British Value, we encourage children to make choices; to develop independence and to think for themselves. In addition, we provide experiences to explore feelings and responsibility, encouraging children to voice their own opinions and listen to those of others.

- **The Rule of Law**

We support children in understanding their own behaviour and its impact on others; and to help them to understand right from wrong. We work with children to develop rules on promises about behaviour and to ensure that all children understand that rules apply to everyone. This might apply to creating a collective response to 'tidy-up time', for example. We reinforce these words using signs and symbols or even music. We encourage children to make the right choices to keep their setting a safe and happy place to learn.

Careers Related Learning

We know that even at the young age of three or four, children are already starting to form their first aspirations. By six they are starting to have opinions on what they think they can or can't do in the future. And by the time they're 10, young people start to make decisions which could go on to limit their future options. At Fellside Community Primary, we believe it is vital to provide children in the Early Years with knowledge about the world of work and to develop a range of skills and aspirations that will benefit their future learning and readiness for their future career.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of a three year cycle.