

FERNDALE PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL



Early Year's Policy

Ratified by Governing Body:
Reviewed Date: September 2023
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Early Years Policy

Vision (Intent)

At Ferndale Primary and Nursery School our curriculum is designed to encourage children to feel motivated to actively explore their environment, and work with others to build on their existing knowledge to create new ideas. Our curriculum provides children with the opportunities to build on their interpersonal and 'Oracy' skills, it helps them to build independence, learn important life skills, and develop learning behaviours to continue to feel confident in their own abilities and potential. We believe that our children are capable learners, so we encourage children to have agency over their own learning, helping guide us in what makes them curious and excited to learn. At Ferndale it is important to us that our curriculum is relevant to the children here and we recognise the range of backgrounds and cultures of the children at our school. Therefore, we take time getting to know our families at transition, at the very beginning and throughout the year to ensure we are providing an individualised curriculum that meets the needs and aspirations of all.

We believe in providing a play- based curriculum that provides stimulating and exciting activities that allow the children to develop socially, emotionally, physically, creatively, and intellectually. In Early years we believe in building a foundation of vital skills which will help children learn throughout their school journey. We encourage our children to be learning partners for each other, and to build knowledge and understanding from their wider environment through their joint exploration. We provide a range of opportunities to develop the language, vocabulary, writing and oracy experiences of our diverse community of children. We give children the opportunity to use their linguistic, cognitive, and social and emotional skills to ensure language enrichment is weaved throughout everything we do during lesson time and child-initiated activities. We give children first-hand experiences and provide opportunities for children to build real life skills while learning about the exciting topics that they have helped to develop. We believe that Early Years is the perfect environment to develop a love for learning and encourage children to use a positive attitude to preserve and strive to explore and understand the world around them.

Play & Exploration

Learning takes place through play-based activities, which are carefully planned and structured to create opportunities for children to develop in all areas of learning. We allow space for both planned and spontaneous play opportunities as we recognise the importance of children having a wide range of experiences. The characteristics of effective learning (Playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically) underpin our EYFS ethos and curriculum and inform the opportunities we create for our children. At Ferndale, children's learning is enhanced by a variety of indoor and outdoor learning opportunities. Through play, in a secure and stimulating environment, children can:

- develop and expand their language and engagement with peers and adults.
- explore, grow, and construct educational experiences that assist them in making sense of their surroundings.
- practise and experiment with concepts and learning behaviours
- learn school rules and social norms.

- learn independence, the value in co-operating with others and sharing experiences with others.
- be willing to take chances and accept that mistakes happen.
- use your imagination to create narratives
- practise interacting with others and navigating solving problems with peers,

Aims

At Ferndale Primary School we aim to:

- Ensure that every child has a happy and positive start to their academic career so they can build a strong foundation for a love of learning and progress socially, physically, cognitively, and emotionally.
- Ensure that all children receive the teaching, encouragement, and opportunities they need to reach the Early Learning Goals outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.
- Give children the knowledge and skills they need to meet the "expected" level of development in each of the seven areas covered by the 2021 EYFS curriculum and attain a Good Level of Development.
- Promote the growth of independence in a comfortable and secure environment.
- Support children in forming relationships by helping them acquire social skills like sharing and cooperation.
- Develop a love of learning and create lasting memories by providing real purposes for learning and supporting children to develop essential life skills.
- Provide real life, hands-on experiences and encourage children to take safe risks to develop their knowledge and understanding.
- Provide language enriched learning enabling children to understand and share their knowledge confidently.
- Celebrate the various characteristics that make each person unique and encourage mutual respect.
- Identify the learning needs of all children and make adaptations to support them appropriately
- Collaborate with parents to address each child different needs to help them realise their greatest potential and ensure that home and school work effectively together.
- Promote good at behaviour in all environments and situations.
- Encourage children to feel motivated, confident and in control of their learning.

Teaching and Learning (Implement)

At Ferndale, teachers follow the statutory framework for the Early Year Foundation Stage. There are 7 areas of learning and development that are inter-connected; 3 **prime areas** and 4 **specific areas**.

Alongside these, are the 'Characteristics of an Effective Learner' which 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

These characteristics are considered and developed when planning and guiding what children learn.

Prime areas

Communication and Language

- Listening, attention and understanding
- Speaking

The development of children’s spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Language is developed and built on through whole class sessions, story-telling, circle time, conversations, role play as well as being modelled throughout the day. Children are encouraged daily to engage actively with stories, rhymes and poems. Children are given extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of context. Teachers model a range of vocabulary and language structures and echo back what the children are saying with new vocabulary to extend children’s language effectively. Children are supported to develop their speaking and listening skills and are taught to listen to others. They are encouraged ask questions to find out more information.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

At Ferndale, children are provided with strong, warm and supportive relationships. Adults help children learn to understand and manage their own emotions and those of others around them. Through modelling and discussions, children are supported to resolve problems and to create good relationships with their peers. Through supported practise and positive feedback, children develop a positive self-image and self-esteem. With guidance and modelling, they learn how to take care of themselves; looking after their bodies and eat healthy. We support children to identify their own needs as well as the need of others.

Physical development

- Gross motor
- Fine motor

Physical activity is crucial to children’s development and helps them to become happy, healthy and active. At Ferndale, children are regularly encouraged to participate in physical activities both inside and outdoors, during focused PE sessions and through activities provided through continuous play or whole class teaching. Children are supported to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Fine motor skills are developed through playing with small world activities, puzzles and using small tools such as peg boards and threading beads. Children are encouraged to develop a tripod pencil grip and to print letters.

Specific Areas

Literacy

- Word reading
- Writing
- Comprehension

Children are encouraged to develop a love of reading through daily story times and through sharing, borrowing and discussing books. Through a range of reading opportunities, children are supported to develop their comprehension skills and their knowledge of print. Through discrete phonic sessions and individual reading, children learn how to recognise and blend phonemes to read words. Children take part in regular writing activities and are taught how to print letters.

Mathematics

- Number
- Numerical patterns

Children are taught to count, sort, match and make connections when working with numbers, shapes, space and measures. Through a broad range of every day contexts and practical activities, children develop their knowledge of number. Children are encouraged to make links and look for patterns and relationships.

Understanding of the World

- Past and Present
- People, cultures and communities
- The Natural World

Through discussions and a range of experiences such as visiting the forest, park and church and meeting important people including fire officers and police officers, children will develop their knowledge skills and understanding of the world around them. Children's cultural, social and technological understanding are developed through role-play, whole class teaching and through listening to stories. Through exploring and investigating, observing and questioning, children discover more about the world around them and are supported to acquire language and develop a broad vocabulary.

Expressive arts and design

- Creating with materials
- Being imaginative and expressive

At Ferndale, children's imagination and creativity is developed through art, music, dance, drama and role-play activities. Children are encouraged to share their own thought and feelings openly. Children are given regular opportunities to explore and play with a range of media and mediums to communicate and express themselves.

Planning

Teachers plan using the Early Years Foundation Stage framework following guidance from 'Development Matters'. Planning includes:

- Long term planning – This contains a breakdown of skills/knowledge to be taught and when (based on the cohorts needs)
- Medium term planning – Topic based planning, indicating learning to be taught over one term. This includes important dates such as festivals or special visits
- Weekly plans – These plans indicate what will be taught each day, the focus learning, continuous provision and enhanced provision for the week. This

planning takes into consideration children's next steps for learning and assessment for learning.

Teachers will meet on a weekly basis to plan appropriate activities based on the needs and interests of their children. Planning may be adapted to suit the needs and interests of individual classes.

Assessment

On-entry assessment

Prior to starting school or nursery we gather information about each child through discussions with parents and/or looking at records from pre-school or outside agencies. This helps us to gain an understanding of each child's current level of development prior to starting school.

A 'Blue Kite' assessment (2-year-old, Nursery or Reception assessment) will be completed for each child when they start at the school and is used to assess a range of areas of learning as well as identify next steps. In FS, each child is assessed using the 'Reception Baseline Assessment'. It is essential that a child's attainment is assessed initially upon starting school so we can build a clear picture of that child's current level of development and set appropriate targets to ensure that child make progress towards the Early Learning Goals.

Following these assessments, any children who are identified as being at risk of not meeting the expected level of development in a particular area are put into intervention groups to support their needs (these intervention groups change across the year in line with the identified needs of the children).

Ongoing assessments

Ongoing assessments are essential to ensure that children are reaching their full potential. A range of assessments are completed to support the children's development. These include:

- Planned observations: to allow children to demonstrate their knowledge and skills
- Incidental observations
- Adult led activities: either written (recorded in individual books) or practical (recorded in floor book where possible)
- Phonic assessments
- Writing assessments: moderate between classes and across the trust to ensure accurate assessment
- Next steps: planned opportunities to address individual children's next steps

Assessment for learning will be recorded in the floor book, recorded on record sheets or recorded in children's books.

Foundation Stage Profile

At the end of FS2, children's learning will be assessed against the Early Learning Goals using a range of information gathered across the year including the teacher's own knowledge. Children will be assessed as 'expected' if they have met all the Early Learning Goals or as 'emerging' if not yet confident in some of the areas. This information will be reported to parents and shared with year 1 teachers.

Tapestry.

At Ferndale, teachers and teaching assistants use an online learning journey called Tapestry. This allows them to observe and record children's achievements and progress throughout the academic year. Tapestry is also used to send photographs and videos to parents via email. This is a fantastic way to share achievements and for parents to be a part of their child's journey through their early years at Ferndale. Tapestry also allows parents to communicate with the early year's teachers about their child's achievements at home as they are able to download photographs or videos. (Any home communication is shared with the class teacher only or those teachers that manage the journal at school). At Ferndale, we are proud to work closely with parents as we believe that communication is paramount to a happy school career. Tapestry allows us to achieve this very important aspect.

The observations and achievements that are emailed home could include;

- Whole class- this informs parents of an activity that was undertaken by the whole class that the children have enjoyed. This could include a special event such as Harvest Festival, Christmas play or Sports Day.
- A group activity of individuals-this could be a child led activity or play that involves social interactions and special achievements.
- Individual- a child may make a comment or have been engaged in an activity that has been recorded to show their own individual achievements and progression.

Each observation that is emailed home will be initially labelled to correspond with the particular area of the Early Years Curriculum that it relates to. This allows parents to see what their child is learning at school and their progression. Assessment of each child is 'in the moment' allows the teachers to plan future activities that will further their progression.

Parental Links

It is essential that we work closely with parents. Parents are the child's first educators and know and understand their child. When working with parents, we ensure that:

- All adults within the school, show an understanding of the parent's role within the child's life and maintain respect whilst working with all.
- Provide school visits allowing parents to share and exchange information about their child. These are advertised through letters home and Tapestry in a

timely manner so parents are able to access all relevant information regarding their child.

- Listen to parents regarding their child and act on key information.
- Parent meetings are held twice yearly where parents are able to discuss their child's progress with the class teacher. All parent meetings information is sent home via email and Tapestry.
- 'WOW' cards are available for parents to fill in to show a wonderful achievement that their child has achieved at home. This is displayed for all to see.
- Tapestry is utilised by all to record learning and achievements and to provide home communication.
- Meetings with the class teacher, SLT and SENDCo can be arranged to discuss any concerns.
- A reading record is sent home and dedicated to each child's individualised reading abilities. This record can be used to write short communications from home which can be acted upon. (Excluding Nursery and Pre-School.)

Tapestry is the main form of communication used within the early years to relay information regarding important dates, achievements, progress etc, although, communication in person by the parent is always advised if the matter requires prompt teacher attention.

Links with our local community.

Ferndale has a strong link with the local community and this starts from the early years of a child's education. There are opportunities for children to participate in whole school assemblies hosted by our local church. Also, during Christian festivals, children are invited to attend Ferndale's local church (All Saint's) and celebrate within their key stages. Local walks to explore the community are also available to give children a greater understanding of the area that their school is in and its rich history. Visitors to the school have included the police, nursing and medical staff. We support these visits as we believe that first-hand experiences are crucial to children's development.

Transition

Pre-School to FS.

Ferndale is fortunate to have a Nursery (2-year-old room) and a Pre-School (3-year-old room) on site. Because of this, we work closely with Foundation Stage (FS2) and incorporate the FS curriculum and learning into our Nursery setting. This allows the children to already have an understanding of the school expectations/routines and learning criteria.

Ferndale has a strong belief that happy and settled children thrive in a primary setting and understand that transitions into higher key stages need structure, support and care. With this in mind, we communicate as an early year's team (Nursery, Pre-School and FS2) ensuring that transitions are enjoyable and run smoothly for children.

The children who attend Ferndale nursery and Pre-School have numerous opportunities to visit the Primary School. These include, library trips, assemblies, walks around the school, trips to FS2 classrooms and the use of the school

playgrounds, utilising the adventure zone and trim trails. As the children become more familiar with the school setting, they are able to visualise their new classroom, teachers and surrounding areas with little or no concerns.

Prior to each new academic year, open days are available for prospective parents and children to attend to view the new classrooms and meet with the teachers and teaching assistants. This is also available to parents wishing to view the Nursery and Pre-School. FS2 teachers integrate themselves with the nursery children, giving a sense of familiarity for both teacher and child. Often, the teacher(s) will visit the nursery room and read to the children or plan a fun activity that will allow a sense of getting to know each other and again, familiarity. This also allows the FS2 teacher(s) to observe each child in the setting ready for transition into FS2.

Home visits are offered to families before starting Nursery, Pre-School and/or FS2. Information packs are also available which detail school expectations and the general routine of the class children will be attending. This allows parents to have all information before term starts so they are able to ask questions in readiness of their child beginning their early education at Ferndale.

Initially, children will attend FS2 on a staggered basis prior to attending full time. This is usually in groups of 10-12 children. This allows children to spend time with their teachers and support is available to make the transition fun and appealing. The transition dates will be sent via email to each parent. Previous to this, an invite will be sent to the parent and child so that the parent is able to see their child's new environment. At Ferndale, we find this advantageous as we want each parent to feel a part of their child's early education and be familiar with our setting and staff.

Transition from FS2 to KS1

During the summer term, teachers from year 1 (KS1) will begin to interact with their new class in FS2. These interactions are short visits that allow the children to become familiar with their new teacher. Classroom swaps also take place allowing children to become familiar with their classroom as well as their new teacher.

Before children from FS2 start their new year in year 1, the teachers, old and new, will meet to discuss each child using the school's transition document. They will discuss:

- Behavioural concerns
- Dietary requirements, allergies, vegetarian, vegan, halal
- Learning needs including learning plans
- EAL needs
- Phonic/maths and writing levels.
- Medical information/concerns.
- Interventions

Year 1 teachers will plan lessons accordingly, considering the transition discussions taken place and gaps in learning. This ensures that the transition into KS1 goes smoothly and each child feels settled, supported, safe and happy.

Appendix

- Foundation Stage Framework
- Early Learning Goals
- Development Matters
- Blue Kite Assessments
- Assessment Tracker