



EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS) POLICY

Introduction

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.'

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile - Department for Children, Schools and Families 2022

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. At Bewcastle Primary School children are admitted to reception in the September following their fourth birthday. Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Bewcastle Primary School we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development.

However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

Aims & Objectives

We aim to support all children to become independent and collaborative learners. We will provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential.

At Bewcastle Primary School, we will:

Provide a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging environment for learning and development for the children to experience as they begin their journey through school.

Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond and enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.

Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.

Develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children.

Provide a caring and inclusive learning environment which is sensitive to the requirements of the individual child including those who have additional needs.

The early-years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

It builds on what our children already know and can do;

It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;

It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;

It provides a rich and stimulating environment;

It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based on four elements:

1. A Unique Child
2. Positive Relationships
3. Enabling Environments
4. Learning and Development

A Unique Child

At Bewcastle Primary School we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning. Inclusion - We value the diversity of individuals within the school and believe that every child matters. All children at Bewcastle Primary School are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, religion or abilities. All families are valued within our school.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning.

At the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations aligned to the needs of our children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the stage. We do this 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;

Offering a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;

Employing resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;

Planning challenging activities to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able, of children with disabilities, of children from all social and cultural backgrounds, of children from different ethnic groups, and of those from diverse linguistic backgrounds;

Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary (such as referrals to speech therapy).

Working closely with parents, carers and other outside agencies to ensure all children's needs are met and we enable them to access the curriculum and make good progress.

Positive Relationships

At Bewcastle 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 being partners with them in their child's education through:

- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts school at our regular stay and play sessions.
- Arranging, where possible, visits by the teacher to all children in their childcare provision or home setting prior to their starting school.
- Providing a handbook of information about commencing Reception at Bewcastle.
- Outlining the school's expectations in the Home-School agreement.
- Inviting children to visit the EYFS Class before starting school.
- Providing where required an induction meeting for Reception parents/carers to meet with staff to discuss school routines, expectations and to answer any questions parents/carers may have.
- Holding a parent consultation early in the academic year to establish how a child is settling into the school environment.
- Operating an open-door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns. Conversely, if Foundation staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them.
- Written contact through weekly school newsletters.
- Publishing a weekly letter detailing the areas of learning and the overarching theme of the term or half-term and related home learning activities.
- Inviting parents (where required) to attend informal meetings about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics or reading.
- Sharing regularly the children's 'Learning Journey' with parents/carers and valuing the ongoing contributions to this from parents/carers.
- Offering two parent/teacher consultation meetings per year at which their child's progress is discussed.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in reception.
- Asking parents to sign a generic permission form for visits and photographs etc.
- Parents are invited to a range of activities throughout the school year such as assemblies, workshops, Christmas productions and sports day etc.
- Offering a range of activities, throughout the year, to encourage specific collaboration between child, school and parents

Enabling Environments

At Bewcastle Primary School we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development, where the children feel confident, secure and challenged. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision. Play-based learning is paramount and children have opportunities to direct their own learning with planned opportunities provided by staff.

We plan a learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning and reflects the individual's interests, passions and abilities. We use materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. We encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning. We ensure that resources and spaces are safe to use and checked regularly.

Learning and Developing

The EYFS Curriculum – Our curriculum for the Foundation Stage reflects the areas of learning identified in the Early Learning Goals.

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and interconnected. None of the areas of learning can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas.

They require a balance of adult led and child initiated activities in order for most children to reach the levels required at the end of EYFS. 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.

The 7 areas of learning are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Children's development levels are assessed and as the year progresses, the balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning, as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

1. Playing and exploring - children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.

'Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development.'

Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, 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.

2. Active learning - children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.

'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 some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

3. Creating and thinking critically - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

"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 the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children's thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning. An oracy approach is used to support and develop the children's learning.

Planning - The Early Learning Goals provide the basis for planning supported by the Cornerstones Curriculum throughout the Foundation Stage. Teachers use the national schemes of work, where appropriate, to support their planning for individual children. The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Development Matters Statements from the Early Years Foundation Stage document. The planning is based upon themes with discrete phonics, maths and reading directed teaching. However, planning, which is based upon a different topic each half term is identified as vehicle of interest to deliver the children's next steps in learning, also therefore responds to the needs, achievement and interest of the children. Our medium-term planning identifies the intended learning, with outcomes, for children working towards the Early Learning Goals,

and also for those working towards National Curriculum objectives. This also links into the Cornerstones Curriculum approach used in the rest of the school.

Observations - 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. These observations then lead the direction of the planning. Relevant and significant observations are recorded in the children's Learning Journeys.

Assessment - During the first term in Reception, the teacher assesses the ability of each child using a baseline test. 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 Foundation Stage Profile 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.

At the end of their year in the Reception the class teacher assesses each child's level of development against the 17 early Learning goals as Emerging or Expected. We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs and the children's interests.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, photographic evidence and through planned activities. Assessment is completed regularly and involves both the teacher and other adults, as appropriate. The collection of assessment data in the Foundation Stage Profile is a statutory requirement. The teacher keeps progress records and learning journals and class displays and records 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.

Tracking grids are updated at the end of each term. This provides a summary sheet for each child which feeds into the whole-school assessment and tracking process. We record each child's level of development to be just working towards, comfortably working within or securely working within the Development Matters age-bands.

Parents receive an annual written report that offers brief comments on each child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs, and gives details of the child's general progress. These are sent to parents in July each year.

The Learning Environment -The Foundation Stage classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are specific areas where the children can be active, be quiet, creative etc.

Children have access to both inside and outside area across the day; this has a positive effect on the children's development. The Foundation Stage has its own outdoor area and has shared use of the school's outdoor area. We also regularly attend Forest Schools. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and in different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. All areas of the curriculum can be explored outside.

Teaching & Learning Styles

The features of effective teaching and learning in our school are defined in our policy on teaching and learning. They apply to teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage just as much as they do to the teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 or 2.

The more general features of good practice in our school that relate to the Foundation Stage are:

- the partnership between teachers and parents, carers and other settings that helps our children to feel secure at school, and to develop a sense of well-being and achievement
- the understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this must be reflected in their teaching;
- the range of approaches that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions, and extend and develop the children's play, talk or other means of communication
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage;
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests, and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities
- the encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management;
- the support for learning, with appropriate and accessible space, facilities and equipment, both indoors and outdoors;
- the identification, through observations, of children's progress and future learning needs, which are regularly shared with parents;
- the good relationships between our school and the other educational settings in which the children have been learning before joining our school;

- the clear aims of our work, and the regular monitoring of our work to evaluate and improve it; the regular identification of training needs for all adults working at the Foundation Stage.

Transition

Starting school can be a difficult time for young children; we therefore plan this time carefully to support children with the transition and to ensure it is as smooth as possible for each child and that they settle in to their new class quickly and happily.

New class sessions - The children are given opportunities to come in to school to meet their new class teacher and other children in their class. They will spend a morning or a full day if appropriate in their new class. Parents can leave their child during this session but the school also offers “Stay and Play” sessions where parents are welcome to stay.

This means that before they join their new class the Reception environment is already a familiar place to them.

Arrangements are also made for the children’s new class teacher to visit them in their current nursery setting.

Starting in Key Stage 1 (Year 1) - Throughout the Reception year, each child’s involvement in whole school life will have been built upon; many of the teaching and support staff will already be familiar people to them. They will have taken part in Key Stage and whole school assemblies as well as sharing playtimes with the whole school.

Safeguarding & Welfare

‘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 EYFS 2014)

At Bewcastle Primary School, we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2022. Our aim is to:

- To provide a setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence and good health is promoted.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children’s stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure that all adults who look after the children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so.
- Ensure that the setting, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for.

Maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Keeping Safe - 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. 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. (See Bewcastle's Child Protection Policy and Appendix 1 – Changes to EYFS Framework September 2025).

Good Health - All children are provided with a healthy snack each day. They have access to water at all times. (EYFS Nutrition Guidance - September 2025 to be followed)

Intimate Care - "Intimate" care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children are able to carry out themselves. However, depending on a child's age and stage of development, they may need some support, for example dressing, wiping their bottom after using the toilet and changing underwear following an accident.

Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and we will ensure that the school's Intimate Care and Toileting Procedures Policy is followed at all times.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of those working in EYFS to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Headteacher will carry out monitoring in the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

Signed: 

Date: 8th December 2025

Review: December 2026

Appendix 1 – Changes to EYFS Framework September 2025

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework must be followed by all early years providers. The framework sets the standards that providers must meet. This ensures that all children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. These changes from September 2025 are to improve safeguarding in the EYFS.

1. To promote safer recruitment, providers must obtain references for prospective staff and there are rules about which references are acceptable. Providers are expected to supply references too. Safeguarding policies must include procedures to help ensure that only suitable individuals are recruited.
2. Providers must follow up on absences if a child is away for a prolonged period or without notification from parents/carers. There should be an attendance policy and, where possible, providers should ensure that they hold additional emergency contact details.
3. Details of children's food requirements, including allergies and intolerances, must be gathered and shared with all relevant staff. Children must be seated safely when eating within sight and hearing of an adult. At least one adult in the room must hold a PFA (paediatric first-aid) certificate. Where possible, staff should sit facing children to prevent incidents (including choking) and to be aware of unexpected allergic reactions. There must be ongoing discussion with parents/ carers about weaning and food provided to match each child's developmental needs. Providers must also have regard for the government's 2025 EYFS nutrition guidance.
4. There are clear criteria for safeguarding training and a setting's safeguarding policies must record details of how safeguarding training is delivered. This will include how practitioners are supported to put the training into place.
5. Early years students and trainees must have paediatric first-aid (PFA) training for them to be included in ratios at the level below their level of study.
6. There is new support for whistle-blowers who raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and providers must have a whistleblowing policy.
7. Children's privacy during nappy changing and toileting must be considered and balanced with considerations for safeguarding.