



## Curriculum policy

### Vision statement

*To work together in partnership to make a real and lasting difference to the lives, learning and opportunities of all young children and their families.*

### Rationale

Ofsted define a curriculum as:

*'a framework for setting out the aims of a programme of education, including the knowledge and skills to be gained at each stage (intent); for translating that framework over time into a structure and narrative, within an institutional context (implementation); and for evaluating what knowledge and understanding children have gained against expectations (impact). The curriculum lies at the heart of education. It determines what learners will know and be able to go on to do by the time they have finished that stage of their education.'*

['Education inspection framework: overview of research'](#), Ofsted, January 2019

At Whitegate we have identified and used the cultural capital of our community to help design a curriculum which takes into account children's starting points and provides opportunity for rapid progress through skilful teaching in an environment rich in playful opportunities both indoors and out. Our curriculum follows a progression model providing opportunities for children to know and understand more and to do more. The curriculum has been planned and sequenced to support children to consolidate and build upon their knowledge through activities which attract, interest and stimulate them. The skill of the Early Years teachers and practitioners at Whitegate is to observe, recognise and utilise every opportunity for learning through a range of pedagogical strategies.



- I am curious and love to explore
- I am motivated and engaged
- I feel secure because I believe I can
- I am willing to 'have a go' and can persevere
- I am creative and use my imagination
- I am exploring my emotions and learning about other people

The characteristics of effective learning are a golden thread which flows through our curriculum.

- Playing and exploring
- Active learning
- Creating and thinking critically

## **Vision for the curriculum**

Our curriculum has been designed around our knowledge of child development. We understand what knowledge and skills children would typically develop at different ages. We have high aspirations for our children and our curriculum planning aims to teach our children these skills and this knowledge in ways which are accessible to them.

The Statutory Early Years Foundation Stage has guided our curriculum design. We focus on the Prime areas: Personal, social and emotional development (PSED), communication and language (C&L) and physical development (PD) throughout the school and centre but with particular emphasis for our younger children. We also ensure that our curriculum covers literacy (reading and writing), mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design. These are the essential building blocks for subjects that the children will study within their Primary and Secondary education.

The programmes of study identify what must be covered in each area. Our curriculum has identified the sequence of learning of knowledge and skills within these.

## **Our Cultural Capital**

Ofsted define cultural capital as:

*'the essential knowledge that children need to prepare them for their future success'*

['Early years inspection handbook'](#), Ofsted, July 2022

At Whitegate we have designed our curriculum to meet the varying needs of our school community. Whitegate serves a unique community; a significant proportion of the school is from the local area and within the top 30% of deprivation; however due to the onsite daycare there are also a significant proportion of children from working families who have needed childcare from their child being a baby. The school consistently receives approximately 45% early years pupil premium funding (EYPP) but also approximately 30% extended (30) hours.

Our curriculum has a strong focus on the Prime areas to promote rapid development within PSED and C&L. Our curriculum, however, is broad and balanced to incorporate the Specific areas to introduce new and inspiring knowledge and skills and encourage children to explore and learn together and from one another.

## **Starting points**

The majority of children joining our school aged 2 (with FEE2 funding from the Government) are not meeting expected levels for their age, most notably in

communication and language and personal, social and emotional development. Their independence and self-care skills are often delayed.

Teachers take time to identify children's prior knowledge and starting points to ensure that they are able to identify where within our curriculum learning sequences their teaching should begin. This practice is repeated in an ongoing way throughout each child's journey through school.

Curriculum planning is completed each academic year to ensure that the curriculum is appropriate to meet children's needs; for example if levels of understanding were particularly low the curriculum map for the year would be adapted to ensure an increased focus on understanding.

## Teaching

*'Teaching is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn'.*

['Early years inspection handbook'](#), Ofsted, July 2022, paragraph 185

Our curriculum is delivered by teachers who are early year's specialists, supported by highly trained and skilful teaching assistants. All practitioners use a range of pedagogical strategies to support the development of every child. They know the current levels of development of each child, recognise their learning styles and use this knowledge to deliver teaching in the most appropriate way. Teachers adapt to meet the needs of each individual child.

Teachers understand the importance of executive function and use this to shape their planning and delivery of the curriculum. Children are given many opportunities to retrieve knowledge from prior learning, to explore and experiment and find their own answers. The relationship between the adult and child are highly valued. Children's choices about who they prefer are respected and through trusting relationships and strong attachments children are able to access executive function and learn every day. The school's work to become an attachment and trauma sensitive school has also influenced curriculum decisions, such as identifying potentially trauma inducing key dates (mothers'/fathers' day) and the focus on conflict resolution.

See the Teaching and Learning policy for more detail.

## Play

*'Play is essential for children's development'.*

J Bubikova-Moan, H Næss Hjetland and S Wollscheid, 'ECE teachers' views on play-based learning: a systematic review', in 'European Early Childhood Education Research Journal', Volume 27, Issue 6, 2019, pages 776 to 800

Our curriculum is built around learning through play. This engages and motivates our young children to want to participate. However, there are different types of playful learning experiences offered. Children are able to access our curriculum through the continuous provision which is planned for based on our observations of children's play behaviours, through playful adult led activities which have been planned to meet the needs of individuals or groups of children and through adult led story starter sessions which are more structured but still incorporate active, hands-on playful activities.

Children are able to become immersed in a story by re-reading it each day of a period of 2 -3 weeks and finding out about characters, settings, predicting and also investigating linked maths activities. There is a strong focus on vocabulary and introducing rapidly a range of new words through each story.

## **Adaptations for vulnerable groups**

### **SEND**

Some children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities may need significant adaptations to the curriculum. The school supports a number of children who are unable to access our whole curriculum. Teachers will identify specific targets, often within PSED and C&L, for children with complex needs and share these with the family. These children may need a different pedagogical approach to make progress.

### **EYPP**

Almost half the school is in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium funding. This is a group which is carefully tracked and monitored and there may be curriculum adaptations needed, for example an increased focus on fine motor control or making relationships. At times we will offer intervention groups such as Ginger bear or a Nurture group to meet the needs of a group of children.

### **CLA**

Children who are 'looked after' by the Local Authority and are aged 3 or above have a Personal Learning Plan completed in conjunction with the Social Worker and care givers. This is regularly reviewed and will focus on key identified areas of the curriculum.

## **Continuous Professional Development**

Staff training and development are held in high regard. Subject leaders use their monitoring to identify training needs across school. School leaders use a range of monitoring tools, including data monitoring, to identify the need for further development in specific curriculum areas.

Through the appraisal process all staff are encouraged to identify areas for personal development and access training. All staff are encouraged and supported to share their personal learning to benefit colleagues and the whole school community.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The curriculum is reviewed regularly. Each academic year curriculum planning considers the needs and strengths of the cohort and is adapted. Termly pupil progress meetings (professional conversations) identify areas of further development. Subject leaders monitor the coverage and progression within their subjects.

School leaders monitor the implementation of the curriculum through classroom observations, observations of teaching, pupil progress reviews, reviews of planning and assessment tools.

There are identified Link Governors for PSED, Communication, Language and Literacy and Maths.