



Ashbridge

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL & NURSERY

EARLY YEARS POLICY AND CURRICULUM

Review date: September 2022

Accessibility: Available on the school website and paper copy on request

Scope: Ashbridge School (Reception Class)

Ashbridge Nursery,
Ashbridge on Ribble,

Ashbridge Nursery at Maxy Farm,
The Fledglings Nursery

Introduction

This policy outlines our Early Years provision, by detailing our curriculum, as well as our approach to teaching and learning. It also sets out how we monitor the progress and outcomes for our children, through the review and assessment methods that we implement. It is agreed by the senior leadership team, and is monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure we meet our overall aims, as well as our statutory requirements. The policy is available via our website for all families, teachers and practitioners.

Aims of the curriculum

It is our aim at Ashbridge to help support children to develop into happy, confident and successful learners by nurturing their emotional wellbeing, and supporting all areas of their learning and development. The individual needs of children within the Early Years (from 0 – 5 years) forms the basis of this policy, which is implemented throughout nursery and until the end of Reception year in school.

The Early Years Curriculum Policy reflects the wider Ashbridge vision statement, which is:

Ashbridge

“Aspiration, Attitude, Achievement”
Potential nurtured, success realised.

We aim that every child at Ashbridge will achieve success through experiencing:

- High quality teaching.
- An engaging and challenging curriculum tailored to their individual needs and stage of development.
- The expertise of a highly effective and specialist team.
- Positive attitudes and consistent moral values.
- Continuity of excellent care and education from birth to eleven years.
- An inspirational outdoor environment providing unique learning opportunities.

Organisation and planning of the curriculum

Our revised curriculum has been developed following a full review in the Spring of 2021. Extensive feedback and suggestions were sought from the entire nursery team, and families provided written feedback through parent surveys. An analysis of the outcomes of our children also informed the review. Our curriculum will continue to evolve each year as our practice deepens.

The Early Years Team

In addition to the Early Years practitioners, we have qualified teachers with ‘EYT’ status, who work directly with the children throughout the nursery and specifically within the pre-school classes. There are also specialist lead practitioners for the Atelier, Forest and Outdoor Learning provision. The Reception class is led by a qualified and experienced teacher, supported by an additional Early Years practitioner.

Pedagogy

Our pedagogy (the techniques/strategies we use to support learning) centres around:

- **Quality interactions** between children and practitioners
- High-quality and varied teaching and **learning opportunities/experiences**

Quality interactions between adults and children are one of the most effective ways to support early learning. Our practitioners listen and watch closely to what children say and do, so that they can help to extend their thoughts, knowledge and skills (scaffolding). They also encourage children to contribute ideas and conclusions during conversations or activities. This sustained shared thinking helps to challenge the children's thinking and therefore extend their learning.

The practitioners also 'teach' our young children through daily interactions during play and care routines, through communicating and modelling language during activities or experiences, explaining and demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, narrating, as well as facilitating and setting challenges. With this in mind, we recognise all of our Early Years practitioners, as well as parents as 'teachers'.

The characteristics of effective learning which we believe are key to a child's development; playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically, underpin all learning and development.

Our pedagogy also draws upon influences from a number of early years approaches from across the world.

- **Forest school**
Forest school aims to increase a child's confidence and promote problem solving skills, through hands-on experiences in the natural environment. Children are trusted to explore their own physical limits, and to engage in risky play and use tools.
- **Reggio Emilia**
The Reggio Emilia approach recognises that children are natural communicators who express themselves through the '100 languages of children'- including movement, pretend play, drawing, music, dancing etc. Most of our Ashbridge nurseries house an 'Atelier'-a studio where children use creativity as a tool to explore and represent their ideas and feelings, and to work on collaboration projects sparked by the curiosity of the child.
- **Montessori**
The Montessori approach nurtures independence so that children feel capable and valued. It encourages opportunities for independence through daily tasks and life skills which promote heightened self-esteem. A carefully designed environment encourages children to make their own choices and to direct their own play through hands-on learning.
- **The Curiosity Approach**
The Curiosity Approach inspires children to be curious through the use of real-life objects and 'open ended' resources/loose parts, rather than traditional plastic toys.

The Early Years Curriculum

Whilst the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS September 2021) makes up part of our unique Ashbridge curriculum, it incorporates much more than this. The breadth of our curriculum aims to foster creativity and to help develop the children into well-rounded individuals, with a love of learning.

Children learn through playing, observing, talking, thinking, listening, exploring, investigating and ‘trying things out’, for this reason our curriculum is delivered mainly through play, and through active first-hand experiences which put the children’s learning into context.

Children’s learning is holistic, and all areas of their learning are interconnected and sequenced. The curriculum is carefully considered to provide a clear focus that draws together relevant learning opportunities which contribute to the development of the whole child.

As well as the areas of learning set out in the EYFS, our curriculum incorporates:

- **Our educational learning programme** (what we want children to learn, know and be able to do)
 - This includes practical life skills, Forest/River/Atelier/Horticultural programmes, core knowledge, as well as social and emotional skills
 - This is detailed in the long-term plans
- **Our pedagogy** (the way we teach)
- **Our learning opportunities and core/inspiring experiences**
- **Our routines and rhythms of the day**

The wider curriculum at Ashbridge consists of:

- Educational experiences through trips and visitors invited into our settings.
- Links with the local and wider community.
- Celebrations of cultural festivals, as well as national and local events.

Whilst our curriculum is carefully constructed to engage and build upon the child’s current knowledge, we know that children learn best when they are motivated and interested. For this reason, our curriculum is designed to be flexible. This flexibility allows our practitioners to be responsive to the interest of the children. Whilst ideas, experiences and learning opportunities are set up to be explored, these are merely a base to pursue knowledge on a subject that has sparked the children’s imaginations.

Our curriculum also includes the ‘hidden’ aspects– what the children learn from the way they are treated, and expected to behave at nursery. We work hard to support children in recognising their own emotions and feelings. This validation helps children learn how to manage their emotions, and to develop self-awareness and self-regulation skills, which are crucial building blocks for their social and emotional development.

We want our children to be able to form meaningful relationships with others, and to empathise and co-operate with their peers. The practitioners take the time to support children to foster relationships with their peers and to develop the social skills and attitudes that they need to interact positively with others. They model skills such as turn taking, and social scenarios such as joining another child’s play or gaining someone’s attention. They also introduce concepts such as conflict resolution, as well as teaching children basic manners and social norms.

We intend that child will **develop**

- Their unique nature and personality
- Their innate creativity and sense of wonder
- Self-confidence
- Empathy and kindness
- Independence
- Resilience
- Self-regulation
- Honesty and trust
- A secure foundation for all areas of learning
- A love for reading

We want children **to learn to**

- Build secure relationships
- Explore, investigate and observe
- Communicate effectively
- Express their needs and preferences
- Listen and think
- Use a wide vocabulary
- New and relevant skills
- Appreciate and care for the natural world
- Know about their community and culture
- Be positive and curious
- Be tolerant and respectful of others
- Make choices and share their opinions
- Make and become a 'good' friend
- Take risks and solve problems

We want children **to know**

- Learning is fun
- They and their family matter and are respected
- They will be listened to and valued
- That they are part of a community
- They will be safe and secure
- How to be healthy

The crucial role of Early Years Teachers/practitioners is to deliver real and relevant learning opportunities and experiences to enable children to extend their skills, knowledge and understanding. **See also High Quality Practitioner** and the definition of teaching that we adopt.

Within each long-term plan in each phase of children's development, Teachers/Practitioners:

- Support and extend children's self-directed spontaneous play
- Extend children's language and communication
- Enhance children's natural curiosity
- Plan, resource and enhance the learning environment
- Build on prior learning, experiences, knowledge and skills
- Observe and assess, in order to promote future progress
- Give children opportunities to make an achievement

Communication skills

At the core of our curriculum and pedagogy is the promotion of communication skills. This is because communication and language skills underpin many areas of a child's development. Not only does communication and language help a child to make friendships and develop social skills, it also helps build confidence and self-esteem. Communication and language skills also provide a strong foundation for other important areas of learning such as literacy. The practitioners focus on supporting the children to articulate themselves and to express their preferences and needs, as well as asking questions and sharing ideas. Practitioners support by modelling phrases and repeating key vocabulary during meaningful interactions or shared focus. We also pay careful attention to fostering a love of language in the children through daily exposure to nursery rhymes, songs, and stories.

Key person approach

Children thrive when they develop secure relationships with caring adults. We operate a key person approach throughout the Early Years so that children can form strong, secure bonds through responsive interactions from their key person. These relationships promote high levels of wellbeing and significantly contribute to a child's progress and development. (See also our Quality care and education policy -Birth To three, and also the key person policy for more details).

Enabling environments

Taking inspiration from the Reggio Emilia approach to early years education, we believe that the environment is the child's third teacher (after parent, and then practitioner). Our indoor and outdoor environments are carefully planned to ensure that they are rich in opportunity for children to explore and experiment, to deepen and challenge their thinking. The learning environments are enhanced regularly to reflect on the children's current interests and stage of development.

Classrooms and nursery areas enable free flow indoor and outdoor learning. Opportunities to play and learn within other specific areas such as the forests, adventure play areas, ateliers, library areas and natural environments are accessible also throughout the nursery and reception day.

Assessment and planning

Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know and understand, as well as what they can do. Practitioners use ongoing, 'in the moment' observations of children's learning and act on what they see and hear. They consider and reflect on what these may tell us about the child's learning and the rate in which they are progressing, and then adapt and extend learning opportunities accordingly, to strengthen and deepen their current learning and development.

By also evaluating adult initiated teaching and learning, teachers/practitioners gain an insight into a child learning and progress in order to plan for the future. Dialogue with parents, and children too are also key strategies implemented by practitioners to gain information on each child's progress and development.

When a child joins nursery, a written baseline assessment of their learning and stage of development is completed in collaboration with their parents. Written assessments are also completed twice a year in nursery, in November and May. Observation checkpoints are also completed at various age-related milestones, and a statutory 2 year assessment is completed after a child's second birthday. Further internal assessment arrangements are also in place within the school Reception class alongside the statutory assessment procedures within the EYFS.

There are opportunities for the identification of any areas of learning or development, where practitioners or parents/carers feel a focus may be needed or where the child may need additional support or challenge. **See 2-year Progress review process**

Information relating to children's learning experiences and wellbeing throughout the day is shared through a range of methods including posting of 'moments' on Parent Zone, as well as daily verbal feedback in nursery and regular ongoing communication systems in Reception class. For our youngest children we also feedback daily about children's feeding, sleeping and toileting patterns.

As a record of a child's learning and development, and journey through Ashbridge, we acknowledge key achievements and milestones through a 'Learning Journey'. This may contain work that children have produced as well as photographs and assessments. This is shared with parents as the children transition from nursery to school. For children that go on to attend Ashbridge School, progress data is entered into the whole school tracking system. This helps to monitor and maintain progress and plan for future learning.

The open-door policy means parents/carers are able to meet with their child's key person/teacher or management team at any time, however we also share children's progress with parents and carers in the following ways:

- Daily verbal feedback in nursery and via a daily journal in Reception class.
- At a 'settling-in' meeting in nursery after a child's first month with us.
- At the statutory 2-year check meeting, at which point a written report is also produced.
- At parent review meetings twice a year in nursery and in October and March in school.
- Through a written report at the end of the pre-school and in October and July in school.

Partnership with parents and families

We aim to create a welcoming, happy and relaxed environment in which parents and carers are encouraged to promote and share in their children's progress and achievements. Teachers and practitioners recognise that effective partnerships have a positive impact on children's development and learning, and therefore we aim to provide opportunities for them to be fully involved in their child's learning and development, and to enrich our curriculum. (See also our policy on Parent Partnership and the Parent/Carer welcome pack for further details).

Transitions

On admission to nursery and Reception class, parents and carers are asked to complete an 'All About Me' questionnaire. This provides a valuable insight into the child's interests and preferences, achievements, and stage of development, giving a foundation on which we can build. It can also inform about a child's home life, and can facilitate any concerns or worries parents may have. This important document is renewed and updated regularly, and at each transition.

At each point of transition, information is shared and opportunities are facilitated for the key person and families to discuss the needs and progress of the child. **See also Transition policy**

Equal Opportunities

We are inclusive, and as such our curriculum is tailored to meet the individual needs of our children, from those with significant additional needs (including EHC Plans), to those identified as able, gifted and talented. **See also SEN, EAL and Able, Gifted and Talented Policies.**

We celebrate individuality and encourage children to value our differences. We aim for children to gradually learn to take responsibility and have consideration for others, and eventually recognise their place in the wider world. By building friendships and relationships with children from different stages and backgrounds, children expand their cultural horizons. Our curriculum prepares children to be active citizens within an international, multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-faith society into which they will grow. All children are given full access to the curriculum irrespective of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.