EARLY YEARS

CURRICULUM POLICY

Approved date: September 2025

Review date: September 2026

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

Scope: Ashbridge School (Reception Class), Ashbridge Nursery Hutton, Ashbridge on Ribble, Ashbridge Nursery at Maxy Farm, The Fledglings Nursery

Introduction

This policy statement outlines our Early Years provision, delivered through our curriculum and 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.

Aims

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.

Our Early Years provision is underpinned by our wider Ashbridge vision:

Empowering Young Minds through Respect and Nurture

We aim that every child in the early years will achieve success through experiencing:

- An engaging and challenging curriculum tailored to their individual needs and stage of development.
- The expertise of a highly effective and specialist team, delivering high quality teaching
- Positive attitudes and consistent moral values.
- Continuity of excellent care and education from birth to the end of the EYFS
- An inspirational environment providing unique learning opportunities that are accessible to all

Organisation and planning of the curriculum

Our curriculum outlines what we want our children to experience and learn and details our aims and intended outcomes for children. It is progressive through each stage of development, with children building on what they know and can do. It is organised into the following phases:

- 0-2 (Babies)
- 2-3 (Toddlers)
- Pre School
- Reception

Specialist Programmes

Our curriculum includes specialist programmes including Forest School and Outdoor learning, Life Skills Programme, Creative/Atelier, Programme, Gardening/Horticultural Programme, Woodworking Programme, and Physical Education Programme.

The Early Years Team

In addition to the Early Years practitioners, we have:

- Qualified teachers with 'EYT' status (working throughout the nursery and specifically within the pre-school classes).
- Specialist Lead Practitioners for the Atelier, Forest and Outdoor Learning, Gardening, and Physical Education provision.
- Early Years Quality Leads
- Reception class is led by a qualified and experienced teacher, supported by an additional Early Years practitioner.

Pedagogy and approach

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**

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 teams who work with our youngest children, teach 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 our Early Years practitioners, as well as parents as 'teachers'.

Teaching and learning are child led with direct teaching methods increasing as children move on through the later stages of Pre School. At each phase we:

- 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, to promote future progress
- Give children opportunities to make an achievement

This approach is then built upon within Ashbridge School Reception class, as can be seen in the curriculum document and additional scheme of work for the school.

Our approach draws on best practice influences including Forest School, Reggio Emilia (Atelier), and Montessori.

- 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 that 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.

The EYFS

Many of our learning opportunities are based around the 7 areas of learning set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and the Characteristics of Effective learning (playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically), underpin all learning and development.

Communication skills

At the core of our nursery curriculum and pedagogy is the promotion of communication skills. Not only does communication and language help a child to make friendships and develop social skills, but it also helps build confidence and self-esteem. Communication and language skills also provide a solid foundation for other key 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.

Nurturing Emotional Wellbeing

We support children to recognise 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 able to form meaningful relationships with others, and to empathise and co-operate with their peers. 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 about social norms.

Enabling environments

Taking inspiration from the Reggio Emilia approach, 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, enabling children to progressively experience risks, challenges and gain in confidence.

Assessment and planning

Integral to teaching is how practitioners and teachers assess what children know and understand, as well as what they can do. Practitioners build upon '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 teaching and learning, teachers/practitioners gain an insight into a child learning and progress in order to plan for the future. When a child joins nursery, a written baseline assessment of their learning and stage of development is completed. Formal assessments are also completed twice a year, in November and May. The statutory 2-year assessment is completed after a child's second birthday.

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. E.g. WellComm assessments

Further internal assessment arrangements are also in place within the school Reception class alongside the statutory assessment procedures within the EYFS.

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.

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.

The open-door policy within nursery and school 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:

In nursery:

- Daily verbal feedback in at arrival/departure times each day
- Through daily 'Moments' via ParentZone
- At a 'settling-in' meeting 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
- Through a written report at the end of the pre-school

In school:

- The children bring home a reading journal every day to log their reading.
- Messages sent via ClassDojo keep parents up to date with what their children are doing in their lessons
- Numerous occasions throughout the year when parents are invited into school.
- Written reports in October and July
- Formal Parent/Teacher meetings each year (November and March)
- Parents can request meetings at any time if they wanted to talk between the formal meetings and parents are provided with the teacher's email address as part of the transition process.

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 they 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 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.