



Teaching and Learning 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.

Introduction

At Whitegate children and families are at the heart of all our work. We believe that all children are born ready, able and eager to learn. We aim to provide a rich, stimulating and safe environment within our centre which promotes learning and development for all our users – children and adults. Whitegate is a learning centre and through our interactions we aim to work in partnership to create a supportive, nurturing and reflective environment for all learners.

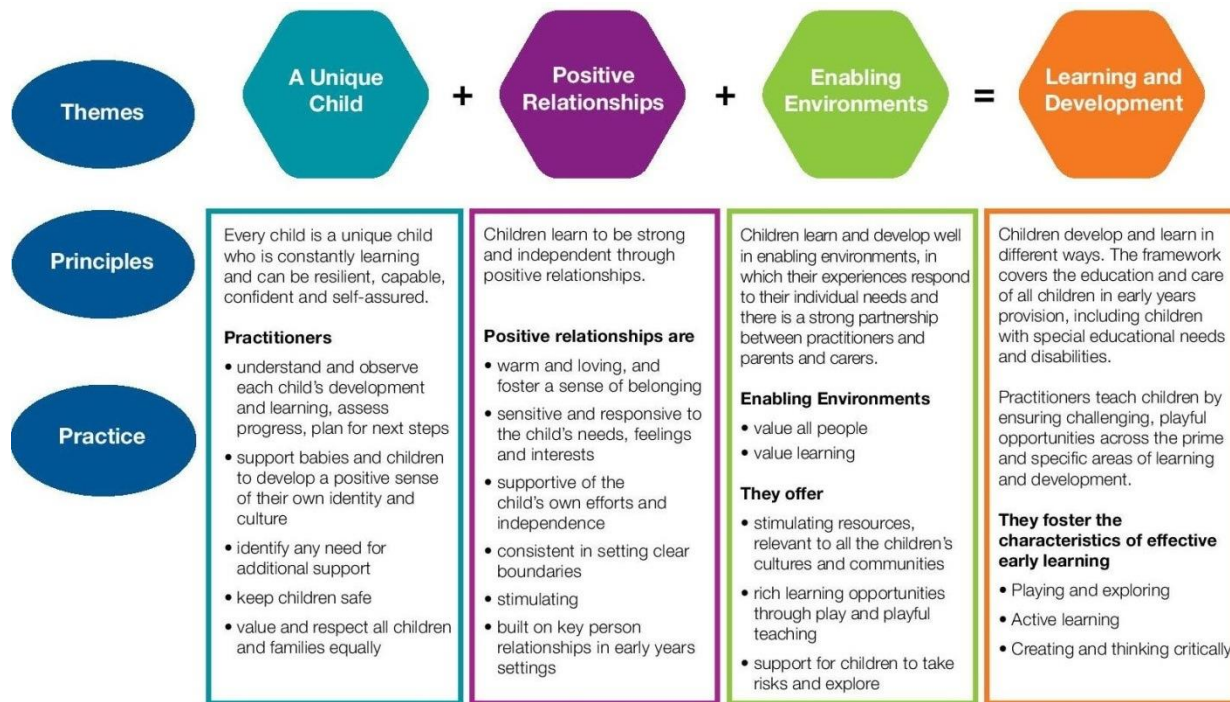
This policy should be read in conjunction with the curriculum policy, the observation, assessment and planning policy and other policies may be referenced within the document.

EYFS and Early Years Outcomes

The four themes of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) underpin this policy:

- Unique child
- Positive relationships
- Enabling environments
- Learning and development

At Whitegate we believe that every child is an individual who will learn and develop in different ways. In order to support and promote their learning and development we must recognise each child's unique characteristics and qualities, foster positive relationships with children and parents and provide rich and stimulating environments.



Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); p.2

Our 'Image of the child' and characteristics of effective learning

At Whitegate we believe that children's dispositional learning is salient. Children are encouraged to develop character and all adults will support children to develop the characteristics they need to achieve throughout their education and into adulthood. As a staff team we have developed the following 'images of the child':

- 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

Our 'images of the child' underpin all our interactions with children and document the quality of environment that we aim to provide. These images are shared with all our centre users.

The characteristics of effective learning are documented in the EYFS and at Whitegate we emphasise the importance of the characteristics. These are the dispositions that underpin all learning. They include:

- Playing and exploring (engagement)
- Active learning (motivation)
- Creating and thinking critically

Our images of the child and the characteristics of effective learning are interconnected and used to support all centre pedagogy.

Prime and specific areas of learning

The EYFS identifies prime and specific areas of learning. The prime areas begin to develop quickly in response to relationships and experiences, and run through and support learning in all other areas. The prime areas consist of:

- Personal, social and emotional development (PSE)
- Communication and language (C&L)
- Physical development (PD)

The specific areas include essential skills and knowledge. They grow out of the prime areas, and provide important contexts for learning. The specific areas of learning are:

- Literacy (including reading and writing)
- Mathematics (number and shape, space and measures)
- Understanding the world (The world, people and communities and technology)
- Expressive arts and design (exploring media and materials and being imaginative)

Adult role and Pedagogical strategies

At Whitegate we view adults as our most valuable resource. It is through our interactions and relationships with children, and their families, that we are able to support all children to learn, develop and reach their potential. We use the following strategies to support children's learning:

1. Subtle intervention – the adult watches and listens to what the child is doing before intervening
2. Knowledge of the child's embedded context and ability to recall a child's previous experience
3. Affirmation of a child through facial expression and physical closeness – mirroring the child's facial expressions and verbal intonation – empathizing with the child's expression of emotion
4. Encouraging the child to make choices and decisions, and supporting them to take appropriate risks
5. Encouraging the child to go beyond what the adult knows about and the adult is open to learning new things alongside the child
6. The adult is aware of the impact of his/her own attitudes and beliefs and how these might affect the child's learning
7. Playing and learning alongside the child. The adult is committed to their own learning and encourages the child's curiosity
8. The adult checks out the child's meaning and gives the child time to respond or question
9. The adult offers language to support the child's actions and offers new information to the child
10. The adult acknowledges both the child's feelings and the child's competence and capability

(Adapted from Frameworks for thinking and sharing knowledge and children's learning and development at Pen Green)

Involvement and well-being

Involvement and well-being are concepts developed by Ferre Laevers in 1997. **Well-being** is described as 'feeling at home' or 'being oneself' and/or 'feeling like a fish in water'. Signs that a child has a high sense of well-being include:

- Openness and receptivity
- Flexibility
- Self-confidence and self-esteem
- Being able to defend oneself; assertiveness
- Vitality
- Relaxation and inner peace
- Enjoyment without restraints
- Being in touch with oneself

Involvement is described by Laevers as 'deep level learning'; he describes how having the right learning environment can help children reach this special state of 'involvement'. Signals of high involvement include:

- Concentration
- Energy
- Complexity and creativity
- Facial expression and composure
- Precision
- Reaction time
- Verbal expression
- Satisfaction
- Persistence

We use Laever's principles to support our development of the learning environment and our teaching. We aim to provide environments and situations which promote high levels of involvement and our relationships and interactions focus on developing the well-being of all our children and centre users.

Attachment and Trauma Sensitive School's Award

The school has a bronze award. There has been significant training for all staff on attachment and trauma and this has resulted in a culture of nurture and understanding. Children are supported to regulate throughout the day. Each classroom is developing emotional literacy through talking about feelings and emotions, labelling these and supporting children to manage their experiences of them. Work has been completed within every classroom to develop calm, clutter free spaces with soft lighting and spaces children can access on their own or with a trusted adult or peer when they experience over stimulation or trauma.

Rhythms of the day

Our rhythms of the day provide a variety of opportunities for children to experience, learn and develop their skills and interests. The rhythm within each classroom has been developed to reflect the age and developmental stages of the children using it. Routines support children to understand what is happening and to develop their independence and autonomy whilst recognising and understanding the expectations of being part of the social group. Children are encouraged to use visual timetables to support their understanding of what is happening next and what is expected of them. Our rhythms of the day remain stable to ensure that children feel safe and are able to access learning. We have arranged our timings to allow children long uninterrupted periods of time to become engrossed in their learning.

Pedagogy for under 2s

Pedagogy for our under 2s focuses on the prime areas of learning. Practitioners aim to develop close relationships with each child's family in order to understand the unique skills, interests and personality of our youngest children. Practitioners aim to support family routines around feeding, sleeping and changing. These are viewed as key learning opportunities.

Pedagogy for under 2s focuses around exploration of the environment and resources, sensory development and early play and interactions. The environment provides rich stimulation and is organised to allow for quiet contemplative spaces and also more active and stimulating resources. Adults play at the children's level to encourage eye contact, mirroring and reciprocity. The outdoors is used appropriately to encourage physical and imaginative play. Supporting children to develop their communication skills is paramount to pedagogy; at first this is non verbal with adults using facial expressions and body language, modelling this for babies. Adults encourage babies to develop expressive language by modelling single words first, then two word phrases, then simple sentences. Children's communication attempts are always enthusiastically responded to and adults use nursery rhymes and music to encourage further exploration of language.

Pedagogy for 2-3s

Pedagogy for our children aged 2-3 years continues to focus on the prime areas, although the specific areas are also considered and planned for. Some small group activities are introduced - focusing on the prime areas and story/ singing/ music. The provision is teacher led and the teacher leads a team of school practitioners seamlessly alongside a team of daycare practitioners. The role of the adult focuses on identifying children's learning and development and planning for progression. Early identification of any difficulties is a key focus of our work and early intervention through individual planning and/or liaison with outside agencies enables us to support children to make rapid progress.

The environment is carefully considered and planned for. The indoors and outdoors are planned and resourced to reflect children's interests in order to encourage them to repeat and progress skills and learning; the role of the adult is key and adults use planning to address children's needs and interests. There is a strong focus on supporting children to develop their language and communication skills. The environment is set up to include communication spaces for one or two children as well as groups of children and all adults model high quality language and interactions through 'sportcasting'. There is also a strong emphasis on conflict resolution which supports children to develop their understanding of themselves and other children and what is expected of them (for more information see Positive interactions and behaviour policy). Story starters are used

to introduce and foster a love of books and the same story is used for a period of 2-3 weeks so that the children know it well. Key vocabulary is identified from the story and explicitly taught and then reinforced through the environment.

Pedagogy for 3-5's

As with all children who attend Whitegate, our 3-5s are provided with a personalised approach to learning and the curriculum. Children's interests are the key foci to all teaching and learning. Children are encouraged to explore and engage with a stimulating environment. The adult role is to intervene where appropriate in children's play and in the most effective way - offering support or challenge, supporting interactions between peers or modelling and scaffolding learning. Adults also can be a play partner to the children. At Whitegate we aim to know our children well and use the key person approach to develop close relationships of trust with each child and family. By knowing each child we can support and encourage, whilst offering appropriate challenge to ensure that playful learning is both purposeful and satisfying.

Using our assessment systems (see observation, assessment and planning policy) we are able to track individuals' learning and progression and set targets for our children to ensure each child has the opportunities to meet their full potential. The nursery school (aged 2-5) is teacher led and the role of the teacher includes working closely with each practitioner to track and plan for children's learning and development. Vulnerable children and groups are identified and their learning is carefully planned for to ensure rapid development, this includes children with special educational needs or disabilities. Children who are more able are also identified and offered challenge.

Different teaching approaches are adopted in the nursery school 3-4s. Each day children come together in teaching groups (teacher led) for early phonics and story based sessions which incorporates mathematical development as a key focus and creative and exploratory elements from our curriculum. Children are introduced to a growing number of new and interesting words as we continue to focus on vocabulary. A large proportion of children attend for the whole day and they are offered a different group experience in the afternoon focusing on oral story telling through the 'Helicopter' stories approach and/ or 'Children inspired by yoga' ('Tatty Bumpkin'). Children make decisions as to where they would like to play and learn for the most part of the session - indoors or out and adults are deployed to support learning throughout the indoor and outdoor environments. Adults plan focused activities which allow children to retrieve knowledge or skills they have previously learnt, consolidate and build upon these further. The prime and specific areas of learning are considered in teaching and learning, although personal and social skills and language and communication continue to be salient.

Explicit teaching

'Explicit teaching is an approach to teaching where the practitioner introduces information or skills through direct instruction. In the context of early education, it can be an effective way to teach children specific knowledge'

['Direct teaching/instruction'](#), Queensland Government Department of Education.

Through our curriculum, we have identified key learning and provide explicit teaching of these skills or knowledge. This is provided through group sessions and/or guided play. The teacher will model a skill and encourage children to try this for themselves with support. There will then be opportunities for the children to practise this skill through their independent play (the 'I do/we

do/you do' model). This could be through using maths manipulatives to explore counting and number problems or through the teaching of new vocabulary. The teaching of vocabulary is viewed as explicit with all adults identifying and modelling new words in every interaction with children. Teachers also build in regular opportunities for children to retrieve previous knowledge and skills and build upon these.

Developing and maintaining a positive learning environment

As stated within our mission statement, at Whitegate we strive to provide a 'supportive, nurturing ethos where every child has 'the opportunity, encouragement and expectation to learn, make progress and attain high standards reaching their full potential'. From the earliest age we encourage children to respect and care about one another. As an inclusive setting we welcome all children and families and embrace diversity. We have developed a strong and positive behaviour management policy which focuses on our high expectations of children's behaviour towards one another and their environment. We provide clear and consistent expectations and aim to support children to develop their spiritual, cultural, social and moral values. We support children to develop their understanding of 'right' and 'wrong' and work closely with our families to share these values. Children are supported to develop their self knowledge, self-esteem and self confidence and to notice the similarities and differences between people and respect them. Our resources and teaching respects the diverse nature of our community and supports children's understanding of diversity.

Monitoring teaching and staff professional development

At Whitegate we aim to deliver the highest quality teaching which promotes a good level of development for all children. Teaching is monitored throughout each academic year by the Head teacher, supported by other members of the Leadership team. All staff are expected to be reflective and our supervision process supports all staff to reflect upon their own teaching and identify how they can develop their own practice.

We have a robust induction process for new staff. Through peer support new staff are given the opportunity to observe aspects of practice linked to our image of the child and the pedagogical strategies.

Staff are expected to show commitment to their continuing professional development. All practitioners have the opportunity to identify their own training needs and attend specific training to develop their pedagogy. The centre also provides specific 'in-house' training throughout the year to develop pedagogy throughout the staff team.

Formal observations of teaching take place during school monitoring - three times a year. These observations are completed by the Headteacher and team leaders and practitioners are invited to contribute to feedback - identifying their strengths and areas for future focus. All practitioners are committed to developing their own pedagogy and knowledge and skills. Whitegate values itself as a reflective learning community.

Monitoring learning and progress

Children's learning is rigorously monitored. All practitioners are responsible for identifying children's achievements and monitoring their progress (see observation, assessment and planning policy). Staff engage in professional conversations about the progress and development of their children and this pupil progress data provides invaluable information to ensure that planning and teaching is focused on what each child needs to learn next. Interventions for individuals or groups of children are planned by the teachers to ensure that gaps in learning are addressed and to promote rapid progress where needed. Interventions include communication groups (Bubble Bear, Ginger Bear), nurture groups, fine motor interventions like dough gym and dough disco. The progress and achievements of groups of children and cohorts is monitored by the Head teacher. The school development plan reflects the results of monitoring.

Engaging with and reporting to parents

Parents are invited and encouraged to engage in their child's learning and development throughout the centre. Information about children's achievements and learning dispositions are shared regularly and parents are encouraged to offer their views and to share their own stories. Staff across the centre use photographs and video as a powerful tool to capture learning and share this with children, families and colleagues.

Evaluation

It is the responsibility of all staff and governors to monitor their adherence to this policy. The policy will be reviewed by the leadership team. The Quality, Standards and Effectiveness Committee will review the policy every three years. The headteacher monitors the effective use of assessment systems and planning. Any outcomes and targets for action and improvement will be included within the School Development Planning process. We use both qualitative and quantitative judgements to evaluate the success of the policy. In line with our Mission Statement, we strive to ensure we meet every child's needs.