



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Formally adopted by the Governing Board/ Trust of:-	Redcastle Family School
On:-	
Chair of Governors/Trustees:-	Heather Pringle
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The term Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. In this policy it is used to describe children who are in our Nursery or Reception classes.

Aim

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. (The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DfE March 2024).

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**;
- children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers;
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.**

At Redcastle Family School we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all of our children, thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning and well-being.

Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the September 2025 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This document also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.



Structure of the EYFS

We offer morning or afternoon sessions five days a week and full day sessions for children aged 2, 3 and 4 years old in our Nursery. Children can begin their journey in our Nursery the day after their second birthday. This equates to 15 hours or 30 hours (full time). Our Reception children start full time school during the academic year in which they are five years old.

A Unique Child

At Redcastle Family School we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We know that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by their school and home environments and we begin to build links with the families. We observe how each child learns to gain an understanding of the characteristics they develop to become effective learners. We use questioning, praise and encouragement to develop a positive attitude to learning and high self-esteem. During their first year at school, the children are introduced to the learning habits. They are taught to be observant, investigative, curious, determined, imaginative, adventurous, co-operative and to use reasoning. Children begin to understand the concept of the growth mind-set. They develop an understanding that everyone can learn with practice and effort. The children are taught how to learn and how to become successful learners.

Inclusion

All children and their families are valued within our school. We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate because of differences. All children at Redcastle Family School are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or stage of learning. We do not group children based on notions of fixed ability. We teach the children that practice and effort lead to learning and improvement. Teachers plan activities that enable all children to access the learning and to achieve as highly as possible. In the early years the children begin to learn to take responsibility for their learning and begin to understand the concept of challenge.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning. Planning for children with additional needs is completed in liaison with the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator.

In the EYFS we have realistic and challenging expectations and meet the needs of all our children through:

- planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests and develop their self-esteem and confidence through a creative curriculum and learning environment
- using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs



- providing a wide range of opportunities and environments to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which each child's contribution is valued monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary

It is vital that all children in the school are safe. Within our nurturing environment we provide children with opportunities to help them develop the skills they need to keep themselves safe. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards both in the real and virtual world.

(For further information refer to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy)

Positive Relationships

At Redcastle Family School we recognise that children learn to be confident and independent through the development of secure relationships. We develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents and carers have played, and will continue to play, in educating their children. At our School the children in both Nursery and Reception are each assigned a 'Key Person'.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between staff and parents and/or carers. Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. The progress check and EYFS profile helps to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge and understanding. At Redcastle, we believe that all parents and carers have an important role to play in the education of their child. We therefore recognise the role that parents and carers have played, and will continue to play, in educating their children. We are committed to nurturing a strong relationship between home and school. We do this through:

- talking to parents about their child before their child starts our school;
- inviting the children to spend time with their teacher in the classroom before starting at school
- inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school encouraging parents to attend parent workshops in the first two terms to discuss their child's progress



- providing parents with a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year
- inviting parents to attend reading cafes and wow events
- sharing our approach to reading and homework

Curriculum

Redcastle has designed an EYFS curriculum that meets the requirements of the 2024 EYFS Framework and prepares our children for the National Curriculum expectations in Year 1. The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development that are equally important and interconnected. However, three areas, known as the prime areas, are particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** - help children develop a positive sense of themselves and others; forming positive relationships and develop respect for others; develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and have confidence in their own abilities.
- **Physical Development** - children will be provided with opportunities to be active and interactive; to develop their co-ordination, control and movement. Children will be taught the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food.
- **Communication & Language** - children will be given lots of opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; to speak and listen in a range of situations.

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through four specific areas:

- **Literacy** - children will be taught to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children will be given access to a wide range of reading materials to ignite their interest.
- **Mathematics** - children will be provided with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces and measures.
- **Understanding the World** - Children will make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.



- **Expressive Arts and Design** - Children will explore and play with a range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

Our EYFS curriculum is designed to improve pupils' life experiences. It provides rich, memorable learning experiences for our children. The ambition of our curriculum is to ensure high achievement for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Our curriculum ensures children's 'school readiness', whilst at all times ensuring children's wellbeing is nurtured. This provides the children with the knowledge and skills necessary as a foundation for future education and for life. Children are exposed to a wide-range of cultural experiences and the curriculum enables them to develop an understanding of the world around them. Their enabling environments are language rich and enhance children's vocabulary and reading.

Language and Literacy Supporting the Reception Child

- Early in the first half term at school, children will begin to bring home an early stage reading book so that parents/carers can support their child with the sounds he/she has learnt at school. This will be explained in detail at the autumn meeting for parents.
- The first books that children bring home to share with parents/carers will be picture books and then books with simple repetitive text and rhymes.
- Each child may also take home a range of reading games or activities that involve matching sounds and pictures; making, reading and writing simple words that can be practised at home.
- During the year, each child will take home their Read Write Inc reading books that have been shared at school.

Teaching and Learning

We provide pupils with a first class education from day one. At Redcastle, teaching and learning in the Early Years has a strong emphasis on the development of language and communication and the teaching and learning of basic skills in reading, writing, and maths. Throughout the Early Years, the content of the curriculum is taught as a sequence of learning that builds progressively over time. Play is vital in order for children to make sense of the world around them. At Redcastle, we provide carefully structured play, through which our children explore and develop the learning experiences that help them make sense of the world around them. They practise and build up their ideas, learning self-control, and begin to understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively both alongside other children and on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. As an Early Years provider, we understand the importance of self-initiated activities. Staff observe children closely and add enhancements to the environment in order



to develop children's individual interests and to improve learning opportunities. The school makes good use of the outdoor area, where a planned programme of age appropriate

activities take place all year round and reflects the learning taking place indoors. We ensure that all children can access opportunities independently both indoors and outdoors by ensuring that we provide an enabling environment where children can take an independent approach to their own learning development.

Effective pedagogy for teaching and learning is embedded across the school. Leaders check, model and support teachers in class ensuring consistency. Teachers use carefully chosen strategies to:

- Present information clearly enabling pupils to understand key concepts
- Check pupils' understanding, identify and correct mistakes and misconceptions
- Ensure that pupils embed key concepts in their long-term memory and apply them fluently
- Deliver the subject curriculum in a way that allows pupils to transfer key knowledge to long term memory.
- Sequence learning so that new knowledge and skills build on what has been taught before and pupils work towards defined end points.
- Assess pupils' understanding in order to inform further teaching, and to help pupils embed and use knowledge fluently.
- Enable pupils to develop their understanding and link prior knowledge to new learning.
- Where it is required, teaching is adapted to meet the needs of children with SEND.

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Staff respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction.

As children move into Reception, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning in preparation for key stage one.

(For further information refer to Teaching and learning Policy)



Play

Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play, children can be inquisitive, creative, questioning and experimental and will learn at their highest level. Playing with their peers is important for children's development. Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. The adults model play and play sensitively with the children fitting in with their plans and ideas. The children are encouraged to try new activities and judge risks for themselves. We talk to them about how we get better at things through effort and practice and that we can all learn when things go wrong. They practice and build up ideas learning 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.

Enabling Environments

At Redcastle Family School we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. The role of both the indoor and outdoor environment in learning/organisation of learning provides opportunities for child initiated activities reflecting the topic where they can develop gross motor skills, social skills etc. We provide stimulating resources which are accessible and open-ended so they can be used, moved and combined in a variety of ways.

Classroom Organisation and Resources

The organisation of the classroom reflects the importance that is placed on children learning through play and first-hand experience, developing independence and having opportunities to initiate their own activities.

The Nursery and Reception class provides the following areas:

- Small world tray for retelling stories
- Role play area
- Large and small construction
- Sand and water
- Book corner with a range of fiction and non-fiction books
- Mark making/Writing table with a range of writing resources
- Making area with access to a choice of natural and man-made resources
- Table top and small world toys
- Computers/Tablets
- Interactive whiteboard
- Malleable materials
- Musical instruments
- Painting and creative equipment



- Maths games and equipment
- Outside classroom – a safe, fenced area including a role-play area giant sand pit, den, outdoor chalkboard, planting equipment and areas, small sand pits, water trays, outside toys.

Community Links

At Redcastle Family School we strongly believe in the importance of community links. Throughout our curriculum we have a wide range of visitors from the local community and opportunities for children to visit and experience the local area. This includes a range of visitors for example the firefighters, dental practice and local organisations. The children will have the opportunity to visit facilities including the town library, local allotments and Thetford Forest.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting of Progress

Assessment is an essential and important part of the Early Years for children's learning and development. Assessment takes a variety of forms in order to gain an understanding of each child's level of understanding. These can be through observations, photographic evidence, examples of work, parental conversations. Assessment occurs throughout any taught session as well as during free flow times when children are embedding and extending any previous learning. These assessments will then be used to shape and adapt any future learning.

Observations are taken using Tapestry App, which allows staff to take photos, videos and to make notes while observing what the children are doing or saying. From such observations we can ascertain what the next steps are for the children. We are then able to share these experiences with the children's parents on an almost daily basis. This is a two-way process whereby parents may input observations of their own, add comments to post and like observations they can view. As it is an app based 'Online Learning Journey', it is highly accessible as parents can access on mobile phones, tablets as well as on computers.

On entry to Nursery and Reception a baseline assessment is carried out for each child and at the end of each half term assessments are collated to track how well the children are progressing. Opportunities for a Parent Teacher Consultation are provided in the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms to provide information about children's progress and to discuss the children's learning journey from Tapestry, to talk about children's strengths, achievements, interests and next steps. These form the basis for the monitoring of pupil progress as the children progress through school. On-going teacher assessments are undertaken in line with the Foundation Stage Profile and these form the basis for the end of year report to parents.



We ensure our end of EYFS assessments are reliable through:

- our knowledge of the child gained through observation and interaction
- our environment enables the child to flourish to their full capacity
- our assessments ensure a range of contributors e.g. parents, the school nurse, Speech and Language Therapy, outreach teachers and other relevant adults
- in-house moderation across the EYFS team
- moderation with the Local Authority (LCC)

(For further information refer to Assessment Policy)

Working with parents

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. The progress check and EYFS profile helps to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge and understanding.

At Redcastle, we believe that all parents and carers have an important role to play in the education of their child. We therefore recognise the role that parents and carers have played, and will continue to play, in educating their children. We are committed to nurturing a strong relationship between home and school. We do this through:

- talking to parents or carers about their child before their child starts in our school;
- Opportunities given to the children to spend time with their teacher before starting school;
- Opportunities for parents to attend a series of 'Stay and play' sessions before their child starts school;
- inviting all parents and carers to a welcome meeting during the term before their child starts school;
- offering parents and carers regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress in our Nursery and Reception classes;
- Termly 'Stay and play' visits for parents; in the form of reading cafes, assemblies and workshops.
- Encouraging parents and carers to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns;
- Sharing termly curriculum overviews to inform parents about what their child is learning each half term.



Safeguarding

All necessary steps are taken to keep the children in our care safe and well. Any safeguarding or welfare issues will be managed with in line school Safeguarding Policy. All staff are responsible for keeping children safe and are trained in line with Safeguarding training expectations. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Mrs Denty and the deputy DSL's are Mrs Paynter, Mrs Hedger and Mr Stansfield. The DSL is responsible for safeguarding children and liaising with local children's services as appropriate. The deputy DSLs will undertake the duties of the DSL in their absence. The DSL and deputy DSLs are Level 3 Safeguarding trained. Please refer to the school's Safeguarding Policy for more information. This can be found under the Key Information tab on the school website.

(For further information refer to Safeguarding Policy)

Health

At Redcastle we offer daily snack which consists fruit provided by the Local Authority. We also offer a range of snacks throughout the week. We ask that children bring a drink of water with them each day, but cups and drinks can also be provided in setting. At Redcastle, we offer lunchtime care for our all day Nursery children. Nursery children can bring a packed lunch or they can order a hot dinner from the school kitchen. Reception are entitled to free school meals but can bring a packed lunch if they prefer. The teacher in the Early Years has received paediatric first Aid training and holds a relevant certificate.

(For further information refer to Food and Nutrition Policy)

Transition

At Redcastle Family School, we recognise that times of transition can be unsettling for both children and their families and aim to offer a structured and supportive approach whereby children feel excited and motivated to meet the new challenges of our settings and parents feel valued, informed and supported. We recognise that transitions can be as small as moving from one room or activity to another, or as large as moving from one setting to another. We believe that gaining a detailed picture of children as individuals will enable us to plan these transitions to ensure they are as smooth and positive as possible. We understand that the role of parents as partners is key, particularly within the Foundation Stage, where



the sharing of information can make the transition process more effective and enable children to get the most from their Foundation Stage experiences. We understand that some children and families will need further support at times of transition and we will do all that we can to offer this. All EYFS staff work closely together to ensure that transition between settings is appropriate and children's needs are met.

Parents are warmly welcomed to look around the Nursery and Reception setting at any time before their child starts our setting. We have an open evening where children and their parents can visit the classrooms and look around the school environment. During open evening the parents are given a pack of information regarding starting dates, uniform, term dates, etc. Parents are introduced to the Nursery and Reception staff team and activities are set up in all areas of the indoor and outdoor areas for families to explore together. Children have opportunities to visit the Nursery and Reception before they start at Redcastle. We hold a new starters event for parents and families to look around the setting and listen to a short presentation about the school.

Parents are given the opportunity to tell us about their child's development and interests so we can get to know their child before they start nursery or reception. Children are given an 'All About Me booklet' to complete and bring along when they start Reception. During the first few days at Redcastle, staff will discuss and advise families as to strategies which may be appropriate to support children in the separating process. If parents leave their child and are concerned, they will always be telephoned and reassured during the session. The Early Years team will discuss any settling issues, provide reassurance and answer parent's questions at the beginning or end of the day. Nursery and Reception have the opportunity to share the outdoor space which supports transition into Reception class.

Reception staff will visit new children joining Reception at their current Nursery and/ or at their home if they have not attended our provision. The new children are also invited to come to a stay and play session in their new Reception classroom in July before they start school. Children with additional needs are offered additional settling in sessions and the class teacher will meet with their parents to discuss their needs and how best to support them during transition to the setting.

Children are given a number of opportunities to meet and get to know the Year 1 teachers. Parents are informed in the second half of the summer term as to whom their child's year one teacher will be and photographs of the staff are displayed.



Children with additional needs are given additional resources to prepare them for their transition to Y1, they will also have additional settling in sessions where needed. Copies of children's end of year reports are shared with their next teacher, along with any other relevant information as part of our teacher transition meetings in the summer term.

Medication

Please refer to our Medicines in School Policy for information about medication and administration.

Intimate care

Intimate care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure (such as cleaning up a pupil after they have soiled themselves) to intimate personal areas. In most cases such care will involve cleaning for hygiene purposes as part of a staff member's duty of care. The issue of intimate care is a sensitive one and will require staff to be respectful of the child's needs. The child's dignity should always be preserved with a high level of privacy, choice and control. Staff behaviour must be open to scrutiny and staff must work in partnership with parents/carers to provide continuity of care to children/young people wherever possible.

Intimate care will only be carried out by school staff, all of whom have had an enhanced DBS check with a children's barred list check. No volunteers will be present or permitted to carry out intimate care. The school's safeguarding policy and the DFE document, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education: for Schools and Colleges' has informed our intimate care procedures. Please refer to our intimate care policy for more information