Observation, Assessment and Planning

Working together to make a real and lasting difference...

Our Mission Statement

Whitegate Centre strives to provide a happy, caring and understanding environment, where each individual is valued and is able to develop to their full potential within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

We aim to provide an integrated service which involves and supports parents in the care and education of their children. For very young children, care and education are inseparable.

Aims

At Whitegate we are committed to supporting every child to reach their full potential. We believe that every child is unique with their own learning style and by getting to know our children and their families well, we can support their learning and ensure they make excellent progress during their time at Whitegate.

Children’s achievements and the progress they make will be valued and celebrated, shared with them and their families. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) guidance on assessment underpins this policy and cross reference should be made to the teaching and learning policy.

Rationale

‘Assessment is the process of analysing and reviewing what we know about children’s development and learning.’ (EYFS)

At Whitegate the skills and interests of each individual child is central to their development. We aim to build a picture of the child through gathering information from a range of sources - especially from those who know the child best, that is the family.

Through careful observations of the children, assessments of their progress and attainment are made and recorded using the ‘early years outcomes’ and their dispositions towards learning are identified and celebrated using the ‘characteristics of effective learning’ from the EYFS and our ‘images of the child’. This information is used to inform future planning to ensure a personalized learning approach.

The diagram below shows how Observation, Assessment and Planning all feed into one another and contribute to our knowledge about the child.
ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

Assessment provides information of children's progress and their learning and development needs. It provides us with the information we need to plan for the next steps. This is assessment for learning; **formative** assessment based on observation, which informs everyday planning. **Summative** assessment is a summary of all the formative assessment carried out over a long period and makes statements about the child's progress.

**Formative Assessment**
At Whitegate all staff use observation as a means of formative assessment. Observation involves:

- Looking for the child's current development and the way the child is learning
- Listening to the interactions of the child with other adults and children
- Recording the important features of the child’s responses, behaviour, learning and development
- Thinking about what has been observed and how it can lead into the next steps of assessment and planning
- Questioning the child in order to clarify, confirm or reject ideas about what we have observed.
- Gathering a range of information - from the family, from other professionals (e.g. Health Visitors/ Two Year checks)

Through our initial meetings with families (home visits or visits within the centre) we aim to build a picture of each child's interests and dispositions towards learning. Staff carry out observations of all children throughout sessions, noting significant moments in their learning and development. These observations are recorded on planning and passed onto the child's key person to filter, record and use to inform future planning.
Personal Achievement Logs (PALs) are kept for individual children in the Nursery and EYC. These records contain information from the child’s family about their likes, dislikes and interests (pen portraits and ‘all about me’s), photographs, observations, learning stories and snap shots of learning. This documentation focuses on children’s dispositional learning using our ‘images of the child’ and ‘characteristics of effective learning’; the ‘early years outcomes’ are also considered. Individual planning sheets (PLODs or ‘children’s interest’s sheets) are also included in the PAL folder. The PALs build a picture of learning, development and interests over time to show the progress made and changes in the child’s interests. These are always accessible to parents and children and they are invited to contribute information from home. We encourage parents to be equal participants; we share our assessments of children’s progress and ask them to contribute their knowledge during family conferences (three times a year) and during home visits.

**Summative Assessment**

At Whitegate summative assessment is used to pinpoint children’s attainment across the areas of learning (EYFS), to track progress and identify areas for development for individuals, groups of children and the cohort as a whole. This assessment informs all planning. The information is collated using ‘making children’s learning visible’ – a computer based record of individual attainment. The program uses the EYFS statements from birth to the Early Learning Goals and for each aspect practitioners can make the judgment as to whether the child is emerging, developing or confident.

On entry, children’s skills and knowledge are recorded on the program as a baseline. Each child has a graph which documents their achievement across the areas of learning and aspects within each area. This summative assessment is completed three times each academic year (October, February, June). Each key person makes the judgments for each of their key children. This will be an assessment of the age phase in which the child is working (eg 22-36 months) and whether they are emerging, developing or confident in this aspect. The key person will then meet with their teacher ‘buddy’ to moderate their judgments and through this rigorous process consistency across the setting can be achieved. All adults use their professional judgment to make these assessments and a ‘best fit’ principle is used. The setting engages in moderation with other settings to support their professional judgments and ensure that these are fair and accurate and in line with similar settings.

On transition to Primary school, children’s progress and attainment is provided for the family and the school in the form of a written report and the progress graph. The program is also be used to assess the progress and attainment of individuals, groups of children or the cohort as a whole.

**Progress**

We aim for all of our children to make good progress in their learning and reach their full potential. We have identified that a ‘good level of development’ equates to four points of progress through the EYFS aspects (for example 22-36 months ‘emerging’ on entry will progress to 30-50 months ‘developing’ on exit). Three points of progress equates to typical development. As an outstanding setting we aim to support a higher proportion of our children to access a good level of development, regardless of their baseline or starting points. The teachers meet three times throughout the year to discuss progress with the head teacher and support each key person to identify specific areas in which individuals are not making good progress and design intervention strategies to accelerate progress.
Our most vulnerable children are identified and supported to ensure that they too make good progress. In many cases vulnerable children are already attaining well below national expectations and we are committed to supporting accelerated progress for these children to support them to 'catch up' with their peers. Groups of vulnerable children are identified (such as two year funded children) and their progress and attainment is carefully tracked and monitored as a group.

PLANNING

Programme of study – The EYFS

Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); p.4

(See teaching and learning policy)

The EYFS underpins our planning. It is adapted to meet the individual needs of children and a developmental range of abilities. We use the characteristics of effective learning to support both planning and assessment and value these as fundamental to children's lifelong learning (see Teaching and Learning policy). Throughout all planning we aim to offer challenge and inspiration to children.

On entry to the setting we work closely with families to build a picture of the child's learning styles and dispositions as well as their interests and this focuses our initial planning for each child.

Continuous planning (long term)

Long term or continuous planning is completed in each room. The environment has been developed to provide specific experiences for the age group of children catered for. The areas are resourced to enable children to explore and discover independently, with their peers and with the support of an adult. The adult role is carefully considered. Adults plan enhancements to the continuous environment based upon children's interests and key development areas and foci.
Within the nursery school (aged 2-5), a long term phonics and mathematics plan provides guidance as to the key skills children need throughout the year. The plans provide opportunity for children to develop fundamental skills and progress their knowledge and application skills.

**Weekly planning (short term)**
Children’s learning is systematically planned for each week across the setting. As the children mature more adult focused planning is used to support their learning and development. In the Snug (age 6 months to 2 years) weekly planning is focused around children's interests - informed by observation and information from families in the home link book. In the nursery school 2-3 years, adults plan focused activities based upon children's interests and also key skills or learning dispositions. A short group learning experience is also planned for each session, which focuses on the prime areas, especially social and communication skills. In the nursery school 3-4s adults plan specific focused activities - indoors and out - which support children to develop their interests and also key skills and dispositions. Systematic phonics and maths sessions are also planned each week. Each key person plans for their key group each week using their floorbooks. These plans are based on the interests of the group and the child's voice is central to what the group learns. The adult role is to incorporate key skills into the work whilst maintaining the children’s interests and voice.

**Spontaneous or ‘in the moment’ planning**
Spontaneous or ‘in the moment’ planning is used throughout the centre. Adults aim to intervene sensitively in children’s play and support the children to consider different methods, offer challenge or scaffold learning. The most effective way of supporting the development of learning is to intervene immediately with resources or support. This planning is recorded on PLOD (possible lines of direction) planning sheets in each room. Adults may retrospectively record what they have already done on the planning documents, highlighting the PLODs which have already been completed and considering further possibilities.

**ROLES AND PRIORITIES**

**The Head of Centre and Leadership Team**
The Head of Centre, with the support of the Leadership Team, will monitor the achievement and progress of individuals and groups of children through ‘making children’s learning visible (MCLV)’ assessment data. The Head and Deputy will monitor PALs and planning documentation.

**Governing Body**
The Governing Body will monitor the progress and achievement of each cohort and key groups of children through Head of Centre reports and the Early Education Committee.

**Teachers**
Teachers will be responsible for inputting information about individual children onto ‘MCLV’ in consultation with each key person. Teachers will take responsibility for the progress and attainment of children in their teaching group. Teachers will work closely with the Head of Centre and Leadership Team to monitor the progress of individuals and groups of children.

**Practitioners**
All practitioners will make observations of all children. These will be recorded in a variety of ways and passed on to the child’s key person. Video is used throughout the centre to capture children’s learning and interactions with significant adults and their peers. The key person will
evaluate the significance of observations of their key children and share this with the child’s family. They will record each child’s learning journey in the form of learning stories and ‘image of the child’ snap shots. The key person will use the ‘early years outcomes’ to assess the attainment of their children and consider next steps for their progress. The key person will use all this information to inform all planning.

**Parents**

Parents are valued as the child’s first and best educator. Parents are encouraged to provide key information about their child’s interests and skills through pen portraits completed on home visits and ‘All about me’ booklets. Parents are invited and encouraged to contribute to PALs with photographs and ‘events from home’ or ‘special event’ information. PALs are always accessible to parents and every key person aims to develop a mutual relationship with their families by discussing learning and interests regularly in an informal way. Parents are invited to meet more formally with their child’s key person regularly throughout the year to discuss progress and agree next steps for their child’s development and learning.

**SEND**

Whitegate Children’s Centre is committed to meeting the special educational needs or disabilities of all children and ensuring they make progress in line with our Mission Statement. Children with Special Educational Needs or Disability will be provided with a ‘targeted learning plan’ to meet their specific needs. These targets will be shared with the child’s parents and all practitioners and targets may feed into planning. TLP targets will be assessed and updated with parents regularly. Please see SEN policy.

**Looked after children**

At Whitegate Children’s Centre we are committed to helping looked after children (CLA) have the best possible experiences in line with Every Child Matters. We aim to provide stability, safety, continuity and individual care and attention. All looked after children will have a Personal Education Plan which will be reviewed regularly. Please see Policy for Looked after Children.

**Record Keeping**

Records of children’s observations and assessments will be kept in Personal Achievement Logs (PALs). This information includes photographs, written observations and examples of work, parent consultation records and information from home. These records will be presented to the child and their parents when they cease attending the setting. MCLV is used to record children’s specific learning assessments related to the EYFS. Individual and group reports can be accessed using the system. The system records attainment on entry and all progress made. Children’s progress is carefully tracked throughout their time in the setting and in the nursery school target setting meetings ensure that all children have the greatest opportunity to fulfil their potential.

**Reporting**

Children’s attainment and progress are reported to parents informally throughout the year and formally towards the end of the year. Family consultations take place in November and March and the PALs are shared with parents, highlighting children’s interests, skills and progress. Individual reports are sent to parents in June to highlight the progress made and children’s achievements. Reports on each child are sent to their next setting as part of the transition information. SEN information is also passed onto the next setting.

**Staff development**
Staff will attend relevant training to increase their knowledge and skills of assessment strategies and the EYFS. The setting has an established and effective system of peer observation and support, whereby practitioners identify their own strengths and areas for development with the support of a colleague. Staff meetings are arranged regularly to discuss any updates to ongoing assessments as necessary including group and target activities. Supervision is used to discuss children’s development and progress and to identify vulnerable children and discuss possible areas for development. Staff also consider their own pedagogy and training needs. Staff supervisions take place three times a year.

**Evaluation**

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

Policy agreed: February 2015 (amended September 2015)

Review: September 2017