



# Pendle Education Trust



<b>Policy:</b>	<b>Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy</b>
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## 1. Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- A close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

### Intent

The intent for our children is to enter the next stage of their education ready to tackle new challenges with confidence and a positive mind-set. We want to:

ENGAGE our pupils in a stimulating environment led by the children yet carefully organised and managed by adults. Providing a curriculum responsive to individual starting points and needs.

INNOVATE our children to take the lead in their own learning, encouraging confidence to explore new ideas, think about problems, take risks, make links and seek challenge.

DEVELOP high levels of engagement, curiosity, collaboration and cooperation. Children who are highly adept at managing their own behaviour in the classroom and in social situations.

EXPRESS themselves with confidence in a meaningful way. Respecting the opinions and values of themselves and others.

## 2. Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the [2021 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#).

This document also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.



### 3. Structure of the EYFS

Casterton Primary Academy does not operate a nursery. The children start school in the Reception year group.

### 4. Curriculum

At Casterton, all teaching staff deliver an EYFS curriculum through immersion in high quality teaching alongside an enriched environment. Our philosophy is to nurture every child's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, developing both skills and confidence as they take their first steps on their own unique journey of lifelong learning.

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2021 EYFS statutory framework.

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as 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:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Within this framework there are four guiding principles that shape our practice. These are:

1. Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured.
2. Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
3. Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
4. Children develop and learn at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

#### Implementation

Our approach is influenced by the work of educationalists, researchers, psychologists and practitioners who have guided our knowledge of how young children learn and how adults can support their learning. "Knowledgeable practitioners appreciate that adult-led learning offers a child something different from, but complementary to, child led learning and it is one without the other that leads to an impoverished educational experience." Fisher, 2016. At Casterton provision is underpinned by a complementary relationship between adult led, adult-initiated and child led



learning. (Definitions in glossary) We are ambitious in our approach using a continuous cycle of observation and assessment, planning/teaching, alongside structured and systematic lessons and guided group work.

## **4.1 Planning**

Throughout their time in the Reception Year our children partake in an ambitious curriculum which is designed and planned in a sequential way to ensure progress towards the end of reception goals. These goals are defined as Early Learning Goals (ELGs) The descriptors for these can be found in the appendix. As previously outlined, our curriculum incorporates learning through play, learning by adults modelling, by observing each other and through guided learning and direct teaching. It is also important to highlight that our plans are flexible to allow us to respond quickly to children's new interests and/or needs. Weaving throughout the EYFS curriculum at Casterton are three Characteristics of Effective Learning:

- playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

These elements underpin how we reflect on each child's development and adjust our practice accordingly. Supporting children in their individual learning behaviour and observing the context of children's play is essential. 'What children learn is important, but how children learn is even more important if they are to become learners in today's society.' Helen Moylett *How Children Learn*, Nancy Stewart (2011)

Staff plan activities and experiences for children that enable them to develop and learn effectively.

Staff also take into account the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

In planning and guiding children's activities, staff reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice.

## **4.2 Teaching**

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.

Examples of specific areas of teaching:

### **Reading**

#### **Phonics**

Systematic synthetic phonics is taught following Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised. Whole-class teaching takes place daily.



Phase 1 is taught continuously throughout EYFS. In Phase 1 phonics, children are taught about:

- Environmental sounds
- Instrumental sounds
- Body percussion (e.g. clapping and stamping)
- Rhythm and rhyme
- Alliteration
- Voice sounds

Typical activities for teaching Phase 1 phonics include 'listening' walks, playing and identifying instruments, action songs, learning rhymes and playing games like I Spy. This phase is intended to develop children's listening, vocabulary and speaking skills. Phase 2 begins when all pupils start school.

### **Daily Phonics Lessons**

We teach phonics for 30 minutes a day. In Reception, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible. Each Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.

- Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term.
- We follow the [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised expectations of progress](#). Children in Reception are taught to read and spell words using Phase 2 and 3 GPCs, and words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy.

We follow a teaching sequence which is implemented throughout the school ensuring that transition to Key Stage 1 is seamless.

### **Shared exploration of language**

At Casterton, we believe the key to success in reading is communication. Research clearly shows that the level of development in language and communication is the greatest predictor of success in later life. Within the EYFS communication and language development is a prime area of learning. At school children use language to:

- Build strong relationships.
- Communicate their ideas and their feelings.
- Think creatively and critically.
- As a tool for learning.
- Become confident with the written word.

(Julie Fisher, 2016)

The development of a young child's communication and language comes primarily from tuning in to conversations that are meaningful to the child. The preparation for all aspects of written language develops through one to one conversation with a responsive adult. Alongside quality interactions, rich and varied experiences ensure language provides the foundation of thinking and learning. Improving young children's vocabulary is paramount. Exploring and extending pupils' vocabulary is part of everyday teaching. Lessons are planned to enrich vocabulary and incidental opportunities are exploited. Vocabulary is discussed with the intention of building background knowledge so pupils can comprehend the content of a text. Shared reading Texts are shared as a whole class daily. 'Shared Reading' is a recognised strategy for teaching reading in which pupils and teacher read a text together



with a focus on a specific aspect. Through experiencing a variety of texts, fiction and non-fiction, children will become aware of the range of strategies required when reading for different purposes.

### **The million-word gap**

Young children who are read five books a day by the age of 5 have heard about 1.4 million more words than children who were never read to. Ohio State University, 2019

### **3 a day**

At Casterton, children are read to at least 3 times a day at school in addition to books provided for home reading. We share books with children for many reasons: enjoying stories together, linking with personal experiences, vocabulary building, developing imagination and language, learning about books. Listening to stories being read and reread helps children to gain insights into meaning and story structure.

### **Teaching Reading**

We teach children to read through reading practice sessions three times a week. These:

- o are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately six children
- o use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments and book matching grids on pages 11–20 of [‘Application of phonics to reading’](#)
- o are monitored by the class teacher, who rotates and works with each group on a regular basis.

Each reading practice session has a clear focus, so that the demands of the session do not overload the children's working memory. The reading practice sessions have been designed to focus on three key reading skills:

- o decoding
- o prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
- o comprehension: teaching children to understand the text.

In Reception these sessions start in Week 4. Children who are not yet decoding have daily additional blending practice in small groups, so that they quickly learn to blend and can begin to read books.

### **Home Reading**

Encouraging reading for pleasure is part of our school vision to create learners for life. All children have their own individual reading books; one phonetically decodable reading practice book and one library book to read for pleasure with an adult. The decodable reading practice book is taken home to ensure success is shared with the family. Children select library books to read for pleasure from a wide range of genres including picture books, non-fiction information books and poetry. If needed, staff will guide pupils towards a suitable selection of library books.

### **Writing**

Mark making and speech provide children with powerful tools for thinking, reasoning and problem solving. Time, space and attention is given to children's mark making, mathematical graphics, drawing and writing experiences. Throughout each day, children have opportunities for spontaneous mark making, drawing and writing in both the indoor and outdoor environment. Resources are carefully chosen, well organised and attractively presented, so that the children can decide independently how they want to represent their ideas and which medium would best suit their purpose. High value is placed upon imagination, ideas and self-expression demonstrated by the children, these are reflected by the adults and used as starting points for planning.



### **Story scribing – Continuous provision time**

In every classroom there are 'story tellers, picture makers and paper cutters, watching, listening and sounding forth' (Paley, 1990) and capturing a child's story idea is an essential part of becoming a writer. Children have an innate desire to dictate a story and all adults are always on hand to listen and record their ideas. Inspired by the work of Vivian Gussin Paley children are encouraged to act out their stories during shared carpet times. Each story is valued and precious. On entry to Reception children will often require much support in recording their story ideas. Anna Ephgrave (2011) details the process of story scribing as follows:

1. Adults are dictated to by the child, the adult says each word as it is written, pointing out gaps and punctuation. Re-reading and scanning and checking writing.
2. The children realise groups of letters make up a word and a group of words make sentences. The children then begin to write the initial sound of a word or a CVC word and the adult continues to write the other parts of the story.
3. Next more phonetically correct words are written by child along with common words, such as 'the'.
4. Gradually children take the pen more and more, until eventually they are writing complete phrases.

### **Talk for writing – Shared writing time**

A fun and creative approach developed by author, Pie Corbett to teach writing. Talk for writing is split into 3 distinct learning parts. Starting with the 'Imitate' stage and the enjoyment of sharing stories. A pictorial story map is created, and the children learn to retell the story by heart using the story map, expression and actions for support. Next the children 'Innovate' the story, make it their own e.g. changing the character or the setting. Finally, the children re-write the story in the 'Invention' stage writing their own version independently.

### **Handwriting**

Handwriting development in our EYFS includes a wide variety of activities planned to develop the fine motor skills required for the correct pencil grip. 'Funky Finger' activities may include threading, using tweezers, dough gym, spiders in jelly, cardboard weaving. The list is endless! From entering Reception, children are taught letter formation using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised letter formation phrase and pronunciation phrase for each grapheme.

### **Maths**

There's more to maths than counting! Children learn about maths through play and their daily experiences. And the more meaningful to them and hands on it is, the better. Our setting is full of mathematical opportunities for children to explore, sort, compare, count, calculate and describe. Providing a safe environment to be creative, critical thinkers, problem solvers and to have a go. Mathematics is identified as one of the specific areas of learning, alongside expressive arts and design, literacy and understanding the world. Our objective is to ensure that all children develop firm mathematical foundations in a way that is engaging, and appropriate for their age. This means actively learning using resources and activities provided in the environment. In addition, maths is explicitly taught daily as short whole class sessions and followed up with small group work within the environment. Concrete – Pictorial – Abstract Mastery of mathematical concepts in the EYFS takes the following approach: Concrete – children use concrete objects and manipulatives to help them understand what they are doing. Pictorial – children build on this concrete approach by using pictorial representations. These representations can then be used to reason and solve problems. Abstract – with the foundations firmly laid, children move to an abstract approach using numbers and key concepts with confidence. Maths is everywhere! Here are a few examples of how our environment promotes mathematical development:



- Sand & Water can develop mathematical concepts and language, e.g. heavy, light, empty, full, big, little.
- Malleable – dough can develop mathematical language – short, long, fat, thin. Children can make shapes of different dimensions – flat shapes, 3-d shapes.
- Imaginative play - set the table for dinner can develop counting skills. Sorting clothes into different colours, or different types of clothes, e.g. t-shirts and socks will develop knowledge of shapes and colours.
- Physical play can develop fine motor skills e.g. Sorting out a jigsaw, threading beads. Block play or playing with toy cars can help to develop sequencing according to size, colour. Playing with different sized blocks can help to develop an understanding of weight and dimensions. Tidying toys allows children to sort into different sizes and colours. It can also develop mathematical language – first, second, third, how many are blue, which is largest / smallest.
- Outdoors – Children may plant seeds this can develop understanding of time and the life cycle of plants. As the plants grow children use measures and develop mathematical language of size.
- Books & Rhymes - Enjoying stories and rhymes with a mathematical element, e.g. “One-two buckle my shoe” can develop number concepts, knowing direction that the print reads from left to right.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year 1.

## 5. Assessment

At Casterton Primary Academy, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

Within continuous provision our assessment strategy is 3-fold.

### 1. Observation

Throughout ‘continuous provision’ observation forms a fundamental aspect of the pedagogy of EYFS at Casterton Primary Academy. “Young children demonstrate language, mathematics, science, creativity, physicality – sometimes all within one activity – and the task of the practitioner is to make sense of what is seen, to recognise any significant steps in learning that may have taken place and to identify where help and support are needed to make further progress” Jan Dubiel, 2014.

Observation and responding to children’s thinking inform our planning of experiences and opportunities, how we create our environment for thinking, the strategies the adults use to extend learning (modelling, scaffolding, questioning, discussion, shared sustained thinking) and how we capitalise knowledge of children’s interests to ensure high levels of engagement. All adults record ‘Wow!’ moments – when a child does or says something that demonstrates progress or skill in a particular area.

### 2. Well Being





Alongside the use of observation as an assessment tool we also use practitioner knowledge of our children understand how focused and comfortable the children are in our setting. This has an empowering impact on our planning and can help to develop the huge potential of the children. As part of their observations, practitioners reflect on the children's well-being as feeling at ease, being spontaneous and free of emotional tensions is crucial to good mental health. It is linked to self-confidence, a good degree of self-esteem and resilience. Practitioners also observe and reflect the children's involvement. This refers to being intensely engaged in activities and is a necessary condition for deep level learning and development.

### 3. Summative Assessments

In addition to the continuous cycle of observation and formative assessment which informs each child's next steps, summative assessments are carried out for phonic development, the stable order principle in number and an assessment of each child's stage of development for each of the 7 areas of learning. These take place termly and informs planning of subsequent teaching and learning.



### The role of the adult

Research shows that progress will be significantly enhanced by the effective support and role models of adults within a high-quality learning environment. At Casterton, the role of the adult, particularly during continuous provision, is based upon the work of Marion Dowling and her book on supporting sustained shared thinking (2005). Within our setting interactions between children and adults will look like this:

- Tuning in to what is happening or a child's thinking.
- Showing genuine interest.
- Respecting children's own decisions and choices.
- Inviting children to elaborate.
- Recapping on what has happened so far.
- Offering personal experience.
- Clarifying ideas.



- Reminding.
- Using specific praise e.g. that is a good idea because...
- Offering an alternative viewpoint.
- Speculating/ using 'I wonder if...'

The definition of teaching in the Early Years as stated by OFSTED (2015); Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term which covers the many ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities: communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment they provide and the attention to the physical environment as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations.

Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do as well as take account of their interests and dispositions to learning (characteristics of effective learning), and use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitor their progress. "A key role of the early childhood educator is to sustain children's thinking and follow the momentum of their learning." Julie Fisher, 2016. Practitioners interact, they don't interfere.

### **The role of the environment**

The importance of each adult to support progression is crucial however, we equally understand that in times when a child is on their own independent learning journey the environment plays a significant role in development. "When it comes to what we have and where we have it, then nothing should be left to chance" Alistair Bryce-Clegg, 2015.

At Casterton each area of the classroom is informed by assessment. As the needs of the children change, as they grow and develop, so does their learning space. Using resources that are open ended encourage creativity, imagination and high order thinking skills. For example, the deconstructed role play may contain ribbon, lace, pinecones or lolly sticks. Outside role play is deconstructed with access to logs, planks, sheets and tyres. These resources can become anything and have unlimited potential. Our timetable allows for long uninterrupted periods of continuous provision that allow the children time to reach a deep level of involvement as they engage, play, investigate and talk. "One of the most powerful influences on development is what happens between people." Hobson, 2002.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child **starts reception**, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

At the **end of the EYFS**, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile reflects ongoing observations, and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child.

The profile is moderated internally (referring to the Development Matters [guidance](#)) and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.



## Impact

Children enter Key Stage One ready to begin the next chapter of the educational journey. They are equipped with a broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for future progress through school and life. In 2017, a 'Study of Early Education and Development: Good Practice in Early Education' was published which outlined 3 themes that underpin effective practice that are aligned with our ethos and development. At Casterton we;

1. Tailor practice to the needs of the children - the child is at the centre of our practice. We have a clear vision of what we want to achieve for the children in our care, and these clear goals inform all areas of our practice.
2. Invest in skilled and experienced staff - that support children to reach their full potential.
3. Operate an open and reflective culture – our culture is driven by continuous improvement. We seek out other settings and professionals to learn from, share and reflect practice. We recognise the knowledge and expertise of our own staff and value open discussion and staff consultation; and embedded within our school is a culture of self-evaluation as a means of driving continuous improvement.

## 6. Working with parents and carers

Parents are the first and most important influence on their child's development and future outcomes. Children have two main educators in their lives – their parents and their teachers. Therefore, the school and the parents all have crucial roles to play. The impact on a child's education is greater if parents and schools work in partnership.

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

Each child is assigned a key person who helps to ensure that their learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. The key person supports parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home. The key person also helps families to engage with more specialist support, if appropriate.

At Casterton, parents are invited to be involved in every step of a child's journey in education. Beginning with a pre-starting school meeting, followed up with home visits and the invitation for their child to attend several 'transition' sessions before the Autumn term commences. We use Class Dojo to communicate with parents and celebrate 'Wow' moments for each child. This enhances this special time in a child's life and captures children's experiences as well as helping us to monitor development and learning. Text, images and videos can be uploaded by parents to share learning and experiences from home via PC, tablet or mobile app - anywhere there's an online connection. Every entry helps to create a complete story of a child's time at school.

Throughout the year families are invited to 'Stay and Play' sessions in the EYFS classroom along with many whole school events e.g. parent café and art exhibitions. We pride ourselves on building positive relationships with the families of Casterton. Creating a 'triangle of trust' (Elfer et al.) between children, parents and practitioners. We understand that when parents relinquish part of the care and teaching of their child to the staff in our setting it is a big step. We create an environment that is conducive to interactions where all feelings can be taken into account. A warm welcome each day often leads to a deeper knowledge and understanding of each child and their family. As stated earlier, 'it is knowing the child and family that opens up endless possibilities for interactions that deepen the emotional



bonds between a practitioner and a child, and lead, in turn, to educational opportunities to support and extend learning.’ (Fisher, 2016)

## 7. Safeguarding and welfare procedures

All adults who come into contact with pupils and young people in their work have a duty of care to safeguard and promote their welfare. All adults receive appropriate Safeguarding training which is updated regularly. There are trained DSL staff within the EYFS along with whole school DSLs. Please see the Safeguarding Policy for further details which can be found on the academy website.

The Early Years environment is one which is heavily centred on learning through play. As such there is an emphasis on trial and error. We encourage the children to do this in a safe, nurturing environment. Children are taught to use equipment, resources and materials safely and are taught the reasoning behind the need for safety.

We promote good oral health, as well as good health in general, in the early years, for example by talking to children about:

- The effects of eating too many sweet things
- Eating a healthy diet
- The importance of brushing your teeth
- The importance of exercise.

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

At every annual review, the policy will be shared with the local academy council.

## Appendix 1. List of statutory policies and procedures for the EYFS

Statutory policy or procedure for the EYFS	Where can it be found?
Safeguarding policy and procedures	See child protection and safeguarding policy
Procedure for responding to illness	See health and safety policy
Administering medicines policy	See supporting pupils with medical conditions policy
Emergency evacuation procedure	See health and safety policy
Procedure for checking the identity of visitors	See child protection and safeguarding policy
Procedures for a parent failing to collect a child and for missing children	See child protection and safeguarding policy



Statutory policy or procedure for the EYFS	Where can it be found?
Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints	See complaints policy

