



Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

Reviewed on:	February 2026
Reviewed:	Annually
Staff Responsibility:	Nursery & Reception Leads Headteacher

To be read in conjunction with RSS Curriculum Policy and Learning and Teaching Policy. Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy.

The EYFS is a distinct and important phase in education. It places an equal priority on supporting children's social and emotional development, and their learning. The early years are the crucial time for developing children's enjoyment of learning, their engagement and motivation. It's an important time for children to develop their ability to persist and show gritty determination. The practitioners who work in the early years guide and shape young children. They create a sense of friendly co-operation. They also set clear rules and limits. This shows that they value each child as an individual, and help each child to live and learn alongside others. They play and have conversations with children. This is how practitioners help children to manage and enjoy being a group, share and take turns. In the early years, children learn new vocabulary and knowledge across different areas of learning. They learn to decide what they want to do, and how to solve different problems along the way. These experiences help them to develop skills which will benefit them throughout their education, and the rest of their lives.

Working with the revised Early Years Foundation Stage Principles into Practice JULIAN GRENIER

Our Early Years Foundation Stage is based upon the four principles below.

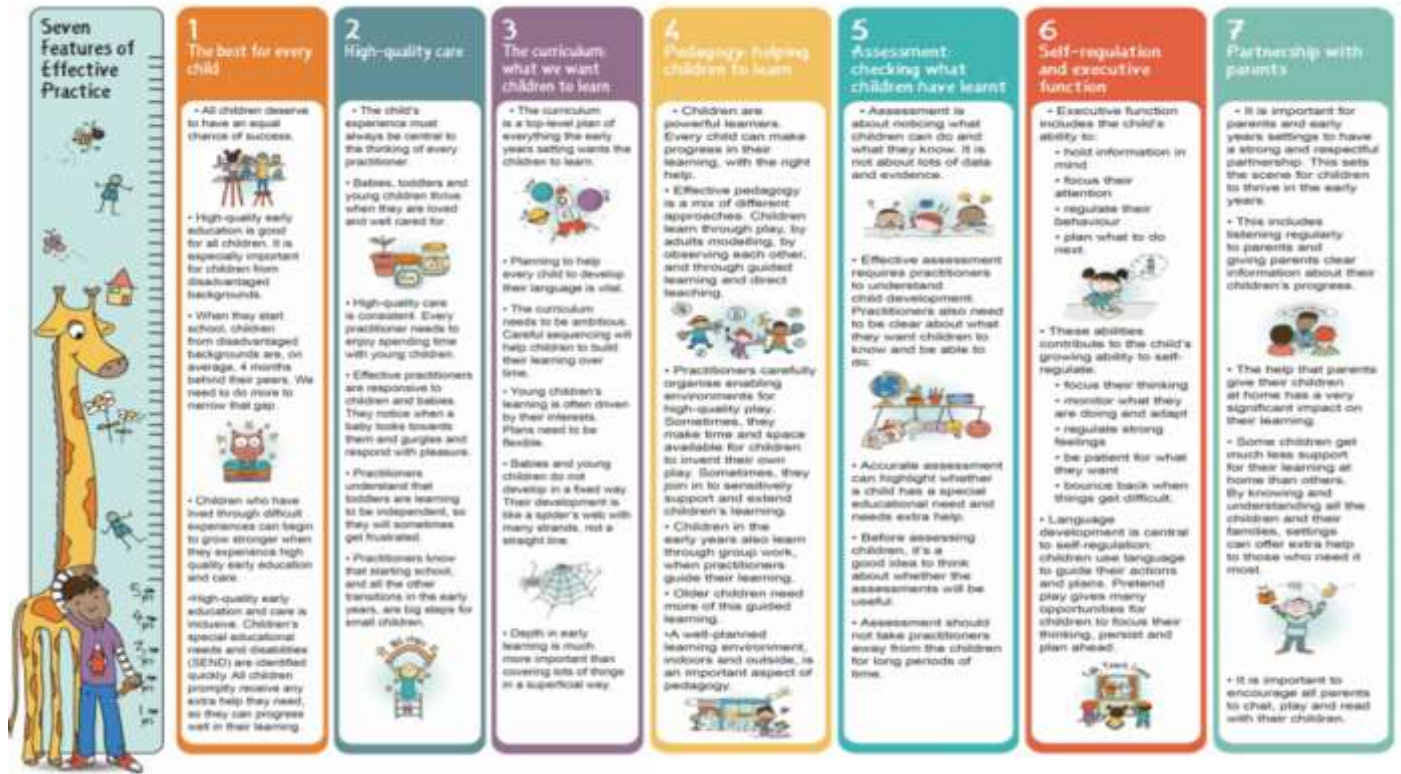
1. Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
2. Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**;
3. Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond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

All children develop in different ways and development is not a linear or automatic process. It depends on each unique child having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments that encourage their engagement and recognise their strengths.

All children have agency and curiosity to learn, and will interact with other people and the world around them in different ways. Understanding these different ways of knowing about the world is central to understanding who children are and how best to support their development.



The Seven Key Features of Effective Practice are implemented in our setting.



Inclusion



Identifying what each unique child “knows and can do” is the foundation of our inclusive early years practice. Some children we know will benefit from extra support and expert advice in order to get the most out of the opportunities for learning and belonging that our early years setting affords.

At Russell Street School we understand that inclusion is:

- A process of identifying, understanding and breaking down barriers to participation and belonging.
- Listening to children’s voices and recognising these are expressed in a range of ways, including non-verbally, is central to inclusive practice.
- Identifying what each unique child “knows and can do”.
- Understanding children as unique includes considering them in relation to others.
- Making sure that our early years practice meets the needs of all children.

Our practitioners know how to offer appropriate support through observation, consultation and careful listening, in inclusive provision which:

- places an emphasis on the changes that can be made to the environment to encourage play and active learning on the child’s own terms
- understands the starting points of every child, regardless of their chronological age
- accepts and understands children for who they are, including their capabilities to sense, feel, and their agency to choose the things they like and enjoy doing, as well as identifying the things that they do not like or enjoy
- takes a positive approach to observation that is child-centred, strengths-based and holistic
- promotes opportunities in practice to follow each child’s lead and listen to their voice, recognising that this will be expressed in a range of different ways, including non-verbally

- uses the EYFS framework, Birth to 5 Matters plus other guidance/research to support understanding of typical development, and to enable practitioners to have confidence to observe, question and consider why a child may be developing differently
- bases practice on awareness that development is not a linear progression and does not move at a standard rate, in order to promote insight into the appropriateness of the provision and resources for specific children
- develops good relationships with children and families through clear and open dialogue.

At Russell Street school all children and their families are valued. We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate because of differences. All children at Russell Street School are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or stage of learning. We teach the children that practice and effort lead to learning and improvement. Teachers plan activities that enable all children to access 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.

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. We allow children to take risks, but teach them how to recognise and avoid hazards both in the real and virtual world.

Play

At Russell Street School we understand that:

- Children have a right to play.
- Children's right to play is recognised as so vital to their wellbeing and development that it is included in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (1989).



Children have a right to play.

At Russell Street School we understand that play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. Play, both indoors and outdoors, makes a powerful contribution to children's wellbeing, development and learning. In play children can become deeply involved as they take things they already know and combine them in new ways so that their understanding deepens. In an enabling environment children choose to play, and are in charge of their play. Having freedom and time to play in an appropriately stimulating and resourced environment which is finely tuned for young children supports development and learning across all areas. Adults have a deep understanding of how play of different types supports children to develop and learn, and are able to discuss this with parents.

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. Adults model play and play sensitively with the children fitting in with their plans and ideas. 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.

Learners for Life: Characteristics of Effective Learning.



Education for children's futures requires supporting children's ability to learn and think for themselves. We cannot predict what challenges children will face in their unknown futures in a complex and rapidly changing world. The best preparation we can give them in their early years is to promote positive dispositions by providing living experiences of making choices, innovating, taking responsibility, facing challenge, thinking flexibly and critically, and learning how to learn so that they will be able to respond to their unfolding futures. Supporting children in the Characteristics of Effective Learning, a statutory element of the EYFS, is a central responsibility in early years provision. The three aspects are Playing and Exploring, Active Learning, and Thinking Creatively and Critically.

Children's emotional wellbeing is the first necessity for effective learning. Children need to feel safe within warm, loving and caring relationships. When children's primary need for emotional safety is met, they can then relax and move into exploring, taking risks, making discoveries, and experiences of the deep involvement through which they learn.

When there is support for children's sense of agency – knowing they have control of their own decisions, goals and actions rather than simply being passive in their experiences – children are likely to be effective in their learning. Experiences which endorse children's agency and autonomy reinforce and develop their learning powers.

Play and self-initiated activities are ideal opportunities to build Characteristics of Effective Learning.

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements

We take all reasonable steps to keep children safe and well.

The EYFS requires early years providers to show consideration of the following ten areas of safeguarding and welfare:

Child protection: being alert to any issues for concern in a child's life and following appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures

Suitable people: checking the suitability of practitioners and other people who have regular contact with children

Staff qualifications, training, support and skills: ensuring staff are sufficiently qualified and have the knowledge and understanding necessary for their role

Key person: assigning a named member of staff to build relationships with the child and parents in order to meet the child's individual needs

Staff-child ratios: ensuring children are adequately supervised at all times

Health: promoting the health of children and implementing procedures regarding illness, infection, food and drink, and accidents

Managing behaviour: using appropriate strategies to understand and manage unwanted behaviour

Safety and suitability of premises, environment and equipment: ensuring that indoor and outdoor space is fit for purpose and suitable for the age of the children and the activities offered

Special educational needs: putting the necessary arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice

Information and records: maintaining records and sharing information with parents and professionals as appropriate to meet children's needs

Care



At Russell Street School we understand that effective early years provision pays as much attention to children's care as it does to play and learning. We ensure respectful caregiving requires thoughtful organisation such as:

- **Organising for predictability and flexibility:** prioritising physical caregiving means planning for a balance between having familiar, predictable times of day and the flexibility to be responsive to children as they require.
- **Organising for individualised care within a group routine:** a balance needs to be struck between caring for the whole group and caring for individual children. Practices that treat children as if they have identical needs do not support children's positive self-concept or sense of autonomy.
- **Organising the environment and resources:** a care environment should contribute to the practical effectiveness of the practitioner through its layout and resourcing, and enable the child to feel safe, comfortable and capable, and able to influence what happens.

As a school we are committed to ensuring that children are well informed of healthy food choices and to be aware of foods that should be eaten less often. This is explicitly taught through planned lessons.

Day to day we use the guidance found in the 'Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance' (2025), which states that:

"Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, these must be healthy, balanced and nutritious."

Children are offered fruits and vegetables at snack time. The Nursery and Reception teams strongly advise parents to book a school lunch through Hobbs Catering. If a child brings in a packed lunch to school there is an expectation that the following is considered:

- make sure children eat a balanced diet covering the 4 main food groups
- avoid foods and drinks high in salt, sugar and saturated fat
- milk and water are the only drinks you should offer
- children should eat a variety of fruit and vegetables to access different vitamins and nutrients.

We are a 'water only' school and this is promoted from the very start. All packed lunches should only contain nut-free products to ensure that those children with allergies are not exposed to food containing those allergens that could cause an allergic reaction.

Here is a link to the website with more information:

[Nutritional Guidance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6839b752210698b3364e86fc/Early_years_foundation_stage_nutrition_guidance.pdf)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6839b752210698b3364e86fc/Early_years_foundation_stage_nutrition_guidance.pdf

A Unique Child

Child Development



At Russell Street 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. 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 good learning habits. They are taught to be observant, investigative, curious, determined, imaginative, adventurous, co-operative and to use reasoning. 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.

Self-Regulation



Self-regulation is now recognised as crucially important in young children’s development, strongly predicting children’s later success in relating to others and in their learning, while supporting lifelong mental and physical health. We understand that self-regulation depends on and grows out of co-regulation, where adults and children work together towards a common purpose, including finding ways to resolve upsets from stress in any domain and return to balance. The flexibility of brain cells and pathways in the early years means that the brain’s architecture is altered in response to the quality and consistency of co-regulation experiences, building the capacity for self-regulation.

Each experience of co-regulation helps to build the neural pathways that regulate emotion. Developing self-regulation, like many elements of development and learning, is not something children do by themselves. It is a process that grows out of attuned relationships where the caregiver and child are closely attentive to each other and engage in sensitive, responsive exchanges.

The foundations of emotional and cognitive self-regulation in the early years are integrally tied together, and both are necessary for behavioural self-regulation. Emotions running very high get in the way of cognitive aspects of self-regulation, as a child who is experiencing strong emotions will have difficulty holding back impulses, focusing attention, or thinking in flexible ways to solve problems. Over-arousal of the emotional part of the brain constrains the thinking part, so a child who is very upset will first need help through emotional co-regulation before they can begin to think about the situation.

Cognitive self-regulation includes:

Focusing attention

Executive function (usually defined as including mental flexibility, inhibitory control, and working memory)

Goal setting

Self-monitoring

Problem solving

Taking different perspectives (such as being aware of others thinking and picturing the future)

Decision making

Self-regulation is not the same thing as compliance, such as sitting still and listening when expected to.

Emotional Literacy



We use the Colour Monster books and materials across school to teach children emotional literacy vocabulary so that they can name emotions, talk about emotions, recognise emotions in others, learn strategies to regulate their emotions. By using these materials all children have a fully understood way of sharing their emotions and develop a large set of emotional vocabulary to enable them to do this successfully.

Positive Relationships

At Russell Street 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.

Parents as Partners

Parents and carers make a crucial difference to children's outcomes. The most important predictor of a child's future outcome is the quality of their home environment. At Russell Street School we therefore recognise that involving parents in their children's learning is the most significant factor in enabling children to do well despite disadvantage.

We do this by:

- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts our school
- Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school
- Encouraging parents to attend parents' evenings to discuss their child's progress
- Providing Reception parents with a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year
- Inviting parents to attend stay and play sessions
- Inviting parents to a curriculum meeting where reading and phonics teaching is explained
- Providing an extensive parents' EYFS guides (Nursery & Reception) where every aspect of the EYFS is explained in detail

Staff develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. We have good links with the local feeder nurseries. The EYFS teachers meet with staff to discuss new intake children.

Enabling Environments

Children are unique and holistic learners, thriving within environments that support their individual and diverse motivations, interests and needs.

At Russell Street School we offer an environment that supports children’s individual and diverse development needs. Our enabling environments offer children security, comfort, choice, engagement and opportunity. We know that children’s learning is best supported when they have opportunities which allow for movement and action, creativity and imagination and collaboration. Our setting offers time outdoors that benefits children by offering unique opportunities. Our resources are open-ended enabling children to access and combine processes of development and learning. Our learning spaces are inclusive, nurturing and supportive of all children. Our knowledgeable practitioners optimise the development and learning potential of every child.

We have planned our provision so that we enable:

- diverse forms of active play, both indoors and outdoors
- experiencing the real physical and natural world, as well as the social world
- the space and time for children to fully discover, test and revisit their ideas and theories
- cosy and quiet space for resting, sitting quietly and sensory engagement
- experiences in familiar and predictable spaces, and in those that are unfamiliar, complex and exciting
- routines and adult involvement which offer support for development and learning that may be planned or may arise informally, for example when a surprise event or spontaneous opportunity presents itself
- opportunities for children to explore things that they would not otherwise have access to
- exposure to things where specific skills need to be taught, which would only happen if an adult initiated it, e.g., cooking.

Learning and Development - Observation, assessment and planning



We know that children’s development and learning is best supported by starting from the child, and then matching interactions and experiences to meet the child’s needs. The observation, assessment and planning (OAP) cycle that we use above describes what is frequently called assessment for learning, or formative assessment.

Gathering Information and Using Information



On-going formative assessment is at the heart of our effective early years practice. It involves observation of children as a part of all activity, which is most often held in the mind of the practitioner but may sometimes be documented, using this rich information to understand how a child is developing, learning and growing, and then planning the next steps for the adults in supporting and extending the learning. The observation process also involves parents and carers, and other professionals. All views will be considered when planning what opportunities and experiences to offer the child next. Each child's unique pathway of development and learning involves many elements woven together in a holistic form. OAP makes this holistic development visible.

Our Curriculum

The curriculum the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) follow is outlined in the following document which can be downloaded by following this link: [Early years foundation stage \(EYFtutory framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/442422/Early_years_foundation_stage_EYF_tutory_framework_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

Read alongside RSS Teaching, Learning & Curriculum (TLC Overview)

Curriculum Intent

At Russell Street School we place great value on the development of children as individuals and providing them with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to prepare them for the challenges in Key Stage One and beyond. Our aim in the EYFS is to build strong foundations rooted in academic success as well as moral and spiritual development, so that ultimately our pupils can be successful, go on to be active citizens of society and happy, curious life-long learners. Our curriculum is therefore the cultural capital we know our pupils need so that they can gain the knowledge, skills and understanding they require for success. They can only do that if we embed the right habits for learning through the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning – Play and Exploration, Active Learning and Creative and Critical Thinking.

We teach pupils how to listen and speak effectively and meet the high expectations for behaviour by working together and being kind. As such, we prioritise personal, social and emotional development and communication and language in the Nursery curriculum. Our enabling environment and warm, skilful adult interactions support the children as they begin to link learning to their play and exploration. As the pupils move into Reception, we invest time and energy into helping pupils set and reflect on their own goals by aiming high and developing a love of reading, writing and number. This is delivered through a holistic curriculum which maximises opportunities for meaningful cross-curricular links and learning experiences as well as promoting the unique child by offering extended periods of play and sustained thinking, and sustained shared thinking, following children's interests and ideas. We value imagination and creativity and seek to create a sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning through an enabling continuous indoor and outdoor provision, alongside trips, visits and regular forest school sessions. Our investment in specialist teachers for P.E. and forest school mean that children continually receive high quality teaching in these areas.

Curriculum Implementation

Pupils learn through a balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities. The timetable is carefully structured so that children have rigorous directed teaching in English, maths and phonics everyday with regular circle time sessions to focus on PSED. These sessions are followed by group work where children work with a member of staff to develop their individual targets. This focused group time means the teacher can systematically check for understanding, identify and respond to misconceptions quickly and provide real-time verbal feedback which results in a strong impact on the acquisition of new learning.

Children are provided with plenty of time to engage in 'exploration' throughout the variety of experiences carefully planned to engage and challenge them in the provision. The curriculum is planned for the inside and outside classrooms and equal importance is given to learning in both areas. It is planned in a meaningful way to enable all aspects of the children's development including understanding the world and expressive art and design as well as to promote sustained thinking and active learning. Co-planning is led by the Year Leads every week. During these sessions the teachers reflect on three questions: "What do our focus individuals need to learn or are curious about? What embedded learning have we observed in this area? What can be changed to exploit the learning and interests of the children/individuals in this area?" In this way, we ensure that the children have agency over their environment and that the provision leads to depth of learning across the curriculum.

Reading is at the heart of our curriculum. Children follow the rigorous and highly successful Read, Write Inc program faithfully and use reading scheme books precisely matched to phonics teaching. Children meet good outcomes for reading with the majority of all children passing the Year One phonics screening. Explicit planned vocabulary teaching across the curriculum helps to close the vocabulary gap. Grandma Fantastic is used across EYFS to introduce pupils to complex vocabulary choices. High quality texts are read daily that ensure a high level of vocabulary experience and acquisition across the full curriculum.

We follow the Maths Mastery approach in Reception with an emphasis on studying key skills of number, calculation and shape so that pupils develop deep understanding and the acquisition of mathematical language. Pupils learn through games and tasks using concrete manipulatives which are then rehearsed and applied to their own learning during exploration. Nursery pupils begin to develop these key skills during daily maths sessions where they explore sorting, quantities, shape, number and counting awareness. These early mathematical experiences are carefully designed to help pupils remember the content they have been taught and to support them with integrating their new knowledge across the breadth of their experiences and into larger concepts.

Our inclusive approach means that all children learn together, but we have a range of additional interventions and support to enhance and scaffold for children's learning who may not be reaching their potential as well as to move on children who are achieving well. This includes, for example, the Nuffield Education Language Intervention, which is support for those children with additional speech and language needs and/or additional 'catch-up' provision in Maths. Staff also use RWI 1:1 tuition which is a focused intervention for phonics, sight words and blending.

We tailor our staff CPD to be early years specific and are focused on moderating outcomes across EYFS so that every member of our team feels confident in making accurate judgements about where individual pupils are and their next steps for learning.

Areas of learning

The EYFS is made up of seven areas of learning:

Prime areas

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Communication & Language

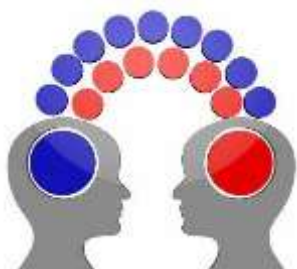
Specific areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

These areas are delivered throughout our curriculum and linked closely together. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities.

The EYFS classes have their own outdoor area used all year round in all weathers. Being outdoors encourages learning in different ways. It offers the children more opportunities to be creative and explore on a larger scale as well as to be physically active linking the indoors and outdoors together. Children will have opportunity to experience all seven areas of learning whether they decide to learn indoors or outdoors.

Sustained Shared Thinking (SST)



At Russell Street School we use Sustained Shared Thinking (SST) as a method to deepen our children's learning. SST is an episode in which two or more individuals 'work together'. This will most frequently be between an adult and a child, but

it may also be between children, if one child is a 'more knowledgeable other' (Vygotsky, 1978). The use of the phrase 'work together' underlines the emphasis on it being an active and creative process. Both parties must contribute to the thinking. This is not the traditional 'teacher' role, where information is presented by the teacher to be simply absorbed, unquestioned by the child. This is a true two-way exchange with information flowing both ways, so the teacher also learns from the child. This is the 'shared' element of SST. The conversation must develop and extend. This is the sustained part of SST. A problem might be solved, or a concept is explained, but the deep-level learning that stays with children and can be built upon, occurs when the thinking is extended. This embeds the knowledge and helps to make it transferable to other circumstances and situations.

Why is SST important?

SST is important because it supports children's deep level learning. Deep-level learning encourages children not to simply learn facts, but also to think critically, and supports a positive learning disposition. SST supports this in three ways: encouraging, modelling and extending children's thinking.

1. Firstly, thinking is encouraged by valuing and taking time to understand the child's perspective or ideas. This creates a virtuous cycle, where a child feels safe to propose more ideas or views.
2. Secondly, practitioners model thinking by demonstrating their thought processes 'out loud'. This gives children a structure or framework that they can then use for themselves. Interestingly, practitioners will have different thought-processes, so children will have a range of models by talking to different practitioners.
3. Thirdly, thought is extended, for both participants, as knowledge is verbally flowing between the two people.

We encourage all children to be 'sustained shared thinkers' means that they can then help each other. This is achieved by modelling the methods ourselves and encouraging children to join in the conversations, supporting the less confident children by being available, although not interrupting, and grouping children with a more knowledgeable other in the class. Children who hear and see thoughtful, sustained conversations are more likely to replicate these types of conversations.

An example of Sustained Shared Thinking is Austin's Butterfly.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqh1MRWZims>



Curriculum Impact

Our curriculum needs to meet the needs of our children, including our disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. We spend time looking at and evaluating how children are learning. This is achieved through talking to children, looking at their work, observing their learning experiences and analysing data and progress by year group, class, groups and individuals. Every member of staff uses **ongoing observational assessment** to identify children's starting points and plan experiences which ensure progress. We use this information to plan learning experiences and next steps so that knowledge and skills are built cumulatively. During each assessment window, three times a year, teachers update the progress children have made onto **Sonar** which allows us to assess the impact of teaching and evaluate whether it has been enough.

Our curriculum and its delivery ensure that all children make at least good progress. During their time in our EYFS, children need to make rapid progress so that we meet the national expectation for GLD at the end of the year. We believe high standards are due to the enriched play-based exploration alongside the rigour of assessment and teaching the children well as they move through the early years – a rich diet of balanced learning experiences is undoubtedly the best way to develop happy, curious children.