EARLY YEARS

Section 3 Evidence Document

Pupils' Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

Autumn 2026

Relationships → Emotional literacy → Regulation → Confidence → Learning

We deliberately build emotional literacy, positive relationships, self-regulation, confidence and physical wellbeing from the earliest stage.

In Early Years, physical health, emotional wellbeing, relationships, communication and learning are closely connected. We therefore do not treat wellbeing as a separate programme. It is woven through the curriculum, routines, play, adult interactions, behaviour approaches, assemblies, PSHE, relationships education and the way we celebrate children.

Our overarching aim is to help children develop emotional literacy, positive relationships, self-regulation, confidence, independence and healthy habits. We want children to become increasingly able to recognise and communicate how they feel, seek help appropriately, manage everyday difficulties, repair relationships and persevere when learning is challenging.

Emotional literacy, relationships and self-regulation

RULER provides a shared language and structure for developing emotional intelligence. We use it alongside our wider Early Years provision to help children recognise and name emotions, notice how feelings can affect behaviour, pause before reacting and develop strategies for managing strong feelings. Adults model and support these processes, with the level of support reducing as children become more independent.

	Example: Pre-Reception *We have introduced a mood meter into our classroom. We spoke about what the different colours mean and Eliana pointed to the yellow quadrant and said 'I feel happy at school'.* *Eliana an asked me what cheerful meant and I explained this to her.*

	Reception: *We were discussing different feelings. When talking about excitement, Leo said she would be excited if a friend came to play and Daphne said she'd be excited when she sees mummy after school.* *We talked about the meaning of being proud.*
	Year 1: *Today we talked about emotions and introduced our mood meter. Max understood all the emotions and said he was feeling sad. When asked why he was feeling sad Max said, "because I have two clubs today". I asked him if he liked school and he said yes but he was tired. We talked about what he might like about the clubs and he said he was shy to do LAMDA. It was really good that Max was able to express his emotions so well and we talked about the fun games he might play at LAMDA and all the positives he could look forward to. Max went off happy and enjoyed a lovely afternoon of friendship time with his friends.*
	Year 2: *The children come into class every morning and place their photograph on the meed meter. The adult then check in with every child to make sure they are OK.* *If a child moves their photo during the day, the adults then support in the moment.* *'The children in class all told me when Toby moved his photo to worried. When I check with him, he was worried about going to the dentist later that day. I was able to reassure him and share this worry with parents when they collected him'.*

Think Equal resources are also used to teach and discuss diversity, emotions, relationships and how we understand and respond to other people. Stories and discussion provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to consider different experiences, perspectives and feelings.

	Pre-Reception *Theme:* ***Is there anyone like me?*** *Celebrate individuality and uniqueness* *Discuss similarities and differences*
	Reception *Theme:* ***How we feel*** *Name 2-3 emotions* *Recognise that everyone has feelings*
	Year 1: Theme: ***Kitchi's moccasins*** *Understand the importance of respecting everyone's ideas, thoughts and feelings* *Think About being inclusive and kind to others who might be different to them*

	Year 2: *Theme* *The boy with the heavy heart* *Talk about their emotions* *Explain the importance of sharing emotions* *Demonstrate understanding of the emotions* *Demonstrate understanding of the emotions of others*

The Foundations for Life guidance supports this approach by emphasising the importance of social and emotional development in early childhood, including managing emotions, communicating with others, nurturing relationships, focusing thoughts, perseverance and bouncing back. It also highlights the importance of responsive adults, co-regulation, modelling and scaffolding.

Curriculum evidence

PSHE and assembly provision provides planned opportunities for children to develop knowledge, vocabulary and practical strategies relating to health, wellbeing, relationships, safety and personal development.

Area	Evidence in practice
Mental health and feelings	Recognising and naming feelings; understanding how feelings can affect people; talking about worries; seeking help; developing strategies for managing difficult feelings.
Relationships	Friendship, kindness, loneliness, working together, resolving disagreements, recognising others' feelings and knowing when to ask for help.
Difference and diversity	Think Equal and other stories, discussion and experiences help children explore diversity, difference, inclusion and respect.
Healthy lifestyles	Healthy food, physical activity, sleep and rest, hygiene, dental health, sun safety, medicines and the people who help us stay healthy.
Safety and responsibility	Personal safety, responsibility, choices, online safety and recognising when to seek help from a trusted adult.
Growth and resilience	Growth mindset, making mistakes, perseverance, self-regulation, fairness, responsibility and transition/new beginnings.

Communication and inclusion

Our Early Years teachers use picture and photographic cards to communicate simple instructions and support children to understand routines, expectations and activities. This provides an additional visual layer to spoken language, supports language development and is particularly inclusive for children who are learning English as an additional language (EAL).

We adapt our communication and support according to individual needs. Visual prompts, modelling, repetition, adult scaffolding and carefully paced interactions help children access learning and

develop increasing independence. We recognise that children may communicate or regulate in different ways and respond accordingly.

Assessment, individual next steps and family partnership

Children's individual next steps are identified from observations of their learning and development. These are tracked through Tapestry (our online journal) so that staff can monitor progress, identify what a child needs to practise next and use this information to inform future provision.

Tapestry also enables us to share learning and next steps with families. This supports a two-way partnership in which parents can see what their child is working towards and contribute to the learning process at home.

An example of this was a mathematical sorting activity in our Pre-Reception class, where a child initially needed support to achieve the intended sorting objective. The next step was shared with the parent through Tapestry. The parent then practised this next step at home. When the child returned to school, the child was able to achieve the sorting objective successfully. This provides evidence of assessment informing the next step, communication with the family and the impact of that partnership on the child's progress.

	Today we completed a sorting activity. Milan was able to identify and name the different colours of the buttons. He needed support with sorting the buttons. We spoke about the word 'same' and I modelled finding groups that were the same colour. Next step: practice sorting items by colour / size and type at home e.g. can you find all the white buttons, can you find all the big toys, can you find all the shells. Continue to develop language to support this such as 'same' and 'different'.

	**At home:** We practised sorting with Duplo and hair clips. Milan grouped them by colour and size, followed instructions like “find the same ones,” and also said “the same” himself when matching colours.
	Milan wanted to complete the sorting activity again this morning. Today he had greater confidence to sort by colour and was able to find all of the green ones independently. He used the word ‘same’ whilst completing the activity. Thank you for your support at home with this as well. Keep up the super work Milan 🌟

Behaviour, relationships and recognition

We have clear and consistent expectations for behaviour. In Early Years, we recognise that behaviour is also a form of communication. Adults help children understand expectations, recognise the impact of their actions, regulate strong feelings and repair relationships. We maintain appropriate boundaries while teaching the skills children need to meet them.

Recognition systems make the behaviours and dispositions we value visible to children. These include:

- Learn Award certificates – recognising outstanding achievement and positive working attitudes.
- Marvellous Manners badges – recognising polite, respectful behaviour.
- Wonderful Walking badges – recognising safe and appropriate movement around school.
- Kindness Star badges – recognising kindness towards others.
- Playground Friend badges – recognising positive friendship, inclusion and cooperation.
- Creativity Star – recognising creative thinking, the arts, singing, drama, imagination, building and related creative qualities.
- Fantastic Felstedian – recognising the school values of Welcoming, Respectful, Adventurous, Fun and Inspirational.

These are not simply rewards for compliance. They help children understand and name the qualities and behaviours that contribute to a positive community.

Playtimes

We value playtimes as an important part of the school day. Playtimes provide our children with valuable opportunities to interact with one another and apply their developing skills in relationships, self-regulation, self-awareness, conflict resolution and emotional development in real life situations.

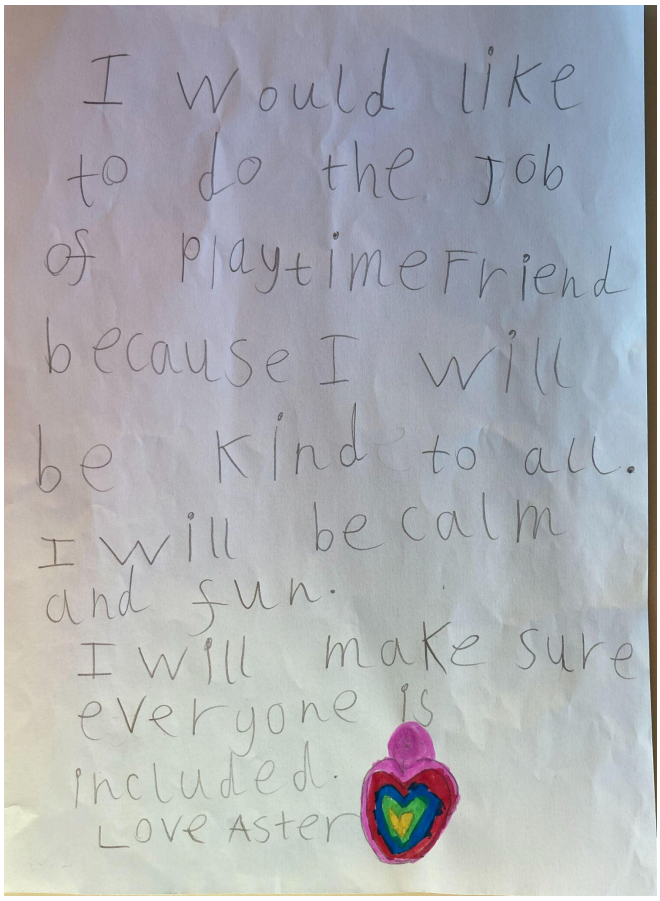
We ensure that children have access to a wide range of play experiences and resources that reflect their individual needs and interests. Appropriate adult supervision provides opportunities for staff to support children 'in the moment', helping them to develop positive relationships, resolve relational conflicts and regulate their emotions.

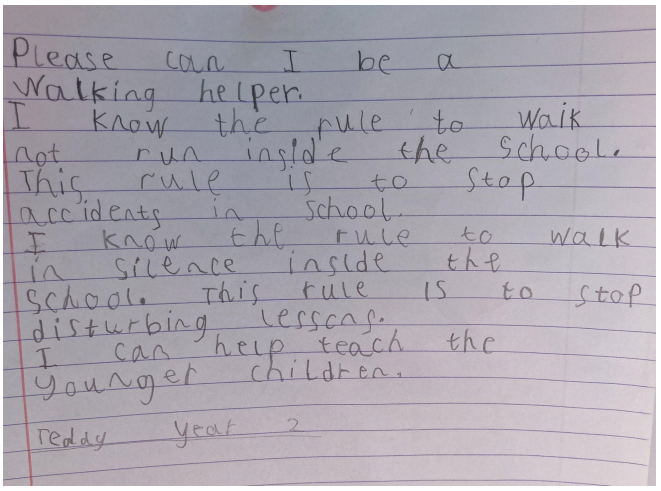
Leadership Roles

Our Year 2 children have taken on leadership roles across Pre-Prep. The children applied for different roles, wrote letters, and are taking on these responsibilities to support the children in Pre-Reception, Reception and Year 1.









How we identify impact

We look for observable changes in children rather than relying only on whether children appear happy. Evidence of developing wellbeing and emotional competence includes children increasingly being able to:

- Name or communicate feelings and needs
- Seek an adult or trusted person when support is needed
- Use a familiar strategy to manage a strong feeling
- Recover from disappointment or a difficult experience
- Listen to and recognise another person's feelings
- Join play and develop friendships
- resolve or seek help with disagreements
- Follow routines and expectations with increasing independence
- Persevere when learning is challenging
- Talk about healthy and safe choices.

Three impact examples

Area	Starting point	Intervention	Evidence of impact

Emotional regulation	Child needed adult to manage big feelings	RULER language, co-regulation, visual prompts	Names feeling, seeks help and uses strategy with less adult support
Friendship	Child found sharing/ turn-taking difficult	Adult modelling, friendship language, Blueprint/empathy work	Recognises another child's feelings, negotiates and repairs friendship
Confidence	Child reluctant to speak/participate	Small-group support, encouragement, Creativity/ Learn Award recognition	Volunteers ideas, participates more readily and perseveres with challenge

Evidence mapped to ISI Section 3

ISI	Focus	Early Years evidence
63	Curriculum, ethos, respect, protected characteristics, self-knowledge, self-esteem and confidence	PSHE and assembly planning; RULER; Think Equal; stories and discussion; adult modelling; recognition of kindness, respect, creativity and school values; visual communication supports; individual observations and next steps.
64	PE and personal/health education	Physical activity, outdoor play, healthy lifestyle teaching, food, sleep/rest, hygiene, dental health, sun safety, medicines and people who help us stay healthy.
65	Relationships Education/RSE	Developmentally appropriate work on family and friendships, kindness, loneliness, resolving disagreements, hurtful behaviour, privacy, physical contact, permission, unsafe situations and trusted adults, supported by stories and discussion.
66	Behaviour policy, sanctions, mobile phones and restrictive interventions	Early Years staff implement clear expectations and appropriate responses to behaviour, with an emphasis on co-regulation, teaching self-regulation, understanding behaviour as communication and repairing relationships. Whole-school policy and procedures apply.
67	Fair and consistent implementation	Shared expectations, adult modelling, consistent language, visual prompts and recognition systems support consistent practice. Individual needs are considered when adapting support.
68	Prefect systems	Not a principal Early Years evidence area. Relevant whole-school systems can be discussed where appropriate.
69	Anti-bullying strategy	Early Years foundations include kindness, inclusion, respect, friendship, recognising feelings, understanding that hurtful behaviour is not acceptable and telling a trusted adult. Assemblies include anti-bullying themes.
70	Personal, emotional and physical programme below compulsory school age	This is a core Early Years strength: integrated PSHE, RULER, Think Equal, relationships work, physical health education, play, routines, adult modelling, co-regulation and individual next steps.

71	Safe premises and accommodation	Early Years staff maintain safe learning and play environments and follow school procedures. Relevant premises, medical and therapy evidence can be provided through whole-school documentation.
72	Supervision	Supervision is embedded in Early Years routines, transitions, indoor/outdoor provision and play. Staff use appropriate oversight and support according to children's needs.
73	Attendance register	Attendance is managed through whole-school procedures.
74	Health, safety and fire evacuation	Children are taught and supported to follow safety routines. Fire and wider health and safety procedures are implemented through whole-school systems.
75	First aid	First aid provision and procedures are supported through whole-school arrangements and relevant trained staff.
76–77	Boarding accommodation and food/drink	Not a principal Early Years evidence area; relevant whole-school/boarding evidence can be provided where applicable.