Castle School

Together We Learn

Early Years and KS1 Curriculum

A guide for parents, carers, staff and visitors.

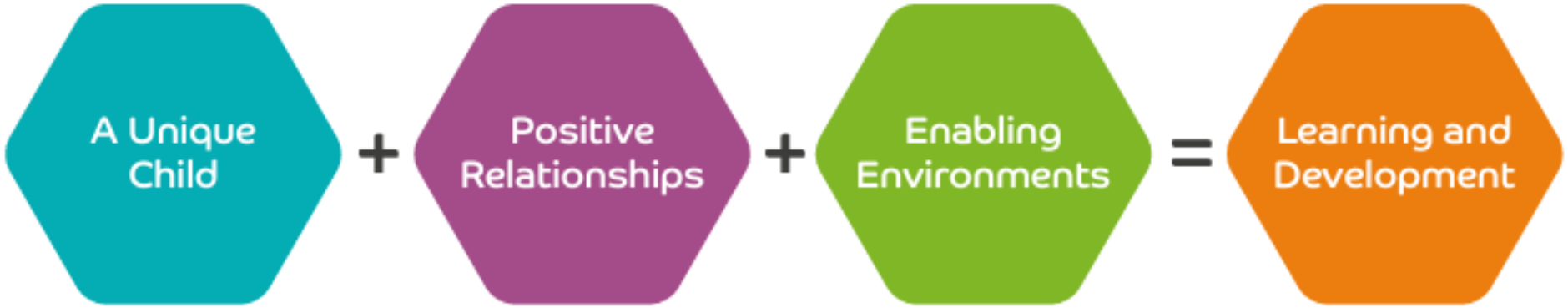
Be Confident

Be Kind

Be Creative

Early Years and Key Stage 1 – Fields Site

The Early Years and Key Stage 1 Curriculum is based on the key principles of Birth to 5 Matters.



A Unique Child

Each child is unique, and while we can be guided by an understanding of some general patterns of development from pre-birth into early childhood, progression is uneven and unfolds differently for each individual child. At Castle School, we understand that each child is unique and that experiences during the early years strongly influence a child's future development. We strive to support development and scaffold learning and build on what has already been acquired.



Positive Relationships with Parents

Parents and carers make a crucial difference to children's outcomes. At Castle School we recognise parents' commitment to their children's early development and education and give priority to working with them. The most important predictor of children's future outcomes is the quality of the home learning environment, so involving parents in their children's learning is the most significant factor in enabling children to succeed. The benefits are greatest when practitioners and families work in respectful partnership to develop ways to support children both at home and at Castle School.



Positive Relationships with Staff

Warm, trusting relationships with knowledgeable adults support children's learning more effectively than any amount of resources and at Castle School we pride ourselves on the excellent relationships we build with our young people. Children who feel secure and listened to will turn to their trusted adults to share their experiences. Emotional wellbeing is the first necessity for successful learning, and adults who respect children's feelings, show empathy, and support children to manage their feelings are helping to lay the foundations for development and learning. The quality of adults' interactions with children has an immense impact on whether their experiences result in making the most of the learning opportunities.

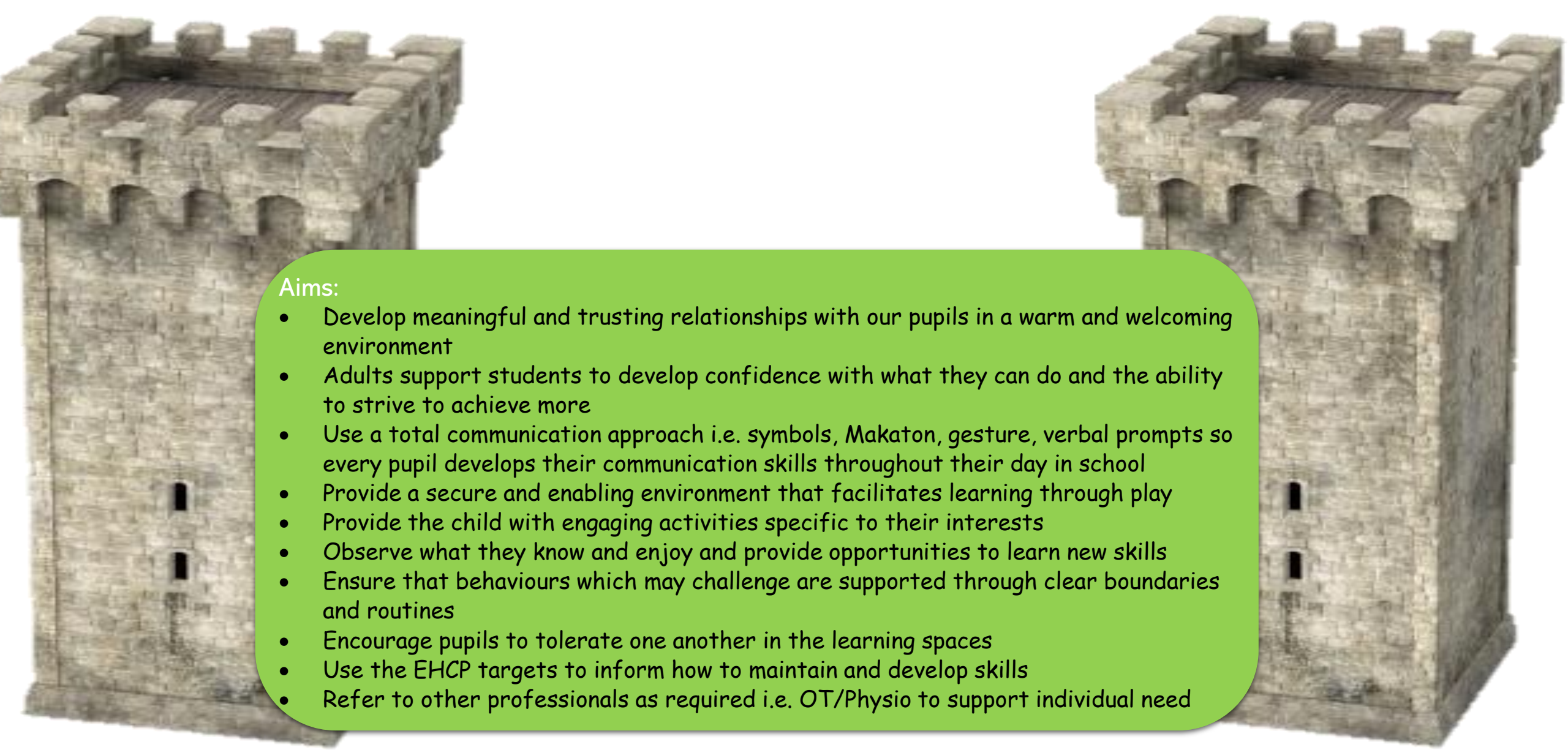


Enabling Environments

Children require a wealth of possibilities within varied contexts, and this is best supported within stimulating and challenging environments that value exploration and play. We have a large soft play room indoors and the outdoors offers unique possibilities: we are fortunate to be able to provide an engaging outside area with attached wooded area for our learners.

We plan activities where children can explore in independent exploration and enquiry, connecting with other children, adults and the natural world as they benefit from freedom of movement and activity, within a framework of supportive adult guidance.





Aims:

- Develop meaningful and trusting relationships with our pupils in a warm and welcoming environment
- Adults support students to develop confidence with what they can do and the ability to strive to achieve more
- Use a total communication approach i.e. symbols, Makaton, gesture, verbal prompts so every pupil develops their communication skills throughout their day in school
- Provide a secure and enabling environment that facilitates learning through play
- Provide the child with engaging activities specific to their interests
- Observe what they know and enjoy and provide opportunities to learn new skills
- Ensure that behaviours which may challenge are supported through clear boundaries and routines
- Encourage pupils to tolerate one another in the learning spaces
- Use the EHCP targets to inform how to maintain and develop skills
- Refer to other professionals as required i.e. OT/Physio to support individual need

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Playing and Exploring

ENGAGEMENT

Finding out and exploring
Playing with what they know
Being willing to 'have a go'

Active Learning

MOTIVATION

Being involved and concentrating
Keep trying
Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

Creative and Critical Thinking

THINKING

Having their own ideas
Making links
Working with ideas

Areas of Learning and Development	Birth to 5 Matters Aspects
Prime Areas	
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Making Relationships
	Sense of Self
	Understanding Feelings
Physical Development	Moving and handling
	Health and Self-care
Communication and Language	Listening and Attention
	Understanding
	Speaking
Specific Areas	
Literacy	Reading
	Writing
Mathematics	Mathematics
Understanding the World	People and Communities
	The World
	Technology
Expressive Arts and Design	Creating with Materials
	Being Imaginative and Expressive

Playing and Exploring

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). Play both indoors and outdoors is also a fundamental commitment to children throughout the EYFS. At Castle School we recognize that the importance of play goes beyond the pupils age and needs to continue to be a regular opportunity as they move through school 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. You will see this in many of our younger class groups at Castle School.



Active Learning

In play, children also have opportunities to engage in Active Learning, as they are intrinsically motivated toward their own goals. By tuning in to the children and providing time, space and resources for children to manage, adults can foster children's growing powers to concentrate with deep involvement. At Castle School, we support resilience by helping children to develop a view that not getting the result they (or others) wanted or were expecting is not a failure, but an opportunity to try again, learn and develop, and that they can keep on trying and persisting even in the face of challenge or difficulties.



Thinking Creatively and Critically

Children think of their own ideas, imagine possibilities, and creatively combine ideas in spontaneous ways. They make meaning as they notice patterns and build their own working theories to make sense of their experiences. With support, children become increasingly able to monitor their efforts, to alter their approach flexibly when needed, and to review how well it went and what they have learned. Adult-planned activities can offer scope for children to reinforce and develop their self-regulation and learning powers, when they are organised to include opportunities for children to explore, follow their interests and think for themselves – building on children's engagement, motivation, and both creative and critical thinking.



Prime Areas

The three Prime areas, Personal, social and emotional development (PSED), Communication and language (CL), and Physical development (PD), describe universal core aspects of early child development. They are time-sensitive because of biological factors that enable rapid brain connections throughout early childhood. At Castle School, we believe it is crucial that children's interactions and experiences in the first few years support development in these fundamental areas to ensure strong foundations in development and learning. Therefore, they are the areas which we focus on at our Fields Site.



Personal Social and Emotional Development

Making Relationships, Sense of Self, Understanding Feelings

Personal, Social and Emotional Development is fundamental to all other aspects of lifelong development and learning and is key to children's wellbeing and resilience. For our young children to flourish, we need to pay attention to how they understand and feel about themselves, and how secure they feel in close relationships which develops their capacities to make sense of how they and other people experience the world. Children's self-image, their emotional understanding and the quality of their relationships affect their self-confidence, their potential to experience joy, to be curious, to wonder, and to face problems, and their ability to think and learn.



Physical Development

Moving and Handling, Health and Self Care

Physical development underpins all other areas of a child's learning and development. Extensive physical experience in early childhood puts in place the neurological, sensory and motor foundations necessary for feeling good in your body and comfortable in the world. Each child's journey relies on whole-body physical experiences and while biologically programmed, the unfolding of this complex, interconnected system requires repeated movement experiences that are self-initiated and wide-ranging. We provide opportunities to move about in our large classroom spaces, our designated soft play room and in our beautiful outdoor garden space. We also provide activities and resources to support the development of fine and gross motor skills as part of our extensive curriculum.



Communcation and Language

Listening and Attention, Understanding, Speaking

Young children use their bodies, facial expressions, gestures, sounds and movements to seek connections and respond to those around them. They depend on back-and-forth responsive interactions to develop confidence as effective communicators and language users. We use Intensive Interaction techniques to encourage this in the Fields Setting. Communication and language lay a foundation for learning and development, guiding and supporting children's thinking while underpinning their emerging literacy. As children grow, they begin to be aware of and explore different sounds, symbols and words in their everyday worlds. A language-rich environment is crucial and at Castle School we use a total communication approach i.e. objects, symbols and Makaton sign to build the foundations required for children to develop these skills.



Literacy

Reading and Writing

Literacy is about understanding and being understood. Early literacy skills are rooted in children's enjoyable experiences from birth of gesturing, talking, singing, playing, reading and writing. Music is a daily part of building these early literacy skills at the Fields Site. Learning about literacy means developing the ability to interpret, create and communicate meaning through writing and reading in different media, such as picture books, logos, environmental print and digital technologies. All the pupils have access to story books during the day in their classes and the outside area. We send home a story book to share with parents every week and for those learners who are ready to read, they will also have a reading book to share in school and at home.



Mathematics

Mathematics for young children involves developing their own understanding of number, quantity, shape and space. Young children have a natural interest in quantities and spatial relations – they are problem-solvers, pattern-spotters and sense-makers from birth. This curiosity and enjoyment should be nurtured through their interactions with people and the world around them, drawing on their personal and cultural knowledge. Children should freely explore how they represent their mathematical thinking through gesture, talk, manipulation of objects and their graphical signs and representations.



Understanding the World

People and Communities, The World, Technology

Understanding the World provides a powerful, meaningful context for learning across the curriculum. It supports children to make sense of their expanding world and their place within it through nurturing their wonder, curiosity, agency and exploratory drive. Our pupils take weekly walks, in small groups, into our local community and local trips are organized to visit places linked to our termly topics.

Rich play, virtual and real world experiences support learning about our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world and how to stay safe within it. They also cultivate shared meanings and lay the foundation for equitable understandings of our interconnectedness and interdependence.



Expressive Arts and Design

Creating with Materials, Being Expressive and Imaginative

Children use a variety of ways to express and communicate, through music, movement and a wide range of materials. Creative thinking involves original responses, not just copying or imitating existing artworks. Expressive Arts and Design fosters imagination, curiosity, creativity, cognition, critical thinking and experimentation and provides opportunities to improvise, collaborate, interact and engage in sustained shared thinking. The Multi-sensory, first-hand experiences, which we provide at Castle School, help children to connect and enquire about the world.



How we organise learning – Taught Curriculum

The sequence of teaching has been devised to promote learning, progression and a deep understanding of key concepts that are fundamental to future independence.
We have identified nine termly themes that act as a vehicle and stimulus to support curriculum delivery.

Year 1	 All about me	 On the farm	 At the seaside
Year 2	 All about me	 Our city	 In the woods
Year 3	 All about me	 In the home	 At the Zoo



Long Term Plan KS1 – Fields Site		
Year One		
All About Me Autumn Term	On the Farm Spring Term	At the Seaside Summer Term
Autumn, Windy, Remembrance Day, Bonfire Night, Diwali, Christmas	Winter, Cold, Valentines Day, Mother's Day, Easter Celebrations	Summer, Hot, Minibeasts, May Day, Transitions
Year Two		
All About Me Autumn Term	In the City Spring Term	In the Woods Summer Term
Autumn, Windy, Remembrance Day, Bonfire Night, Diwali, Christmas	Transport, Winter, Cold, Valentines Day, Mother's Day, Easter Celebrations	Summer, Hot, Minibeasts, May Day, Transitions
Year Three		
All About Me Autumn Term	In the Home Spring Term	At the Zoo Summer Term
Autumn, Windy, Remembrance Day, Bonfire Night, Diwali, Christmas	Winter, Cold, Valentines Day, Mother's Day, Easter Celebrations	Summer, Hot, Minibeasts, May Day, Transitions

How we sequence learning and plan for progression

All learning is carefully sequenced and paced based on the needs of each of the learners.

There are opportunities to practice and consolidate skills and knowledge,

Those pupils that are becoming more formalised learners will be stretched through individual and small group interventions.



T

- Begin to show awareness and interest in the light environment.
- Respond to light and visual stimuli with sounds or gestures. Begin to notice cause and effect.

L

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Light room 11.00 -11.30

- Allow learners some time to get comfortable with the light room environment. Encourage them to explore the glowing toys and lights.
- Use the glowing objects to attract the children's attention. Move them slowly to encourage tracking and eye movement.
- Use your facial expressions. Smile and make gentle eye contact.
- Imitate any movements or sounds the children make, showing that you are focused on them.
- Model simple back-and-forth games, like passing a glowing ball or rolling it gently towards the children.
- When a learner shows interest (through gaze, gesture, or sound), respond immediately to maintain engagement.
- Pay close attention to each child's cues and adjust the stimulus level accordingly.
- Use your body language, voice, and facial expressions effectively to communicate friendliness and warmth.
- Be patient and give the learners ample time to respond to interaction attempts.
- Reinforce interactions by mirroring and celebrating all forms of communication, however subtle.

S

- Encourage to use descriptive language for lights and colours.

R

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- E
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- Respond to light and visual stimuli with sounds or gestures. Begin to notice cause and effect.

R

- Encourage to use descriptive language for lights and colours.
- Engage in creative exploration of light and shadow.
- develop awareness of colour and shape.

E

- Encourage to use descriptive language for lights and colours.
- Engage in creative exploration of light and shadow.
- develop awareness of color and shape.

Assessment

Assessment is an ongoing process and is an integral part of our teaching and learning. It allows us to identify what pupils already know and can do and helps us to plan the next steps in learning. It also helps us to identify any barriers to learning and then put in the necessary support.

We have designed our own bespoke assessment frameworks, adapted to the needs of our pupils.

Learners use the Castle Rainbows, which are adapted from the Birth to 5 Matters and EYFS goals.

