



Strong Foundations Booklet

How children build foundational
knowledge in the first years of
school

Welcome to Gawber

At Gawber, we believe every child should feel known, valued and excited to learn. Our Early Years and Key Stage One team provides a nurturing, language-rich environment where children develop firm foundations for learning and a strong sense of belonging. Through purposeful play, high-quality interactions and carefully planned experiences, we help children thrive—academically, socially and emotionally.

This booklet offers a clear overview of our approach across key strands: **Belonging, Oracy, Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Health and Physical Development, Learning Behaviours, Executive Function, English Mastery** (Reading and Writing), **Maths Mastery**, and **Transitions**. Each section explains what children experience at Gawber and how our practice to help them achieve to their full potential.

We work in close partnership with families and value the support of governors and the wider community. If you would like to see our provision in action or have any questions, please get in touch—we're always happy to help.

Belonging – Setting, Community and Inclusion

At Gawber, children develop a strong sense of belonging when they feel safe, welcomed and included, learn about their local community, and celebrate diversity in all its forms. Through early identification of needs, close partnerships with families and nurturing, adaptive practice, we ensure every child is supported to thrive and reach their full potential.

In FS2, the focus is on helping children feel secure, welcomed and ready to learn:	• Children build strong relationships with key adults who provide reassurance, warmth and consistency. • They learn classroom routines and expectations, developing respect for their environment and the people around them. • Children begin to learn about their local village and school community through stories, simple maps, photographs and local walks. • Diversity is introduced through picture books, circle times and inclusive play experiences, helping children recognise similarities and differences in a positive way. • Staff identify any early emerging needs, working closely with parents and external agencies where required to provide early and effective support.
In Year 1, children build on early foundations and develop wider awareness and responsibility:	• Children show growing confidence and independence, forming supportive relationships with peers and adults across the school. • They take increased responsibility for classroom organisation, shared spaces and resources, demonstrating respect and care. • Their understanding of the local community deepens through simple research, local visits, history units and geography topics linked to Barnsley and Gawber. • Children begin to discuss diversity more explicitly through stories, assemblies and PSHE, recognising that people may differ in background, beliefs or needs. • Staff continue to monitor social, emotional and learning needs closely, adapting teaching and maintaining strong communication with families.
By Year 2, children demonstrate a more mature sense of belonging and responsibility:	• Children act as role models for younger pupils, showing respect, kindness and understanding in their daily interactions. • They take greater ownership of their learning environment, demonstrating pride in their classroom and contributing to whole-school routines. • Their knowledge of the wider community grows through more detailed learning about local landmarks, significant people and their place within the broader world. • Children show a deepened understanding of diversity and inclusion, discussing fairness, equality and respect in age-appropriate ways. • Additional needs are well understood, with personalised support helping each child achieve their potential and transition confidently toward Key Stage 2.

Oracy

At Gawber, children develop confident communication skills as they learn to express their needs, ideas and feelings in clear, well-structured sentences and engage in purposeful talk with adults and peers. Storytelling, rich language routines, emotional literacy teaching and regular opportunities for performance and shared reading all help build children's vocabulary, confidence and ability to communicate effectively.

In FS2, the focus is on building secure foundations for confident communication:	• Children build strong relationships with key adults who model clear, warm language and encourage children to express their needs, ideas and feelings in full sentences. • Daily storytelling, role-play and <i>Talk Through Stories</i> sessions help children listen carefully, join in with refrains and begin to retell familiar stories using new vocabulary. • Staff teach early emotional literacy through high-quality interactions and circle times, helping children name and talk about their feelings. • Purposeful talk is built into play, with adults modelling turn-taking, questioning and sentence stems to support focused, structured communication. • Staff at Gawber notice emerging speech, language and communication needs early and work closely with families and external agencies to ensure children receive timely support.
In Year 1, children build on these early foundations to speak with increasing confidence and purpose:	• Children use full, well-structured sentences to explain their ideas, give simple reasons and respond appropriately to peers and adults. • Through daily <i>Talk Through Stories</i>, shared reading, drama and storytelling, children build ambitious vocabulary and develop clearer sequencing in oral retelling. • Emotional literacy is extended through PSHE, assemblies and story discussions, supporting children to express feelings and respond sensitively to others. • Oracy supports learning in all subjects: children describe, explain, compare and recount using subject-specific vocabulary. • Opportunities for performance—poetry reading, small presentations and collaborative learning—build confidence, fluency and awareness of audience.
By Year 2, children demonstrate a more mature command of talk for learning and for different audiences:	• Children communicate clearly and confidently, building on others' ideas, asking questions and explaining their thinking using a wider range of sentence structures. • They retell stories with increasing detail, expression and vocabulary, and begin to plan short spoken presentations with logical sequencing. • Discussions deepen as children use talk to reason, justify opinions and compare viewpoints in age-appropriate ways. • Daily reading, poetry recital and cross-curricular discussions continue to strengthen fluency, expression and engagement with ambitious language. • For children with identified communication needs, Gawber provides personalised scaffolds and targeted support to ensure they can participate fully and progress towards Key Stage 2 expectations.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Children's social and emotional wellbeing flourishes in Gawber's nurturing, relationship-focused environment, where they feel they belong, learn emotional vocabulary and build positive relationships. Early identification of additional needs and carefully tailored support enable every child to grow in confidence, independence and resilience.

In FS2, the focus is on building secure relationships, emotional awareness and confidence:	• Children form close, trusting relationships with key adults who provide warmth, consistency and a nurturing, family-focused ethos that helps them feel safe and settled. • Staff teach emotional literacy explicitly through high-quality texts, visuals and daily interactions, supporting children to recognise, label and begin to manage their feelings. • At Gawber, we have a 'whole school' approach to supporting our youngest children, with upper Key Stage Two children providing 'big brother/big sister' peer play for children who need support at lunchtimes. • Through supported play, turn-taking games and shared activities, children learn early social skills such as sharing, cooperating and resolving simple conflicts. • Independence is encouraged through routines that build confidence—hanging up belongings, choosing activities and trying new challenges with gentle adult support. • At Gawber, staff identify emerging social or emotional needs early and work closely with families and external agencies to provide timely, tailored support.
In Year 1, children deepen their social understanding and emotional regulation:	• Children show growing confidence in building friendships, working collaboratively and seeking help from adults when needed. • They extend their emotional vocabulary through PSHE, assemblies and story discussions, beginning to talk more clearly about their feelings and what helps them feel better. • Positive social skills develop further as children learn to negotiate, take turns, share ideas and listen to others in group tasks and play. • Independence continues to grow as children make choices, take responsibility for simple tasks and develop perseverance when learning feels challenging. • Staff monitor children's wellbeing closely, adapting support, routines and expectations to meet individual needs while maintaining strong communication with families.
By Year 2, children demonstrate a more mature understanding of themselves and others:	• Children act as positive role models for younger pupils, showing kindness, empathy and respectful behaviour throughout the school day. • They use a wider emotional vocabulary to explain feelings, recognise how others might feel and begin to apply simple self-regulation strategies more independently. • Socially, children work cooperatively in groups, manage minor disagreements with increasing independence and show responsibility in supporting the class community. • Their confidence grows as they take on greater responsibilities, persevere through challenges and reflect on their own learning behaviours. • Additional social or emotional needs are well understood, with carefully planned personalised support helping each child prepare successfully for the transition into Key Stage 2.

Health and Physical Development

At Gawber, children develop strong physical health and wellbeing through daily movement, outdoor play, regular PE and active learning that builds essential strength, balance and coordination. Purposeful routines, songs, actions and the teaching of oral health help children stay active, engaged and supported in developing healthy lifelong habits.

In FS2, the focus is on establishing healthy habits, strength and coordination through daily movement:	• Children take part in daily movement and outdoor play that support their physical health, confidence and wellbeing, with adults modelling active, healthy routines. • Early physical development is promoted through regular PE, movement to music and active learning opportunities that help children explore how their bodies move. • Gross-motor activities such as climbing, balancing, wheeled toys and large-scale construction build essential strength, balance and coordination needed for secure pencil grip and early writing. • Oral health is introduced through simple PSHE discussions, stories and visits from health professionals, helping children understand how to look after their teeth. • Staff at Gawber use active approaches across the day—songs, actions and movement linked to vocabulary—to keep children engaged, regulated and ready to learn.
In Year 1, children build on these foundations to develop control, stamina and healthy routines:	• Children take part in more structured PE lessons, developing coordination, agility and balance through games, athletics, dance and outdoor activities. • They apply their growing strength and control to fine-motor tasks, refining pencil grip, handwriting fluency and tool use through daily practice. • Outdoor play and active learning continue to be central, helping children build stamina, collaborate physically with others and develop confidence in challenging themselves safely. • Oral health learning deepens through PSHE, with children beginning to talk about tooth brushing, healthy eating and simple hygiene routines. • Teachers use movement breaks and action songs to support focus, engagement and regulation throughout the day
By Year 2, children demonstrate greater physical control, independence and understanding of healthy choices:	• Children participate in PE with increased confidence, showing improved coordination, teamwork, control and understanding of rules and tactics in simple games. • Their fine-motor skills are more secure, enabling fluent handwriting, accurate tool use and greater independence across the curriculum. • Children show awareness of how physical activity contributes to health, discussing exercise, rest and healthy choices in age-appropriate ways. • Oral health education supports children to talk about keeping their teeth healthy and making informed choices about food and hygiene. • At Gawber, additional physical or sensory needs are well understood; personalised support ensures every child continues to make progress and transition confidently towards Key Stage 2

Learning Behaviours – Engagement, Motivation and Critical Thinking

Children develop positive learning behaviours when they experience Gawber’s stimulating, language-rich environments that spark curiosity and encourage engagement in learning. Through high-quality interactions and consistent modelling of perseverance, problem-solving and learning from mistakes, children build motivation, resilience and strong critical thinking skills.

In FS2, the focus is on developing curiosity, confidence and early problem-solving:	• Children explore language-rich, stimulating environments that encourage curiosity, experimentation and independent choice, supported by warm and responsive adults. • Staff model perseverance by narrating their own thinking (“I’ll try again... I can fix this”), helping children learn that mistakes are part of learning. • Children are encouraged to have a go, keep trying and celebrate small achievements, building early motivation and confidence. • High-quality interactions support early critical thinking through simple problem-solving—predicting, noticing, explaining and trying different approaches. • At Gawber, staff closely observe engagement and learning behaviours, identifying children who need additional support to build confidence or independence.
In Year 1, children build on these foundations to become more independent, reflective and resilient learners:	• Children engage more purposefully with learning tasks, supported by environments that promote curiosity and offer meaningful challenges across the curriculum. • They begin to use language linked to resilience (“I can try another way”, “What else could I do?”) as adults model retrieval, repetition and working through challenge. • Children apply problem-solving strategies in pairs and groups, using talk to explain their ideas, compare approaches and think aloud. • Staff encourage children to review their work, talk about what went well and recognise how effort leads to improvement. • Additional scaffolds and routines help children who need support to sustain attention, persevere with tasks or organise their thinking.
By Year 2, children demonstrate a more mature approach to engagement, independence and reflective thinking:	• Children show growing independence, selecting resources, planning simple steps and sustaining effort during longer tasks. • They demonstrate resilience by adapting strategies, learning from mistakes and showing pride in their progress and achievements. • Critical thinking becomes more evident as children explain reasoning, justify choices, make predictions and consider alternative solutions. • Collaborative learning strengthens their ability to negotiate roles, share ideas and support peers in problem-solving. • At Gawber, children with additional learning or self-regulation needs receive personalised support to ensure they can fully participate and transition confidently towards Key Stage 2 expectations.

Executive Function

At Gawber, young children develop key thinking skills—such as paying attention, remembering information and following steps—through routines, play and strong adult modelling. Visual prompts, small-step instructions and a calm, well-organised environment help children feel confident to practise and strengthen these skills every day.

In FS2, the focus is on building early attention, memory and simple planning through routines and play:	• Children develop attention and listening through predictable routines, visual cues and warm adult modelling that help them feel secure and ready to learn. • Staff use small-step instructions, visual reminders and repetition to strengthen children's early working memory, helping them remember what they need to do next. • Play activities—such as construction, storytelling and simple sequencing tasks—help children practise planning, choosing resources and completing short goals. • Adults model “thinking aloud” (“First I need... then I will...”) to demonstrate how to organise steps and solve simple problems. • At Gawber, staff notice emerging executive function needs early and provide tailored support such as timers, now/next boards or movement breaks to help children stay focused and regulated.
In Year 1, children build on these foundations to manage longer tasks and organise their thinking more independently:	• Children sustain attention for longer periods, supported by clear routines, visual timetables and explicit teaching of “ready to learn” behaviours. • Working memory strengthens as children follow two- or three-step instructions, recall information in lessons and use sentence stems or vocabulary prompts to organise their ideas. • Planning and problem-solving develop through structured activities such as simple investigations, writing sequences, story retelling and multi-step maths tasks. • Adults continue to model self-talk strategies (“What’s my goal?” “What do I need first?”), helping children begin to apply them independently. • Staff at Gawber adapt scaffolds for children who need support, including checklists, chunked tasks and opportunities for movement and regulation.
By Year 2, children demonstrate increasing independence in attention, planning, organisation and self-monitoring:	• Children maintain focus for longer learning periods, showing greater control when switching between activities and managing distractions. • Their working memory is more secure, enabling them to hold information in mind—such as instructions, vocabulary, steps in a method or story structure—while completing a task. • Children plan more effectively by identifying steps, choosing resources, checking their progress and evaluating their work with growing independence. • They use talk to reason, problem-solve and explain their thinking, drawing on strategies modelled throughout EYFS and Year 1. • At Gawber, children with identified executive function needs receive personalised support (e.g., visual sequences, regulation tools, task breaks) to ensure they succeed and transition confidently towards Key Stage 2 expectations.

English Mastery: Reading

Children develop early reading through daily systematic phonics using the Read Write Inc programme, alongside rich story experiences and environments that foster a love of books. Talk Through Stories teaching further develops children's vocabulary, comprehension and oral storytelling skills across Gawber's English curriculum.

In FS2, the focus is on building secure early phonics and a love of stories:	• Children take part in daily Read Write Inc phonics lessons, learning to recognise sounds, blend to read simple words and sentences, and develop confidence as early readers. • <i>Talk Through Stories</i> sessions build early comprehension, helping children learn rich vocabulary, join in with repeated phrases and retell stories in their own words. • Reading areas, cosy book corners and access to high-quality picture books encourage children to choose, enjoy and talk about stories independently. • Daily story time, regular visits to the school library and support from Year 6 'Reading Buddies' help children associate reading with comfort, enjoyment and shared learning. • At Gawber, staff identify early reading needs quickly and provide targeted interventions to ensure all children make strong progress
In Year 1, children become increasingly confident, fluent and thoughtful readers:	• Daily RWI phonics lessons continue, helping children read with greater accuracy, speed and confidence as texts become more complex. • Children deepen their story understanding through <i>Talk Through Stories</i>, discussing characters, settings and key vocabulary, and beginning to explain preferences. • Independent and guided reading sessions build fluency, expression and comprehension, supported by a wide range of high-quality fiction, non-fiction and poetry. • Reading for pleasure is prioritised through daily story time, library visits and opportunities for children to recommend books to each other. • Staff monitor progress closely, adapting interventions and supporting children who need additional practice with blending, fluency or comprehension
By Year 2, children demonstrate increasing fluency, comprehension and independence in reading:	• Children read a wider range of texts with developing fluency, expression and accuracy, applying their phonics knowledge confidently to unfamiliar words. • They use <i>Talk Through Stories</i> and guided reading to discuss vocabulary, make simple inferences, predict outcomes and retell key events with greater detail. • Regular reading across the curriculum helps children build background knowledge, subject-specific vocabulary and confidence in tackling more challenging texts. • Reading for pleasure strengthens through independent book choices, poetry recitals, author studies and engagement with both the school and class library. • At Gawber, personalised support continues for children who need additional fluency or comprehension practice.

English Mastery: Writing

At Gawber, children learn to write with increasing fluency through progressive motor-skill development, daily handwriting and phonics-linked writing opportunities. Structured teaching helps children apply taught vocabulary and use story structures confidently across the curriculum.

In FS2, the focus is on building motor skills, early mark-making and confidence as emergent writers:	• Children develop the strength, coordination and control needed for writing through daily fine- and gross-motor activities, including threading, cutting, climbing, dough work and large-scale mark-making. • Early writing is taught through phonics-linked activities, helping children hear sounds, form letters and begin to write simple words and phrases using the sounds they know. • Daily handwriting practice supports correct pencil grip, letter formation and increasing control. • Children have regular opportunities to write within provision—labels, lists, messages, stories, signs—encouraging independence, purpose and enjoyment. • At Gawber, staff quickly identify children who may need additional motor-skill, pencil-grip or handwriting support and provide targeted intervention
In Year 1, children build fluency, stamina and confidence in structured writing:	• Children continue daily handwriting practice, refining letter formation, grip and control to develop early fluency. • Writing is closely linked to phonics, with children applying taught sounds to spell words and build simple sentences with increasing independence. • Structured writing lessons help children use vocabulary from <i>Talk Through Stories</i>, sequence ideas clearly and begin to use simple sentence structures. • Children write for a range of purposes across the curriculum—recounts, labels, instructions, descriptions—developing stamina and confidence. • Staff at Gawber adapt scaffolds (word banks, sentence stems, oral rehearsal) for children who need support with organising ideas or forming sentences.
By Year 2, children demonstrate increasing independence, accuracy and control as writers:	• Children write longer and more accurately structured sentences, using taught vocabulary, varied sentence openers and simple punctuation with growing security. • Handwriting becomes more fluent and consistent, with children applying correct formation automatically and writing at greater length. • Writing lessons are linked to <i>Talk Through Stories</i> texts, enabling children to use story structures, descriptive vocabulary and narrative techniques more confidently. • Children write across a wider range of genres—stories, reports, letters, explanations—drawing on vocabulary and knowledge from across the curriculum. • At Gawber, personalised support continues for children who need help with spelling, organisation or motor skills, ensuring each child progresses confidently towards Key Stage 2 writing expectations.

Maths Mastery

Children build strong early mathematical understanding through daily NCETM-led teaching, practical hands-on experiences and carefully sequenced small steps that develop secure number sense and early reasoning. Mathematical talk, engaging provision and purposeful problem-solving help children apply their learning confidently across the curriculum.

In FS2, the focus is on building strong number sense through practical exploration and rich mathematical talk:	• Children take part in daily NCETM-led maths sessions that use practical, hands-on learning to build secure early understanding of number, comparison, pattern and shape. • Mathematical skills develop progressively as children move from exploring concrete resources (cubes, counters, tens frames) to simple pictorial representations. • Fluency is built through repetition, maths games, number rhymes, daily subitising practice and familiar “maths routines” such as counting, sorting and matching. • Children begin to “talk like mathematicians” using sentence stems and rich vocabulary modelled by adults—for example, “<i>I know it’s four because...</i>”. • At Gawber, early number misconceptions or gaps in fluency are identified quickly and supported through targeted one-to-one or small-group work.
In Year 1, children deepen understanding and begin to apply ideas more independently:	• Children continue daily NCETM-aligned lessons, developing number facts, addition, subtraction, place value and early reasoning through practical and visual approaches. • They move confidently between concrete, pictorial and abstract representations, using tens frames, number lines and part-whole models to explain their thinking. • Fluency grows through frequent practice of number bonds, subitising and counting patterns, supported by games, songs and retrieval activities. • Children use mathematical talk to explain, compare and describe ideas, supported by sentence stems and carefully modelled vocabulary. • Staff adapt scaffolds to support children who need help retaining number facts, organising methods or explaining their reasoning.
By Year 2, children show increased fluency, reasoning and independence in applying mathematical skills:	• Children apply secure place value knowledge to addition, subtraction, simple multiplication and division, supported by NCETM small-step teaching. • They move flexibly between concrete, visual and abstract methods, selecting appropriate tools and representations to support problem-solving. • Fluency strengthens as children recall number facts, doubles, halves and bonds with increasing accuracy and speed. • Reasoning skills develop through opportunities to justify answers, spot patterns, compare strategies and explain methods using precise mathematical vocabulary. • At Gawber, personalised support ensures all children make strong progress and are well prepared for the increased demands of Key Stage 2 mathematics.

Transitions

At Gawber, children experience smooth, supportive transitions through early partnerships with parents, nursery visits and ongoing communication that helps us understand each child's background and needs. Thoughtfully planned movement through FS2, Year 1 and Year 2—including visits, PSHE sessions and continued EYFS support—ensures continuity, security and early identification of any additional needs.

In FS2, the focus is on secure, supported beginnings through strong partnerships and early understanding of each child:	• Smooth transitions begin before children start school through home–school communication, nursery visits and early meetings that help staff understand each child's background, interests and starting points. • Parents are welcomed as partners through stay-and-play sessions, workshops and regular communication that builds trust and consistency for families. • Staff provide warm, predictable routines and clear expectations to help children settle confidently into school life. • Any early emerging needs are identified quickly so personalised support can be put in place from the very start. • At Gawber, these early relationships and shared understandings ensure that children feel safe, known and ready to learn as they enter FS2.
In Year 1, children experience a gradual and well-supported transition into more formal learning:	• Children take part in transition visits and shared activities with Year 1 staff, helping them become familiar with new adults, routines and classroom spaces. • PSHE sessions and circle times help children talk about change, expectations and feelings, preparing them for a new stage of learning. • The structure of learning increases gradually, with EY staff working in Year 1 weekly to support continuity and help children adjust smoothly. • Parents remain closely involved through ongoing communication about routines, expectations and any emerging needs. • Support is adapted to each child, ensuring that they build confidence, independence and security as they move through the year.
By Year 2, children demonstrate confidence, ownership and readiness for the next stage of learning:	• Children take greater responsibility for routines and learning behaviours, showing maturity and readiness for Key Stage 2 expectations. • Transition is supported through visits to Year 2 classrooms, shared activities, and opportunities to meet staff and understand new routines. • Staff work together to ensure that learning builds logically from Year 1, with clear continuity in expectations, vocabulary and teaching approaches. • Additional or ongoing needs are well understood, with personalised plans ensuring that every child receives the support they need to succeed. • At Gawber, these carefully planned steps help children move into Year 2—and later into KS2—with confidence, enthusiasm and a strong sense of belonging.

