

Falkirk **Pedagogy** STRATEGY



FALKIRK COUNCIL

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Falkirk's Pedagogy Strategy

Foreword

Falkirk Council is unwavering in its commitment to ensuring that every child and young person experiences the highest possible standard of learning, teaching and play. This Pedagogy Guidance defines what that standard looks like in Falkirk—and sets the clear expectation that it must be consistently realised in every classroom and learning space across all our education establishments. It is the professional benchmark for all Falkirk practitioners.

Grounded in evidence-informed practice and aligned with the principles of Learning to Achieve, this guidance captures the pedagogy we know makes the greatest difference to learners. It reflects Falkirk's shared values, our high aspirations for all children and young people, and our collective belief in the power of highly skilled practitioners to transform lives.

Practitioners are expected to engage with this document critically and constructively—to reflect, to adapt, and to implement its principles with rigour and integrity. It is through this commitment to excellence in pedagogy that we will continue to raise attainment, close the poverty-related attainment gap, and empower every learner to thrive.

We recognise the professionalism, dedication and creativity of our workforce. This guidance is both a reflection of that professionalism and a challenge—to maintain the highest of standards, every day, for every learner, in every setting.

Every practitioner needs to improve, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better.

— Adapted from Dylan Wiliam



The key organisers for the strategy provide a framework for how learning experiences are designed and delivered and refer to the following:

Cultures

Definition: The broader social, institutional, and disciplinary context in which learning takes place.

Examples:

- Values and expectations of the learning establishment
- Subject or context-specific ways of thinking and doing
- Norms around assessment, interaction, and communication with learners

Role of the Practitioner

Definition: The function and presence of the practitioner in guiding, supporting, and structuring the learning process.

Examples:

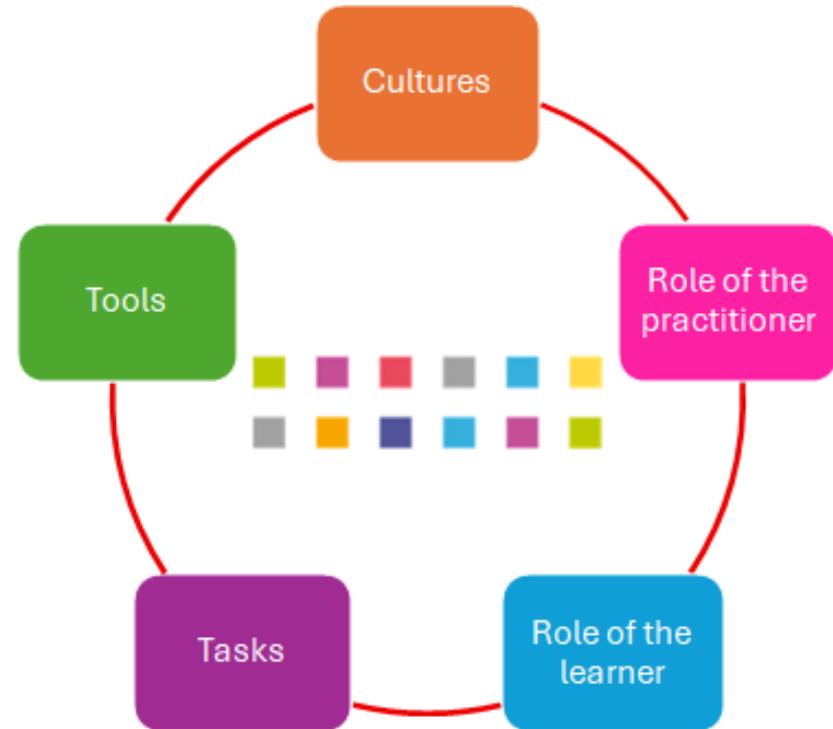
- Instructor as facilitator, coach, or expert
- Modes of interaction (face-to-face and digital interaction)

Role of the Learner

Definition: How learners are expected to engage with the learning environment, and what prior knowledge, motivations, and agency they bring.

Examples:

- Independent or collaborative learning.
- Active participation vs. passive reception.
- Learner autonomy and responsibility.





Tasks

Task Design: Learning tasks should be equitable, engaging, and differentiated. In learning settings, practitioners should include a balance of the following pedagogies:

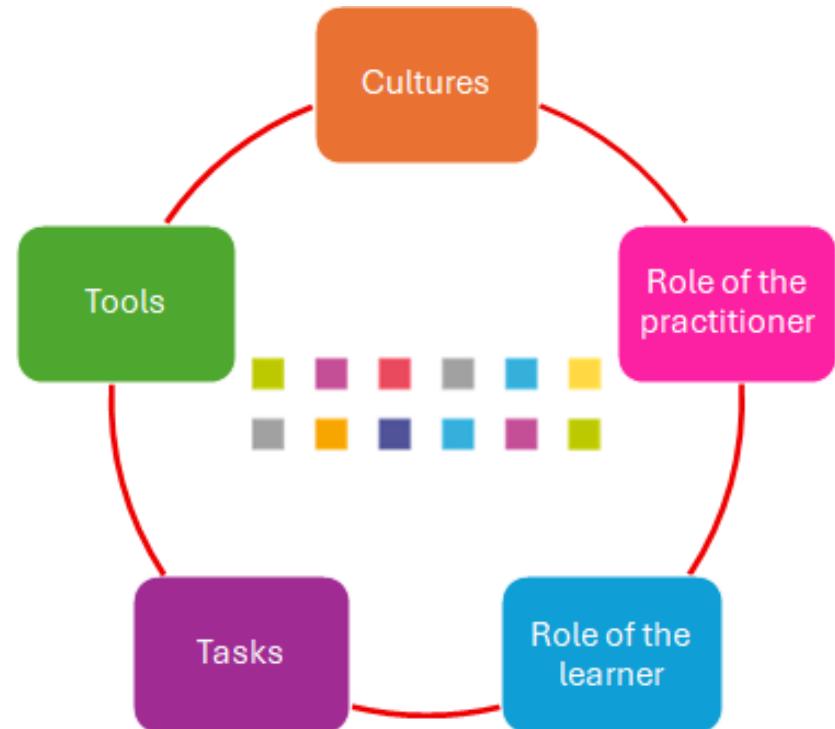
- Play-based learning - [How Good is Our Play for Learning](#)
- Recall & Routine tasks - [Retrieval Practice – Connected Falkirk](#)
- Classification & Interpretation (analytical skills)
- Higher Order Thinking Skills - [A framework for thinking skills | Resources | National Improvement Hub](#)

Tools

Definition and Purpose: The resources, platforms or technologies used to support, enable, or frame the learning tasks. Tools provide the means for learners and practitioners to carry out tasks, access content, communicate, and assess progress.

Examples:

- Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) like **Moodle** or Microsoft Teams
- Digital content (videos, articles, podcasts)
- Assessment tools (**e-portfolios**, quizzes, **Turnitin**)
- Communication platforms (discussion boards, email, chat apps)
- Collaboration tools (Google Docs, Padlet, **Miro**)
- Physical tools and resources (manipulatives e.g.: Cuisenaire rods, lab equipment, textbooks, models)





Improvement Plans at every level within the local authority are tied together with the golden thread of improving outcomes for all children and young people. Falkirk's Pedagogy Strategy aligns with this and describes highly effective practices which are the ambition and expectation in every setting and establishment in Falkirk.

Practitioners can, and usually do, have positive effects, but they must have exceptional effects... excellent practitioners are the single most powerful influence on achievement.

— Adapted from John Hattie



National Context

The following documents are used nationally for self-evaluation and this strategy focuses on Quality Indicator 2.3:

How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare? (HGIOELC)

Quality Indicator 2.3 - Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- Learning and Engagement
- Quality of Interactions
- Effective Use of Assessment
- Planning, Tracking, Monitoring

How Good is Our School? 4th Edition (HGIOS4)

Quality Indicator 2.3 - Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- Learning and Engagement
- Quality of Teaching
- Effective Use of Assessment
- Planning, Tracking and Monitoring

A Shared Understanding

Language Matters

Throughout this document, you will see the following terms.

Big Ideas A Big Idea captures the core understanding children and young people will develop in a particular area of the curriculum from early years onwards. It will set out overarching ideas and concepts and have relevance and meaning for learners. It will support progression and guide the selection of content.



Capacities A capacity is the ability to know, do or be something in particular.

Curriculum Curriculum in Scotland is defined as the totality of all that is planned and enacted for children and young people from early learning and childcare, through school and beyond. That totality is shaped by the purpose (the 'why') set out in the four capacities and a set of entitlements and can be planned for and experienced by learners across four contexts (the 'what'): opportunities for personal achievement; the ethos and life of the school/setting as a community (and with its community); curriculum areas and subjects and interdisciplinary learning.

Inclusion Inclusion means taking positive action and intervening in order to enable achievement for all by building and fulfilling the potential of every child, young person and adult.

Learner Refers to all children and young people in Falkirk settings.

Pedagogy Pedagogy is curriculum enacted and manifested in and through the interactions, experiences and spaces and times of teaching, learning and assessment.

Practitioner Refers to everyone who works with children and young people in Falkirk settings.

Setting Refers to all establishments including Early Learning & Childcare, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, Special Schools and Specialist Provisions.

Skills Skills is an overarching term used to describe a wide variety of behaviours and practices that can be acquired, developed and improved with guidance, reflection and practice. A variety of skills frameworks are used across Scotland to develop children and young people's understanding of their skills.



Local Context

In Falkirk we refer to two key documents to support highly effective practice in learning, teaching and assessment. These have been created by senior leaders and staff across the authority, with the extensive involvement of children and young people.

As such, they can be considered as our key policy [Learning to Achieve \(LTA\)](#) and our key guide [Interactive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Guide \(ILTAG\)](#).

This document aligns with Falkirk's Learning to Achieve Framework and the national curriculum, with a view to ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people in Falkirk from 3-18 across all settings. It has been prepared to provide all practitioners across Falkirk with a framework which sets out our pedagogical approaches. Underpinning this is an intention that all learners experience high quality learning, teaching and assessment provision across all establishments.

All settings and practitioners should use this document to:

- Support the development of context-based guidance and strategy on play, learning, teaching and assessment.
- Inform ongoing collaboration between early years practitioners, teachers, children, young people, and families to inform and drive continuous improvement in play, learning, teaching, and assessment.
- Review and adapt learning environments to create accessible, inclusive and engaging spaces for play and learning. Reviews and adaptations address a wide range of additional support needs including; physical, emotional, learning needs and family circumstances.
- Embed regular, well planned and purposeful moderation activities which are collaborative in nature within and across establishments to ensure consistency in play, learning, teaching, and assessment.

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Learning to Achieve is designed to offer direction on how we deliver Curriculum for Excellence across Falkirk Council educational establishments. It provides the scaffolding which allows us to build on our longstanding commitment to achievement in its widest sense and continues to stand the test of time.

— Learning to Achieve, Falkirk Council Children's Services, Aug 2022

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Cultures

Vision & Values: Falkirk Schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings foster an accessible, inclusive, and engaging culture based on agreed values and seek to create a [learner centred learning environment](#). This culture and environment underpin learning experiences and ensure all children and young people feel included, valued and supported. A commitment to Children's Rights and positive relationships is embedded within the culture of all establishments.

Engagement & Well-being: Learning environments are [nurturing](#) and informed by trauma-sensitive and attachment-aware practices. Strong relationships with families are built through joint planning and [family learning activities](#) that encourage home-school collaboration.

Diversity & Inclusion: Falkirk Schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings ensure equitable access to learning by addressing physical, emotional and cognitive barriers. Inclusive environments feature sensory supports, visual timetables, and appropriate [digital tools](#). In all establishments both the curriculum and learning experiences are relevant and inclusive. Falkirk Schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings follow our [Falkirk Council Guiding Principles](#) to ensure support structures are in place for all learners.

Role of the Practitioner

Effective Play, Teaching, Learning and Engagement: Practitioners deliver high-quality, well-paced, and engaging [learning experiences](#) that recognise diverse learning needs. Planning ([Realising the ambition](#), [Curriculum for Excellence](#)) is intentional and [differentiated](#). Practitioners use a range of evidence to inform planning such as evaluations, assessment information and learners' prior experiences. Planning aligns with the [4 Key Capacities](#), [experiences and outcomes](#), [benchmarks](#) and [Falkirk's progression pathways](#). All learners are supported, particularly those with Additional Support Needs. The use of [digital technology](#) is embedded in our approaches to learning, teaching and [play](#).



Feedback & Assessment: Practitioners provide clear, constructive [feedback](#) to help learners to reflect and improve. Formative and summative assessments guide planning for next steps and track progress. For the youngest of learners, high quality observations and interactions with adults support the extension of children's learning by building on prior knowledge and extending the interests of the children.

Professional Development: All practitioners actively engage in professional learning activities. Early years practitioners' [Codes of Practice](#) highlight their professional responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills. The expectation that teachers have enquiring dispositions towards their professional practice is embedded throughout the [Professional Standards](#). Falkirk Council's [professional learning offer](#) is underpinned by the following principles:

- Transformative Learning: At the heart of everything.
- Evidence-Informed Practice: Grounded in the best available research.
- Learner Agency (UNCRC - Article 12): Ensuring children's voices are central.
- Equity and Inclusion (UNCRC - Article 2): Creating effective and inclusive learning experiences for all.
- Practical Application: Providing practical 'take-aways' for implementation.
- Collaboration and Networking: Providing opportunities for practitioners to connect.
- Modelling Excellence: Providing modelled examples of effective practice from current practitioners.
- Equitable Access: Providing support and resources equitably, across sectors.
- Self-Efficacy and High Expectations: The professional learning offer promotes self-efficacy and high expectations for all learners.
- Innovation: The professional learning offer shares new learning for practitioners or present established practices in innovative and engaging ways.



Role of the Learner

Ownership & Agency: Learners take ownership of their learning through [self and peer assessment](#), goal setting, and reflection. Learners' voices are central, with children and young people leading their own learning by planning experiences with adults following on from their own interests and those of their peers.

All learners actively co-create their learning journey by collaborating with practitioners on planning and extending learning and play. In the best of practice, learners contribute purposefully and with understanding to the creation of learning intentions and success criteria. This ensures that all learners are fully aware of not only [what they are learning but what success looks like](#).

Learners Leading Learning: Learners are supported to [lead various aspects of learning](#), such as classroom or playroom tasks and activities with peers of varied abilities. Opportunities to do so will promote peer-to-peer interaction and the application of prior knowledge. This approach empowers pupils with choices in their learning, encouraging discourse and a deeper understanding of the purpose behind what and why they are learning.

Active Participation: Learning is stimulating and relevant, involving enquiry-based and [collaborative learning](#) approaches. Practitioners always seek a balance of adult and child-initiated learning and play experiences, with children and young people taking an active role. All learners are motivated, engaged and enjoy the challenge of new learning and big ideas. All learning and play experiences facilitate the [development of skills](#) and these skills should be clearly referenced in planning and evaluation of learning.

Tasks

Task Design: Learning tasks are accessible to all, engaging, and differentiated. All tasks are well-planned and intentional to progress learning and play. Practitioners ensure high quality and engaging experiences for learners. Assessment strategies are planned for learning and play tasks.



All learning and play tasks are designed around the following principles:

- Encourage Exploration: Tasks should allow for multiple entry points and solution pathways, fostering creativity and deep engagement. • Be Low-Floor, High-Ceiling: Tasks should be accessible to all learners while providing opportunities for more advanced learners to explore deeper complexities.
- Promote Collaboration: Well-designed tasks encourage learners to work together, share ideas, and build on each other's reasoning.
- Integrate Real-World Contexts: Embedding learning within meaningful, real-world contexts makes it more relevant and engaging.
- Include Reflection: Tasks should provide opportunities for learners to reflect on their strategies, justify their reasoning, and evaluate different approaches.

In all settings, practitioners are highly skilled in crafting learning and play experiences and adopt a wide range of pedagogies across the [4 Contexts for Learning](#) such as:

- **Play-based learning** - [How Good is Our Play for Learning](#)
- **Recall & Routine tasks** - [Retrieval Practice – Connected Falkirk](#)
- **Outdoor Learning** - [Outdoor learning resources | Resources | Education Scotland](#)
- **Higher Order Thinking Skills** - [A framework for thinking skills | Resources | National Improvement Hub](#)

Tools

Assessment & Tracking Tools: All settings utilise tracking systems to monitor progress and inform planning. Digital tools such as interactive learning platforms and assistive technologies are integrated.



Resources: Practitioners select and use specific tools that scaffold knowledge and understanding to ensure engagement and progression in learning. This includes the most appropriate learning environment within settings and in their community. Practitioners use innovative teaching aids, including [Augmentative and Alternative Communication \(AAC\) devices](#), and inclusive software to support diverse learning needs. Tools can be used successfully for all learners, including those with additional support needs. Examples of tools as resources include;

- Manipulatives such as [Cuisenaire Rods](#), [Numicon](#), molecule models, 3D printed models, construction kits
- Artifacts: these are tangible objects or products central to the learning process. They can be created by learners (projects, reports, digital presentations) which demonstrate understanding and provide evidence of skills. Additionally, teaching artifacts are physical objects (historical items, scientific specimens) used by practitioners as engaging learning stimuli, while digital artifacts encompass any digital output or resource supporting or evidencing learning.
- Open ended materials and resources are those that have no single, prescribed use or fixed outcome, encouraging learners to explore, create, and problem-solve in diverse and imaginative ways. They foster creativity, critical thinking, and independence by allowing learners to dictate their own learning pathways.

Strategy and Communication: All settings support and enhance the learning process through [discourse strategies](#) that go beyond individual conversational moves and focus on structuring interactions to promote a culture of thinking. Staff mobilise learner knowledge through [talk moves](#), for example, to make settings of deep learning and critical thinking.

Additional Resources

Highly effective pedagogical practices are visible in all of Falkirk Council education settings. The following links will take you to guidance produced by local colleagues in working groups made up of Early Years Practitioners (link to poster) and the Senior Leadership Engagement Group (link to poster).



Learning to Achieve - Pedagogy Group



Falkirk Council

Planning

- Focus on the 7 principles of design
- Work with the Experiences and Outcomes, Falkirk Council pathways and national benchmarks
- Differentiation is evident
- Have and share the clear purpose of learning
- There are clear steps to success
- Children and young people contribute to planning
- There are opportunities for collaboration and moderation
- Resources and environment support engagement of children and young people
- Takes account of data and prior learning and knowledge



Meeting Learners' Needs

- Ensure high expectations and aspirations for all learners
- Build in appropriate pace and challenge
- Use a variety of approaches including outdoors, digital technologies and play
- Provide a balance of child and adult led play and learning experiences
- Provide opportunities for children and young people to reflect on their learning
- Include well timed supports and interventions
- A well planned environment that supports individual learning styles
- Nurturing relationships are prioritised.



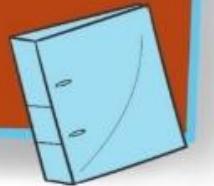
Learners' Experiences

- A positive and nurturing ethos
- Children and young people lead learning
- Effective questioning
- Opportunities for discovery
- High levels of pupil engagement



Assessment and Attainment

- Include opportunities for formative and summarise assessment
- AfL strategies are embedded into pedagogy
- Ensure regular tracking and monitoring processes are in place and acted upon
- Effective questioning is used to support and challenge
- Opportunities to assess the application of learning



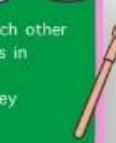
Skills Development $A+1=2$

- Skills for learning: Develop thinking skills which will encourage deep learning
- Skills for life: Develop core skills required to enable learners to make meaningful contributions
- Skills for work: Skills developed in relevant and real life contexts.
- Learners can talk about and apply their skills.



Visible Learning

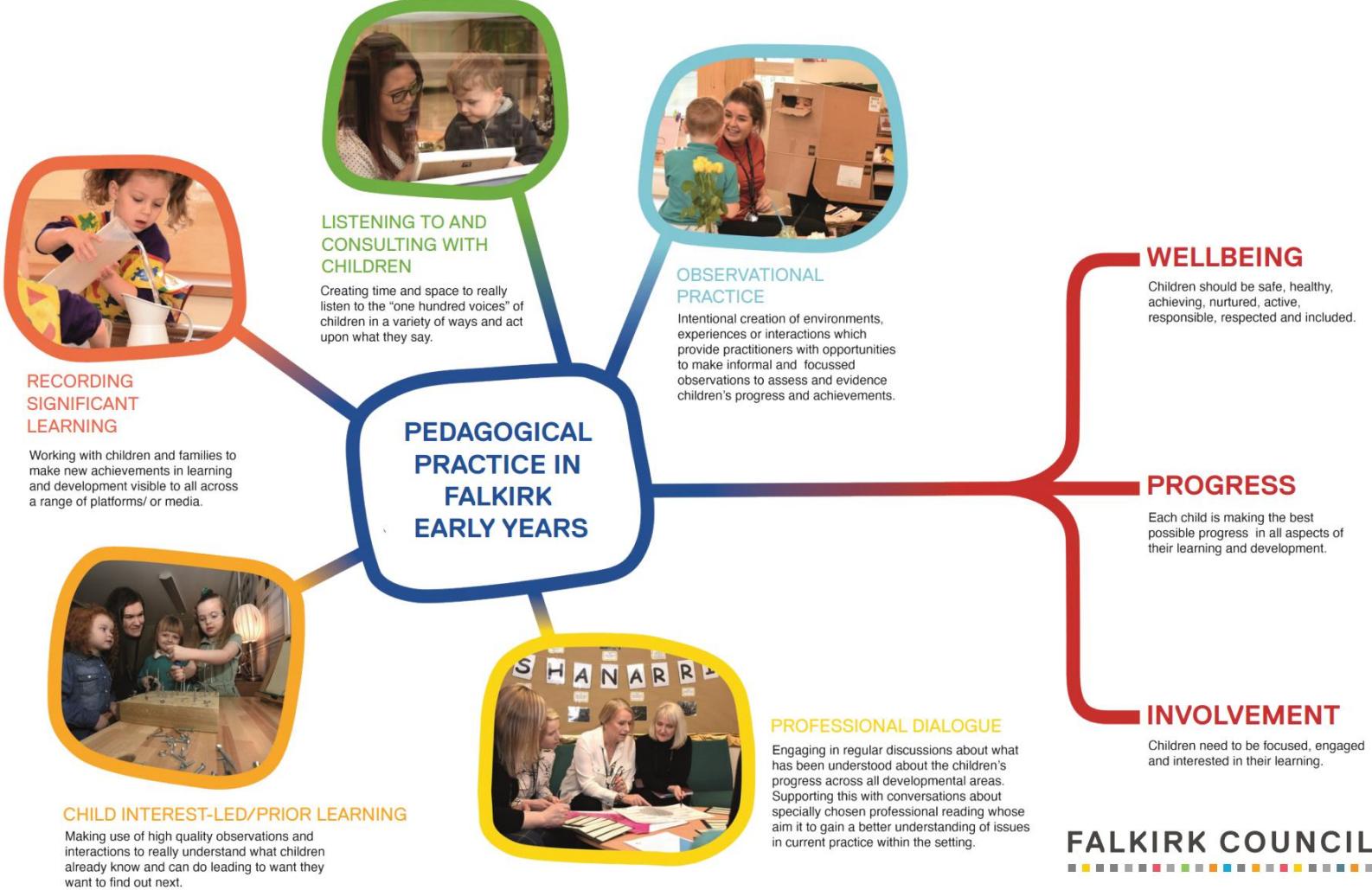
- Ensure regular feedback
- Peer and self assessment embedded
- Learners lead learning and learn from each other
- Learners are clear about their next steps in learning
- Learners can discuss their learning journey
- The language of learning is evident





EARLY LEARNING: PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH IN FALKIRK

It is important that the interested adult engages with the following features with integrity and consideration of the individual child:



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Additionally, the following principles are evidenced within the [Interactive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Guide](#) and the links provided (right click each button and select Open Link) in the graphic below are examples of what can be found within the guide. Practitioners should access the guide to fully explore the linked resources available.

Elements of Highly Effective Pedagogy:

