

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Early Years Policy



Introduction

This policy reflects the philosophy of our school in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. It aims to give a framework and guidance within which all staff work. This policy applies to all children who join the school either in Nursery (in the term following their third birthday) or Reception (in the September of the academic year in which they turn five). The Early Years provision which we offer our children is based on the following principles.

- It builds on what our children already know;
- It ensures that all children are included and have access to the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum;
- It offers a structure for learning and development that has a range of starting points and content that meets the needs of young children.
- Activities and play provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors.
- It provides a safe, rich and stimulating environment in which children can learn, develop and grow.

Aims and Objectives

Through active experience, we aim to help children express and understand the Catholic Faith and to develop Christian values and attitudes through teaching and learning within the whole curriculum. Early Years education is the foundation upon which children build the rest of their lives and is an education that encompasses all aspects of learning and development. The Curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage should underpin all future learning by supporting, fostering, promoting and developing children's:

Communication and Language – Children will be given lots of opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; to speak and listen in a range of situations.

Physical Development – Children will be encouraged to be active and interactive; to develop their co-ordination, control and movement. Children will be taught the importance of physical activity and make healthy choices in relation to food. They will be supported to take responsibility for their own physical well being.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development – We will help children develop a positive sense of themselves and others. They will learn to form positive relationships and develop respect for others. Develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings and understand appropriate behaviour. Children become more independent and confident in their own abilities.

Literacy – Children will be taught to link sounds and letters. They will develop their phonic knowledge and begin to read and write. Children will be given access to a wide range of literary materials to ignite

their interest and to develop a love of reading. The phonics and early reading scheme used is Little Wandle.

Mathematics – Children will have lots of practical opportunities to develop and improve their number skills. They will experience and develop their counting, calculating, number recognition and understanding of addition and subtraction problems. They will identify numerical pattern.

Understanding the World – Children will be guided to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

Expressive Arts and Design – Children will explore and play with a wide range of media and materials as well as have opportunities to share their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play and design and technology.

We also aim to develop the children's ability to learn effectively. For this we take into consideration the EYFS **Characteristics of Effective Learning**; *Playing and Exploring- Engagement*; *Active Learning- Motivation*; *Creating and Thinking Critically- Thinking*.

Quality of Teaching

The following points underpin the quality of teaching within our Early Years Foundation Stage Unit:

- The child's home background and language is valued.
- Staff are well trained in the EYFS and undergo ongoing staff development and training.
- Play is recognised as an important tool for children to develop and reflect on their learning.
- There are plenty of opportunities for the children to talk about themselves and the world around them.
- The children engage in first-hand experiences based around exciting and relevant topics that are often child initiated.
- Ongoing observation and assessment of children mean learning is well planned and the needs of the individuals/groups are the starting point for their next steps.
- Children have access to a variety of indoor and outdoor activities.
- Resources are accessible to all pupils.
- Special needs are identified as soon as possible, and the appropriate measures taken to support the child's learning.
- Partnership with parents and carers is positively addressed and is recognised as being vital to the development of the child.
- Teaching is a mixture of adult led, adult initiated and child-initiated play and activities.
- Children have clear understanding of boundaries and rules within the setting.
- Teaching staff provide a safe and secure environment for children to take risks and have a go. All ideas and contributions are valued.

Quality of Learning

The following points underpin the quality of learning within our Early Years Foundation Stage Unit:

- The children engage in first-hand experiences based around exciting and relevant topics that are often child initiated.

- Teaching staff provide a safe and secure environment for children to take risks and have a go. All ideas and contributions are valued.
- Characteristics of learning are considered to provide children with opportunities to play and explore, to be actively involved and motivated to learn and to think creatively and critically about what they set out to do.
- Children are enabled to access resources and materials independently and return them independently.
- Children have a pride in their work, enjoy and take on a challenge and have high expectations.
- Children are encouraged to reflect on and evaluate their work and that of their peers.
- Everyone is involved in the child's development (parents/carers/staff/ the child etc)
- The resources and materials are appropriate to the needs of the child and their learning and development.
- Transition between Reception and Year 1 aims to be as smooth as possible to help children prepare and settle happily into their new learning environment. Early Years and Key Stage One staff liaise closely and have regular phase meetings at which children's work is moderated. As well as discussion meetings, reception staff provide Year 1 teachers with a report and learning journey on each child to help them plan for the children's learning and next steps within Year 1.

Organisation and Management

The unit comprises two classrooms – one for Nursery and one for Reception with a shared outdoor area. The Nursery class runs sessions in the morning and the afternoon with some children staying for the whole school day, Reception children are in school all day.

The daily routine involves carpet time, fruit and milk time, small and large group activities, phonics/number time, story time and tidy up time. The children in our Reception class are encouraged to be part of the whole school environment over the course of the school year by taking part in whole school assemblies, masses and other events. The children make choices about their activities and recognise that learning is a social interactive process between child, adult, resources and the environment.

There is a balance of adult-led, adult initiated and child-initiated activities, delivered though indoor and outdoor play.

The curriculum is based on the whole school "Big Ideas" curriculum and is carefully designed to be exciting and relevant where teacher or child initiated. Children's ideas and opinions are included in the planning process.

Activity time within a small group is often adult led or adult initiated. The adult's role during this time is to teach, scaffold and observe how children respond to instructions, gather information, interact with peers, solve problems and extend their learning and development. The children are encouraged to have an active role in their learning and be engaged and motivated in these group activities. Group activities will consider the needs, interests and abilities of the children.

Adults will:

- Extend the children's ideas
- Ask open-ended questions

- Set up additional problem-solving activities
- Introduce new resources or concepts
- Help children practise new skills

This small group time will incorporate Literacy/Maths work and will be planned according to the needs of the groups of children. The children are encouraged to access and put away resources independently. The children are given the opportunity to evaluate and recall their work in a variety of ways:

- Recall and recount problems encountered
- Draw pictures or show models
- Describe the activities undertaken simply, e.g. in a sentence

Carpet time takes place every day for all children. Adults will spend time doing register time, prayer time, playing games, singing songs, reading/telling stories and talking about special events.

Choosing time is child-initiated learning time. Children have access to many resources within the classroom. In the morning this is more specified and in the afternoons the children are free to decide themselves what they would like to do in choosing time. Choosing time is a chance for children to play and explore as well as use and apply their knowledge and skills. The adults' role is to support children in their play and interactions with other children as well as scaffold and provide opportunities to extend their play and learning. Opportunities should be available for children to solve problems, work individually or with others, choose and use resources independently, have and develop their own ideas and take risks in a safe and secure environment. Adults will observe and collect evidence from children's child-initiated play to help provide a picture of the child's learning and development and plan for their next steps.

Phonics and Maths sessions are taught in whole class sessions and learning is consolidated through planned and child-initiated activities. Through careful observations and informal assessment, children needing support to keep up are identified and planned for.

The Early Years Curriculum

St Joseph's School Early Years Unit follows the guidance set out in the new EYFS Framework 2021. We ensure the welfare and safety of all children by carrying out regular audits using county documents and also ensure that whole school policies are in place e.g. see Health and Safety Policy, Admissions Policy, Lost Child Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, SEN Policy, EAL Policy. Teaching, learning and development occurs within seven areas of learning.

Three Prime Areas: Personal Social and Emotional Development; Communication and Language; Physical Development

Four Specific Areas: Literacy; Maths; Understanding of the World; Expressive Arts and Design

Characteristics of Effective Learning forms an important part of the Early Years Curriculum and helps staff understand and develop how children learn. These are as follows: *Playing and Exploring- Engagement; Active Learning- Motivation; Creating and Thinking Critically- Thinking.*

The classroom environment (both indoors and outdoors), resources, staff and provision help to provide a stimulating and safe environment in which children in our reception classes can learn and develop.

Observation and assessment is ongoing throughout the year. Each child's development is formally assessed at various points in the year in relation to the Early Years Outcomes and then in relation to The Early Learning Goal for each area of learning (17 aspects) at the end of the reception year. Transition is a key part of our EYFS curriculum from when children come from their Nursery to our reception classes and then going from reception into their Year 1 classes. We aim to ensure smooth transition and help all children feel happy, safe and supported to learn and develop within their new environment.

Planning

All staff are committed to planning as a team around the needs and interests of the children. Main planning is done by Early Years Coordinator/teacher and Early Years teacher with regular input from Early Years TA's.

Long Term Planning

Long term planning provides a clear framework for working with children in our reception classes. It outlines topics, trips, key whole school events across the year that can help inform all other planning for the children's learning, development and experience within our EYFS unit. Long term planning is flexible and regularly evaluated especially for each new academic year. We ensure that all areas of learning and The Early Years Outcomes are considered to ensure children's learning and development progress across the whole year.

Medium Term Planning

Planning takes place each term but is evaluated weekly. The topics are planned carefully to ensure continuity, progression and enjoyment for each child in their learning and development throughout the EYFS. Ideas and interests of the children are also taken into consideration as well as key special events and festivals (e.g. Lent, Holy Week, Remembrance Day, Chinese New Year, Eid etc).

Short Term Planning

Early Years staff meet regularly to feed ideas and observations into the next planning cycle. Activities are selected from our medium plans which are deemed appropriate to meet the needs and interests of the children (based on observations and assessments and the Early Years Outcomes). The activities are then set out on our weekly planning sheets. The plans are flexible and are extended/differentiated accordingly at this stage.

Resources

The children will have the opportunity to select from the following areas daily in their adult-led, adult initiated and child-initiated learning:

- Quiet book area
- Sand and water
- Outdoor area (The outdoor area and equipment is regularly risk assessed)
- Construction play
- Creative craft area

- Writing/mark making area
- Phonics games and resources
- Painting
- Table toys/small world
- Computer
- Maths Area (Maths games and resources)
- Science/investigation resources and tools
- Role play
- Music box
- Malleable materials
- Puzzles
- Bats and balls, climbing and balancing equipment

In addition

Collective worship in classes and with the whole school

Regular food technology/cooking sessions

Regular sessions in the school hall and computer suite

Outdoor learning in our woods

Observations and Assessment

Observation and assessment is ongoing and helps to inform planning.

Methods of Observation

- Daily observations on Tapestry
- More focused long observations and analysis.
- All staffs' knowledge of the whole child.

Observations and assessments are shared and evaluated regularly, and children's individual need are supported and planned for. For each adult led/initiated group activity assessment against success criteria (based on the Early Years Outcomes) is carried out for each child during the activity session. An on entry formal baseline assessment is undertaken during the first term children arrive in the EYFS unit (RBA).

Each child has a Tapestry profile which contains a collection of various forms of evidence collected by staff, that provide a picture of a child's development under the areas of learning identified in the EYFS. They consist of photos and video clips celebrating artwork, mark-making, writing with observations made including notes of relevant conversations or comments made by the child. The growing profile is shared with parents and carers who are encouraged to contribute from home. At the end of Reception class, the profile is completed for each child and parents are informed as to which Early Learning Goals have or have not been achieved.

This final, summative assessment, will be moderated with colleagues in other schools as well as internally with the receiving Year One teacher.

Behaviour

Our aim is that all children will flourish in a secure environment in which boundaries and expectations are clear and children are free to develop without fear of being hurt or hindered by anyone. Children

will be supported and encouraged by adults to verbalise their feelings and to adopt a problem-solving approach to dealing with social conflict in order to develop self-discipline and self-esteem in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

To achieve this:

- Rules governing the conduct and safety of the group will be explained to all newcomers.
- The teaching of our faith and PSHE will support and underpin the development of children's core values and attitudes to become faithful, respectful Christians.
- Adults will provide a consistent, positive role model and will endorse desirable behaviour
- In any case of misbehaviour it will be made clear that it is the behaviour which is unwelcome, not the child
- Any behavioural problems will be handled in a developmentally appropriate fashion, respecting individual children's level of understanding and maturity, and acknowledging that some kinds of behaviour may arise from a child's special needs.
- Adults will support children in working towards acceptable behaviour
- Recurring problems will be tackled by all staff in partnership with the parents to establish an understanding of the cause.

(For more information see our whole school Behaviour Policy)

Parent links

Our aim is for parents to be partners in their children's learning and to be fully informed of their children's progress. We encourage parents to see us at the beginning or end of the day with any queries or immediate needs.

All parents/carers will be actively encouraged to be a part of their child's learning and development. We send a newsletter home each term outlining the topic for the term and how parents can help at home. Each child also has a home link book in which teaching staff and parents can share observations and information. We look for opportunities to involve the parents in the children's learning through regular homework, special events such as Open Afternoons, masses and the Friday Celebration Assembly in which the children's achievements are shared.

Staff and Professional Development

The Early Years staff will attend appropriate courses, training, moderation, partnership meetings and information evenings to extend their knowledge, skills and expertise in order to keep up to date and abreast of current educational developments and initiatives. The information is then shared with members of the team and, where appropriate, fed back to the whole school staff.

Equal Opportunities and Special Needs

The school's purpose is to deliver a well-planned, balanced and appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of the community and parish we serve. We have high expectations of all our children and provide them with quality learning experiences covering all aspects of the curriculum. These are irrespective of race, gender, class or disability. The school's ethos supports the development of cultural and personal identities and prepares our children for full participation in society. Every child needs to

achieve success in order to develop a positive self-image. We recognise that all our children, including those with English as an Additional Language and Special Educational Needs, require a differentiated approach in order for them to have access to the whole curriculum and therefore reach their full potential.

It is the responsibility of the SENCO, EAL coordinator and ALL members of staff to ensure that teaching strategies, resources and support are appropriate to the needs of each individual. (For more information see SEN and EAL policies).

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Early Years Coordinator will be responsible for overseeing staff and their development, planning, assessment and delivery of the appropriate curriculum and the evaluation of its success. An action plan will outline key actions in place and this should be regularly reviewed. This information and any new initiatives will be shared with all Early Years staff at regular meetings and will be used to support future planning and development initiatives. The Early Years teaching staff are responsible for the day to day planning, assessment and running of their classes. Regular monitoring of all Early Years Staff will be carried out by the Head Teacher and other senior members of staff. The Early Years Coordinator will monitor and observe EYFS staff and unit regularly.

Phase Leader: Mrs. Susan Davies

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