

St. Ethelbert's Catholic Primary and Nursery School



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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Introduction

In our Early Years Foundation Stage, we will value each child as a unique individual person and we will build upon the range of experiences, skills and interests that each child brings with him/her to St. Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School and Nursery.

We shall provide a well-planned and resourced curriculum to provide a solid and enduring base for their learning, take that learning forward and provide opportunities for each child to succeed in accordance with our Mission Statement.

We will monitor each child throughout the school year to ensure they are making progress and that any difficulties are identified and addressed.

Aims

We follow and adhere to the statutory guidance and the guiding principles that shape the practice in Early Years, including:

- Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

These include:

- To ensure that each and every child feels included, secure and valued.
- To ensure that no child is excluded nor disadvantaged.
- To consolidate and build upon what the child already knows and can do.
- To observe, record and respond appropriately to each child.
- To provide opportunities for each child to initiate their own learning.
- To provide well planned purposeful activities that engage each child in the learning process.
- To provide varied and stimulating experiences for each child in so far as the environment allows.
- To enable each child to learn through play and practical activities.
- To inform, involve and encourage parents/carers in the education of their children.

All Practitioners working in Early Years work towards all of these aims.

(Practitioners are the Teaching Staff, Teaching Assistants, volunteers and students on work placements or teacher training courses).

Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that applies from September 2024. We have embedded the four overarching principles that shape the practice in our setting. We ensure that the children are given a variety of opportunities to support their learning and development, taking into account each unique child, developing positive relationships and within an enabling environment.

Structure of the EYFS

Nursery: 16 children at one time (15 and 30 hour entitlement)

1 Teacher.

1 Full Time Teaching Assistant (holding at least level 2 qualification)

Reception: 30 full time places

1 Teacher

1 Full Time Teaching Assistant (holding at least level 2 qualification)

Children are supervised continuously and follow the requirements for adult:child ratios set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (updated 2024). All EYFS staff have a pediatric first aid qualification and have completed PREVENT training. All staff have at least a level C at GCSE English and Maths or equivalent.

Reception and Nursery have the use of a large classroom and a dedicated outdoor area. The classroom has a carpet area and the rest of the space is organised into learning areas for the children to access.

Staff are organised to support the children in a balance of adult led and child-initiated experiences throughout the day. All provision sessions include free flow access to the outdoor area.

Curriculum and Planning

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development:

Prime Areas

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development: Self-Regulation, Managing Self, Building Relationships.
- Communication and Language: Listening, Attention & Understanding and Speaking
- Physical Development: Gross Motor Skills and Fine Motor Skills

Specific Areas

- Literacy: Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing
- Mathematics: Numbers and Numerical Patterns
- Understanding the World: Past & Present, People, Culture & Communities and The Natural World
- Expressive Arts and Design: Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive.

Learning and development across all these areas are underpinned by 'The Characteristics of effective Learning':

- Playing and Exploring – engagement
- Active Learning – motivation
- Creating and Thinking Critically – thinking

We also base our learning around a 'Topic' each term to enhance the children's learning which informs our planning.

We aim to create an attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment which will encourage children to explore, investigate and learn through first-hand experience. Resources are clearly labelled and organised into learning areas, enabling the children to access them with a high level of independence.

Practitioners regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the learning areas and resources and make adaptations as necessary. All learning areas reflect the EYFS framework ensuring the three prime areas and four specific areas are accessible throughout all learning times. Children take ownership of their space and play a large part in caring for their environment.

We have our own Curriculum Progression Plan, starting from Nursery through to the end of Reception. This outlines the topics with suggested texts, vocabulary, enhanced provision ideas and questioning for each topic and shows a progression in skills based on the Development Matters Learning Objectives and what the children need to know by the end of Reception to be ready for Year 1. This is a flexible document and can be altered depending on the needs of the class and the children's interests. This also includes our schemes of work for Mastering Number and White Rose in Maths (Reception only) and Little Wandle for Phonics and Reading. Reception also use Literacy Tree as part of their directed Literacy sessions.

Our short-term planning shows the learning opportunities that will be available over the week. It includes enhancements to areas in response to the children interests as well as the progression of the curriculum. These will include opportunities for the seven areas of learning in the EYFS.

Nursery and Reception classes have Forest School sessions every week, planned and delivered by a Level 3 trained Forest School Leader. These sessions provide more opportunities to develop skills such as independence, confidence and resilience and pupils will engage in purposeful learning activities that enable them to explore the natural world.

Religious Education

St. Ethelbert's has a strong Catholic ethos and we ensure that the children learn and celebrate the life and teaching of Jesus Christ through the liturgical year, in Reception, and following "Lighting the Path".

The children take regular visits to the St Ethelbert's Church and are introduced to the teachings of Jesus Christ through an interactive curriculum.

Learning through Play

We believe that both structured and child-initiated play is a key way in which children can learn with enjoyment and challenge.

The role of the Practitioner is crucial in:

- planning and resourcing a stimulating environment,
- fostering a happy, safe and secure learning environment,
- supporting and extending children's learning through planned play activity,
- extending and supporting children's spontaneous play,
- extending and developing children's language and communication in their play.

With effective adult support, play will allow children to:

- Take risks and make mistakes,
- think imaginatively and creatively,
- practise and consolidate ideas, concepts and skills,
- learn how to behave appropriately and understand the need for rules,
- be alone, alongside others or co-operate as they talk, investigate or solve problems,
- help them make sense of the real world, including expressing fears or anxieties in a safe and controlled situation.

There is a range of "continuous provision" available in the indoor and outdoor environments that are designed to offer open-ended, practical learning opportunities. Each week, the provision is enhanced with additional resources, based on observations and the children's interests.

As the children grow older, and their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year 1.

All EYFS staff are trained in using the Shrec Approach to ensure children are being exposed to open-ended questioning and staff are always developing the pupils' language and vocabulary and moving their learning forward.

Safeguarding

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure; when their individual needs are met; and when they have positive relationships with those caring for them. We ensure the welfare and safety of our children on a daily basis and follow the statutory requirements to ensure all needs are met.

- Children are supervised indoors and outdoors at all times.
- Risk assessments are carried out and adhered to when needed.

- Children are given fruit and milk daily and are encouraged to drink water throughout the school day.
- Free school meals are available to all children.
- Close relationships with parents/carers to ensure smooth transition and continued communication throughout the school year.
- If any concerns are raised regarding any of the children in our care, we report these immediately to our DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead), and follow the correct procedures.

Transition

Into Nursery / From Nursery to Reception:

We believe it is vitally important to ensure a smooth transition for children starting Nursery or Reception. We have close contact with parents/carers leading up to the start of school in September, including two 'taster' sessions in June/July, classroom tours, introduction booklets and parent information meetings. These enable all staff to find out about the needs and interests of each individual child before they start school, helping them to settle into their new surroundings without difficulty.

The children who attend our Nursery, who are moving up to Reception, visit Reception Class for some of the child-initiated time, meaning they are already very familiar with the environment and adults in Reception Class.

Many Reception children start with two hours a day for two days (depending on when the term starts) then the children continue full time. During this time, we focus on getting to know the children, as well as teaching the class rules and routines.

From Reception to Year 1:

We always want to make sure that the children in Reception are prepared for the transition into Year 1 and so we start introducing the children to a more structured routine in the Summer Term. We also have visits to the Year 1 classroom in small groups throughout the Summer Term so that the children can get used to the new environment and their new teacher. Close communication links with parents/carers are vital.

Parental Involvement

We believe that parent involvement is crucial in the effective learning and development of each child in the Early Years setting.

We value the contribution that our parents and/or carers make to their child's learning and take every opportunity to work in collaboration with them. We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. From the very beginning of term, we form close communication links with parents, starting with transition. We make ourselves available at the beginning and end of each school day for parents to talk to and we also use Class Dojo as a means of communication.

Class Dojo also enables parents and carers to be fully involved in the teaching and learning of their children. They are able to see the positive feedback children receive

with Class Dojo points and updates or important reminders are uploaded regularly. Through Class Dojo, parents are able to see some of the daily learning that takes place and are also able to upload their own photos and videos of any Home Learning that takes place.

We also keep parents and/or carers up to date with their child's progress and learning via:

- Two parent meetings (autumn and spring terms)
- An end of year report in July
- 'Share the Learning' experiences for parents to come into class at the end of each term
- Communication through Reading Records
- Home Learning books sent home each week
- Termly Newsletters

Assessment

On starting school, each child will complete a short language assessment to identify their level of understanding. Each child will also complete the statutory Baseline Assessment within the first six weeks of starting school. These will all be linked to the Early Years Curriculum and will inform us of the child's starting point. This information will then inform our planning on an individual basis for each child.

Observations and assessments on all children using the Early Years Curriculum will be updated and reviewed on a daily basis and targeted within weekly planning. Examples of literacy, mathematics and observational work (knowledge and understanding of the world) will be added to each child's personal file. Observations of the children in different settings and learning contexts will also be kept by practitioners. This will ensure we pick up on concerns about pupil progress. These will be communicated to parents and where necessary the SENCO will be informed. Advice from and referrals to outside agencies may also be sought. Children will be given regular feedback on their progress and achievements. Parents will be informed of these through regular positive feedback, two parent/ teacher meetings and day to day contact with class teachers. We also hold two additional SEND parent/teacher meetings a year. Assessment is and will be used to inform planning.

At the end of the EYFS, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The national expectation is for all children to achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD). This is when a child achieves an expected level in the Prime Areas of learning, as well as Literacy and Mathematics.

The profile reflects ongoing observations, and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child.

The profile is moderated internally (referring to the Development Matters guidance) and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. The children are assessed on a 'Good Level of Development' and the EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.

At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage Our aim is for all children to achieve GLD, however, it is more important for them to reach their full potential and make good progress.