



Nurturing **Ambition
Through a Living Faith**

Early Years Policy

Vision

Our Academy delivers a purposeful curriculum through its living Christian faith. We nurture ambition in all our learners in order for them to become positive citizens of tomorrow.

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Bible

'Let us not love with words or speech alone but with actions and truth.' — 1 John 3:18

Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. In our Academy the Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of two. The children at Darwen St James' can commence Nursery after their second birthday and then start the Reception class the September before they are five. These three years form the Foundation stage and will underpin all future learning for our children.

At Darwen St James' we aim to create an attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment which encourages children to explore, investigate and learn through first hand experiences. We also aim to make it a place where children feel secure and confident, and are challenged to develop their independence. In Nursery and Reception, children are encouraged to become independent learners and to take some responsibility for initiating their own lines of enquiry and investigation through play.

Starting Nursery

The children can start in the nursery room after the term of their second birthday. AM and PM sessions are available to all children. Settling in sessions will be given to support the child and parent's transition at this time. Parents will be given information on how the nursery operates, and our home school agreement. As the child turns 3 we offer the 30 hours extended day or the am and pm sessions.

Starting Reception

Children begin the Reception class in the September of the school year in which they will be 5 years old. Children join Darwen St James' having attended one or more of the pre-schools and nurseries within our local area including our own Academy nursery. However, by attending our nursery, children are not automatically offered a place in the Reception class and parents / carers must complete the Local Authorities application form. Please see our Admissions policy for more information. Our admission arrangements are carefully organised and regularly reviewed to ensure that all parties are happy, confident and fully informed about all aspects of induction.

For young children change and transition can be bewildering and overwhelming. For this reason we value the importance of a positive introduction to school for both children and parents/carers. We begin to meet new pupils and welcome families to Darwen St James' during the summer terms of the school year prior to entry.

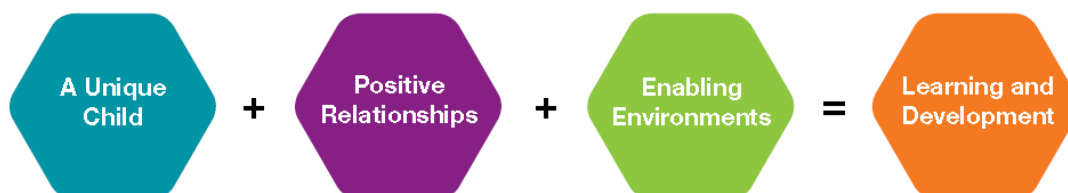
The children who attend our Academy Nursery classes will already be familiar with the Reception class teacher and early years practitioner, however, towards the end of the Summer Term the children who have not been to our nursery will have the opportunity to meet their new class teacher and experience some informal activities. Parents / carers will also have the opportunity to attend a meeting with all the Foundation Stage teachers and this will be led by the class teacher.

The children will start the Reception class at the start of September, however this will be built up throughout the week, depending on the individual needs of the children.

Aims of the Foundation Stage

- To make each child's first experience at Darwen St James happy and fun.
- To provide a child friendly setting that is safe, stimulating and caring.
- To ensure that all children feel valued in the Foundation Stage setting.
- To develop children's confidence and independence to carry out daily tasks and to become independent learners.
- To offer a balance of child initiated and adult led activities.
- To provide a differentiated curriculum firmly based on children's needs, interests, skills and knowledge.
- To foster and develop a partnership between home and school in order to establish an accurate understanding of each child's individual needs. (Parents as partners)
- To provide a broad and balanced curriculum which will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to his/her full potential.
- To work within the guidelines of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based upon four themes:



- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**;
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.** The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Our practice is underpinned by these four themes.

UNIQUE CHILD

At Darwen St James' we believe all children are special. We give all our children the opportunity to achieve their best by:

- Using a wide range of teaching strategies that include Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic learners
- Planning activities that take into account children's individual learning needs
- Using resources and materials that reflect the community that the children come from
- Provide a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued

Inclusion

All children at Darwen St James' are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, religion or abilities. We value the diversity of individuals within our school as we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best by taking account of the range of life experiences our children have when planning for their learning.

In the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of all our children by taking into account children with special educational needs, those who are more able, children with disabilities, children of different social and cultural backgrounds, boys or girls, and those of different ethnic groups.

Special Educational Needs

In accordance with the 2014 SEND Code of Practice, children requiring additional support receive targeted support through SEN Support Plans and, where appropriate, Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Standardised terminology and documentation align fully with school SEND policy. Class teachers discuss targets and progress with parents/carers on a regular, planned basis. We also ensure adaptive teaching extends and challenges children identified as more able or high prior attainers.

Welfare

- **Safeguarding & Suitability:** All staff, volunteers, and regular visitors undergo strict Safer Recruitment checks, including enhanced DBS verification. Staff receive ongoing safeguarding training in accordance with KCSIE and statutory guidance. Allegations procedures strictly follow statutory thresholds for reporting harm to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and Ofsted.
- **Emergency Contact Details:** The school maintains up-to-date emergency contact details for all children, ensuring at least two contact numbers per child are recorded and verified regularly.
- **Safer Sleep Provisions:** For younger children in our Nursery and Pre-School unit requiring sleep, strict statutory safer sleep guidelines are enforced. Children are placed on their backs on firm, flat mattresses with clean individual bedding. Staff conduct continuous visual and auditory checks, maintaining written sleep monitoring

logs.

- **Safe Eating and Choking Prevention:** Mealtime and snack activities are closely supervised by staff trained in paediatric first aid. Food is prepared in accordance with statutory age-appropriate guidance to prevent choking (e.g. cutting round foods such as grapes lengthways). Strict allergy tracking protocols are displayed and adhered to in all continuous provision areas.
- **Oral Health Promotion:** Children in the EYFS participate in daily supervised toothbrushing schemes to promote oral health. Reception children receive visits from local dental practices and undergo routine school nurse health checks (height, weight, and vision screening).
- **Balanced Screen Use:** Where technology is available within the environment, screen use is strictly controlled, purposeful, and balanced with physical activity, active exploration, and face-to-face interaction.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

At Darwen St James' we aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with children and their families. All staff involved within the Foundation Stage aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them.

Parents as Partners

Parents are the first and most important educators of a child. We encourage their involvement in all aspects of learning and encourage a partnership based on mutual trust and respect by:

- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school.
- Offering both parents and children the opportunity to spend time in the Foundation Stage before starting school.
- Operating an open door policy for parents with any queries.
- Sharing regularly the children's 'Learning Journey' with parents and valuing the ongoing contributions to this from parents via Dojo.
- Offering two parent/teacher consultation evenings per year.
- Sending home an annual report on their child's attainment and progress during their time in the Foundation stage.
- Communicating with parents/carers via Class Dojo and our social media pages, Facebook and Twitter.
- Developing a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents:

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

At Darwen St James' we provide a stimulating indoor and outdoor environment in both Nursery and Reception, offering experiences and activities that are challenging but achievable, giving children the confidence to explore and learn in secure, safe spaces.

The Foundation Stage classrooms are organised to allow children to explore and learn. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet, creative etc. The learning environment is divided into clearly defined areas including: role play, book corner, writing table, maths area, listening centre, computer area, art and craft area, playdough, exploration, sand, water, outside, construction, small world, painting and a snack table.

Children have the freedom to move between the indoor and outdoor classroom throughout the school day. The free flow between the inside and the outside has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

The Indoor Classroom:

We aim to ensure that the indoor environment is:

- calm, attractive, orderly and well ventilated
- has areas suitable for quiet learning, focussed individual or paired/group learning, comfortable relaxation, investigation, creativity and construction,
- organised to encourage children to take a pride in and responsibility for their environment and to develop independence in the selection, care and return of resources and equipment

The Outdoor Classroom

We aim to ensure that our outdoor environment:

- offers opportunities for fresh air and exercise in a secure environment
- promotes physical development, specifically gross motor skills, core strength and body awareness.
- promotes health and general well being
- provides some covered and shaded areas
- has a variety of features, different surfaces, texture and levels
- offer a range of opportunities and challenges for independent and supervised exploration and experiences in all areas of learning

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

At Darwen St James' a carefully structured curriculum based on the EYFS offers provision that builds on the children's individual learning needs. Through play, children have the opportunity to explore, investigate, discover, repeat, revise and consolidate their knowledge, skills and understanding.

The EYFS is divided into 7 areas of learning and development, all are important and interconnected; however, three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These three areas, the *prime* areas, are:

- Communication and Language;
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

There are 4 *specific* areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. These are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive Arts and Design

Communication and language:

- **Listening, Attention and Understanding**

Throughout the EYFS children will be encouraged to develop their listening skills and demonstrate their understanding through making comments about what they have heard and asking questions to clarify their understanding. Children will be given lots of opportunities to listen to stories and respond appropriately with actions and words. They will interact continuously with adults and peers and work towards holding a conversation that contains back and forth exchanges.

- **Speaking**

Throughout the EYFS children will work towards being able to participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary.

With lots of encouragement and a range of experiences they will offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate. Children will work towards being able to express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

Physical development:

- **Gross Motor Skills**

Throughout the EYFS children are given lots of opportunities to negotiate space and obstacles safely and are encouraged to do this with consideration for themselves and others. They will demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing and be encouraged to move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping and climbing.

- **Fine Motor Skills**

This area of development involves providing opportunities for the children to hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing, using the tripod grip in almost all cases. They will use a range of small tools, including scissors, paintbrushes and cutlery. Throughout the EYFS children will develop accuracy and care when drawing.

Personal, social and emotional development:

- **Self Regulation**

Throughout the EYFS children will develop skills in working and playing cooperatively and taking turns with others. They will be encouraged to form positive attachments to adults and friendships

with peers; and to show sensitivity to their own and to others' needs. They will work towards being able to show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly. Our learning environment will encourage them to set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate. Children will learn to give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, showing an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.

- **Managing Self**

Children will be encouraged to be confident to try new activities and show independence,

resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge. They will be helped to explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly. Over time, the children will learn to manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet and understanding the importance of healthy food choices.

- **Building Relationships**

This area of development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

English:

- **Comprehension**

Children's enjoyment of books and stories is essential for their subsequent development in this area. Talking, re-telling and role playing are all consistent elements of English teaching at Darwen St. James. Through these activities, children are given opportunities to demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by using recently introduced vocabulary and telling stories in their own words. Through familiarity with key texts, children will be encouraged to anticipate key events in stories.

- **Word Reading**

Once Phase 1 of Letters and Sounds has been mastered the children will move on to the subsequent Phases that teach see it, say it, write it for each letter in the alphabet. They will be given daily opportunities to use sound blending to read words consistent with their phonic knowledge and build up to reading simple sentences including some common exception words.

- **Writing**

Throughout the EYFS children are given a wide range of opportunities to mark make with a variety of materials. When they are ready they will copy and write recognisable letters. they will gain knowledge of the alphabetic code and eventually write words.

Mathematics:

- **Number**

This area works towards children having a deep understanding of numbers to 10, and how to recognise quantities without counting, for example using the familiar pattern of dots on a dice. Children will also be taught how to recall number bonds up to 5 and some doubling facts.

- **Numerical Patterns**

This area of development includes counting up to 10 and then beyond 10 and recognising the pattern of the counting system. Children are given opportunities to compare quantities of up to 10 objects and to talk about when one quantity is greater than, less than or the same as the other quantity. Alongside this children explore and represent patterns within numbers up to 10, including evens and odds, double facts and how quantities can be distributed equally.

Understanding the world:

- **Past and Present**

Children will think about the people around them and their roles in society. Using their own experiences they will be able to talk about similarities and differences between the past and now. They will also explore the past through books read in class and storytelling.

- **People, Culture and Communities**

Children will be given lots of opportunities to observe and discuss their immediate environment including looking at non-fiction texts and maps. They will explore some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class. They will compare life in the U.K and life in other countries.

- **The Natural World**

Children will be given lots of opportunities to explore and observe the world around them, drawing pictures of animals and plants. They will be able to name some similarities and differences between different environments and understand important processes such as the growing of a seed.

Expressive arts and design:

- **Creating with Materials**

Children learn to safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function. Their creations are celebrated and shared and we encourage children to explain the process they have used. Children also have access to props and materials for role play exploration.

- **Being Imaginative and Expressive**

Children are taught to sing nursery rhymes and songs and are given time to develop skills to move in time to the music! They will use stories as a basis for learning and have opportunities to retell and adapt narratives. Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher;

At Darwen St James' we believe these seven areas depend on each other to support a rounded approach to child development. Children learn in many different ways and

we recognise the need to provide opportunities that allow children to learn in the ways that best suit them; playing, talking, observing, investigating and problem solving, questioning, experimenting, testing, repeating, reflecting and responding to adults and each other.

The curriculum is delivered through a combination of adult-led focussed learning and child-chosen/child-initiated activities. The learning may be delivered through a wide variety of activities aimed at the whole class, groups, pairs or individuals that take place both in and out of doors.

Planning

We devise an overview for the Year and look for opportunities to make links with other subjects whenever possible. The children are encouraged to add their own interests and focuses for learning.

Systematic planning ensures continuity and progression in the introduction and development of specific basic skills and concepts. The Planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Non-Statutory Curriculum Guidance from the Early Years Foundation Stage document.

Long term plan

The EYFS staff at Darwen St James work closely with the other curriculum leads to create a high quality, engaging curriculum that covers all areas. These can be viewed on the individual curriculum subject pages.

Medium Term Plan

Knowledge of children's progress gathered through observations and interactions with the children will be used each half term to identify the skills children need to stay on track during their nursery or reception year.

Short term planning

Weekly plans are completed throughout the week, responding to children's interests. A mixture of directed and free choice activities are planned each week for children to engage in. In the nursery class, all activities are based around the 3 prime areas of learning. In Pre-School and Reception all other areas of learning are included in the weekly plans.

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. As stated in the Early Years Adopter Framework Statutory Framework, three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

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
Keeping trying
Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

Creating and thinking critically – thinking

Having their own ideas

Making links

Choosing ways to do things

Assessment

We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of both formal and informal observations.

The EYFS uses Class Dojo to record observations of the children.

- On entry assessments are made in both Nursery and Reception to give teachers and support staff an understanding of the children's individual abilities in each area of learning.
- Standards and Testing Agency baseline assessment is completed on entry
- A baseline assessment is completed in the nursery and pre school within the first 2 weeks of a child starting.
- At the end of the Nursery and Reception Years information will be passed on to the next teacher giving them a detailed account on each child's abilities.
- Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data will be sent to the LEA.

At the end of their reception year the children's progress is recorded on to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Each child's level of development is recorded against the 17 Early Learning Goals.

Workbooks

Children complete various pieces of work across the whole EYFS. These take many forms including; challenges set up in Continuous Provision, one to one focused work, small group Focused Activities and whole class activities.

Every child across the EYFS has an online learning journey.

In Reception every child has a literacy/phonics book. In this book there will be evidence of focused activities and wow moments in the children's learning. These provide a valuable record of each child's progress throughout the year. In addition to this teachers keep PSHE and R.E. virtual books to record learning taking place in these subjects.