



Early Years Policy

School Number: 06027

This policy was reviewed by: Mrs AM Deacon

May 2021

The Purpose of the Early Years Policy

The Early Years policy in this school reflects the value and importance of early years education within the Foundation Stage. It provides a framework for staff, which gives guidance on practice and outlines procedures for planning, teaching and learning, monitoring and evaluating the curriculum. The policy contributes towards raising educational standards within the school and ensures that the needs of the youngest children are met within the context of whole school policies, curriculum planning, agreed teaching approaches and organisational structures. The Foundation children follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document.

Within this document, the term Early Years is used to describe children in our Foundation Stage classroom.

The policy reflects the main aims of the school, which are:

School Mission Statement

Our Catholic school of St Ignatius' puts the faith and uniqueness of Jesus Christ at the centre of our vision for our children. We all strive to treat every person with respect and understanding. We know that no matter who we are or what our backgrounds, in school we will be listened to and valued. We are all children of God. We are totally committed to providing every opportunity for all of our children to develop intellectually, socially, physically and spiritually through a working partnership with home, parish and other local faith communities so that our children are prepared for further opportunities, responsibilities and experiences.

We work in an atmosphere of reconciliation where we all learn to forgive each other and to start each day afresh.

We acknowledge our great responsibility to help all our children on their individual faith journeys guided by our belief in the Word of God. The diversity of faiths in our school challenges us to teach our children -

- to live together
- pray together
- and play together.

This is our school.

This is our community.

Here we all are, Lord!

Introduction

The Early Years Policy addresses all aspects of the needs of young children and ensures that:

- Early Years education is valued, seen as the foundation for education and the beginning of a continuum of learning throughout the primary phase.
- The curriculum experiences of children are appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- The identification of and provision for special educational needs of children are included.
- The importance of 'play', 'first hand' experiences and an active curriculum are recognised in planning learning opportunities for young children.
- There is shared understanding of the emotional & developmental needs of young children, how they learn and develop skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The needs of the children are considered carefully in matters of organisation, management and administration.
- Children experience a smooth transition from home or nursery, into the reception class and into Key Stage One.

"The foundation stage of education will make a positive contribution to children's early development and learning. During this time we cannot afford to get things wrong. The early years are critical in children's development. Children develop rapidly during this time- physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. The foundation stage is about developing key learning skills such as listening, speaking, concentration, persistence and learning to work together and cooperate with other children. It is also about developing early communication, literacy and numeracy skills that will prepare young children for Key stage one of the national curriculum."

Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, QCA/Dfee 2000

Key Aims and Principles of the Early Years Policy

Staff at St. Ignatius Catholic Primary School believe that the following aims and principles underpin their practice and reflect a shared vision of how children develop and learn, the activities and experiences which help children make progress, and the type of stimulating environment which promotes opportunities for learning.

The aims of the Early Years Curriculum are:

- To provide a happy, safe, secure and stimulating environment with opportunities for children to enjoy learning, develop confidence and self-esteem, and build good relationships with others.
- To support, foster and develop children's personal, social and emotional well - being.
- To build on what the children already know, understand and can achieve.
- To enable pupils to express preferences, communicate needs, make choices, make decisions and choose options that other people act on and respect.
- To value parents/carers as important partners in their children's learning.
- To address the individual needs of all children by enabling them to participate in a broad, balanced, relevant and age appropriate curriculum, with due regard to equal opportunities.
- To promote the moral, spiritual, cultural, intellectual and physical development of children.
- To develop positive attitudes and dispositions for learning

Early Years Curriculum & Planning.

Our Early Years Curriculum is based on the Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and is planned to lead smoothly into the National Curriculum at Key Stage One in a way which is relevant and meaningful for all children. The Foundation Stage Curriculum stresses the importance of the child's personal, emotional and social development, emphasises that early literacy and numeracy lay the foundation for the future learning of all children.

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected but three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive (DfE 2014: 1.3), they support children's learning in all other areas, they are known as the prime areas.

The prime areas are;

- **Communication and Language** - Listening, Attention and Understanding and Speaking
- **Physical Development** - Gross motor skills and Fine motor skills
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** - Self regulation, Managing self and Building Relationships.

The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. The specific areas are;

- **Literacy** - Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing
- **Mathematics** - Numbers and Numerical patterns.

- **Understanding the World** - Past and Present, People, Culture and communities and The Natural world.
- **Expressive Arts and Design** - Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive.

As a Catholic school our Foundation children are taught Religious Education with the support of the 'Come and See' scheme of work. This is taught through various activities including stories, artwork, and discussions. They also take part in daily worship sessions which may be whole school or as a class.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The characteristics of effective learning are a key element in the Early Year's Foundation Stage. They detail the ways in which children should be learning from their environment, experiences and activities.

The three characteristics are:

- **Playing and Exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- **Active Learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- **Creating and Thinking Critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

At St. Ignatius Catholic Primary School we are working towards children achieving most aspects of the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year. Development matters help staff identify children's developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes as they make progress towards the Early Learning Goals, throughout the Foundation Stage. The Early Learning Goals establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage, but are not intended to be a curriculum in themselves.

Teaching

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on. Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on our topic work, mathematics, literacy, phonics, and

stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc... Reading and story play an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern classics. We make sure there is always time for whole class story at the end of the day but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times.

Planning

We believe many children need to be given a starting point to learn new things and find topics are a great way to fire the imagination. These topics are flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests. All staff and children are given the opportunity to contribute to these topic plans by taking part in a planning session using talking tubs. We also incorporate local or national events and school themes into our plans.

Weekly plans include what children are to be taught in specific sessions, how staff are organised and how resources are to be used. Evaluation of activities, observation and staff listening to, and talking with children, are key strategies for gaining information on each child's progress, development and next steps.

The wider curriculum consists of

- Educational visits and visitors, e.g. family members, members of the local community
- Opportunities to access the local and wider environment including shops, parks, seaside, museum and library visits.

Classroom organisation

Our Foundation classroom has defined areas with clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. The classroom is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning. The classroom has a writing area, mathematics area, creative area, book corner, role play area, construction/small world area, outdoor area and carpeted teaching area. A variety of activities are planned for and set up in the different areas each day. The adults move within the different areas. The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside. As with the indoor learning environment, we ensure that there are a range of activities outside that reflects the learning needs and are suitable for children with disabilities. We provide access to an outdoor play area ensuring that outdoor activities are planned and taken on a daily basis (unless circumstances make this inappropriate, for example unsafe weather conditions).

Assessment, observations and Learning Journeys.

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies all of which come together in their individual Learning Journey. These are a collection of children's work, photos and observations, using the 'Evidence Me' App. These observations create a detailed picture of the child, which can be linked directly to development matters and include individual next steps. These next steps inform planning for future activities and learning opportunities. Staff have access to an iPad which is used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning using the app. Parents have access to the 'Evidence me' app and are encouraged to upload photographs and videos of observations made of their child at home. Teachers can then make notes on these observations that can be sent back to the parent. Teachers can also share observations made in school with parents using a share button within the web page. Parents can only see their own child's observations. All observations are printed and placed into a Learning journey folder. The Learning journey folder is passed on as the child enters Year 1 and becomes the school record of achievement.

On entry to Foundation class we carry out baseline assessments for each child. Throughout the year the Class Teacher submits end of term assessment data to the assessment co-ordinator showing each child's development across the seven areas of learning. At the end of Foundation year the class teacher assesses each child against all seventeen aspects of the Early Learning Goals (ELG). Practitioners indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the child's end of year report and can be discussed in the final Parent/teacher meeting.

Role of staff and key worker

The class teacher is the named key worker for each child in the setting. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents.

All adults within the Early Years setting actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between

adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being now and their future successes.

Extra to this each child is given an additional key worker. The Key worker and children work together daily on reading, writing and language development activities.

Partnership with parents and carers and smooth transitions.

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. Parents are invited into school for many events including; Friday Superstars assemblies, special assemblies at other times, open mornings, children's plays and performances, art exhibitions, school sponsored events, art week, school outings and many more.

We offer toy library sessions and pre-school visits followed by a home visit before the children begin their school year. These times give parent the opportunities to share valuable information which can help make a smooth transition from home to school and allow parents to ask any questions they may have about starting school. During these visits parents are given a welcome booklet, school prospectus and other leaflets that explain school procedures. Parents have the opportunity to discuss and view school uniform, P.E. kit, book bags etc.

We then offer parenting workshops and 'come and play' sessions during the year. On these occasions parents will be given the opportunity to look at their child's learning journey and discuss their child's progress with the class teacher. Parents bring and collect their child from the classroom door and teachers are available each morning and evening to talk and to discuss any arising matters. Parents are provided with a termly newsletter that outlines what their child will be learning.

The foundation staff arrange to visit local feeder nurseries which provides the opportunity to discuss prospective children, gaining valuable information, especially concerning special needs.

Health & safety and safeguarding

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.

Members of staff do not use their mobile phones or personal handset devices in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal handsets. This is in line with our Safeguarding Policy. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS.

These photographs are used in children's portfolios, in class displays and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school website through the paperwork in their initial starter packs.

We are a healthy school and our children receive free fruit and milk from a Government scheme. All children are given the option to eat a free school lunch although some children prefer to bring a packed lunch from home. We ask parents to make sure that this lunch is a healthy one.

We have an EYFS risk assessment which is updated annually.

Liaison with other agencies

At St. Ignatius Catholic Primary school we liaise with many outside agencies to address the needs of our children. Teaching staff and the school SENDCO are responsible for liaising with these agencies.

Staff Development

The identification of training needs for teaching and non-teaching staff will take place through Performance Management and/or staff development interviews.

The Early Years co-ordinator will ensure that appropriate dissemination of training/materials/good practice takes place regularly.

Reviewing the Early Years policy.

The head teacher, Early Years Coordinator, and governors will monitor the early years provision and review this policy on a regular basis to ensure it is being implemented appropriately and to take account of changing circumstances. The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Resources

The resources in the Early years department are continually being monitored and updated as and when needed.

There is an annual budget available for each class and subject areas including the early years. The coordinators and class teachers are responsible for auditing their subject/class resources and purchasing relevant materials.

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