



'Growing, loving and learning in the arms of Mary'

Early Years Policy

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Rationale

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. It is not just a preparation for the next stage of learning but is vitally important in itself. For young children there is no distinction between work and play. Their work is their play. Their play is their work.

Learning for young children is a rewarding and enjoyable experience in which they explore, investigate, discover, create, practice, rehearse, repeat, revise and consolidate their developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes. During the foundation stage, many of these aspects of learning are brought together effectively through playing and talking.

Our Aims:

We aim to ensure that our children have a sound foundation for learning by:

- developing their curiosity, independence, self-confidence, motivation and imagination
- developing their social, communicative and co-operative skills
- recognising that all aspects of their development are of equal importance
- equipping them with basic skills which they may then use to pursue and develop their knowledge and understanding in all areas of the curriculum
- providing a curriculum that is responsive, dynamic and appropriate to their needs

This is done within an ethos in which:

- all children feel secure, supported, valued and happy
- we focus on their achievements, strengths and progress
- all children are excited and enthusiastic about their learning
- there are opportunities, experiences and activities that support visual, auditory and kinaesthetic styles of learning
- there is an appropriate balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities
- parents are valued as important partners in their child's education

How do we do this?

We want children to be engaged in the learning process and for their learning to be relevant and purposeful. Therefore, we believe that children learn best by doing.

We believe that play, both indoors and outdoors, is an ideal vehicle for young children's learning. Play helps children to explore, investigate and make sense of the world around them. Play allows children to be challenged in their thinking and helps them to practice and rehearse skills and to be motivated in their learning. Children are inquisitive and curious and we wish to build upon this in a positive and enjoyable manner.

Planning

The Early Years is based around four key themes, three prime areas of learning and four specific areas of learning.

The themes:

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

Each theme is linked to an important Principle:

A Unique Child

Every child is unique and each one responds to different learning methods in different ways.

Enabling Environments

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning. This gives them the freedom to expand on their knowledge.

Positive Relationships

Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of positive and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.

Learning and development

By following the EYFS's 7 areas of learning, each child will be taught a wide range of skills to aid their development. Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.

The three prime areas are:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal Social and Emotional Development

The four specific areas are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Approach to Teaching and Learning

We plan learning experiences from the children's interests and believe they should play an active role in generating ideas for the curriculum. The class has plans for continuous provision inside and outside.

We believe that children learn most effectively when teaching and learning styles are varied, inclusive and provide appropriate balance.

We plan for staff to “teach” through:

- Input sessions that have a clear focus and/or objective
- Adult directed tasks that are accessed independently or with appropriate support
- Interacting with children during their play and child led activities
- Enabling children to initiate their own activities by developing areas of provision that are accessible, flexible and responsive.

We plan for the children through:

- Accessing the areas of provision
- Responding to a range of stimuli, appropriate questions and suggestions
- Initiating their own activity
- Participating in an adult directed activity either independently or with appropriate support

The Learning Environment and Classroom Organisation

We believe that the environment plays a critical role in each child's learning as a safe, secure and stimulating place that promotes curiosity, challenge, creativity and independence. We place great importance on outdoor learning for which the children are provided with suitable outdoor clothing, provided generously by the school's PTA.

In order to achieve this we:

- Ensure that wall and table top displays reflect and celebrate the children's work and achievements
- Encourage children to explore interactive and exploratory displays
- Ensure that tools, equipment and resources are available and accessible, being clearly labelled to encourage children to take responsibility for their storage and care
- Ensure that all areas of provision are suitably and appropriately resourced and that there is sufficient opportunity for children to consolidate and develop skills, knowledge and understanding in all six Areas of Learning, as stated in the Early Years guidance.
- Ensure that appropriate challenge is built into the planning of areas of provision and that these are clearly linked to the early learning goals.

Planning the Curriculum

Long Term Planning:

Each area of provision is carefully planned following observations and analysis of child-initiated learning, which indicates what the children can access.

Medium Term Planning:

We are developing an enquiry-based approach which puts questioning at the heart of the school's ethos and culture. The children engage in generating questions which forms the basis of the medium-term plan.

Short term Planning:

Weekly planning ensures all of the EY objectives are addressed over time, identifies activities for each area of learning, which are delivered through a balance of adult directed and child-initiated activities. Time is also planned for observing and assessing each child.

Assessment through observation

Children give indications of their learning all of the time through what they say, what they do, how they approach activities etc., and it is primarily by observing children that judgments are made to inform records and planning.

A system of planned observations take place each week including observations of activities, the different learning spaces, individuals and groups of children (e.g. of an activity, an observation on a particular child or on an aspect from the early years outcomes. These observations are recorded in a variety of ways e.g. photographs, post its, observation formats and annotations on work. These are all stored electronically in the children's individual Learning Journals

Assessment times

- Children entering school are observed during their first weeks, to provide baseline information.
- Work produced during self – initiated activities is collected and collated in each child's Learning Journal, which parents are encouraged to contribute their journey, through 'WOW' moments.
- Early Years outcomes are updated at the end of each term.
- At the end of year, a report summarising the achievements from the early years outcomes is sent to parents.
- The profile data and characteristics of effective learning are discussed with the Year 1 teacher so that she can continue to help the children to achieve the early learning goals if they have not done so before they can access the KS1 curriculum.

Transition

Changing from a pre-school or nursery setting into reception or moving into Year One can be daunting for both parents and children. We aim to make this transition as easy and comfortable as possible for all involved.

The EY Team works closely with professionals within school and other settings ensuring the children have a series of pre-visits so they become comfortable within their new environment.

We have regular dialogue with parents and professionals to ensure we gain a full overview of the child and their needs. We aim for each child to visit their new setting through regular sessions before they start school. We will organise times for the children to visit us at St Mary's RC Primary School.

Partnership with Parents*

We greatly value the contribution and knowledge which parents and carers bring. In order to draw on this as effectively as possible we try to include parents as much as possible. Formal meetings which are offered to parents include

- An admission meeting to explain school and class routines – **June/ July**.
- Home visits will take place for every new pupil.
- Autumn term: parent consultations to discuss settling in and any additional support – **October**
- Autumn term: Curriculum meetings to inform parents about how the Early Years curriculum is taught and how they can support at home.
- Spring term: parent consultations to discuss progress **February/ March**.
- Summer term: parents receive school report and Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)
- Links through learning activities as and when appropriate, e.g. share a book morning, open invitation to join phonics information session, play mornings etc.

* Whenever the term parent is used it refers to anyone who has parental responsibility for the child.

Admission Policy

All children are admitted in September as full time in line with the school's admission policy.

Equal Opportunities

In line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy, no child in the foundation stage class will be discriminated against or disadvantaged because of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability, gender or ability.

Allergies / Health Issues

Parents/carers are asked to inform us of any foods their children are allergic to or any foods they do not wish their child to eat.

It is important that parents provide us with all relevant health information.

Safeguarding Children

The school takes its child protection responsibilities very seriously. Any concerns, which the school has, will be noted and, if deemed necessary, will be reported to the relevant agency. The safety of the child is always of paramount importance.

The full Safeguarding Policy is available in school for parents to read if they wish.

Special Educational Needs

Should a child have any special need the parent will be informed at an early stage. Group and individual help is provided within the school where possible. We have links with various agencies and when necessary their involvement may be required to support certain children. Parents/Carers will always be informed if an outside agency is assisting us to support their child. We have a full Special Educational Needs Policy available on our school website or via the school office.

Health and Safety

We have a Health and Safety Policy which all staff and students are familiar with and we have designated people responsible for first aid in school. Foundation Stage staff have had paediatric first aid training. Children are taught the safe and appropriate use of equipment and materials. Children are taught to be mindful when moving around the school and are aware of safety issues. Risk assessments are undertaken before after school activities take place and before we embark on school outings. A full Health and Safety Policy is available in school.

Appendix 1

The areas of learning and development support, foster, promote and develop children's development:

Prime Areas

Communication and Language - Children will develop confidence in listening and attention, understanding and speaking in a variety of settings and purposes.

Physical Development – Developing skills involved with moving and handling. PD will improve co-ordination, control, manipulation and movement. It helps children to gain confidence and feel positive about being healthy and active. This promotes a positive feeling of well-being, and knowledge of health and self-care.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development – Crucial for all aspects of life which will give the children the best opportunity for success in all other areas of learning. Each child needs a positive sense of him/herself and respect for others. PSED involves making relationships, developing self-confidence and self-awareness and managing own feelings and behaviour.

Specific Areas of Learning

Literacy – Children will learn to read, using different strategies. They will demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read. Children will use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds. They will then progress to writing simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others.

Mathematics – Will develop confidence and competence in learning and using key skills. This includes counting, sorting, matching, seeking patterns, making connections, recognising relationships and working with numbers, shapes, space and measure.

Understanding the World – Knowledge of people and communities, skills, problem solving, exploring and understanding will help them to make sense of the world.

Foundations are developed for Science, Design and Technology, History, Geography and Computing.

Expressive Arts and Design – Exploring and using media and materials is fundamental to successful learning. It enables children to make connections and extend their thoughts, feelings and understanding. It will include art, music, dance, role-play and imaginative activities.