

EARLY YEARS POLICY

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for the teaching and learning of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Curriculum at St Nicholas School.

Children entering St Nicholas at reception age will be joining a school with an ethos that recognises early childhood as a unique experience in itself, as well as setting the foundations for future learning. **Our School curriculum is personalised to the needs of each pupil and is structured so that it provides three distinct pathways for children through the school and into adult hood. These pathways differentiate between the levels of independence the learner is working towards achieving.**

RATIONALE

The Reception pathway classes aim to provide a free and protected space in which all children can experience themselves as learners. We recognise that this may be a child's first encounter with formal education and we work to ensure that children experience a flexible yet predictable, inclusive environment; this provides a good balance of security and appropriate levels of challenge. We aim to support children to become independent learners by supporting them to find their inner resources of curiosity and enthusiasm, so that they can enjoy engaging with learning and as they develop, manage their own ways of learning. We encourage all children to experience themselves positively and believe that nurturing and respecting the child's self-autonomy will lead them to recognise their own ideas, skills and knowledge leading to a positive sense of self.

EARLY INTERVENTION

We recognise the profound and continued effect of Early Intervention and Early Years education on equipping children with the skills they need for the rest of their lives and in helping them to understand themselves, each other and the world around them. We recognise that where children have special needs or disabilities, it is important that these are identified at an early stage and that identification leads directly to early intervention and support for families and children. It emphasises that early intervention strengthens the ability of families to provide effective support for their children and improves outcomes for the whole family.

We involve parents/carers and all other professionals in the Early Years to meet the needs of each individual child through an open, innovative child-centred curriculum, based on the revised EYFS.

We aim to give the individual child the means by which to reach their full potential by:

- Working with parents and family
- Work within the framework of Early Support
- Collaborative working with the keyworkers
- Working with mainstream pre-schools and Reception classes
- Multi-agency working eg OT, Physio, SALT, Paediatrician
- Developing strong relationships with individual children in all environments to know their strengths and needs.

THE EARLY YEARS CURRICULUM

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To develop skills that have already been acquired and use them in a wider environment
- To generalise these skills to make them functional in all environments.

- To understand the control that particular modes of communication can have upon an increasing circle of people and to help extend, refine and develop them in the most positive and successful way
- To make learning pleasurable and rewarding through play and exploration.
- To use their senses to explore the world around them.
- To help children think and communicate about their learning
- To develop confidence, persistence, resilience and independence.
- To have access to a wide range of indoor and outdoor resources that stimulate their thinking and creativity.
- To seek challenge and learn from their mistakes.
- To develop expression of choices, ideas and feelings.

The curriculum is taken from the revised Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (2012)

The revised EYFS focuses on the 'How' of effective learning. These are defined as:

- 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

The 'what' of the revised EYFS has been divided into Prime and Specific areas. The 'Prime' areas are:

- Personal, Social and emotional development
 - Making relationships
 - Self-confidence and self-awareness
- Communication and Language
 - Listening and attention
 - Understanding
 - Speaking
- Physical development
 - Health and self-care
 - Moving and handling

The 'Specific' areas are:

- Literacy
 - Reading
 - Writing
- Mathematics
 - Number
 - Shape, space and measure
- Understanding the world
 - People and communities
 - The world
 - Technology
- Expressive arts and design
 - Being imaginative

Exploring and using materials and media

The breadth of the EYFS considers the following areas regarding factors that influence children's learning:

- **A unique child** – every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- **Positive Relationships** – children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person;
- **Enabling environments** – the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning;
- **Learning and 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 curriculum planning is in the form of long and medium term plans, which develop skills throughout the Foundation Key Stage. Within Reception class, we have selected that medium term planning is themed and learning objectives and activities are created via these stimuli. Each session is planned for with a balance of child led and adult led learning experiences that are evaluated at each session and used to inform future planning.

OTHER INTERVENTION:

It is acknowledged that the children may be accessing other services, depending on their needs and these may include:

- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Specialist Nursing Team
- Hearing and Visual Impaired Service
- Specialist Teaching Service
- Behaviour Service
- Educational Psychology
- Clinical Psychology
- Play Therapy
- Mainstream schools/ inclusion/ in-reach opportunities
- Team Around the Child/Family (TAC/TAF) – instigated initially by the Health Professionals and supported by the school.

TRANSITION INTO ST NICHOLAS FROM PRE-SCHOOL SETTINGS

Children and their families are at the centre of our transition process. We recognise that parents/carers have an invaluable contribution to make and we wish to establish a partnership with them which helps us build on the foundations they have given their child. We aim to work alongside the parents/carers to support each child's development. On entry, a home visit is arranged to enable parents to share their story with the reception class teacher in a relaxed and informal setting. They are given the opportunity to meet staff and other parents during the summer term at transition taster sessions. This is an opportunity for parents to consider practical aspects of their child entering school, such as ordering uniforms, as well as being supported through the emotional journey parents and children are on. The Family Support worker The Well Being team, with the Foundation Key stage manager and Reception class teacher support parents through these processes. Once at school, parents/carers are continually informed of their child's progress via a home link book, home school symbol board, parent evenings, Individual Education Plans section F targets, Annual Reviews, Earwig online timeline and by telephone or email. We welcome parents/carers to become fully involved in their child's education. Our Wellbeing Team Worker is available to support parents/carers with information,

advice and help to access any services needed. Parent workshops are available in a variety of subjects.

We will attend transition Team Around the Child Meeting, where these are requested by parents, and liaise with other professionals as well as the parents. We will also observe the child in their pre-school setting, whether it is at the Mary Sheridan Observation and Assessment Unit **Caterpillars Specialist Intervention Nursery** or other setting if a child has not attended the MSU. **Caterpillars.**

The Teacher in Charge at **Caterpillars** is also the Foundation Key Stage manager within the school and this ensures continuity, good communication and clear tracking of pupil progress.

The Reception class teachers and where possible, Teaching Assistants from the Reception classes will work at the Mary Sheridan Unit **Caterpillars nursery** throughout the summer term in order to get to know the children and their families. This enables parents to feel secure in the knowledge that there will be familiar faces for their child when they start school, and safe in the knowledge that the adults are aware of their child's needs.

The **Caterpillars Nursery** will provide the Reception Class Teachers with the following:

- Observation notes
- EYFS Progress tracker
- Mobility programmes
- Communication programmes, including PECS and use of visual supports
- Visual impairment programmes
- Hand function programmes
- Physiotherapy programmes where appropriate
- Pen portraits
- Toileting and eating and drinking programmes
- IEPs **Early Years Personalised Plans or EHCP where appropriate**

For those children not attending the MSU **Caterpillar Nursery** transition and information sharing meetings will be organised with the appropriate setting.

POLICY INTO PRACTICE

The development of good information sharing, communication and relationships with parents/guardians as part of this multi-disciplinary team is regarded as vital in order that:

- The transition from home to school may be as smooth as possible
- Learning can take place across two environments
- A passport scheme will be introduced to children if appropriate
- Home school links through frequent communication will be maintained via home visits, home link book, **Earwig online timeline** and telephone or e mail
- Learning journeys

INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITIES

St Nicholas School promotes, where and when appropriate, inclusive opportunities for pupils.

ASSESSMENT

St Nicholas School uses the Pupil Asset **Early Years Foundation Stage Framework** assessment **via the Earwig online platform**. The School adopts the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) and alternative assessment using teacher assessment to plot accurately the progress pupils achieve. This maybe in the form of photographic and video evidence, formal and informal observations, and examples of pupil's work. This evidence is placed on the Pupil Asset system **Earwig online**

platform at three points throughout the year. Parents contribute to their children's learning and assessment through 'The Unique Story' which details their observations and progress seen in other settings outside the school environment **and through section A of the EHCP**. Parents are given the opportunity to discuss the assessment and each child's needs are reviewed annually at the Annual Review of Statement **Educational Health Care plan (EHCP)** meeting.

Daily assessment of children is on-going to ensure that activities and outcomes are appropriate for their needs. The child's personal and social development is regarded as the key to success in areas of learning. Their levels of Well-Being and Involvement **Engagement** are assessed in order to evaluate whether a child is doing well emotionally, is feeling comfortable with oneself as a person and therefore developing their learning capabilities and competencies.

Well-Being focuses on the child's levels of:

- enjoyment
- relaxation
- vitality
- openness
- self-confidence
- Emotional security.

Involvement/**Engagement** focuses on the child's levels of:

- motivation
- experience
- satisfaction
- exploratory drive
- Perseverance
- **exploration**
- **realisation**
- **anticipation**
- **persistence**
- **initiation**

Individual Education plans are assessed each term and provide information for the development of new goals.

TEACHING AND LEARNING STYLES

- Activities will be provided that build upon the children's experience and interests, and take into account the physical, intellectual, emotional and social abilities of each child
- Children are encouraged to make their own discoveries and to think and communicate them
- Space, facilities and equipment will reflect learning needs
- Facilitated skilled support from adults will help the children to interact with each other
- All staff will use clear and consistent approaches so that routines, beginnings and endings can be anticipated and understood
- Routines whereby children begin to understand what is expected of them as they progress are built into the school day
- Ability to communicate through provision of communication aids where applicable
- Providing children with strategies that promote good decision making and taking responsibility for their action.
- Behaviours that are encouraged/discouraged are agreed in partnership with school and home.

STAFF ARE EXPECTED:

- To be skilled at joining in child level play and communication, and to recognise that learning opportunities occur constantly and spontaneously

- To encourage problems solving, they label and describe actions, follow children's lead and turn take with them
- To acknowledge what the children say and discover
- To be constantly looking to build upon skills and ensure progressions
- To encourage independence in all areas
- To make written or photographic observations in relation to the EYFS curriculum.

SAFEGUARDING

Within the Foundation Stage children are taught about themselves and keeping themselves safe through adult and child led activities. The emphasis is understanding about themselves, naming body parts and expressing feelings, developing a strong sense of self and feeling valued, relating to one another, taking care of personal needs and resolving conflict. It is recognised that the children are at the early stages of this development. The consistent messages given from adults emphasise staying safe and support children to learn these vital life skills. The Foundation Key-stage manager is a Designated Safeguarding Lead, and any incidents or accidents which cause concern are recorded and reported according to school procedures, and held by the Headteacher.

St Nicholas School will endeavour to support the welfare and safety of all pupils through:

- Maintaining children's welfare as our paramount concern
- Ensuring the content of the curriculum includes social and emotional aspects of learning
- Ensuring that child protection is included in the curriculum to help children stay safe, recognise when they don't feel safe and identify who they might/can talk to
- Providing suitable support and guidance so that students have a range of appropriate adults to approach if they are in difficulties
- Promoting a positive, supportive, neutral and secure environment where pupils can develop a sense of being valued and heard in their own right
- Ensuring all steps are taken to maintain site security and student's physical safety
- Working with parents to build an understanding of the school's responsibility to ensure the welfare of all children including the need for referral to other agencies in some situations
- Ensuring all staff are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and are aware of the school's procedures and lines of communication
- Monitoring children and young people who have been identified as having welfare or protection concerns; keeping confidential records which are stored securely and shared appropriately with other professionals
- Developing effective and supportive liaison with other agencies

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure continuity and in line with any changes in Statutory Guidance, shared with staff and Governors on request on a yearly basis.

EQUALITY, SAFEGUARDING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

St Nicholas School, in all policies and procedures, will promote equality of opportunity for students and staff from all social, cultural and economic backgrounds and ensure freedom from discrimination on the basis of membership of any group including gender, sexual orientation, family circumstances, ethnic or national origin, disability (physical or mental), religious or political beliefs.

As part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), St Nicholas School aims to:

- Provide equal opportunity for all;
- Foster good relations, and create effective partnership with all sections of the community;

- Only take actions which does not discriminate unlawfully in service delivery, commissioning and employment;
- Provide an environment free from fear and discrimination, where diversity, respect and dignity are valued.

All aspects of Safeguarding will be embedded into the life of the School and be adhered to and be the responsibility of all staff.

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES:

Safeguarding
Caterpillars Specialist Intervention Nursery
Community Cohesion
Behaviour
Equality
Single Equality Scheme
Monitoring and Evaluation
Teaching and Learning

Sally Mullervy
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Ratified by the LCS committee in their meeting on 8 March 2021