

Early Years Policy

Mission Statement

To follow in Jesus' footsteps, caring for each other when we work, play and pray.

Introduction

At St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we recognise that all children have rights as outlined in the UN Convention. As duty bearers, we have the responsibility to respect these rights and are committed to supporting our children through their education and to ensure that they are rights-holders.

Statement of intent

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to their full potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. When parents choose to use Early Years' services they want to know the provision will keep their children safe and help them to thrive. The Early Years Foundation Stage is the framework that provides that assurance.

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we have designed our curriculum with pupils' learning at the centre with the aim of ensuring that all pupils make progress. We recognise that a curriculum has to be broad, balanced and offer pupils opportunities to grow as individuals as well as learners.

As a Catholic School, the teachings of the gospels are at the centre of everything we do. Pupils are taught to treat each other with respect and to support each other in their learning.

We aim to ensure that pupils enjoy learning and feel prepared for life after school.

We intend to offer our pupils new and exciting experiences that are designed to build resilience, confidence and self-esteem both in the classroom and through extra-curricular activities.

We recognise that pupils should be challenged in their school; learning from failures and celebrating successes.

We intend for our curriculum to enable pupils to develop their interpersonal skills, creativity and independence.

It is our intention that pupils leave St Joseph's Catholic Primary School with a sense of belonging to a community where they have the confidence and skills to make decisions, self-evaluate, make connections and become lifelong learners. It is our intention to provide a Catholic education in which our children are informed and empowered to transform society.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year (FY). In our school, all children join us, at the beginning of the school year in which they are five.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

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

A Unique Child

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates.

Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration/ sharing assemblies and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

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The Early Years staff recognise their role as scaffolders to children's learning in the classroom. It is their role to push the children, with guidance and support, out of their comfort zone; recognising each child's unique characteristics and building on this within their next steps. This is when learning and progress is truly achieved.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children at St Joseph's are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school.

We believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the EYFS we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. We meet the needs of all our children through:

- planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping
- planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

Children's safety and welfare is paramount. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We provide children with choices to help them develop these important life skills. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

Welfare

"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."

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for EYFS. We understand that we are required to:

- promote the welfare of children.
- promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Positive Relationships

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:

- talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school;
- the children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school during visits in the summer term and Handover day;

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- the teachers discuss with Nurseries and Pre-schools to meet the children and discuss their progress with their key workers;
- offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress in our FY class.
- encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. There is a formal meeting for parents each term at which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress in private with the teacher. Parents receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year;
- arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents; Stay and Learn, Class assemblies, Sports Day and other workshops when required.
- expectations for parents to complete reading and other homework tasks with their children.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them.

Enabling Environments

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Planning within the EYFS follows the schools' Long Term Plan and is based around termly themes that focus on the Educational Programmes highlighted in the new statutory EYFS framework 2021. These plans are used by the EYFS teachers as a guide for weekly planning, however the teacher may alter these plans in response to the needs (achievements and interests) of the children.

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 is completed through adult interaction with the children in their play and adult initiated activities. 'Wow!' moments are recorded and uploaded onto Tapestry to display the children's learning. Staff may choose to keep examples of the children's work but there is no requirement in the new statutory framework to keep any work or online learning journals.

Within their first 6 weeks, the children will undergo the statutory baseline assessment (RBA) alongside class assessments to create a baseline. Staff will then use this data to plan effectively to provide the opportunities for the children to develop.

Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their progress against the characteristics of effective learning, ELG's and R.E. Parents are given an opportunity to discuss these judgements with the EYFS teachers.

The Learning Environment

The EYFS classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The classroom is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and located equipment and resources independently. The EYFS class has its own enclosed outdoor area. This 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. It offers the children to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that help the children to develop in all 6 areas of learning. We encourage children to know their rights as a child and teach them about British Values e.g. taking responsibility for their own behaviour, having their voice heard, respecting others.

Learning and Development

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are inter connected.

Teaching and Learning Style

Our policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our school. These features apply to teaching and learning in the EYFS just as much as they do to the teaching in Key Stage 1 and 2. Features that relate to the EYFS are:

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- the partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- the understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;
- varied reading opportunities are planned and the love of reading is promoted
- the range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication;
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards the Early Learning Goals throughout EYFS;
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;
- the encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management;
- the support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- the identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are shared with parents;
- the good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school;
- the planned use of the Wellcomm scheme to assist children in their language development, focusing on speech and understanding.
- following the mastery approach to Maths, using resources such as the White Rose Maths to ensure that our children gain a fuller and deeper understanding of numbers and mathematical concepts.
- using the Read Write Inc reading scheme to send reading books home to parents to develop their reading fluency and a love for reading with the children.

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we know that it is important to consider not only what a child learns but also how they learn. We place the Characteristics of Effective Learning at the heart of our planning.

Playing and Exploring:

“Children’s play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children’s development.”

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Active Learning:

“Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.”

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfactions as they take ownership of their learning.

Creativity and Critical Thinking:

“When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, the discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.”

Children should be given opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults can support children’s thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

Areas of Learning

The EYFS is made up of 7 areas of learning:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Literacy
- Mathematics

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- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELGs) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS teachers to follow the principles stated in this policy.

The Head of School, Executive Principal and EYFS Leader will carry out monitoring of the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

Reviewed by Local Governing Board: November 2022

For review November 2024

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