

EYFS POLICY

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“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and to be supported in reaching their full potential. A child’s experience in the early years has a major impact on their future learning and experiences. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up”

(Statutory Framework for the Early Years, DFE, 2017)

Introduction

The EYFS applies to children from three years of age to the end of the reception year. Here at St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School, all children join us at the beginning of the school year in which they are turning five. The Early Learning Goals set out what is expected of most children by the end of the Foundation Stage.

The EYFS is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do.
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged.
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points
- Has content that matches the needs of young children.
- Activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors.
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment.

EYFS Areas of Learning

The Prime Areas of Learning:

- Communication & Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social, Emotional Development

The Specific Areas of Learning:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts & Design

Teaching and Learning Style

The features of good practice in our school that relate to the EYFS are:

- The partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement.
- 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 achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the 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 regularly shared with parents.
- The good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school.
- The clear aims for our work, and the regular monitoring to evaluate and improve what we do.
- The regular identification of training needs of all adults working within the EYFS.

Play in the EYFS

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, 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.

Inclusion in the EYFS

In 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, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of their reception year. Some children progress beyond this point. We achieve this by planning to meet the individual needs of all the children.

Starting School

When the children begin their Reception journey with us in September they start school in a staggered way to help them to settle in.

Planning

“Play is essential for children’s development, building confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play and in taking part in play which is guided by adults.” (Statutory Framework for the Early Years, DFE, 2017)

Here at St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School we deliver each area of learning and development through planned and purposeful play delivered through a combination of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

In planning activities we take into account the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice.

There are three characteristics of effective learning:

- Playing and Exploring – investigating and discovering.
- Active learning – children keep on trying if they encounter a difficulty.
- Creating and thinking critically – children have their own ideas and make links between ideas.

Planning is based on a topic in conjunction with the children’s interests which will be set for the term. In St Teresa class, the key themes will be taught through whole class carpet sessions, adult led group activities and some will evolve through the children’s own play activities supported by an adult if necessary as well as the child led activities.

Staff are skilled at making observations of the children in their play to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning, which then informs future planning.

Reading

During the children’s first year we create a culture where books, vocabulary and reading take top priority. Short, focused, daily phonics sessions from our scheme Unlocking Letters and Sounds, are crucial in developing these reading skills, but supporting children to become independent readers who love reading is undoubtedly our ultimate goal. The Reading Agency Reading facts researched the benefits of reading and found ‘that reading for pleasure can promote better health and wellbeing, aids in building social connections and relationships with others and is associated with a range of factors that help increase the chances of social mobility.’ Our children have daily reading lessons in groups and they will read 1:1 with an adult at least three times a week.

Assessment

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise the children’s progress. It involves practitioners observing children so as to understand their level of achievement, their interests and learning style.

From the start of the year 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 ongoing and takes the form of observation, phonic and word checks and writing assessments. This involves the teacher and other adults as appropriate. We collect observations to help inform the assessments of how the children are achieving in each areas described previously.

Parents receive an annual report that outlines comments on each child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs and gives details of the child's general progress. We complete a mid-year report to highlight the areas of learning and more importantly the child's next steps for the second half of the year. At the end of the year each child receives a report card to sum up the overall achievements' of the whole year.

The Role of Parents

We believe that all parents have an important role to play in the education of their child. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating their children.

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education through:

- Offering a home and a pre-school/nursery visit to each child before they start school.
- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school.
- Offering both parents and children the opportunity to spend time at school at the Picnic afternoon, followed by a stay and play for the children.
- Operating an open door policy for parents with any queries.
- Offering Parent Workshops on some of the key elements of the EYFS
- Offering two parents' evenings per year where "Next Steps" are shared and an optional drop-in Parents evening session.
- Sending home a mid-year report on their child's attainment and progress and a report card at the end of the Foundation Stage year.
- Developing a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents.
- Encouraging parents to collect evidence of their child's learning at home.

We encourage parents to support their children's learning at home by reading daily, counting, singing nursery rhymes, talking about the environment and how things work, trying new activities, being physically active and practising phonics, markmaking and writing.