St Catherine's Catholic Primary School

"Loving and Learning Together as Jesus taught us"

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Date of policy review: October 2025
Next review: October 2026

Policy Reviewed & Passed by the Governors
Key Person Responsible: Maureen Kelly

St. Catherine's places high value on excellent Early Years Practice in our Nurseries for two and three-year-olds, our Reception classes, and across the school.

Aims

The curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) should underpin all future learning by supporting, fostering, promoting and developing children's:

- Personal, social and emotional well-being
- Language and communication skills
- Positive attitudes and dispositions towards their learning
- Open mind-set
- Focus and persistence
- Team-work and collaborative skills
- Relationships
- Spiritual development
- Physical development
- Reading and writing skills
- Mathematical skills
- Understanding of the world
- Creative development

St Catherine's believes that Early Years Education is the foundation upon which children build the rest of their lives. Children learn in a complex way and are influenced by everything in their environment.

Children use their senses to explore and make sense of the world around them. They learn through play, meaningful real world experiences and hands-on learning, through conversation with adults and other children and through a variety of planned experiences.

Curriculum requirements:

- Effective education requires practitioners who understand that children develop rapidly and at different rates during the early years – physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.
- Practitioners should ensure that all children feel included, secure and valued.
- No child should be excluded or disadvantaged regardless of their need; inclusion is at the heart of excellent early years education.

The Early Years Staff follow the Early Years Statutory Framework (2025) and strive to implement in practice the principles stated for excellent early years education, including but not limited to the following:

- Effective education provision happens when children learn and develop in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time
- Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships, with staff and family members.
- Each child in the EYFS is assigned a key person. The role of the key person is to help

ensure that every child's care and education is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents

- Families and practitioners should work together to develop a strong relationship which children can benefit from.
- To be effective the curriculum should be ambitious, carefully sequenced and driven by children's interests.
- Staff understand that young children do not develop in a fixed way, and that depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way. Through planning for the learning, and assessing and reviewing the development of each child, practitioners provide a curriculum that allows children to develop a secure foundation for future learning.
- There should be opportunities for the children to engage in activities that they plan or initiate themselves as well as those planned by adults.
- Practitioners must be able to observe and appropriately respond to children's needs and interests, to help them build their learning over time.
- Well-planned, purposeful experiences and appropriate intervention by practitioners will engage children in the learning process.
- For children to have rich and stimulating experiences, the learning environment should be well planned and well organised, enabling all children to make good progress.
- Above all, effective learning and development for young children requires high-quality care and education by practitioners.

Equal Opportunities

We believe that children should be treated as individuals and have equal access to the Early Years Curriculum. All staff must have an awareness of equal opportunities, and the protected characteristics enshrined in the Equality Act 2010, and understand what they mean in principle as well as in practice. Practitioners plan to meet the needs of girls and boys, children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). children who are more able, children with English as an additional language, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, children from all social and cultural backgrounds and children of different ethnic groups. Children with SEND are identified rapidly, and promptly receive the support needed to progress well in their learning. We are committed to achieving excellent outcomes for all pupils in our Early Years Foundation Stage.

Learning and Teaching

Staff believe that 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 Early Years many of these aspects are brought together effectively through playing and talking.

Effective learning involves:

- Children initiating activities that promote learning and enable them to learn from each other
- Children learning through movement and their senses
- Children having time to explore their own ideas and interests in depth
- Children feeling secure in the environment, and with the staff which will help to promote confident learners
- Children learning in different ways and at different rates
- Children making links in their learning
- Creative and imaginative play activities that promote the development and use of language.

We believe that teaching is the process whereby children are systematically helped to make connections in their learning and are actively led forward to reflect and make use of what they have already learnt.

Teaching has many aspects, including planning and creating a learning environment, organising time and resources, facilitating meaningful opportunities interacting, questioning, responding to questions, working with and observing children, assessing and recording children's progress and sharing knowledge gained with other practitioners and parents.

Effective teaching requires:

- Working in partnership with parents and carers
- Planning experiences and activities that are challenging but achievable
- Practitioners modeling and facilitating planned and purposeful play
- Practitioners who model a range of positive behaviour.
- Using language that is rich and grammatically correct and broadening children's vocabulary through modeling and explanation.
- Using conversation and carefully framed open and closed questions
- Direct teaching of skills and knowledge.
- Promoting positive attitudes to learning through interaction and support
- Planning both indoor and outdoor learning environments
- Skillful and well-planned observations of children
- Assessing children's development and progress.
- Identifying the next step in children's learning to ensure that all children make excellent progress

The Areas of Learning

There are seven areas of learning and development, all of which are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three prime areas, are:

Communication and language;

Communication and language development underpins all seven areas of learning and development. It involves giving children meaningful opportunities to experience a rich language environment, through the introduction of new vocabulary, frequent opportunities for reading and experiencing a wide range of texts; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

Personal, social and emotional development;
Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others. This development is crucial for children to lead happy and healthy lives, and it is fundamental to their cognitive development. Children will learn to; form positive relationships and develop respect for others; develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; understand and regulate their behaviour in different situations; and to have confidence in their own abilities. Children will also learn to how to look after their bodies, including developing an awareness and understanding of healthy eating and managing their personal needs.

Physical development;
Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, gross and fine motor control and movement. Children are provided with repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play in a range of situations to allow them to develop their physical literacy and skills with proficiency, control and confidence.

We also support children in the four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

Literacy;
Literacy development involves encouraging children to develop language comprehension. This occurs when practitioners talk and read with children. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest and to develop a life long love of reading. Skilled word reading involves the speedy working out of the pronunciation of familiar printed words, as children link sounds and letters (decoding). Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition, through articulating their ideas and structuring them in speech before writing.

Mathematics
Mathematics involves children developing a strong grounding in number. Providing children with frequent and varied opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems will give them a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which they can develop. Children are also provided with rich opportunities to develop their spatial reasoning, including shape, space, and measures.

Understanding the world
Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to discuss their personal experiences, explore,

observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment. This will help children to increase their knowledge and sense of the world around them, and to develop their understanding of the culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world.

Expressive arts and design
Expressive arts and design involves developing children's artistic and cultural awareness to support their imagination and creativity. Children are encouraged to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. We provide opportunities for children to share their thoughts, ideas and feelings through art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

The Value of Play

Well-planned play, both indoors and outdoors, is an important way in which young children learn. It is the process through which children explore, investigate, recreate and understand the world in which they live. It is a vital component of children's lives and is the medium through which skills can be developed and practiced.

The role of the practitioner is crucial in developing high quality play in the learning environment. This includes planning and resourcing a challenging environment, supporting children's learning through planned and spontaneous play, and extending and developing children's language and communication in their play.

Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

Playing and exploring: Children investigate and experience things and 'have a go';

Active learning: Children concentrate and persevere if they encounter difficulties. They enjoy their achievements; and

Creating and thinking critically: Children have and develop their own ideas, make links and connections between their play and experiences, and develop strategies for doing things.

Planning and Assessment

Our EYFS Curriculum has been designed to reflect the needs of our intake. It is therefore unique to St Catherine's Catholic Primary school. We want to ensure that all children leaving our EYFS are ready to start the St Catherine's KS1 curriculum. Each term is based around a series of core texts. Each book focus does not last a specific amount of time but is based on the children's learning at the time, and builds on their interests and fascinations. All the books have resources and activities ready to use in the enhanced provision. Each term the children are introduced to a wide range of high-quality storybooks and age appropriate non-fiction texts. Using books in

this way teaches children that books and reading form the basis of all learning.

This ambitious curriculum is co-constructed with the children, follows their interests, and develops their passions. Staff will provide shared learning opportunities which excite, inspire and engage each child in their learning, and allow them to develop their unique and individual talents. We use In The Moment Planning to ensure that all children are supported and challenged in their learning through play. At St Catherine's our curriculum is delivered through a mix of child and adult led activities, where adults model, support and scaffold the children's learning so that they develop the core skills they need. Our pupils will leave Reception having developed these core skills, and ready to move onto the next stage of their education, having secured the foundation needed for a lifelong love of learning.

The Role of Additional Adults in Reception

The two Reception classes are supported by their own two teaching assistants who are valued for the special contribution that they make and are seen as 'practitioners' in the classroom. They are involved in planning, assessment, teaching and liaison with parents. They have a special role to fulfill and the following list is seen as some of the qualities and skills they bring to the team.

- To assist in providing a full range of activities which meet the emotional, physical, social and intellectual needs of the children.
- To learn with groups of children for various activities in the different curriculum areas.
- To participate in the preparation of the learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, before the children arrive and with classroom management during the session.
- To make observations and monitor progress of the children and share these with other members of staff.
- To contribute to the planning of the curriculum to meet the needs of individual children.
- To contribute with regards to record keeping and reports as required by the teacher
- To provide first aid and comforting ill children if trained
- To help children acquire self-help skills including toileting and personal hygiene as necessary.
- To work closely with parents and carers, providing a welcoming environment.
- To assist with the tidying up of materials and organisation of resources used during the sessions.
- To help with creating displays.
- To carry out lunchtime duties and attend staff meetings and courses when required.
- To attend Early Years meetings and contribute their knowledge and ideas.

Transition

We have a thorough settling in process for all children before they start full time, this includes; a new parents meeting, a home visit, several drops in sessions before the children start as well as a staggered start.

At the end of the year teachers and practitioners will meet and discuss the children transitioning to a new class. This transition time is extremely important and it is essential that the children are well prepared and parents have an understanding of the next step in their child's education. The transition between Reception to Year One is carefully planned, and parents are invited to a meeting to discuss this transition to Key Stage One. We also host a meeting early in the Autumn Term for the new Year One parents so they can see the learning environment for themselves and understand the National Curriculum.

Role of Parents

The EYFS Team is keen to develop an effective partnership with parents. We recognize that parents are the children's first and most enduring educators and that in order to have a positive impact on a child's development and learning it is essential to develop a close working relationship with parents and carers, based on mutual respect.

The EYFS Team is always happy to talk to parents about any issues as they arise and communication between home and school is a fundamental to children's learning.

There are also meetings each term to discuss each child's progress and next steps.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Please read our school policy which provides all the relevant information regarding our Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures.

Tracking

DfE Stat Policy	Best Practice	Web	MyUSO	Signed by Staff
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