Early Years Policy

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Together, we learn, love and grow with Jesus

St Jude's Catholic Primary School Early Years Policy

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) states that: '*Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their 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.'*

AIMS

At St. Jude's Catholic Primary School, we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start in their school life, both intellectually and emotionally, to enable them to develop their full potential. We are an inclusive school, recognising that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates.

In EYFS, we aspire to support each child's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- recognising that all our children are unique and supporting them to develop across all areas of learning.
- ensuring that all children feel included, secure and valued.
- providing a safe, nurturing, inclusive and stimulating environment in which every child feels valued, secure and confident to learn.
- providing a high quality, ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum that supports children to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need for future learning.
- building positive relationships with parents and carers, recognising their important role in their child's learning and development.
- encouraging children to become self motivated and confident, independent learners with a positive attitude to learning and self discipline.
- teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions different to their own.
- providing rich opportunities for children to learn through a balance of purposeful play, exploration, adult-led experiences and child-initiated learning.
- providing learning experiences in play, both indoors and outdoors, which reflect their personal interests and areas of curiosity, to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.
- developing children's curiosity, creativity and problem-solving skills, encouraging them to ask questions, explore ideas and make connections.
- developing children's communication and language, supporting them to be confident communicators and attentive listeners.

- promoting a culture of high expectations, where children are encouraged to be independent, take appropriate risks, persevere and develop a love of learning.
- using observations, assessments and professional knowledge to understand children's individual needs and identify next steps to ensure that teaching and provision are responsive and purposeful.
- Ensuring that all children, including those with SEND, disadvantaged children and those with additional needs, have equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities and appropriate support.
- ensuring that children develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to make a successful transition into Year 1.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from their birth to the end of the Reception year. In our school, children join Pre-school from the September of the academic year in which they turn four years of age. Surplus places may be available to children in the term after their third birthday and subsequently they attend Pre-school for four or five terms. Children join Reception from the September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old.

Our Early Years curriculum is designed to provide children with the knowledge, skills and experiences they need to develop as confident, curious and successful learners. It is informed by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework and is carefully adapted to reflect the needs, interests and starting points of the children in our setting.

We place a strong emphasis on developing children's communication and language, early reading, early writing and mathematical understanding, alongside their personal, social and emotional development. We provide a language-rich environment in which children are encouraged to talk, listen, ask questions, share ideas and develop their vocabulary.

The Seven Areas of Learning

The EYFS curriculum is organised into **three prime areas** and **four specific areas** of learning. These areas are interconnected, and children's learning and development across them are supported through a range of carefully planned experiences.

Prime Areas

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

Specific Areas

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

At St. Jude's, our curriculum is planned to ensure that children build knowledge and skills progressively across the areas of learning, with opportunities to revisit and consolidate previous learning. Staff use their knowledge of children's starting points and interests to adapt provision and identify appropriate next steps. Learning is carefully sequenced while remaining responsive to children's interests and experiences. Staff provide high-quality interactions, model language and vocabulary, ask purposeful questions and introduce new knowledge and concepts.

The indoor and outdoor environments are considered an important part of the curriculum. Resources and activities are carefully selected to encourage children to explore, investigate, practise skills and apply their learning independently.

We recognise that play is an important vehicle for learning in the Early Years. Adults support children's play through sensitive interactions, modelling, questioning and extending children's thinking without unnecessarily interrupting or directing their learning.

All practitioners within the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all the children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. At St. Jude's the EYFS teachers act as the 'Key Person' to all children, supported by other practitioners.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework is based upon four themes:

- A Unique Child – developing resilient, capable, confident and self-assured individuals
- Positive Relationships – supporting the children in becoming strong and independent self-assured individuals
- Enabling Environments – where opportunities respond to individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents/carers
- Learning and Development – acknowledging that children learn in different ways and at different rates

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The characteristics of effective learning describe factors which play a central role in a child's learning and in becoming an effective learner. In EYFS we observe and seek to develop the way children learn through characteristics of learning.

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
Keep on trying if they encounter difficulties
Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

Creating and Thinking Critically – Thinking
Having their own ideas
Making links
Choosing ways to do things

They are vital elements of support for the transition process from EYFS to Year 1. Information describing the child's characteristics of effective learning will provide Year 1 teachers with vital background and context when considering the child's next stage of development and future learning needs.

Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of our Early Years practice. Staff observe children as they play, interact and engage in learning experiences, during adult focused activities and child-initiated play. Assessment is used to identify children's strengths, understand their individual needs and inform future planning.
Professional knowledge, observation and evidence gathered through everyday practice are used to build an accurate picture of children's development and progress.

Baseline assessment is carried out during the children's first 3 weeks upon entering the setting. Judgments made on children's development are based on practitioners' evidence of children's behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated activities across all areas of learning and development.

In Reception, 'Sonar' records children's progress over the academic year in their learning and development of the EYFS framework. At the end of the year, it provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements.

There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development using the Early Learning Outcomes (2021). The observations and assessments are used to identify learning priorities and plan the next stages in the learning experiences for the child.

In order to ensure our judgements are accurate and consistent we have moderation meetings within the setting and in Local Consortia Early Year's moderation.

Planning

In the EYFS our planning is led by developmental next steps and children's interests. Our planning is divided into long term, medium term and short term. Our long-term plan is highlighted throughout the year to ensure coverage of objectives. Medium term planning is created and considers the individual children's learning and developmental needs. Short term planning shows specific activities planned to achieve the objectives. All Areas of Learning and Development are planned for and available to access within the setting. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child-initiated activities both indoors and outdoors. Children's interests are responded to and inform future planning.

Parents/Carers as Partners

At St. Jude's, we recognise the role that parents/carers have already played as children's first educators in life and their future role in the education of their child. We recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents/carers. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home has a positive impact on children's learning and development and we aim to build good relationships and keep parents/carers informed about the life of the school and their child's progress by:

- inviting all parents/carers to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school.
- providing the opportunity for children and/or parents/carers to visit and take part in typical activities in the classroom during the term before they start school.
- signing a whole school agreement with parents/carers
- delivering sessions to support parents/carers in understanding the EYFS curriculum to enable them to contribute to children's learning
- inviting parents/carers to meetings in Autumn and Spring terms to talk about their child's learning and development in Pre-school or Reception.
- writing a report to parents/carers on attainment and progress at the end of Pre-school and Reception
- an open-door ethos, where practitioners are available to talk to parents/carers at the beginning and end of the day. Parents/carers are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss concerns they might have.
- Parent Partnership letters are shared with parents/carers on a termly basis to inform of learning opportunities during the term.
- photographs are shared regularly on Class Dojo, the school website and/or Facebook to reflect the current learning in our Pre-school and Reception classes.
- encouraging parents/carers to engage in activities at home, on a half termly basis, which link to current learning (Homework Project)

- encouraging parents/carers to contribute to assessments by sharing photographs or making comments of children's learning at home using Class Dojo.
- inviting parents/carers into the setting on other occasions to share special events such as class assemblies, stay and play sessions etc, where children share what they have been learning.

Inclusion

All children have an equal entitlement to a good Early Years curriculum regardless of gender, race, culture, religion, disability and special or medical needs and social circumstances. All staff are aware of the need for the curriculum to reflect cultural diversity and the need to prepare children for life in a diverse and multi-faith society. Our curriculum is designed to be accessible to all children. We make appropriate adaptations and provide additional support where necessary to ensure that children with SEND, children who are disadvantaged and children with other additional needs can participate fully and make progress.
We work closely with parents, carers and relevant professionals to understand children's individual needs and provide appropriate support.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

The safety, health and wellbeing of children is a key priority within our Early Years provision. Staff provide a safe, secure and appropriately supervised environment in which children can learn, play and explore.
Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken and reviewed regularly to identify and minimise potential hazards within the indoor and outdoor learning environments. Consideration is given to the developmental age and individual needs of children, including risks associated with:

- choking and the safe preparation and consumption of food
- allergies and dietary requirements
- the use of small objects and loose parts within the learning environment
- outdoor play and physical activity
- access to equipment and resources
- personal care and hygiene
- medicines and medical needs
- children who require additional or individual safety measures

Staff follow the school's relevant health and safety, first aid, food safety, allergy and safeguarding procedures. Appropriate staff receive relevant training, including paediatric first aid where required.
In line with the principles of Benedict's Law, St. Jude's is committed to protecting children with food allergies, intolerances and specific dietary requirements. We will work in partnership with parents or carers to obtain, record and regularly update information about each child's dietary needs and allergies.

Food and drink are prepared, provided and supervised in accordance with appropriate food safety procedures. Staff consider children's individual dietary requirements, allergies and developmental needs when planning food-related experiences.
Children are taught age-appropriate ways to recognise and manage risks and are supported to develop independence and an understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.
Detailed procedures for responding to accidents, injuries, choking incidents, allergic reactions and other medical emergencies are set out in the relevant school policies and procedures.

Transition

Into pre-school

We recognise that starting pre-school is an important milestone for children and their families and may be a child's first experience of an educational setting. We aim to make this transition a positive, welcoming and reassuring experience for every child. We understand that children settle at different rates and that some children may require additional support to develop confidence and feel secure in their new environment. Transition is therefore planned carefully and is tailored to the needs of individual children and families.

Where possible, we provide opportunities for children and their parents or carers to become familiar with the setting before their child starts. This may include:

- visits to the setting;
- opportunities to meet staff and explore the environment;
- sharing information about routines and expectations;
- providing families with information about the setting;
- gathering information about the child's interests, strengths, development and individual needs; and
- discussing any medical, dietary, SEND or safeguarding information that may be relevant.
- Parents and carers are encouraged to share information about their child's personality, interests, routines, experiences and any factors that may support their child to settle successfully.

Staff monitor children's wellbeing and engagement throughout the settling-in period and adapt support where necessary. We recognise that successful transition is not simply about children becoming comfortable in the setting, but about helping them to develop secure relationships, confidence, independence and a sense of belonging.

Into Reception

Children joining Reception have may have been to a range of settings within the community, including pre-school at St. Jude's. We aim to ensure that the transition

from home or pre-school to our Reception class is a smooth one so that we can build on children's prior knowledge and achievements.

We ensure this by:

- having discussions with pre-school settings to share assessments and information.
- giving all children (and parents/carers) the opportunity to visit the Reception class prior to their starting date to familiarise themselves with the building and the key people involved.
- arranging for additional visits or support for children who require it.
- inviting the parents/carers of the new Reception intake into school to meet the practitioners. At this meeting information regarding the induction process is shared and information packs are distributed detailing school routines and expectations. 'All about me' booklets are given to parents to complete with their child in order to support practitioner's knowledge and understanding of each individual child.

Sharing information with Reception

Where children are moving from our own Pre-School into Reception, staff work closely together to ensure that important information about each child is shared appropriately.

Where children are joining Reception from another early years setting, we seek relevant information from the child's previous setting, with appropriate consent where required. We aim to ensure that there is continuity between Pre-School and Reception. Reception staff use information about children's prior learning and development to inform their planning and teaching.

Transition into Year 1

We recognise that a successful transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1 is an important part of children's educational journey. Throughout the Reception year, children are supported to develop the skills and characteristics that will help them to become increasingly independent learners. Children are gradually introduced to routines and expectations that will support them in Year 1, while maintaining an appropriate balance of play, exploration and adult-led learning.

Our aim is to ensure that children move into Year 1 feeling confident, secure and excited about their next stage of learning, while ensuring that their individual needs, strengths, interests and achievements are understood by their new teacher.

Reception and Year 1 staff work closely together to ensure continuity and progression. Staff share relevant information about each child and where appropriate, Reception staff and Year 1 staff will meet to discuss individual children and ensure that important information is communicated effectively.

Children are given opportunities to become familiar with their Year 1 environment, staff and routines before the end of Reception. This may include visits to the Year 1 classroom, meeting their new teacher, taking part in shared activities and becoming familiar with changes to routines and expectations.

During the final term in Reception, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child. Moderation assessment is done by the Pre-school and Reception practitioners, Y1 teacher and KS1 Leader to moderate and validate these judgements.
The Profile provides parents/carers and practitioners with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1.

Monitoring and review

The implementation and effectiveness of this Early Years Policy will be monitored regularly by the Early Years Leader and Senior Leadership Team.
Monitoring will include:

- observing the quality of teaching, learning and interactions across the Early Years
- reviewing children's learning, progress and development
- monitoring the implementation of the Early Years curriculum
- reviewing the quality and use of the indoor and outdoor learning environments
- monitoring the provision for children with SEND and other additional needs
- gathering feedback from staff, parents and carers where appropriate
- reviewing children's wellbeing, engagement and behaviour
- monitoring the effectiveness of transition arrangements

The Head teacher, EYS Leader and staff will review this policy regularly.