

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY



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EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

Mission Statement:

To go forward together in Christ

To respect our neighbour

And to always give of our best.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At Sacred Heart, we offer 62 places in our Nursery and 60 children begin their Reception year each September. Most of the children attending our school Nursery move into Reception.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

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

A Unique Child

At Sacred Heart 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 celebrations, circle times and rewards (such as 'star of the week'), to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Settling in Period/Transition:

The transition to full time Nursery and Reception occurs over a period of weeks and works differently across the two year groups. These transition periods allow the children to settle in and adjust to routines, rules and the school environment. It also allows staff to get to know the children in a smaller group, and begin to observe and assess the children.

Nursery: Intake of our children is staggered over a number weeks so parents will receive different starting dates throughout September. On the child's first day, they will stay for 2 hours. On their second day, children will stay for lunch before going home. Depending on how the child has settled over the first two days, they may either stay for the full school day or after discussion with the parents; decide on a longer transition period.

Reception: Intake of our children is staggered over the period of a week, with typically 6 children starting on each day. All children are full-time from their first day.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children at Sacred Heart are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school. 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. 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 who are more able;
- monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary, eg: through early intervention, regular discussions with parents, use of IEPs, referrals to other agencies when necessary.

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children.

Welfare

At Sacred Heart we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2012. 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 Sacred Heart we recognise that children learn to be strong independent learners 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 and most enduring 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:

- Nursery staff visiting all children in their home setting prior to their starting school. This gives the staff a chance to talk to parents about their child, and begin to get to know the child before they start school;
- Home visits by Reception staff are carried out for children who did not attend our Nursery setting. We also invite new starters to come with their child to visit the Reception learning environment;
- having open mornings where parents can tour the school and see the EYFS classes in action;
- various curriculum evenings (such as English or Maths evening) for parents to understand the EYFS curriculum and how they can support their children at home;
- Achievement Book mornings where parents can come and the opportunity to see what their child is learning at school and the progress they are making. All caregivers involved with the child are invited to contribute to the achievement book through parent contribution sheets on a regular basis;
- offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress through Parent Teacher Consultations. Parents are also able to look through the children's Achievement books and books at these meetings;
- encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns.
- 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: Sports Day, School Masses, Special Celebrations, Dress-up days, Book Week etc;

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. In Nursery, each child is allocated a 'Key Person' who can either be the Class Teacher, higher-level teaching assistant (HLTA), Nursery Nurse or Teaching Assistants. In Reception, the class teacher acts a 'Key Person' to all children in their class, supported by the Learning Support Assistants.

A handover meeting occurs between the Nursery and Reception teachers to discuss the children moving to Reception. Children's learning records are requested from contributing Nurseries, and transition meetings occur for those children with Special Educational Needs who come from outside Nurseries.

The Head teacher, Deputy and EYFS Leader make regular visits to the EYFS classes to interact and spend time with the children.

Enabling Environments

At Sacred Heart 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 in the EYFS follows the children's interests, although we typically begin each school year with an 'All About Me' themed topic. We carefully observe the children's child-initiated learning and link all areas of the curriculum to these interests to achieve maximum pupil engagement. EYFS teachers plan a careful balance of adult-led and child-initiated opportunities as a guide for weekly planning, as well as learning environment plans however the teachers may alter these in response to the needs (achievements and interests), and observations 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 starts with the completion of baseline assessment within the first few weeks of children attending school full time. In Nursery & Reception, this is done by both narrative observation and adult-led activities.

At Sacred Heart, we use the Target Tracker to record judgements against the EYFS Profile. Each child's level of development is recorded against 17 assessment scales derived from the Early Learning Goals (ELGs).

Year 1 teachers are given a copy of the Profile report together with a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning.

Within the final term of the year, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their child's progress within the EYFS Development Matters and ELGs. We give a reasonable opportunity for the parents to discuss this report with their child's teacher.

The Learning Environment

The EYFS classroom and outdoor areas are 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 classrooms are set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and located equipment and resources independently. Each child is allocated a class teacher and base class for carpet times, however are free to use all areas of the environment during free-flow learning.

Each Nursery and Reception class have their own enclosed outdoor area. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and resources for the children to access that help them to develop in all 7 areas of learning. Many of the areas allow the children to develop and extend their learning in several areas.

Nursery and Reception classes have lunch at staggered times in the dinner hall. The teachers, LSAs and lunchtime supervisors are able to provide the children extra support and encouragement during this time.

Learning and Development

At Sacred Heart 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. Long term provision planning is displayed in each area of the classroom to enable staff, parents, and other adults working with the children to support, enhance and extend children's learning in each area.

Learning Through Play:

At Sacred Heart, we firmly believe that learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences which interest and inspire them. Using children's interests as a starting point, we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to

pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child-initiated play and adult-led activities is very important to us.

We take great inspiration from the Statutory Framework for the Early Year Foundation Stage which advocates that:

‘Teaching should not be taken to imply a ‘top down’ or formal way of working. It is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities: communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment adults provide and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children’s next steps in learning and monitor their progress.

Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Department for Education, 2014;

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 2. Features 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 understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;
- 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 Developmental Matters and 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 skills;
- 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;

Characteristics of Effective Learning

These underpin the 7 areas of learning and development and represent processes rather than outcomes.

Playing and exploring: *children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go’.*

‘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 practice 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. Staff spend time playing alongside and with the children. This provides opportunities to model

appropriate behaviour, turn taking, reinforce prior learning, and extend learning and assessment opportunities to inform future planning.

Active Learning: *children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.*

'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 satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

Creativity and Critical Thinking: *we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.*

'When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they 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 are given opportunities to be creative through all areas of learning. 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.

The Curriculum: Areas of Learning

Religious Education is also taught in the EYFS. We follow the Islington Catholic RE Project scheme, with guidance provided by Westminster Diocese. This scheme is based on the teachings of the Catholic Church and is taught through different themes which offer opportunities for young children to explore and develop spiritually, morally, intellectually and emotionally. These themes promote caring values and attitudes, help to raise self-esteem and encourage children to make their own moral decisions based on their knowledge of the Catholic Faith and experience. RE planning is linked into all areas of the EYFS Curriculum.

Nursery and Reception follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document, which is to download at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335504/EYFS_framework_from_1_September_2014_with_clarification_note.pdf

The EYFS framework clearly defines what we teach and includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected. There are seven areas of learning and development: three Prime areas and four specific areas. The prime areas cover the knowledge and skills which are the foundations for children's school readiness and future progress, and which are applied and reinforced by the four specific areas.

The three prime areas:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development: *Making relationships, Managing feelings and behaviour and Self-confidence and Self-awareness*
- Communication and Language: *Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking*
- Physical Development: *Moving and Handling and Self Care*

The four specific areas:

- Literacy: *Reading and Writing*
- Mathematics: *Numbers and Space, Shape and Measures*
- Understanding of the World: *People and communities, The world and Technology*
- Expressive Arts and Design: *Exploring and using media and materials and Being Imaginative*

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 (ELG's) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of those working in Reception to follow the principles stated in this policy. The senior leadership team (SLT) and EYFS Leader will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. The EYFS also has a link governor on the governing body. The EYFS staff also take part in EYFS Moderation with other schools in the Borough.