

St. James' C of E Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

St James' C of E Primary School
EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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April 2020

Reviewed: April 2021

Introduction

'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.'

Early years education is the foundation upon which the children build the rest of their lives and is an education that encompasses all learning. At St. James' we greatly value the importance that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the EYFS at our school. The overall aims of this policy are to ensure consistency in teaching and learning and classroom organisation in the Foundation Stage. The policy reflects the consensus of opinion of the teaching staff and has the support and agreement of the governing body. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all members of staff.

The EYFS applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. At St. James' C of E Primary School children are admitted to Reception in the September following their fourth birthday.

Aims and Objectives

We aim to support all children to become independent and collaborative learners. We will provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential. Each child is valued as an individual and teaching and learning is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates.

At St. James' C of E Primary School, we will:

- Provide a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging programme of learning and development for the children to experience as they begin their journey through school.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond and enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children.
- Provide a caring and inclusive learning environment which is sensitive to the requirements of the individual child including those who have additional needs.

The early-years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds upon 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, content that matches the needs of young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment;
- It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers.

Early Years Foundation Stage Principles

The EYFS is based upon four principles or themes:

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

The Unique Child

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 and 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 and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning.

Positive Relationships

We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and our aim is to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.

Enabling Environments

We also believe that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests and stages of development and learning needs, before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning. We also plan and consider the learning environment. The Foundation Stage unit is organized to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where children can be active or be quiet and rest. The unit is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

Learning and Development: The EYFS Curriculum

The curriculum for the Foundation Stage, educational programmes and the Early Learning Goals are set out in the 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' document (DFE, 2014).

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in Early Years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. None of the areas of learning can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas. They require a balance of adult led and child initiated activities in order for most children to reach the levels required at the end of EYFS. 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.

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

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Specific Areas:

- **Literacy:** Reading and Writing
- **Mathematics:** Numbers and Shape, space and measures
- **Understanding the World:** People and communities, The world, Technology
- **Expressive Arts and Design:** Exploring media and materials and Being imaginative

Children's development levels are assessed and as the year progresses, the balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning, as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.

However, if a child's progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents/carers and agree how to support the child.

Reception pupils also participate in a daily phonics session, following the guidance in the "Letters and Sounds" document and in line with school policy.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS also includes the Characteristics of Effective Learning. At St. James' we plan activities within the classroom and outdoor area with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them.

The three Characteristics of Effective Learning are:

- **Playing and Exploring:** children investigate and experience things and 'have a go'
- **Active Learning:** children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- **Creating and Thinking Critically:** children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

Planning, Observation and Assessment

Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Effective learning builds on and extends what children already know and can already do. Our planning puts the principles of the EYFS into practice and is informed by observations we have made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning needs. All staff in the Foundation Stage at St. James' are involved in making observations of the children's learning and these observations are used as a guide for weekly planning; however staff may alter these in response to the needs of the children.

(also see Planning Rationale, Appendix 1)

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs and interests. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of recorded observations (written or photographed), copies of the children's work, as well as the teacher's professional judgment.

These observations form part of each child's learning journey and are used to inform the end of EYFS assessment against the Early Learning Goals and the Characteristics of Effective Learning (DFE, 2014).

Alongside staff, parents are encouraged to contribute to this process by initially completing our Home to School transition record and through discussions held at home visits. Parents are given opportunities throughout the year, such as at Parents Evenings and drop-in sessions, to share and make comments in their child's learning journey about their learning and development. They are also given WOW vouchers to record significant events that happen at home or out of school and these are then shared and celebrated in school. Each child's learning journey is given to them as they leave the Reception Year.

Teaching Strategies

We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children's engagement in activities builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing in order to develop and extend learning. In some cases the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible.

By the Summer term in Reception the children will experience many more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to year 1.

Teaching

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on.

Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught as a whole class. During these times we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, good sitting and listening skills and taking turns to answer.

The Importance of 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.' (DFE, 2012)

At St. James' we do not make a distinction between work and play. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that 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 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 experiences at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to 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.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and place a great emphasis upon parental involvement and developing a close working relationship. We believe that forming good relationships can contribute to creating a happy and effective learning environment for young children.

Parents of new children are invited to a meeting in the term prior to admission. At this meeting admission procedures are explained in detail. The school's EYFS policy and the way in which the day is structured is also explained. Parents will be given a school prospectus and booklet to share with their child (*Appendix 2*). They will also be asked to complete a Home to School Transition document (*Appendix 3*) which will form part of their child's records at school.

All new children are also invited to visit the school for two taster sessions. We offer for children to come and join us for a teddy bear story time and an afternoon 'stay and play' sessions during the summer term preceding their admission into school. During these visits members of the PTA are available to answer any queries parents may have and to discuss their roles in school. Contact is also made with pre-school settings during the summer term, where transition visits/meetings are organised between teachers and key workers. Where a visit cannot be arranged a telephone conversation will be held.

During the taster sessions, parents are also invited to sign up for a home visit to take place at the beginning of the new academic year, before the children start school. This provides opportunity for the children to meet members of the Reception team after the summer break and for parents to speak to the teaching team privately.

After the first few weeks of the new term a Curriculum information evening meeting is held for parents. This offers the opportunity to explain the EYFS curriculum, including the seven areas of learning and the Foundation Stage Profile. Time is also spent briefly explaining the reading scheme, the Maths activities, and the approach to phonics/writing and to outlining other activities undertaken throughout the year. Parents will have the opportunity to ask questions and talk to the Reception team. A phonics information evening and workshop is also held during the Autumn term in order to go into greater detail about the way phonics is taught at St. James', the reading scheme and how parents can support their child at home.

After the October half term there are consultation meetings held with the parents to discuss how their child has settled, to share learning journeys and talk about children's future learning needs. Parents are encouraged to raise any queries/problems they may have as soon as they can as often these concerns can be dealt with immediately or an appointment can be made at a mutually convenient time.

In addition to this, throughout the year, parents are invited to join their children for activities and events within school. This has included a Family Tree Afternoon and a Reception Welcome service at the church as we welcome our new families to the school in the Autumn term; a junk modelling afternoon in the Spring term linked to our theme/topic of learning; and then an event

in the Summer term, where previously we have been involved in The Very Hungry Caterpillar's Giant Wiggle raising money for Action for Children.

Admission

All children are admitted into school during the first two weeks of the school year, initially on a part-time basis. There is a staggered admission system to full-time education which is explained in detail in the School Admission Policy. Parents are invited to discuss any concerns they may have about their child beginning full time education; arrangements for which can be flexible.

Safeguarding and 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.'

(DFE, 2014)

At St. James' Primary School, we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2014.

- To provide a setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence;
- Promote good health;
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs
- To ensure that all adults who look after the children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so;
- Ensure that the setting, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for;
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Keeping Safe

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. We encourage children to take risks and highlight the importance of keeping themselves safe by teaching them how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. Risk assessments are undertaken by all staff when equipment is used. Indoor and outdoor environments are also checked regularly and any concerns highlighted and dealt with.

Good Health

All children are provided with a healthy snack each day through the Free Fruit for Schools scheme. Milk is available to those children whose parents have signed up to Cool Milk and children also have access to water at all times. Under the governments Universal Infant Free School Meal scheme all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to a free school meal.

Intimate Care

"Intimate" care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children are able to carry out themselves. However, depending on a child's age and stage of development, they may need some support, for example dressing, wiping their bottom after using the toilet and changing underwear following an accident. Parents inform staff of those children likely to require such care and a discussion takes place regarding how their needs can be met in school as they would be met at home. All parents are asked to provide clean clothing, such as underwear and socks, and are always informed when a child has needed such care.

Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child. Intimate care is given to those children who need it in line with our school policy.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of those working in Reception to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Headteacher and EYFS lead will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. The Curriculum Committee of The Governing Body will also be part of this process. This policy will be reviewed in September 20XX or as necessary.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Assessment and Record Keeping Policy
- P.E. Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Early Help Policy
- Safeguarding Children Policy
- Health and Safety Policy