



Early Years Policy

Written by: D. Stevens Spring 2023

To be reviewed: Spring 2025

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, in order 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 special.
- ❖ ensuring that all children feel included, secure and valued.
- ❖ providing a caring, safe and secure environment for learning, where children feel happy.
- ❖ establishing positive relationships with parents/carers.
- ❖ 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 learning experiences in play, both indoors and outdoors, which reflect their personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.
- ❖ making careful observations in order to support and extend individuals learning.

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.

Together, we learn, love and grow with Jesus

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.

Together, we learn, love and grow with Jesus

Areas of Learning

The EYFS curriculum is made up of seven areas of learning and development. Three areas are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving. These three areas are the *prime* areas:

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

Children are also supported through the four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. They include essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. The *specific* areas are:

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

Experiences at St.Jude's Primary School enable the children to develop many competencies, skills and concepts across several areas of learning. We value all Areas of Learning with equal importance and understand that they depend upon each other to support a rounded approach to the development of each child. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELGs) that define the expectations for all children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

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.

Assessment and Record Keeping

The main EYFS assessment method is through practitioners' observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult focused activities and child initiated play. Observations take place on a daily basis (both formally and informally). All practitioners carry out planned observations of individuals and groups of children regularly. They also make spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of children's learning.

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.

Together, we learn, love and grow with Jesus

In Reception, Target Tracker 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, in Early Years Cluster Meetings and we take part in all LEA meetings.

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 takes into account 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. The activities provided support parents in assessing their child against 'Ages and Stages Questionnaires' (ASQ).
- ❖ signing a whole school agreement with parents/carers
- ❖ delivering INSPIRE 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

Together, we learn, love and grow with Jesus

- ❖ 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.

Equal Opportunities

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.

Keeping Safe

The school takes its child protection responsibilities very seriously – it is important to us that all children in our school are safe. There are clear procedures for assessing risk. 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. (See *Whole School Safeguarding Policy*)

Transition

Into Pre-school

To facilitate a smooth transition from home to St. Jude's pre-school, parents/carers are invited to 'taster sessions' where they can accompany their child to school being able to familiarise themselves with the building, get to know key people taking care of their child and share important information about their child.

Together, we learn, love and grow with Jesus

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 if desired) the opportunity to visit the Pre-school or 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.

Transition into Year 1

During the final term in Reception, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child. 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.

Each child's level of development is assessed against the Early Learning Goals. Moderation assessment is done by the Pre-school and Reception practitioners, Y1 teacher and KS1 Leader to moderate and validate these judgements.

The Year 1 teacher is given a copy of the Profile report and have access to a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three characteristics of effective learning. This ensures each child's stage of development and learning needs are clearly identified and assists with the planning of activities in Year 1. All staff meet at the end of the summer term for important 'handover sessions'.

Reception children also have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with their new teacher and surroundings.

Together, we learn, love and grow with Jesus

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the Early Years practitioners to follow this policy.
The Headteacher and EYS leader will carry out monitoring on the EYS as part of the whole school monitoring system.

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

Together, we learn, love and grow with Jesus