

St Elizabeth's Catholic Voluntary Aided Academy

Early Years foundation stage policy 2024



'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 Foundation Stage Profile - Department for Children, Schools and Families
2012

The following documents should be read in conjunction with this policy: Admissions Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy; Safeguarding Policy; Behaviour Policy; Tapestry Policy

Within this document, the term Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is used to describe children who are in our Reception class (Class name - Iona).

Aims & Objectives

At St Elizabeth's Voluntary Aided Catholic Academy we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent learners, setting in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond. We 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. We value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and next steps and helping each child to progress. We use a variety of assessment methods including ongoing and more formalised observations.

We work alongside parents, carers and others to develop positive relationships, building a strong partnership to meet the needs of individual children, including those who have additional needs, supporting them to reach their full potential.

We follow the curriculum as outlined in the 2024 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document, which is available on the school website.

The EYFS is based on 4 key principles:

- ✚ A Unique Child - Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- ✚ Positive Relationships - Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**
- ✚ Enabling Environments - Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers
- ✚ Learning and Development - **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**

Principles into practice

Our early-years curriculum reflects these by:

- ✚ Providing a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven areas of learning as well as the Characteristics for effective learning, using play as the vehicle for learning. Building on what our children already know and can do.
- ✚ Promoting equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring no child is excluded or disadvantaged. We provide early intervention for those children who require additional support
- ✚ Working in partnership with parents and within the wider context, acknowledging the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers and the benefits of sharing both successes and concerns with them.

- ✚ Planning challenging learning experiences, both topic led and based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment.
- ✚ Providing opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult-led and child-initiated, supported by the adult.
- ✚ Providing a rich, stimulating and secure and safe learning environment both indoors and out.

Unique child

We recognise that each child is an individual who develops at their own rate and by our approach to planning, including next step planning we will support each child to reach their full potential. This encourages children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Positive relationships

Children learn through building positive relationships with each other and the adults in our setting. We endeavour to develop a caring, respectful, safe and stimulating environment in which all children can thrive.

Enabling environments

Our indoor and outdoor learning environments are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are specific areas where the children can be active, be quiet, be creative etc. Continuous provision is available in each area with enhancements being made continually to facilitate children's interest, needs etc.

Children have access to both the inside and the outside environment throughout the day, which is known to have a positive effect on the children's development. The Early Years Foundation Stage pupils have their own outdoor area with sand, water, climbing equipment, bikes, writing opportunities, mud kitchen, construction, art shack and role play. Spending time outdoors offers opportunities for exploring and learning things differently to when pupils are indoors and gives things a different perspective. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. All areas can be explored outside.

Learning and development

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in all early years' settings. We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on a range of topics, our observation of children's needs, interests and stages of development across these seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve and exceed the Early Learning Goals.

All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected and none can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across these areas of learning. They require a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities in order for children to develop effectively and to give them the best chance of obtaining a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year. 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.

The three Prime areas are:

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

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

Specific Areas:

- ✚ Literacy
- ✚ Mathematics
- ✚ Understanding the world
- ✚ Expressive arts

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. All staff will contribute to each child's assessments, Tapestry observations and next steps.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- ✚ Playing and exploring - children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- ✚ Active learning - children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties and enjoy their achievements.
- ✚ Creating and thinking critically - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Planning

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum provides the basis for planning throughout the Foundation Stage.

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which they can explore, think creatively and are active learners. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

In the Early Years, we write medium term plans using the EYFS based on a series of topics each of which offers experiences in all seven areas. We also follow the children's interests where appropriate. These plans are reviewed by the Headteacher. These plans then inform our short-term weekly planning, alongside our observations, which remains flexible for unplanned circumstances or children's responses.

Children have whole group and small group adult led sessions, which increase as they progress through the EYFS with times for a daily phonics session using 'Read Write Inc' and a daily mental math session 'CLIC' teaching aspects of Mathematics and Literacy, including shared reading and writing. We also focus on Physical - gross and fine motor skills through daily sessions of 'Squiggle' and 'Dough disco'. At the heart of our curriculum is a strong Catholic ethos, with acts of worship, daily prayers and Religious education lessons which form part of our daily/ weekly routine.

The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined by the EYFS.

'Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities'

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are planned by the adults. During children's explore and learn time, staff interact to stretch and challenge children further.

In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice.

We create a stimulating environment to encourage children to free-flow between inside and out.

Assessment

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, teacher and teacher assistant knowledge of the pupils, feedback sheets for Literacy, Numeracy and RE and photographic evidence. Assessment is completed regularly and involves both the teacher and other adults, as appropriate. During the first term, the teachers and teaching assistants assess the ability of each child using observations and activities. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children. This baseline assessment also takes into consideration any other records we receive from previous pre-school settings, parents and childminders.

Significant observations of children's achievements are collated in their own personal learning journey, which are shared with parents daily. Parents are also encouraged to add their own observations to 'Tapestry', sharing home experiences and to comment on observations that have taken place within school. In Autumn term, parents are invited to attend an introduction to Early years meeting as well as a parents evening. During Spring term we offer another parents evening and provide a 'New starters' meeting for parents and children who are starting in the next academic year.

Within the final term of Reception, we provide the parents with a report based on their child's development against each of the Early Learning Goals and the Characteristics of Effective learning. The parents are then given the opportunity to discuss these judgements with the Reception teacher in preparation for Year 1. As well as this we send a summary of these assessments to the LA for analysis.

Parents as partners & the wider context

We strive to create and maintain partnership with parents and carers as we recognise that together, we can have a significant impact on a child's learning. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate confidently in their child's education and care in numerous ways including parents to become active participants in their learning journeys and inviting them in to be parent helpers in class and other classes in school.

Working with other services and organisations is integral to our practice in order to meet the needs of our children. At times we may need to share information with other professionals to provide the best support possible.

We draw on our links with the community to enrich children's experiences by taking them on outings and inviting members of the community into our setting.

Safety

Children's safety and welfare is paramount. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We have stringent policies, procedures and documents in place to ensure children's safety.

We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways, including the provision of nutritious food, following set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.

Please see our separate policies and procedures on Health and Safety & Child Protection.

Inclusion

We value all our children as individuals at St Elizabeth's, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and support them at their own pace so that most of our children achieve and even exceed the Early Learning Goals. We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents and outside agencies. See our separate policies on Equality of Opportunity and Learning Support.

Transitions

At St Elizabeth's we recognise that starting school and moving up classes has the potential to be a stressful time for both children and parents. To this end we have established a strong procedure for transitions to ensure that our children and parents are as confident and secure as they can be when facing the challenges of each year group. Transitions are carefully planned for and time given to ensure continuity of learning. At any transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings, including nurseries and childminders. Reception staff hold a meeting in the summer term before the children start school to provide parents with key information, school expectations, knowledge on our curriculum and assessment and advice on how they can help their child. As well as this, teaching staff make contact and visit feeder settings to discuss the children who will be attending St Elizabeth's in the next academic year. Children attend introductory sessions during the summer term to develop familiarity with the setting and teaching staff. At the beginning of reception there is a settling in period to allow children to become used to their new environment gradually. Throughout the year the children in both EYFS and Year 1 have the opportunity to mix up every week, to enable the Reception children to have a smooth transition into year 1, giving them plenty of time to become familiar with the Year 1 teacher and the classroom. This also allows children in Year 1 to access the Foundation Stage resources both in our indoor and outdoor learning environments to continue to develop any skills they had yet to secure within the Foundation Stage curriculum.

In the final term in Reception, the Year 1 teachers meet with the Early Years staff and discuss each child's development against the Early Learning Goals in order to support a smooth transition to Year 1. This discussion helps the Year 1 teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children.

Healthy Eating

All children, in Reception are provided with a healthy snack each day as well as being given the choice of a drink - milk and water. They have access to water at all times. School dinners are provided for free for all children in Reception and menus are sent termly for parents to see and choose from. We also incorporate cooking sessions into our curriculum. This is to encourage pupils to try a range of foods and develop skills.

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. We actively encourage parents to start helping their children become independent with these tasks before they start school. 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 and parents work in partnership to give the right support to an individual child.

Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher, and the EYFS lead will be monitoring EYFS provision as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. The Governing Body will also be part of this process. This policy will be reviewed in January ????