



# EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

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## 1. Introduction

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at St Scholastica's Primary School. It is very much a reflection of our school Mission and Vision Statements.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching adults.

*As our Mission Statement says: Living, Loving and Learning through Christ'*

**Living** – We provide a safe environment where children are inspired to achieve their true potential.

**Loving** – We learn how to love Jesus and each other. We follow His example by showing kindness and respect to everyone. We see potential in all.

**Learning** - We educate and nurture all to meet the demands of the changing world with Love, Peace and Respect.

As our Vision statement says;

*"Our school is a Catholic community. Through the love of Jesus Christ, we inspire our children to learn, grow, enjoy and be happy so that they are readily equipped for the next stage of their development."*

"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*

## 2. Principles

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- **A 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 aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.
- **Enabling environments.** We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.
- **Learning and development.** The Foundation Unit is 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 unit is set up in learning areas where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At St Scholastica's Primary School we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

The EYFS for children is from birth to five years of age. All children begin school with a wide variety of experiences and learning and it is the privilege of the adults working in the foundation stage to accept the task of building upon that prior learning experience. This is done through a holistic approach to learning ensuring that parents and guardians, support staff and the Foundation Stage team work effectively together to support the learning and development of the children in their charge.

## 3. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

- Recognising that all children are unique and special.
- Understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates - physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued.
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community.
- Teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- Encouraging children's independence and decision-making, supporting them to learn through their mistakes.
- Developing children's understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously.
- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions different to their own.
- Understanding the importance of play in children's learning and development.
- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children's personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.
- Providing experiences which build on children's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.
- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.

#### **4. The Role of the Adult**

Adults are needed to:

- Organise an environment which is rich in learning opportunities. For example, offering many natural materials and plenty of space will enable children to explore and experiment, building their concepts about materials and physical force
- Organise and structure the environment to ensure that it promotes play, enabling children to integrate their learning across different domains
- Interact with children's play and learning, showing due sensitivity (not interfering when children are deeply involved, and giving children time to explore objects, ideas and equipment without being directed). Adult interaction can be:
  - An adult-led experience. Here, an adult plans an experience which is matched to the interests and development of a group of children. The adult provides encouragement and guidance for the children to work collaboratively together towards a shared end, sharing discussion and tasks along the way. This will often include the adult directly teaching new skills and ideas. The mode of conversation should be collaborative, "thinking out loud", rather than instructive – "now pick the pencil up and ....."
  - An adult becoming involved in a child's play, or the play of a group. Here the adult shows an interest, takes part, and may suggest some ideas, but does not attempt to steer the direction or the theme of the play
  - An adult may shift from observing a child, to interacting, through spotting a "teachable moment". If a child really wants to cut a piece of paper to a particular size, this is usually the right time to teach the use of scissors!
  - An adult may discuss with a child or a group – what they are doing, what they have found, do they need some more resources or equipment?
  - Conversation with children should be respectful and authentic. Trivial and fleeting comments ("that's lovely" ..... as you pass a child painting) are worse than silence! Where an adult starts a conversation with a child, it should as far as possible be a sustained, two-way process ("that's an interesting painting .....") which involves the child in being thoughtful, and becoming aware of the adult's point of view as well as clarifying hers or his.

#### **5. Learning and Development**

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the [2017 statutory framework of the EYFS](#).

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

These areas of learning and development address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all areas of learning and development are all closely interlinked. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centred curriculum which allows children to make lots of links within their learning. All areas of learning and development are given equal weighting and value.

At St Scholastica's Primary School, we believe that Early Years education is important in its own right and should not be viewed simply as preparation for the next stage of children's education. We believe that the EYFS curriculum allows a natural progression into the National Curriculum at the beginning of Year 1.

## **6. Observation, Assessment and Planning**

Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Our planning shows how the principles of the EYFS are put into practice and is always informed by observations we have made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning needs. All staff who work in the Foundation Stage are involved in this process.

The planning within the EYFS is based around the children's interests. These plans are used by the EYFS team as a guide for weekly planning. However, we may alter these in response to the needs of the children.

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). Practitioners make time to 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. Observations are recorded in different formats (e.g. narrative style, post-it notes, whole class grids, photographs, Tapestry). All practitioners are involved in observing children. Practitioners use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. It informs them of children's abilities, needs, interests, play schemas and learning styles. Observations are evaluated, children's learning priorities are identified and relevant learning opportunities are planned to support children to make the next steps and progress.

Other methods of assessing children in the EYFS setting include engaging alongside children in their play, annotation of children's written work, talking with children about their task or play and in Learning Journeys.

Learning Journeys record children's progress over the academic year in all Areas of Learning and Development of the EYFS framework. Samples of children's work are gathered. Photographic and video evidence and observations are uploaded onto an online platform called Tapestry. Parents and carers are encouraged to sign up to the platform to ensure they can view the evidence but also upload their own observations of their children at home.

There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development using an EYFS tracking system. This is updated at least once each term to track individual progress. At the end of the year it provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements.

## **7. Baseline assessments**

On entry into our reception class, teachers will use the reception baseline assessment (RBA), which is a statutory assessment that was introduced in September 2021. It has to be done in the first six weeks children start in reception and assesses children in mathematics, literacy and communication and language.

### **Why was the RBA introduced?**

A key measure of primary schools is taken from the progress pupils make from the end of key stage one (year 2) and the end of key stage two (year 6). The government guidance found that these assessments did not reflect the important work done between reception and year 2 and the RBA aims to change this.

### **What is the point?**

The purpose of the RBA is to provide a starting point for year-level progress; the data collected will be compared to key stage two (year 6) data seven years later, to provide a progress measure for schools. It is not to be used to make judgements about early years provision.

### **What happens to the data?**

The data from the RBA will not be used for anything other than the progress measure. It will be confidential and in the National Pupil Database. It won't be shared with others, including schools, teachers, pupils or parents and carers and the score will stay with pupils even if they move schools.

### **What about the results?**

Scores will not be shared or published. Teachers will receive short statements telling them how the child performed on the day. There is no expected result and children cannot pass or fail.

In addition, the school will complete their own initial assessments and any concerns will be shared with parents.

## **8. The Induction Process**

During the Summer Term prior to starting school the following September the following visits are conducted:

- ✓ Foundation staff will visit pre-school settings from which September's intake will be taken.
- ✓ Each child and their parents and carers will be invited to spend some time at St Scholastica's Primary School in order to familiarise themselves with both the staff and the foundation unit environment.

When children join the school in September the following procedures will apply in order that they can gradually adjust to their new surroundings:

- ✓ During the first and second week, children will attend one session only (morning or afternoon)
- ✓ During the third week and thereafter, children will attend for the full school day unless Foundation staff and parents or guardians agree that it is not in the best interests of an individual child.

There is a relaxed and open ethos in the setting. Established routines, a calm atmosphere and encouraging talk are some of the strategies practitioners use to maintain children's positive feelings about school.

## **9. Parents as Partners**

At St Scholastica's Primary School, we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development. So, practitioners endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents.

We value the role of parents as children's primary educators. Through questionnaires and informal chats at the beginning and end of the day, practitioners encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports practitioners in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular letters, reading records and informal chatting at the beginning and end of the day. This also gives suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in the setting. Class newsletters are also sent home on a weekly basis, with whole school newsletters sent home fortnightly.

Parents are invited to attend parents' evenings during the course of the academic year. The first of these takes place during the autumn term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into the setting. Another parent's evening takes place during the spring term where practitioners will feedback on children's learning and development progress.

Other opportunities for practitioners to share children's learning, development and well-being with parents include Learning Journeys, end of year reports and Celebration assemblies where children's achievements are recognised. We will conduct workshops for parents and carers to enable them to be familiar with the teaching methods used in school to make it easier to emulate them at home.

Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as educational visits and reading, as well as offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, art, music) to

support children's learning. Parents may be invited into the setting on other occasions such as open afternoons where children show them their work as well as special events such as plays and assemblies.

The setting has a friendly, open-doors ethos and practitioners are available to talk to parents at the beginning and end of the day. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have.

#### **10. Inclusion and Equal Opportunities**

In line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy, we will provide all children, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability with equal access to all aspects of school life to ensure that every child is valued as an individual. All staff are role models and are aware of the influence they have in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical attitudes.

#### **11. Special Educational Needs & Disability**

Children with special educational needs will be supported as appropriate to enable them to access the curriculum fully. This includes children that are more able and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. Individual Education Plans identify targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support commensurate with the school's Special Educational Needs & Disability Policy. The school's SEN Co-ordinator is responsible for providing additional information and advice to staff and parents and for arranging external intervention and support as necessary.

*See Special Educational Needs Policy.*

Agreed By Governors: November 2023      Presented to staff: November 2023

Signed by Chair of

Teaching & learning committee\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

Signed by Head teacher\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

Review date:     Autumn Term 2025