



Early Years Policy

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”

- *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

Department for Education - 2021



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 Early Years 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.

This policy is based on the requirements set out in the new [Early Years Foundation Stage framework](#). At St Matthew's we are very committed to the CPD for all our Early Years staff and have ensured that these recent changes have been embedded into our setting. Our two main focuses in line with the new framework are to;

- improve outcomes at age 5, particularly in early language and literacy
- reduce teacher workload such as unnecessary paperwork, so practitioners can spend more time with the children in their care.

Early childhood is the Early Years on which children build the rest of their lives. At St Matthew's Primary School we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure Early Years for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. We 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 Early Years 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 Early Years Stage team work effectively together to support the learning and development of the children in their charge.



Aims

It is every child's right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and with economic well-being. The overarching aim of the EYFS is to help young children achieve these five outcomes. 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 Matthew's Catholic Primary School we aim to:

- Provide an inclusive, safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child including children with additional needs.
- Work in partnership with parents and guardians and value their contributions ensuring that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability.
- Provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum and environment which builds on the interests, strengths, talents and experiences of all our pupils, providing the 'cultural capital' (the best knowledge, skills and understandings) they need to succeed in life.
- Foster a love for reading and develop communication and language for children to reach their full potential.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Provide opportunities whereby children experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development.
- Provide experiences for all children, whatever their needs, which are inclusive rather than parallel.

Learning and Development

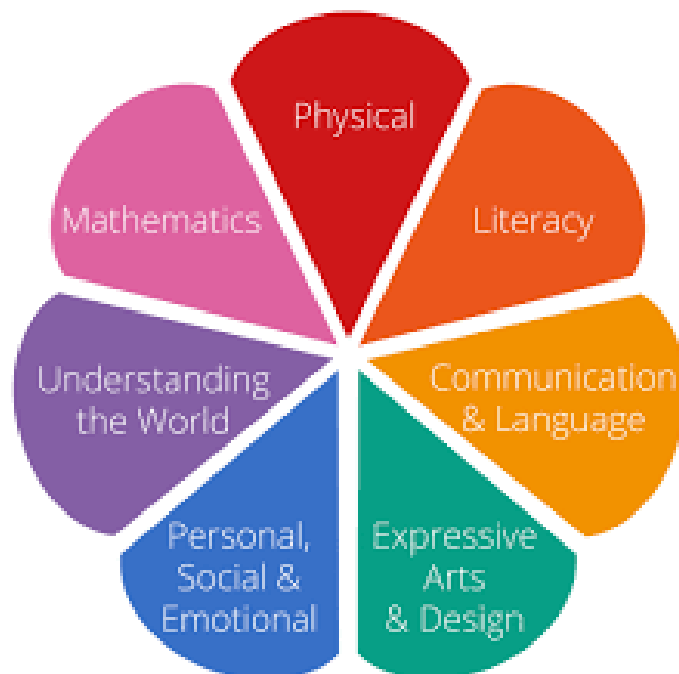
Learning and development is categorised into **three prime** areas of learning:

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

Additionally there are **four specific** areas of learning:

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

At St Matthew's our environment is set up in such a way that all 7 areas of learning are accounted and planned for.



Document created by J. McNally (EYFS Lead) - 2021

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The characteristics of effective learning underpin achievement of these prime and specific areas of learning. They describe factors which play a central role in a child's learning and in becoming an effective learner and are vital elements of support for the transition process from EYFS to Year 1. The characteristics represent processes rather than outcomes. 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.

Staff at St Matthew's are fully aware of the importance of the Characteristics of Effective Learning and are able to identify them.

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
 - Keeping trying
- Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

Creating and thinking critically - thinking

- Having their own ideas
 - Making links
- Choosing ways to do things

Observation, Assessment and planning

At St Matthew's Catholic Primary School planning is divided into long term, medium term and short term. Long term plans state the topics to be covered for each year. Medium term plans illustrate the objectives being taught each term. Short term or weekly plans, show specific activities planned to achieve the objectives. Staff ensure that all children are encouraged to experience all areas of activity during the week, although they may not experience them each day. A mixture of directed and free choice activities are planned and children's choices are carefully monitored to ensure a balanced programme. The children begin Early Years by having free choice of activities for most of the sessions and as the year progresses; the school day becomes more structured. This ensures the children are prepared for the for the Key Stage One framework.

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 that work in the Early Years 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. This fostering of the children's interests develops a high level of motivation for the children's learning.

Our Early Years practitioners carry out ongoing assessments of the children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in our EYFS does not require excessive paperwork and we ensure that practitioner's interactions with the children are our number one priority. This also ensures that teacher workload is reduced and gives more time for the professional dialogue to take place at weekly meetings. Practitioners know the children's level of achievement and interests, and this is reflected in their teaching and learning experiences. The parents and guardians are given the opportunity to meet with the Early Years Teachers each term and, at the end of the third term, we provide parents/guardians with a written report in relation to the children's early learning goals.

Learning Through Play

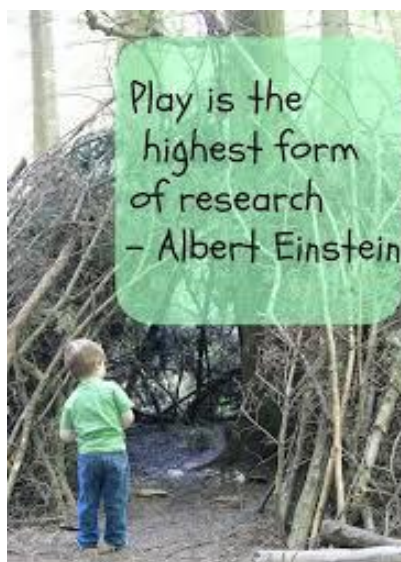
At St Matthew's Primary School, we do not make a distinction between work and play. Children learn through planned play activities and our skilled staff will decide when child-initiated or adult-led play activities would provide the most effective learning opportunities.

The Learning Environment

The Early Years classrooms are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, quiet, creative etc. The classroom has defined learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. The Foundation Stage has an enclosed outdoor area, and children are able to free-flow between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Being outdoors offers the children opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. They are able to explore, use their senses, develop their language skills and be physically active. We plan activities and resources both inside and outside enabling the children to develop in all the areas of learning.

The Outdoor Environment

Learning outside the classroom supports the development of healthy and active lifestyles by offering children opportunities for physical activity, freedom and movement, and promoting a sense of well-being. It gives them contact with the natural world and offers them experiences that are unique to outdoors, such as direct contact with the weather and the seasons. Outdoor play also supports children's problem-solving skills and nurtures their creativity, as well as providing rich opportunities for their developing imagination, inventiveness and resourcefulness. And, of course, the outdoor environment offers more space than indoors and therefore is particularly important to those children who learn best through active movement. St Matthew's also has access to a year round outdoor classroom that our Reception class will be visiting throughout the year. To ensure that our trips to the outdoor classroom are hassle free, we have invested in new waterproof suits for children to enjoy learning outdoors whatever the weather!



The Induction Process

During the summer term before the children start St Matthew's, home visits are timetabled for the EY teachers to visit the children in their home setting. We make this a priority at St Matthew's to ensure that home-school links are established as soon as possible.

The new reception children and parents are also invited to taster sessions in the summer term to provide them with essential information for the next academic year. During this day, the children and parents get to spend time in their new classroom with the Early Years Staff. Parents have the opportunity to speak to all staff and ask any questions.

During the summer term your child's Class Teacher or the Early Years Lead will visit your child in their nursery setting. They will stay and play with your child and get to know them and ask their key person any relevant questions.

When children join the school in September, they start on half days for two weeks to gradually adjust to their new surroundings. After this they will then stay in school full time, including staying for their dinner.

Organisation of classes

In Reception we have 2 registration classes, each having 30 children. These classes are further split into **key person** groups with a maximum 15 children in each group. Each key person group is led by a Teacher or Teaching Assistant. Initially the aim of the key person role is to ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting and to build a relationship with the child and parents. As the year progresses, these key person groups will change to include interventions and focused aspects of learning based on children's needs. The school day begins at 8:45m and ends at 2:55pm. All children must be accompanied to and from school by a known adult.

Intimate Care

'Intimate' care is any care which involves washing or touching 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 after using the toilet or changing underwear following an accident. In most cases, intimate care is to do with personal hygiene and the school will always inform the parents when intimate care has been carried out.

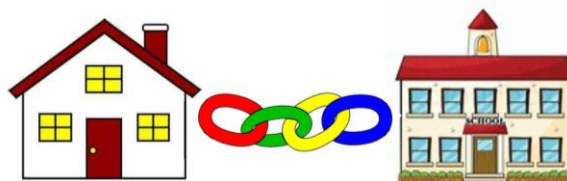
Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child. At St Matthew's we encourage our children to be independent in the toilet but if they are unable to do this then we will contact parents and a positive toileting plan will be implemented. Intimate care is only provided in extreme cases and no intimate care is to be given without the express written permission of the parent or guardian of that child. All parents and guardians will be asked to provide that permission when their child joins St Matthew's.

Home and School Links - Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educators and we aim for the school and parents and carers to work closely in Early Years. This can have a very positive impact on a child's development but relies on a two-way flow of information and knowledge.

We will develop this working relationship between the school and parents and carers by;

- Operating an "open door" policy that will allow parents and carers to discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner. Conversely, if Early Years staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them.
- We will send home a 'home-school link book' to enable parents or guardians to record events that occur outside of school to discuss in key person time. This is part of the Early Years curriculum to encourage children to talk about past events with people who are special to them.
- We will provide 3 further parent/carer evenings at the end of each term to inform parents and carers formally of a child's overall progress.
- At the end of the academic year, the class teacher writes up a report for each child to take home which comments on their progress in all areas of learning, including RE.
- Throughout the year, parents/carers are invited into school to take part in various activities with their child. E.g. stay and plays, cookery mornings, sports days etc.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to attend training session held by Early Years staff to encourage learning at home.
- Children present regular assemblies to their families including a Christmas Nativity.
- In the final week of school, families are invited in to watch Reception's 'Moving Up' assembly to celebrate their year of hard work and success.
- This year we are developing our use of our online platform Seesaw.



Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

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 Play Plans identify targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support commensurate with the school's Special Educational Needs 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.

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.

Safeguarding

Prior to starting school, Nurseries will share any relevant information involving outside agencies to ensure that we can best support that child at our school. The school takes its child protection responsibilities very seriously. Any concerns, which the school has, will be noted and, if deemed necessary, will be reported to the relevant agency. The safety of the child is always of paramount importance and in Reception it is vital that children are picked up by a familiar adult. A letter is sent home in September for parents to indicate who will be picking their child up and staff will always refer to this. The full Safeguarding Policy is available in school and online for parents to read if they wish.

Positive Behaviour Management

Reception follows the same Positive Behaviour Management policy and systems as the rest of the school. Our emphasis is on rewards to reinforce good behaviour. We believe that rewards such as Dojo points, certificates, postcards and Golden Rule winners have a motivational role in helping children to see that good behaviour is valued. Please refer to Positive Behaviour Management Policy for more information.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to follow this policy. The Senior Leadership Team will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring system

Revised: September 2021

Review: September 2022

Impact of Covid-19

At St Matthew's, the Early Years staff take Covid safety restrictions very serious and always follow the latest guidance. Contact in and out of the setting is restricted to limited adults and although this may impact parental involvement, we will endeavor to engage parents in any way we can whilst still remaining safe.

In the case of school/year group closure we would provide online work for all our pupils to avoid lost learning.