



St Matthew's Catholic Primary School



Introduction

Starting school can be both exciting and worrying time for children and parents alike, with so much new information to take on board. With this in mind we have put together this information booklet. Hopefully it will provide you with a better understanding about the Foundation Stage and will answer some of the questions that you may have. We are here to make your child's first years at school as enjoyable as possible, so if you do have any worries or concerns, please do not hesitate in telling us so that we can help.

Reception Class Team

You will get the chance to meet our Reception team in June when you come to the parents meeting and stay and play sessions. All of our staff at St. Matthew's are passionate about teaching and have a child centred approach to all that they do. As a school we understand that Reception is a vital year group to establish the building blocks of our children's education.



The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

Schools and early year's providers have to follow a structure of learning, development and care for children from birth to five years old. This is called the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and it enables your child to learn through a range of activities.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based on four distinct but complementary principles:

- Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships;
- 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;
- Children develop and learn in different ways at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early year's provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Learning Environment

These are our classrooms where you will learn Literacy, Maths and much, much more!



Learning through Play

The best outcomes for children's learning occur where most of the activity within a child's day is a mixture of:

- Child-initiated play, actively supported by adults.
- Focused learning, with adults guiding the learning through playful, rich experiential activities.

Many of the activities the children will be carrying out will be practical and play based. Play in the Early Years classroom is essential and contributes to the development of the whole child. Below are just some of the reasons that make learning through play so important.

- Encourages children to think for themselves.

- Gives children a chance to practise skills.
- Can improve concentration.
- Gives children confidence.
- Children learn to take turns and co-operate with others.
- It develops their language.
- It develops mathematical and problem solving skills.
- Children have a chance to explore and investigate.

Learning Outdoors

Outdoor learning complements indoor learning and is equally important. Being outdoors has a positive impact on children's sense of well-being and helps all aspects of children's development. The curriculum requires the children to have daily accesses to the outdoor environment. This will take place in all types of weather.

Our lovely weather can mean it is bright and sunny in the morning but damp and miserable in the afternoon. It is

therefore important for your child to have a suitable coat in school every day. On sunny days children should bring sunhats and should come to school wearing sun cream.



Outdoor learning is important because:

- Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors;
- It gives children first-hand contact with weather, seasons and the natural world;
- Outdoor environments offer children freedom to explore, use senses and be physically active;
- Promotes a sense of confidence and well-being;
- Provides opportunities for developing harmonious relationships with others, through negotiation, taking turns and co-operation;
- Supports those children who learn best through activity or movement;
- Supports children developing creativity and problem-solving skills;
- Provides rich opportunities for imagination, inventiveness and resourcefulness;
- Children have the chance to increase their balance and agility;

We have lots of fun in our outdoor area. Make sure you bring the right clothes to keep you warm in the winter and cool in the summer.



Areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

The children will cover all seven areas of the curriculum through everyday activities. All the areas are important and interconnected. 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. Those three areas, the prime areas are:

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

In addition, there are four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

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

Communication and Language Development

Involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations. They will have the opportunity to listen and respond to stories, songs, poems, and nursery rhymes. There will be many opportunities for children to develop and use language during role play situations, recreating roles and experiences in play situations. This will also provide valuable opportunities to support their growing ability to express a wide range of feelings.



Physical Development



Involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children will also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food. Children will undertake a wide range of activities both outdoors and indoors to develop both fine and gross motor skills, co-ordination

and balance, traveling skills etc. Many of our activities during the week are designed to develop children's coordination. Threading beads, working with play dough, pouring sand and water, all help to strengthen fingers and develop control.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities. It promotes independence and encourages children to develop positive attitudes to their learning. We encourage the children to: try new activities, dress and undress independently, use the toilet and wash their hands independently, take turns, share and play alongside other children, listen to others and respect their point of view and to tidy away after activities.

Literacy Development

Involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. They will be introduced to the letter sounds, shapes and names through "Jolly Phonics" and "Letters and Sounds" materials (A government initiative), which adopts a multi-sensory approach to learning. Children will be given access to a wide range of reading materials to promote a love of books and reading. Reception has a quiet area where children can look at books, read stories or listen to a story. There are opportunities for sharing books in larger groups during carpet sessions. We have writing areas, and also provide writing materials in role-play areas to encourage children to write or make marks to represent writing during play.



Mathematics

Involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in computing, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtracting problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures. Children have the opportunity to build models using bricks and junk materials to develop their awareness of space and shape. Through songs and number rhymes, children will learn to recognise

numbers, count groups of objects and begin to use addition and subtraction methods in basic calculations. Their ability to problem solve and investigate is developed through practical activities, which are within children's own experiences.

Understanding the World



Involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment. Children will develop a sense of time and place and the language associated with these concepts. They will be encouraged to ask questions about how things happen and how things work and will be given opportunities to explore and investigate objects, materials and living things. Children have access to ICT equipment, including interactive whiteboards. They access a wide range of programs to support and extend work in the other areas.

Expressive Arts and Design



Involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thought, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology. Children will explore colour, shape and texture both in 3D and 2D. In Foundation Stage the focus is more on the process of how something is created, not necessarily the product. We offer a wide range of creative activities throughout the week, both indoors and out.

The areas of the curriculum are taught in a variety of ways. We provide opportunities for whole class, small group and individual work. Work can be organised through guided play, structured activities, adult led activities or child led explorations. To ensure each child is learning and progressing with the activities, the class teacher takes time to observe children during activities and those observations are fed into assessment criteria.

Parents as Partners

We believe that parents are a child's first educators and we value the knowledge you have about your child's capabilities and interests. Throughout the year we will use a variety of ways to exchange information with you. We try to chat with parents and carers at the beginning or end of the day, but often there may not be time to talk about exciting things that your child has done at home. To overcome this, and encourage sharing this type of information, a home-school link book will be sent home with your child when they start school. This book is a fantastic way for you to share anything exciting that happens outside of school. Perhaps your child has learned how to do something for the first time e.g. fastening their zip or it could be something that they, or you, are proud of e.g. persevering at something they found hard. This home-school link book is shared with

the class during our key person time and give us the opportunity to celebrate those 'wow' moments!

We also welcome parents' help in school for a variety of activities or events. So, if you have an area in which you have particular interest e.g. baking or gardening and have some time to spare please let us know.

If you need to speak to the class teacher about a particular issue it is usually best to ask in the morning, as home time can be quite busy releasing all of the children. However, you are more than welcome to wait aside until all of the children are released to speak to the teacher. This may not be your child's teacher, as they could be working with other children but please pass on any message to the teacher on the door and they will pass it on.

School Entry Arrangements

Young children need time to adapt to a new setting, group or class, some will settle easily, some will find it more difficult. To make this experience as smooth as possible we have a settling-in procedure involving visits to the new class prior to starting in September. There is a gradual intake during the first week, with the children attending school for a morning or afternoon session. Morning sessions are from 9:00am to 11:00am and the afternoon sessions from 12:45pm to 2:45pm. **Parents will receive a letter to state which session their child will be attending.** After this first week, the children will attend school for the full day and stay for lunch as well. On their first day the children will come in through the Reception Class entrance. The children and parents will be shown where to go and where to place their items (coats and bags). We encourage children to say goodbye to their parents/carers and come straight in. We ask that parents do not enter the classroom at this time as it makes it harder for the children to settle.



Key Person

The EYFS promotes the good practice of children having a 'Key Person' who has special responsibilities to the children, giving them reassurance to feel safe and cared for and building relationships with parents and carers. They will help the children become familiar with their new class and will try to make sure the needs of every child is met appropriately.

Example day in reception class

8:55 - 9:00 - Register, days of the week, weather, news and Collective Worship

9:00 - 9:30 - Dough Disco/Scribble Disco/Peer Massage

9.30 – 10.15am RWI phonics session

10.15 - 10:45 - Maths lesson/Continuous Provision

10.45-11:40 - Literacy lesson/Continuous Provision

12:00 - 13:00 - Lunch/tooth brushing and play

13:00 – 14.30 - Small group work (phonics/maths/communication and language)Cooking/Topic work/ Key Person time/RE/Continuous Provision

14:30 - 15:55 - tidy up time, story and get ready for home

School Opening Times (normal times)

The Reception day starts at 8.45am. Registers are taken promptly by the class teacher at 8.55am and 1.00pm. If you arrive after 8.55am when the gate has been locked you will need to go through the main school reception and a member of the office staff will let you in. You then need to let the school office staff member your child's name so that your child can be signed into school and the reason why you are late. They will then be marked in as a late mark.

Home Time Collection

Children will be allowed to go home with their normal carer, unless we have been notified in advance. The children remain inside the classroom until they have been called by the teacher who is on the door. Getting two classes of 30 children out safely to their parents is a big responsibility, so please be patient with us. We kindly ask you to line up in an orderly queue when picking up your child as this makes it easier and quicker to release them.

Developing Independence



We will be working hard to help the children to become more independent throughout the year. This will include developing their independence in getting dressed and undressed. You can support your child at home by encouraging them to dress and undress with less support. Obviously a busy school

morning is probably not the best time to do this, but allowing more time to practise at weekends will certainly help them. In addition, think about them getting dressed and undressed for PE. Getting shoes in the right feet is hard enough without having to fasten buckles or laces. Velcro fastenings are much easier for them to manage.

IMPORTANT

Please ensure all items of school clothing are clearly labelled with your child's name.

Please check regularly to see if the name is still visible because, from experience, we know that within weeks the handwritten labels will usually have faded to something illegible and iron-on labels will probably have fallen off.

Absence from School through Illness

If your child is absent from school through illness it is important that you inform the school before 8.55am on the first day of illness. You do not need to inform us each day of your child's illness, but a follow up note is needed on their return to school, so that the absence can be recorded and passed on to the Education Welfare Officer. The school number is 0151 226 1871. If the school is not informed the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

Emergency Contact Numbers

In your admissions pack you will find an emergency contact form. This will need to be completed and returned to the school office. If any of the particulars you have given us for any reason, please let us know as soon as possible; this way we will be able to contact you immediately should your child become ill, have an accident etc.

Special Educational Needs

At St. Matthew's we are fully committed to meeting the needs of those pupils with Special Educational Needs. Your child's class teacher and SENCo are always willing to discuss any concerns that you may have regarding your child's development. However please be aware that during the early years of a child's education, it is very difficult to distinguish between Special Educational Needs and developmental stages. Therefore we may need to work with outside agencies to support our assessments on a pupil.

A Healthy Snack

Each day your child will have access to free milk and a healthy snack through the National Fruit Scheme for Schools. This includes a piece of fruit or a vegetable. We also make many other things for snack including toast, cereal, crumpets etc. Hydration is very important for little brains so if you would like your child to have a water bottle, please provide a named sports bottle to be brought to school every day. *We kindly ask for a small contribution towards our snack ingredients (information to follow about this payment)*



School Dinners/Packed Lunches

All Infant school children are now entitled to receive free school meals. All Reception children will be expected to have a school dinner rather than bringing in a packed lunch as it helps them try new foods and encourages independence. From September, school will be using a new catering company 'Food for Thought' who will provide delicious hot and cold meals. If your child does not want to have the hot choice that day then packed lunch grab bags will also be available containing sandwiches, snacks, drinks and deserts. We ensure that all our meals meet the Schools Nutritional Standards.

Toilet Incidents

In the Early Year we are well aware of the "little accidents" that can sometimes happen if children do not get to the toilet in time. We do have an emergency supply of clothing at school if needed. (Please could you ensure that any borrowed underwear is washed and returned to us, otherwise our stocks will begin to diminish)? We do not notify parents unless there is a particularly bad mess or your child is



extremely distressed. We do not fuss or embarrass the child and wet clothing is quietly left in a bag for you at the end of the day. If parents do not wish staff to clean and change their child they may sign an 'I do not give consent' form.

School Uniform

Dark grey tracksuit with school badge on the jumper, Light blue polo with badge, white or grey socks and sensible black shoes/trainers (no colour) with Velcro fasteners. We also ask that you purchase a St Matthew's book bag and a St Matthew's coat will also be available to purchase. All uniform can be purchased at Brienda Fashion Shop Ltd (74 Muirhead Avenue East)

PE kits will NOT be needed for the first two terms (autumn and spring) but please ensure that your child has the school PE kit for the summer term.

St Matthew's believes that the responsibilities of parents is to ensure that their child has the correct uniform and expectations of appearance as stated above, it should be clean, in good repair and the child's name written on all items.

If any parent has difficulties for any reason with fulfilling this request they are asked to speak to a senior member of staff to discuss their issues.

Children arriving to school with incorrect uniform may be given uniform from our supply of spares. Continually arriving at school without appropriate uniform will result in parents being contacted.

We ask all parents and carers to support us in this school uniform policy by sending their child to school correctly dressed and ready for their daily schoolwork. No child should be made to stand out by breaking our school uniform policy, our aim is to ensure equality.

We hope you have found this information useful and we look forward to welcoming you and your child. If you do have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask; we will try to answer them as best we can.

