

ST JAMES' EARLY YEARS AND FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

This policy has the school values at its heart:

**Faith in action,
Working together,
Walking in the footsteps of Christ**

Our Vision is:

Share our love of God every day in all that we learn, do and say.

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage
3. The Early Years Foundation Stage framework
4. Active Learning through Play
5. Assessment and Record Keeping
6. Planning
7. Parents as Partners
8. Admissions and Induction
9. Equal Opportunities
10. Special Educational Needs
11. Health and Safety and Safeguarding
12. Monitoring and Evaluation

1. Introduction

Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at St James' RC Primary School. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching adults. In the policy, the term 'setting' refers to the Early Years educational provision at St. James' RC Primary School. This is available to children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old. These children are in the final year of the EYFS. This is referred to as the Reception Year.

2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

In the EYFS setting at St. James' RC 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 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 by the practitioners looking after them.
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence, independence 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 differ 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.

3. The Early Years Foundation Stage framework

Teaching in the EYFS setting at St. James' RC Primary School is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (Published December 2023, effective January 2024). This document is a principled approach to Early Years education, bringing together children's welfare, learning and development requirements through four themes: 'A Unique Child', 'Positive Relationships', 'Enabling Environments' and 'Children Learn in Different Ways and at Different Rates'.

The curriculum is centred on 3 prime areas of learning:

1. Communication and Language.
2. Physical Development
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Providers must also support activities through four specific areas which strengthen the prime areas.

These are:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding of the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

Educational programmes which practitioners deliver in the setting must involve activities and experiences from one of the seven areas.

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 between what they are learning. All Areas of Learning and Development are given equal weighting and value.

At St. James' RC 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 framework allows a natural progression into the National Curriculum.

At St James' we recognise the importance of a smooth transition into Yr1 and that some pupils will have exceeded the ELGs in some areas, whilst some will be working at Expected and Emerging levels. This breadth of ability is reflected in the planned transition created each Summer Term in order to ensure that pupils move seamlessly from R to Y1.

At St. James' we also recognise the need to liaise with the pre-school settings attended by our pupils. During the Summer Term the Early Years practitioners visit the local pre-schools. The SENCO also visits the pre-school when a child transferring to St. James' has been alerted to the school as having a particular special need. Please refer to the Transition policy.

4. Active Learning through Play

At St. James' we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our EYFS setting has an ethos of learning through play. We recognise the importance of children's play. It is an essential and rich part of children's learning process that supports them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative, independent and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

In the EYFS setting at St. James', we provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences which will support children to discover, explore, investigate, develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity, and help to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts. Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding. A key part of our active learning is our bi-weekly visits to Forest School. The EYFS teacher is a qualified Forest school leader.

5. Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the effective running of the EYFS setting at St. James'. Regular, planned and focused assessments are made of children's learning and individual needs. A record of each child's progress in all areas of their learning is kept.

The main EYFS assessment method is through practitioners' professional judgement and knowledge of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult focused activities and child-initiated play. The new Framework places emphasis on the teacher's professional judgement and the importance of staff spending time with children rather than on onerous observation recording. We therefore 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) The teacher and classroom assistants are involved in observing children.

We use knowledge of individual children to inform us 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, annotating children's written work, talking with children about their task or play.

There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development using the Development Matters document (July 2021). This is updated at least once each half- term to track individual progress. This is recorded informally. Judgments made on children's development in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile are based on evidence of children's behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated activities across all Areas of Learning and Development.

From September 2021 the EYFS Baseline is carried out during the first half term in line with statutory requirements. An informal baseline assessment is compiled by EYFS staff during the first half term. This is based on transition documents and information from pre-school settings, conversations with families conducted during home visits and the observation of children within the setting. This baseline is used to inform planning and set targets for children.

6. Planning

The EYFS framework provides a long-term plan to follow by ensuring that all Early Learning Goals are achievable by the end of the academic year. St James' uses the non-statutory document Development Matters (July 2021) as a basis for what to teach. The curriculum is designed to cover all aspects through engaging and stimulating topics. Topics may change based on the interest and enjoyment of the children.

Medium term planning takes into account the individual children's learning and developmental needs. The parents are informed of this and kept up to date with the topics and phonemes that the children are covering in class.

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 indoors. The setting also makes use of the outdoor environment whenever possible.

Educational visits within the local community and further-a-field are also planned to support children's learning within the classroom.

7. Parents as Partners

At St. James' 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. We 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, we 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 us in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests. Parents are also asked to complete a 'WOW Star Moment' via our online homework platform, when they notice new things their child is doing and also things to comment on as requested by the teacher (such as use of technology and outside sporting achievement).

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular letters and informal chatting at the beginning and end of the day. We also give suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in the setting. Regular communication is also carried out via the yellow reading record which comes to school daily, and via the orange phonics book which informs parents of weekly phonic focus.

Parents are invited to attend parents' evenings and goal setting days 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 parents' evening takes place during the spring term where practitioners feedback on children's learning and developmental progress. Finally, in the summer term, the parents receive a report about their child's progress and are invited to a walk round evening where they have the opportunity to discuss this report.

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.

St. James' has a friendly, open-door 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

8. Admissions and Induction

St. James' provides full-time Early Years education for children in the Reception Year. This is for children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old.

Before they start in the setting, all children are offered a visit during the summer term. The purpose of this initial visit is for the children to meet their new teachers teaching assistants and start to become familiar with the school environment.

In the summer term parents are invited to an induction meeting to receive information regarding the induction process, to meet the teacher and to learn more about the school. There is time during the meeting for an informal chat and parents' questions. School information packs are distributed to parents at this meeting.

At the start of the academic year EYFS staff conduct home visits to all families. Please also refer to the Transition policy.

In the autumn term, parents are invited to a phonics meeting and any other workshops or events that are taking place within the school year.

9. Equal Opportunities

All practitioners at St. James' have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered in the EYFS setting.

All children, irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development within the EYFS setting at St. James'.

10. Special Educational Needs & Disability and Most Able

See Special Educational Needs & Disability Policy and More Able and Talented Policy.

11. Health & safety and Safeguarding

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance. The class teacher is the key worker for all children in Reception Class. Buildings and grounds risk assessments are carried out by the Head teacher and site manager in line with whole school procedures. Risk assessments relating to the cohort and activities are carried out as and when appropriate by the class teacher. Equipment is monitored every week for wear and tear. From the spring term the children are involved with risk assessing the setting both inside and outside. Throughout the year children are encouraged to manage their own risks in relation to adventurous activity.

Please refer to whole school policies for Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Healthy Schools, and First Aid.

12. Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be updated in line with any new developments in the school and/or any new government guidance.

It was last reviewed in: spring 2024

It will next be reviewed in: spring 2025

This statement of policy was approved by the Governing Body at their meeting on:-

Date: _____

Signed:

_____ (Chairperson)

_____ (Head teacher)