

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School



EYFS Policy

Reviewed and agreed: February 2024

Next review date: February 2025



“Tell me and I’ll forget, show me and I’ll remember, involve me and I’ll understand” – Chinese Proverb

Intent

“The development of children’s spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development.” EYFS 2021

At St Aidan’s Catholic Primary School, our Early Years curriculum is designed to provide children with a secure foundation to progress through school. Our curriculum is progressive from Nursery through to Reception. It is built upon individual children’s needs and is designed to build upon their prior learning and experiences at both home and in private settings. Our curriculum is immersive and aims to educate the whole child. It offers a balance of structure and flexibility that is well matched to the needs of our children but is ambitious for all in order to drive learning forwards. Staff confidently and competently follow the children’s interests whilst maintaining focus on the prime areas of learning. At St Aidan’s Catholic Primary School we strive to ensure that each individual reaches their full potential from their various starting points.

At St Aidan’s our Early Years curriculum is built upon the development of children’s communication and language skills. We establish a language rich environment through skilful adult questioning and observation. Staff are skilled at providing opportunities for children to develop their communication and language skills as we believe that this the cornerstone of early curriculum. At St Aidan’s we build communication skills through stories and repetitive language patterns. Staff adapt their language to meet the needs of individual children through quality conversations and interactions. Staff provide extensive opportunities for children to embed new words in a range of contexts until children become comfortable using a broad range of vocabulary and language structures.

We aim to ensure that our learning environment is stimulating for all children. That it is filled with quality planned for, and incidental adult interactions with proactive, well trained staff; and based on their individual knowledge of individual children. We aim to ensure that our curriculum is engaging and maximises opportunities for cross curricular learning experiences, providing a foundation for children’s future learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage and their wider school journey.

We aim for our children to use EYFS to develop their independence skills where children are encourage to ‘have a go’ before offering them the appropriate support and scaffolding to extend their skills and knowledge. We celebrate each small step success to develop confidence in our children who strive to do better and make progress. This goes hand in hand with the EYFS at St Aidan’s nurturing confident and independent learners who are equipped with skills and knowledge for the next steps of their learning journey in year 1.

Implementation

Each term the EYFS staff introduce a new topic to provide the inspiration for learning which is adapted based on the interests of the children and the specific needs of individual cohorts. Within this, children are exposed to a range of topical themes to enable them to develop a sense of the wider world they live in. For example, EYFS staff plan series of activities linked to real world events such as The King’s Coronation, Remembrance Day or World Water Day. There are opportunities for children to access those activities throughout the year.

Children learn through a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities. The environment is carefully planned to entice incidental child-initiated learning. Quality interactions with adults within the setting allows staff to systematically check for understanding, address misconceptions and provide real-time verbal feedback. This has a strong impact on the acquisition of new learning. Children are exposed to a wide range of well-planned experiences, with an appropriate level of challenge to their age and developmental stage, to both encourage their independent and scaffolded engagement within the provision.

At St Aidan's our curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced to ensure that prior learning is built upon. Early Years staff are well equipped at adapting to the changing needs of individual and groups of children as learning progresses throughout the academic year. Throughout the Early Years setting, and the course of the academic year as their skills progress, children are provided with plenty of opportunities for repeated practise in a range of contexts to embed learning. The culture of overlearning in order to embed acquired knowledge through frequent high-quality interactions aims to provide all children with the fundamental skills needed to make progress and become successful. Adults within the setting are highly skilled at orchestrating opportunities throughout the day to revisit learning that meet the needs and stage of learning for our children.

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are important and included into the curriculum taught. There are three prime areas, which are seen to underpin learning and development, are at the forefront of our curriculum and are embedded into the learning within the specific areas.

The prime areas are:

Communication and Language
Physical Development
Personal, Social and Emotional Development

The Specific Areas are:

Literacy
Mathematics
Understanding the World
Expressive Arts and Design

Characteristics of Effective Learning:

The EYFS also includes The Characteristics of Effective Learning (COEL). These are regularly assessed through observations and planned for throughout the EYFS.

The three characteristics are:

Playing and Exploring-children investigate and experience things and events around them and 'have a go'

Active Learning- children concentrate and keep trying if they experience difficulties, as well as enjoying what they achieve.

Creating and Thinking Critically- children have and develop their own ideas, make links between different experiences and develop strategies for doing things.

Communication & Language

At St Aidan's Catholic Primary School we believe that Communication and Language is the cornerstone of Early Years and it forms the basis of our curriculum. In order for children to access the seven areas stipulated within the Early Years framework they must first develop their communication and language skills. Within the Early Years Foundation Stage staff at St Aidan's facilitate language learning and retention through a carefully constructed, language rich, purposeful learning environment. Frequent opportunities to share stories, rhymes and songs punctuate daily routines. Adults carefully and deliberately plan activities to target child and cohort specific communication and language needs. From this, adults orchestrate plenty of opportunities for children to engage in repeated practise in a range of contexts.

Physical Development

Physical development within Early Years is categorised by gross motor skills and fine motor skills. Children's gross motor skills are predominantly developed through large equipment play and specific, skills based Physical Education (PE) lessons. Fine motor skills are developed through carefully constructed activities to target and cultivate children's pre-writing skills.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

As children move through the Early Years Foundation Stage their personal, social and emotional development needs are constantly progressing too. This is usually in line with the individual child's chronological and developmental stage and phase. Well skilled staff within the Early Years environment are very responsive to individual children's developing needs in order to support their personal, social and emotional development. At St Aidan's Catholic Primary School, a key feature of our early Nursery curriculum focuses on the development of independence in order to equip children with the confidence, and skills to continue their learning journey into Reception and beyond.

The Early Years team provide and plan a wide range of experiences to enable children to build positive relationships with both adults and their peers. Free flow activities and themed days support children as they transition from Nursery to Reception. Children are able to establish and maintain positive relationships that continue throughout their time in our Early Years setting. By the time children leave Reception they are confident and prepared to move throughout school and transition into Year One.

Literacy

At St Aidan's we encourage a love for reading and stories form the basis of everything that we do. Class readers are linked to termly topics and are used to stimulate and enthuse learning. Adults ensure that key texts are embedded into continuous provision so that children have the opportunity to recognise, use and internalise key vocabulary. As children reach the end of their Reception year, they have been exposed to a rich range of story language, genres and authors. We aim for children to leave the Foundation Stage equipped with a repertoire of stories to inspire their learning journey as the progress into Key Stage One.

Phonics

At St Aidan's Catholic Primary School we teach Monster Phonics, a DfE validated scheme. This begins in Nursery with the Foundations Programme to develop speaking and listening skills. Children in Nursery learn to become attuned to the sounds and begin to develop oral blending and segmenting skills. This prepares them for their Phonics learning in Reception. In Reception, children are taught Monster Phonics in a daily 30 minute session. Children learn phonemes and corresponding graphemes through fun, engaging and focused sessions, using a wide range of resources. Children are assessed through ongoing assessment, more formal assessments are built into the scheme.

Mathematics

Our Mathematics curriculum is sequentially planned to ensure that children have a solid underpinning of the number system. We encourage children to develop and explore mathematical thinking, reasoning and problem solving through a range of activities. Mathematics in Early Years is taught through daily targeted teaching sessions, small group adult led activities and through the continuous provision set within the classroom. Adults skilfully use a range of concrete and pictorial structures to support learning; and provide quality opportunities for children to consolidate their mathematical skills during play-based interactions.

Assessment

Frequent and ongoing formative assessment is key to ensuring pupils prior learning is built upon. Through high quality interactions, incidental learning and adult led tasks, staff are continually assessing children's ability and using this to inform next steps. This cycle also enables staff to identify and further support required or additional needs. At the end of reception, pupils are assessed against the statutory Early Learning Goals (ELGs).

Impact

Children who leave our Reception class successfully transition into Year One with confidence and skills to continue their learning journey. The impact of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is clearly evidenced by the progress children make from their individual starting points to their performance against the Early Learning Goals.

Early Years staff use their knowledge of individual children and their understanding of each child's bespoke scaffolding to reach individual end points to make assessments through observations and interactions.

At St Aidan's Catholic Primary School there is an open dialogue between Early Years and Key Stage One to establish the balance between formal learning and continuous provision and enable children to progress within their next stage of learning.