

## St Peter's RC Primary School Early Years Policy (2016)

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year when they are five. At St Peter's RC Primary School children usually start in reception at the beginning of the school year in which they are five.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At St Peter'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.

### Aims

- To provide a quality teaching and learning environment that is committed to raising standards and ensuring appropriate challenges are set for all children
- To provide a caring, happy, secure environment where children feel valued and develop respect for others and their surroundings.
- To make the child's first experience of school happy, positive and fun.
- To ensure breath of balance across the curriculum through carefully planned adult input and sensitive interaction using Development Matters and the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage.
- To encourage parents/carers to become partners with the school in educating their children.
- To provide a curriculum that is based on active learning to meet the individual needs of each child.
- To foster a love of learning, enable choice and decision making, encourage independence and self-confidence.
- To provide experiences for all children, whatever their needs, that are inclusive.
- To support children in their social, physical, intellectual and emotional development.

### Principles

The EYFS is based upon four overarching principles:

- **A Unique Child**
- **Positive Relationships**
- **Enabling Environments**
- **Learning and Development**

## **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 so we use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning.

## **Equal Opportunity and Inclusion**

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and believe that every child matters. All children at St Peter's Primary School are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, religion or ability. All families are valued within our school.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning.

We aim to set realistic but also challenging expectations according to the needs of our children in order to ensure that they are working towards achieving their full potential. We do this through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them learn effectively;
- Offering a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Employing resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able or gifted, of children with disabilities, of children from all social and cultural backgrounds, of children from different ethnic groups, and of those from diverse linguistic backgrounds;
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support (such as referrals to outside agencies) as necessary.
- Working closely with parents, carers, the school SENCO and other outside agencies to ensure all children's needs are met and that we enable them to access the curriculum and make good progress (Please see our whole school policy on SEND for more information).

### **Positive Relationships**

We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from establishing secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families. We recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education through:

- Inviting all parents/carers to attend an Induction Meeting before their child starts school.
- Offering all parents/carers the opportunity for visits by staff to the home setting as part of our induction process
- Providing an Information Pack for parents/carers prior to children starting school.
- Outlining the school's expectations in our Home-School agreement.
- Providing a Curriculum Meeting for parents/carers to meet with staff to discuss the EYFS Curriculum, school routines, expectations and to answer any questions parents/carers may have.
- Holding parent consultations in the Autumn and Spring terms to discuss children's progress and outline targets.
- Operating an open door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns. Conversely, if Foundation staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them.
- Sharing information about our topics on the school website and in termly letters.
- Sharing the children's 'Learning Journey' with parents/carers and valuing the on-going contributions to this from parents/carers via 'WOW' cards.
- Sending a written report to parents/carers about their child's attainment and progress at the Offering the services of our school Parent Support Advisor.

### **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 and stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.

The Foundation Stage Unit is organised to allow the children to explore and learn securely and safely whilst encouraging them to develop their independence.

## Learning and Development

At St Peter's we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying the secure foundations for future learning and development. All children begin school with a wide variety of experiences and learning and it is the privilege of the adults working within 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/carers and the Foundation Stage team work effectively together to support the learning and development of the children in their charge. We believe that learning through play is crucial at this stage in a child's development and therefore use a balance of adult led and child initiated activities.

### **The Curriculum**

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected but *“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.”* (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage DfE 2014) They support children's learning in all other areas and are known as the Prime Areas.

The Prime Areas are;

- **Communication and Language** – Listening & Attention, Understanding and Speaking
- **Physical Development** – Moving & Handling and Self-care
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – Making Relationships, Managing Feelings & Behaviour and Self-Confidence & Self-Awareness

The remaining four specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge. The Specific Areas are;

- **Literacy** – Reading and Writing
- **Mathematics** – Numbers and Space, Shape & Measures
- **Understanding the World** – People & Communities, The World and Technology
- **Expressive Arts and Design** – Exploring & Using Media & Materials and Being Imaginative

The balance in coverage of the areas will shift as the year progresses, in response to the children's needs and progress. All children will also participate in daily phonics sessions, following guidance given in the 'Letters & Sounds' document (DfES 2007).

## **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Foundation Stage teachers plan activities within the unit with these in mind. They consider the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them.

The three characteristics are;

- **Playing and Exploring** – children are given the opportunity to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- **Active Learning** – children are encouraged to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements
- **Creating and Thinking Critically** – children are encouraged to develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

## **Planning**

The Early Learning Goals provide the basis for planning throughout the Foundation Stage. The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Development Matters Statements from the Early Years Foundation Stage document. The planning is topic based, changes on a half-termly basis and is driven by the children's needs, achievements and interests.

## **Observation**

Foundation Stage staff use observations to inform planning and assessment. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning. Relevant and significant observations are recorded in the children's Learning Journeys.

## **Assessment**

During the first term the teachers assess the ability of each child using a baseline test. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort in order to plan for individual children and groups of children.

The teachers then use the Foundation Stage Profile (which is the nationally employed assessment tool) to record their observations at the end of the Foundation Stage. Teachers also use this to summarise their pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.

We record each child's level of development against the 17 Early Learning Goals as Emerging, Expected or Exceeding. We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the Foundation Stage is undertaken through observations, photographic evidence and through planned activities. Assessment is completed regularly and involves both the teacher and other adults, as appropriate. The collection of assessment data in the Foundation Stage Profile is a statutory requirement.

The teachers keep progress records, Learning Journals and examples of each child's work. These books contain a wide range of evidence that we share with parents at each parent consultation meeting.

Tracking grids are updated at the end of each term. This provides a summary sheet for each child which feeds into the whole-school assessment and tracking process. We record each child's level of development to be Low, Mid or High working within the Development Matters age-bands. At the end of the final term we send a summary of these assessments to the LA for analysis. The child's next teacher also uses this information to make plans for the year ahead. Parents receive an annual written report that includes comments on each child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs, and gives details of the child's general progress. We complete these in June and send them out to parents in July each year.

#### 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."*

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage – DfE 2014

At St Peter's Primary School we follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE 2014)