

Learning to love, loving to learn.



ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

Mission Statement

At St. Joseph's we share a vision that together we are the architects of the future, building lives on the firm foundations of the Gospel. Inspired by Christian values we aim to provide love and security within a curriculum designed to meet the complex needs of all individuals, in order to prepare them to take their place in the ever changing world of today and tomorrow.

The values and language of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are central to our ethos.

Introduction

At St. Joseph's we value each individual child and we believe that all children deserve the best possible start to their education in school.

We acknowledge the diverse needs of each child and value and respect the different experiences and interests that they bring with them to school.

"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 childhood need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up."(The EYFS Statutory Framework, 2012).

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the EYFS at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School.

The Aims for the Early Years

We recognise that each child is unique and special and we aim to meet the needs of each individual child and to give them access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that will enable them to reach their full potential socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, morally and spiritually and which embraces and reflects our mission statement.

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We aim to provide opportunities so that each child can:

- Feel valued
- Become autonomous
- Explore feelings of awe, wonder, delight, joy and mystery
- Develop into a fluent and confident communicator
- Develop an enjoyment and interest in books and desire to become a reader
- Extend their natural inquisitiveness and curiosity
- Explore how and why things work and how they are constructed
- Solve problems and develop mathematical ideas and understanding
- Develop strength and agility, as well as body and spatial awareness
- Become creative and imaginative in their work
- Develop dispositions for lifelong learning.

Principles for Early Years Education

Early Childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. It is valid in its own right as an important stage of life.

As a staff, we the Early Years Team believe that while each of these principles is particularly potent during the Early Years, they are applicable throughout the whole Primary Phase.

- The best way to prepare children for adult life is to give them what they need as children
- The whole child and all aspects of his/her development are important
- Young children learn in an integrated way and do not separate learning into subjects
- What children can do is the starting point of a child's education
- Play is powerful medium for learning
- Children who feel confident in themselves and their own abilities have a head start to learning. They learn best when they are given appropriate responsibility, allowed to make errors, decisions and choices and respected as autonomous learners.
- Self-discipline is emphasized
- Young children need a stable, planned and well organised environment offering new challenges and rich and stimulating experiences and opportunities for learning

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- There is a potential in each child which develops and emerges powerfully when conditions are favourable
- All children have abilities which can and should be identified and promoted
- Relationships which children make with other children and adults are of central importance in a child's life
- Quality education is about three things; the child, the context in which learning takes place and the knowledge which the child develops and learns.

The Early Years Curriculum

In developing the early year's curriculum, the needs of the child are paramount. Every child is viewed as unique, developing and making progress at different rates, with specific needs which are met in appropriate ways. Consideration is also given to all the learning that the child brings from home.

The early year's curriculum at St. Joseph's has been developed from the Government's Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, (March 2012) which sets the Standards for Learning, Development and Care for children from birth to five. This document is a principled approach to Early Years education bringing together children's welfare, learning and developmental requirements.

We strive to put the principles into practice following the four themes:

- A Unique Child;
- Positive Relationships;
- Enabling Environments;
- Children learn in different ways and at different rates.

The curriculum is centred on 3 prime areas of learning:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

There are four specific areas which strengthen the prime areas. These are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive Arts and Design.

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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.

Our planned curriculum emphasizes early literacy and numeracy, mathematical and scientific exploration, developing each child's relationship with God and their knowledge and understanding of our Faith and the development of physical, creative, personal, social and emotional skills through activities and experiences which are planned to encompass these and many more elements of thinking and learning.

Religious Education is taught through "The Way, the Truth and the Life" religious programme as a collaborative activity. Catholic knowledge, traditions and values are transmitted through appropriate topics, stories and activities which promote the child's innate capacity for wonder, awe, reverence and imagination, leading to a deepening relationship with God, in partnership with the home and the Parish.

Staffing

The early years team consists of two teachers, a nursery nurse and teaching assistants. The team share common aims, approach and philosophies about how children grow, learn and develop and about the most effective ways to provide opportunities to support and extend children in this. All members of the team provide valuable and unique contributions to teaching and learning in the early years and are given opportunities for Professional Development.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all the children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. At St Joseph's each new nursery child is allocated a key person and the parents are informed who their child's key worker is in the Autumn Term. The key person approach is aimed at enabling and supporting close attachments between children and practitioners.

Organisation

Young children have the right to an environment which is structured to meet their individual needs and which maximises opportunities for learning. We aim to provide a happy, stable and caring environment pervaded by an atmosphere of trust, respect and

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value, in which every child can experience a sense of belonging and feel secure and confident.

Our classrooms offer an attractive, well organised environment providing a wide range of first hand experiences and activities through which to investigate the world.

All the children are encouraged to become independent learners and classrooms are organised into areas which contain a range of challenging and stimulating materials which facilitate the development of autonomy.

Outdoor provision is regarded as an essential part of learning. Young children are physically active and energetic and they are encouraged to move freely and spontaneously within a safe, secure and structured area where they can practice fine and gross motor skills and explore their physical environment. Activities that promote and develop each area of Learning and Development are structured both indoors and out.

We organise the day to provide a balance between child- initiated and adult initiated/directed activities. Staff, work with children in different groupings according to the activity. Throughout the day, children will have opportunities to engage in solitary, spectator, parallel and co-operative play in pairs or small groups, while participating in directed or self-chosen activities. Much will be self-chosen, especially in the nursery, but staff will be observing and monitoring progress closely and will make judgements about whether to intervene, extend or modify the learning potential of the situation. Some activities will be planned with a focus to meet specific learning outcomes or teach a particular skill or appropriate knowledge according to the child's development.

At St Joseph's 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. To young children we recognise that play is work and it is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative 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 providing these active learning opportunities through play we understand

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the central position of play within the EYFS framework. This is essentially a play based curriculum and pedagogy as the provision of play opportunities underpins its delivery.

Girls and boys are given equal access to and are encouraged to take part in all activities. Individual differences are celebrated, bilingualism is seen as strength and the language of the home is valued. Children are given opportunities to explore and to enjoy stories, poetry, art and music which reflect different cultures and languages and they have access to toys and equipment, which reflect the communities in which they live.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Baseline assessment is carried out within the first few weeks of entering our Nursery and Reception Classes. Early Excellence materials are used for Baseline assessment in the Reception Class. Following this, the main EYFS assessment method is through observation of the children in different teaching and learning contexts by the EYFS practitioners. Planned observations take place daily of individuals and groups of children engaged in their learning. Practitioners also make spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of children's learning. All practitioners are involved in observing children and use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. It informs them of children's abilities, needs, interests, 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. Working in this way, practitioners can ensure that all children are offered appropriate targets to be set and shared. This system helps to identify children with special needs and ensures early intervention.

Observations are recorded using "Build a Profile", which develops an on-line record of a child's learning and development in all Areas of the EYFS framework, producing a detailed summary at the end of the child's time in the EYFS.

Parents

Parents are the child's first and most important educators; they have unique information and understanding of their child. In order to share this information and understanding, we need to develop a partnership with each parent, built on mutual respect and understanding.

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All staff have an important role to play in establishing a warm, open and helpful relationship that enables parents to understand how they can best share and contribute to their child's education. Staff, are always available at the beginning and end of each session to give time to parents or appointments can be arranged if parents require a longer talk. Formal parent evenings are held regularly throughout the year.

Parents are expected to spend time settling their children in the Early Years. The settling period could be a couple of days, a week or more depending on the needs of each individual child.

All parents are encouraged to become fully involved in their child's education. Some parents volunteer to work alongside staff on a regular basis; others contribute by supporting topic work and sharing artefacts, photographs and books. Others become involved in the Friends of St. Joseph and support fund-raising activities. Whatever forms their contribution takes their parental involvement is valued, fostered and welcomed.

Information is regularly provided for parents through Curriculum Topic letters, Head-teacher's newsletters and text messages to keep them informed of school news and events. There is a parent's notice-board outside the Nursery where copies of any relevant documents are displayed.

"Children joining a Nursery for the first time have already made major steps in learning. Through the things they do and talk about with their children, parents play a crucial part in that early learning and will continue to be a strong influence on their young child's development. An important aspect of the role of the teacher is therefore to explain to parents what the school is seeking to achieve and to help to extend their children's learning."

Source: "The Education of Children Under 5" D. E. S. 1989.

Every year, parents of new children to the Reception and the Nursery Classes are invited to a meeting in the term before their children begin school. At these meetings, admission procedures are explained in detail and information booklets are distributed. They are given the opportunity to ask questions, to meet staff and to look around the school. They also receive a detailed questionnaire which provides an initial forum for sharing information.

"All children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning. It is the privilege of early year's teachers to take in the challenging task of building upon that learning and

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experience. Children are our collective future and the foundations for that future are set in the first years of education in the Nursery and Infant Classes. “

Source: Early Years Curriculum 1995.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS teachers to follow the principles stated in this policy. The named Governor responsible for the EYFS is Mrs Christine Kawesi. She will visit regularly and discuss EYFS practice with the EYFS team and provide feedback to the whole Governing Body, raising any issues that require discussion. The SLT will carry out monitoring of the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

POLICY REVIEW TERM: BIENNIAL

Policy Reviewed: June 2016

Next Review: June 2018