



Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body : 28th September 2016

Signed : *A Kiely* Chair of Governors .

To be reviewed : September 2018, or dependant on any legislative changes

Our Vision

As a Catholic school that puts Christ at the centre, we are committed to encouraging everyone to 'Be The Best They Can Be'

Safeguarding Statement

'Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the safety and welfare of all children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.'

INTRODUCTION

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up."

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile - Department for Children, Schools and Families 2012

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Our Lady of the Assumption School we greatly value the important role that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development, however we also believe 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. The EYFS is for children from birth to five years of age. The final year of the EYFS is referred to as the reception year.

All children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning. It is the privilege of the practitioners working in the EYFS to take on the task of building upon that prior learning and experience. This is done through a holistic approach to learning, ensuring that parents/carers, support staff and the reception teachers work effectively together to support children's learning and development.

AIMS and OBJECTIVES

We aim to support all children to become independent and collaborative learners. We will provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential.

At Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School, we will:

- Provide a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging programme of learning and development for the children to experience as they begin their journey through school.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond and enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children.
- Provide a caring and inclusive learning environment which is sensitive to the requirements of the individual child including those who have additional needs.

The early-years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do;
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment;
- It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

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

A UNIQUE CHILD

At Our Lady of the Assumption School 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, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebrations and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals. All children are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school.

In our school we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the EYFS we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Children with special educational needs are identified and supported in liaison with the Special Needs Coordinator and appropriate outside agencies where relevant

We aim to meet the needs of all our children 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 to learn effectively;
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary;
- working closely with parents, carers and other outside agencies to ensure all children's needs are met and we enable them to access the curriculum and make good progress.

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries and rules to enable them to make appropriate choices. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children.

Welfare

"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 Our Lady of the Assumption we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2014.

We understand that we are required to:

- Promote the welfare of children.
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment are safe and suitable for purpose.

- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

We endeavour to meet all these requirements.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

At Our Lady of the Assumption School we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We acknowledge that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating their children. We value their contribution and involve them in their child's education as fully as possible.

We do this through:

- Inviting both new nursery and reception intake parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school.
- Offering a visit to all the new nursery children in their home setting prior to their starting school
- Ensuring the children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school during 'get to know us' sessions
- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school.
- Providing a variety of information about starting in the reception and nursery classes in Our Lady of The Assumption Catholic Primary School.
- Inviting parents to attend informal meetings about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics or reading.
- Operating an 'open door' policy so that parents can discuss any worries or concerns.
- Offering regular consultation meetings for parents at which the teacher and the parents discuss the child's progress
- By providing parents with a report on their child's progress at the end of each school year
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents, e.g. 'Stay and Play' sessions, local trips, Celebration assemblies, Class assemblies, Masses and other religious events, Sports Day etc.
- Encouraging parents to contribute to their child's 'Learning Journals'
- Weekly sharing of information through the 'home-links' books.
- Frequently updating the reception and nursery class webpages.
- Publishing a Curriculum overview on the website and detailing the areas of learning and the overarching theme of the term or half-term.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children and parents/carers interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

At Our Lady of the Assumption we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

The Learning Environment

"A rich and varied environment supports children's learning and development. It gives them the confidence to explore and learn in secure and safe, yet challenging, indoor and outdoor spaces."

("Early Years Foundation Stage", Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007)

We aim to create an attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment which will encourage children to explore, investigate and learn through first-hand experience. We also aim to make it a place where children feel secure and confident, and are challenged to develop their independence.

Activities are planned for both the inside and outside; children have the freedom to move between the indoor and outdoor classroom throughout the school day. The learning environment is divided into a variety of different areas: role play, book corner, writing table, maths challenge, topic display table, listening centre, computer area, art and craft area, play dough, builder's tray, sand, water, outside, construction, small world and puzzles. These areas are carefully arranged to encourage quiet areas and more active areas within the learning environment.

Children are encouraged to become independent learners and to take some responsibility for initiating their own lines of enquiry and investigation.

Both the nursery and the reception classes have their own secure outdoor area. This has a positive effect on the children's development; being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children opportunities to explore use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that help the children to develop in all areas of learning.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The early learning goals (the knowledge, skills and understanding which young children should have acquired by the end of the reception year) and the educational programmes (the matters, skills and processes which are required to be taught to young children) are set out in the "Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage" document (DfE 2014).

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. None of the areas of learning can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas.

They require a balance of adult led and child initiated activities in order for most children to reach the levels required at the end of EYFS. 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.

The three Prime areas are:

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

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Specific Areas:

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

Children's development levels are assessed and as the year progresses, the balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning, as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.

However, if a child's progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents/carers and agree how to support the child.

Reception pupils also participate in a daily phonics sessions, following the guidance in the 'Read, Write, Inc' document and in line with school policy.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

1. **Playing and exploring** - children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.

'Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development.'

Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

2. **Active learning** - children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.

'Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.'

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

3. **Creating and thinking critically** - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

'When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings'

and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.”

Children should be given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children’s thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

The **Planning** within the EYFS is based around themes or topics with discrete phonics, maths, RE and reading directed teaching. The planning objectives within the foundation Stage are from the Development Matters Statements from the EYFS document. These plans are used by the EYFS teacher as a guide for weekly planning; however the teacher may alter these in response to the needs (achievements and interests) of the children. This will be indicated on the weekly planning.

The EYFS staff use **observations** as the basis for planning. 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.

- During the first term in Reception, the teacher **assesses** the ability of each child using a nationally accredited baseline test. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children.
- Children coming from our nursery have the July assessment in nursery as their starting point in YR. Children new to the school are assessed against the Development Matters in September.
- The Foundation Stage Profile is the national assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the Foundation Stage, and 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. This is not statutory from September 2016.
- 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 takes the form of both formal and informal 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 teacher keeps progress records and learning journals and records examples of each child’s work. These progress books contain a wide range of evidence that we share with parents at each parental consultation meeting.
- Tracking grids are updated at the end of each half term. This provides a summary sheet for each child which feeds into the whole-school assessment and tracking

process, (O Track). We record each child's level of development to be beginning, developing or secure within the Development Matters age-bands.

- At the end of the final term in Reception the summary judgement is used during transition meeting with KS1 staff and this informs the plans for the year ahead.
- We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Children are assessed in the first few weeks and their progress is tracked every half term. Most assessment in the EYFS takes the form of observations, and this involves the teacher and other adults as appropriate. These observations are recorded in the children's individual 'Learning Journals' and used to inform the 'next steps' in the child's learning and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.
- Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their progress against the ELG's and assessment scales. The parents are given the opportunity to discuss these judgments with the teacher if they wish.

Learning and Teaching

We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In some cases the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible.

By the summer term in Reception the children will experience many more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to year 1.

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and experience that interest and inspire them. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play.

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on. Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. This looks quite different in the Nursery and Reception classes. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc...

The features of effective teaching and learning in the EYFS, at Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School, which results in good outcomes for the children are:

- the partnership between the staff and parents/carers that helps our children to feel secure at school, and to develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- the understanding that staff have of how children develop and learn, and how this must be reflected in their teaching;
- the range of approaches that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions, and extend and develop the children's play, talk or other means of communication;
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage;
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests, and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;
- the encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management;
- the support for learning, with appropriate and accessible space, facilities and equipment, both indoors and outdoors;
- the identification, through observations, of children's progress and future learning needs, which are regularly shared with parents;
- the clear aims of our work, and the regular monitoring of our work to evaluate and improve it;
- the regular identification of training needs for all adults working at the Foundation Stage.

MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION

The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one full time reception class and a morning nursery class. The teachers are responsible for the management, planning and assessment of the Nursery and Reception classes and work in co-operation with each other. Priorities relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage will be identified in the school improvement plan as appropriate. Management roles and responsibilities will be reviewed in line with performance management procedures.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader's main responsibilities are:

- ensuring the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage Policy
- ensuring the efficient running of the Reception and Nursery classes
- monitoring the quality of learning and teaching
- managing the budget for the Nursery and Reception classes with particular reference to resources and equipment
- supporting the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage staff and informing them of national, local and school decisions which will impact on the Early Years
- keeping the head teacher and other senior staff informed of developments within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Relevant staff training and development needs will be outlined in the school improvement plan.

It is expected that all staff and governors are aware of the requirements of the Early Years

Foundation Stage and the importance of the key stage in relation to the children's learning and its impact on raising standards across the school.

The Early Years Foundation Stage development plan details developments within this stage. This document feeds into the school development plan.

Policy written by: Judith Whewell, June 2016

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