

# **Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School**

## **EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY**

This document outlines the philosophy, aims and principles of early years teaching and learning in reception at Sacred Heart School. The document underpins practice in all areas of provision.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

“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 it’s own right and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”

“Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage”, Department for Education 2012

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Sacred Heart 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 reception 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**

It is every child’s right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and with economic well-being in accordance with the Government Every Child Matters Agenda. At Sacred Heart School the overarching aim of the EYFS is to help young children achieve these five outcomes.

We aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to his/her full potential. Each child is valued as an individual and teaching and learning is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates.

At Sacred Heart School we aim to:

- provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child, including children with additional needs
- provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond
- provide opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development
- use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress and be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- enable choice and decision-making, fostering independence and self-confidence through positive relationships
- work in partnership with parents/ carers and value their contributions ensuring that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability are enabled to achieve their full potential.
- provide opportunities whereby children experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development
- provide experiences for all children, whatever their needs, which are inclusive rather than parallel, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.

## **Learning and Development**

### **The EYFS Curriculum**

Our curriculum for the Foundation Stage reflects the learning aims and objectives set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum.

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in all early years' settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected and none can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across these areas of learning. They require a balance of adult led and child initiated activities in order for children to develop effectively and to give them the best chance of obtaining a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year. 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.

More information on this curriculum is available in a parent friendly handbook and can be found online at:

<http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/2015/03/what-to-expect-when-a-parents>

### **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

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

- Playing and exploring - children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- Active learning - children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.
- 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.

### **Planning**

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum provides 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 based upon themes with discrete phonics, maths and other directed teaching. However, planning, which is based upon different topics that have been identified as vehicles of interest to enable us to deliver the children's next steps in learning, also responds to their social and emotional needs as well as their achievement.

## **Staffing and Organisation**

There is one Reception class at Sacred Heart School with a maximum of thirty children in the class. There is a ratio of one teacher per class supported by two full time NVQ3 qualified TAs. The staff work as a team and meet formally at least once a week in order to plan effective provision, prepare resources and review assessments for the Reception Class.

The Reception classroom has different learning zones including two role play areas. The children have access to these at all times during the day. There is also a secure, partly covered outdoor area, which is used to support the children's learning. The children have access to this from the classroom.

At Sacred Heart School we engage in ongoing professional development to improve our teaching skills, knowledge and understanding. All practitioners are encouraged to participate in local authority courses, in-service and local partnership group training. Practitioners also conduct and attend in house training and disseminate new initiatives, ideas and teaching methods to colleagues.

## **Assessment, Recording and Monitoring**

During the first term, the teacher assesses the ability of each child using observations and activities. 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. This first /baseline assessment also takes into account any other records we receive from previous pre-school settings and parents.

The Foundation Stage Profile is the nationally employed assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the pupils' Foundation Stage and to summarise their progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

We record each child's level of development against the 17 areas of learning as Emerging, Expected or Exceeding. Observations and assessment of each individual pupil is on-going with the information gained being used to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. The Reception team have regular planning meetings to discuss each child and the ways we will adapt the provision to address their learning and any needs identified.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, teacher and teacher assistant knowledge of the pupils and photographic evidence. 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.

Assessment data is recorded by the teachers in Reception in learning journals which is a collation of examples of each child's work. These books contain a wide range of

evidence that we share with parents at each parental consultation meeting. We also share them at our regular 'watch us at Work' or 'Stay and Play' sessions.

At the end of the final term of a pupil's Reception Year we send a summary of these assessments to the LA for analysis. The child's next teacher uses this information to make plans for the year ahead. We share this information too at parental consultation meetings and in the end-of-year report.

Parents receive an annual written report that offers comments on each child's progress in each area of learning as well as the characteristics of effective learning. It highlights the child's strengths and developmental needs, and gives details of the child's general progress. We complete these in the Summer Term and send them to parents before the end of the school year.

### **Learning through Play**

Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.

At Sacred Heart School we do not make a distinction between work and play. We support children's learning through planned play activities, and decide when child-initiated or adult-led play activities would provide the most effective learning opportunities. We believe that it is important for adults to support children's learning through play, by getting involved in the play themselves and modelling by example.

### **The Learning Environment**

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, 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, curious learners and to take some responsibility for initiating their own lines of enquiry and investigation, demonstrating a 'can do' attitude

### **Liaison with pre-school settings and induction**

At Sacred Heart School we have close links between the onsite independent pre-school. The Reception and Pre-School teachers meet to discuss assessment and induction issues. We are continually looking at ways to integrate the activities of the Pre-School and Reception classes e.g. through invitation to the foundation stage

assemblies, Christmas plays and visits from the Reception staff to the Pre-School. During the summer term, Pre-School children who will be starting school in September make visits to the Reception class as part of the induction process.

, 'Early Move up day' is held in the Summer term where all children who will be starting school in the following term are invited to attend for an afternoon session. Parents/Carers have the opportunity to meet the head teacher, class teacher and Teaching Assistants and can visit the Reception classroom. Parents/Carers are given a Reception brochure which outlines the Reception curriculum and school routines, along with other necessary documentation.

During the summer term, the teacher makes visits to the pre-schools to enable them to meet the new pupils on 'home ground'. Transfer records are shared from all Pre-School settings and used to inform Reception practitioners about the new intake.

### **Reception to Year 1 Transition**

Reception and Year 1 teachers work together to make the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 as smooth as possible. See School Transition Policy.

**Reviewed by Head teacher & Foundation Stage Teacher January 2018**

**Ratified by Governing body: January 2018**

**Next Review Date: January 2020**