



## EYFS Policy St Mary's and Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academies



*"Many Hearts Accord – We Grow and Learn Together  
to build the Kingdom of God.  
(School Mission Statement)*

### Introduction

"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 children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up" - Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage, Department for Education, 2020

### Principles

The EYFS is based upon four overarching principles:

- **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; we use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning.
- **Positive relationships.** We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.
- **Enabling environments with teaching and support from adults.** We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through play, teaching, interactions and observations we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning and development.
- **Learning and Development.** Within the Foundation Stage children learn through a balance of child initiated play based learning and adult led learning. Play is the way in which young children make sense of their world, build peer

group relationships and learn how to negotiate and solve conflict. Play is deeply connected to the development of symbolic thought and figurative language. They practise and build up their ideas, learn how to control themselves, and begin to understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively both alongside other children and on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears, or re-live anxious experiences, in controlled and safe situations. The Foundation Stage is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. The environment is set up in learning areas where children are able to choose how and what they want to learn and can find and locate equipment and resources independently.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At St. Mary's and Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academies 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.

The EYFS for children is from birth to five years of age. All children begin school with a wide variety of experiences and learning and it is the privilege of the adults working in 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 and guardians, support staff and the Foundation Stage team work effectively together to support the learning and development of the children in their charge.

### **Areas of Learning and Development**

The curriculum of the Foundation Stage underpins all future learning by promoting and developing the prime areas of:

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

And the specific areas of:

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

In addition, as Catholic academies, we also promote and develop children's spiritual understanding of the Catholic faith.

## **Communication and Language Development**

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. The Early Years Policy places a strong emphasis on children developing competence in speaking and listening and acknowledges that all other areas of learning make a vital contribution to the successful development of communication. Language and communication is nurtured and developed through

- children being exposed to daily high quality texts, rhymes and poems
- key vocabulary being planned for
- high quality interactions between both staff and children and children and children is scaffolded
- high quality role play within the indoor and outdoor ensures that children can use and develop language effectively
- Partnership working with parents and carers
- Partnership working with external agencies such as Stoke Speaks Out and Speech and Language Therapists
- Identified target support for children such as 'Time to Talk' and 'Talk Boost'

All Foundational Stage staff are at least Stoke Speaks Out Level One trained and have received Launchpad for Literacy training. This has enabled staff to identify and close skill gaps and to ensure progression for all through quality first teaching. Please refer to the 'Early Language' statement for further information.

## **Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)**

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Self-regulation, managing self and building relationships all form part of PSE development. PSED is fundamental to children's all round development and to their future outcomes. Alongside working with parents, a quality transition plan ensures that children settle quickly into school. Our schools overarching four rules 'Respect God' 'Respect Others' 'Respect Oneself' and 'Respect Property' ensures that children are supported to work co-operatively with others, learning how to work and play and function in a group beyond the family. In addition, the schools operate 5 SMART rules

- Smart Uniform
- Move Sensibly
- Act with Jesus' Kindness
- Respond Respectfully
- Try your Best

(See Relationships Policy for further information)

## **Physical Development**

Fine and gross motor physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Physical development is implicit in all areas of the EYFS framework. Providing daily opportunities for children to practise and develop physical control, mobility, awareness of space and manipulative skills in indoor and outdoor environments will ensure the development of strength, co-ordination, stability, balance and dexterity of all children. Please refer to the 'EYFS Outdoor Policy' for further information.

## **Literacy Development**

In addition to communication and language development the children will be developing skills in reading and writing. Not only are these skills essential for educational success but essential for life skills. In nursery, children have daily activities associated with 'Letters and Sounds Phase 1'. This ensures that all children are developing essential skills in speaking and listening. In Reception, daily phonics will ensure that children will learn to read and spell supported by a systematic synthetic phonics programme, 'Phonics Bug'. Phonics plays a big part in this area and the ability to blend for reading and segment for spelling are skills that are promoted daily in the Foundation Stage at St. Mary's and Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy. There are daily opportunities for children to listen to stories and to develop of lifelong love of reading.

## **Mathematical Development**

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children will be taught mathematical skills daily, such as counting, recognising numbers and using mathematical language. Children will also develop and practise skills through planned continuous provision and child initiated play. For example, in reception, the children will 'pay' for fruit during snack time in order to develop real life mathematical skills. Children in the nursery will become familiar with numbers and the number system using an on line programme 'ten town'.

## **Understanding the World**

This covers the subjects Geography, Science, DT, History, RE and ICT. This is a major area of learning and enquiry focusing on children's developing knowledge and understanding of their environment, other people and features of the natural and made world. Children will have access to outdoor provision, trips and visits, visitors and a breadth of stories in order to develop their knowledge and skills in Understanding the World around them.

## **Expressive Arts and Design**

This covers art, music, and drama. This area of the EYFS framework focuses on the development of children's imagination and their ability to communicate and to express ideas and feelings in creative ways. Children have access to role plays initiated through topics, children's interests and occupations, daily stories, daily singing and rhymes and access to art activities initiated through topics and continuous provision.

## **Religious Education (R.E.)**

Within the Foundation Stage we follow the Archdiocese of Birmingham Catholic Education scheme of work specifically written for nursery and reception 'Living and growing as people of God. We also take part in daily worship, assemblies and masses both at school and at church. We use the 'Life to the Full' scheme of work to support the teaching of Relationship and Sex Education. Within the foundation Stage the main focus is that God created us as individuals by God to love and to be loved. Please see the RSE policy or the school website.

## **Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning**

The characteristics of effective teaching and learning describe factors which play a central role in a child's learning and in becoming an effective learner. They are vital elements of support for the transition process from EYFS to Year 1. The characteristics of learning run through and underpin all seven areas of learning and development, representing processes rather than outcomes. Information describing the child's characteristics of effective learning will provide Year 1 teachers with vital background and context when considering the child's next stage of development and future learning needs. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

Through a balance of child initiated play based learning, adult directed teaching and positive adult interactions children will have opportunities to develop these characteristics.

## **Seven Key Features of Effective Practice**

### **1. The best for every child**

All children deserve to have an equal chance of success and high quality early education is good for all children.

#### **Inclusion in EYFS**

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 we are planning for their learning.

Within the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations keyed to the needs of our children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. We help them do this by planning to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able, 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.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build on and extend the children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- using a variety of teaching strategies that are based on children's learning needs;
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children, and to help them to learn effectively;
- Offering a safe and supportive learning environment, in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Employing resources that reflect diversity, and that avoid discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- Working closely with parents (see above)
- Monitoring children's progress, and providing support (such as referrals to speech therapy) as necessary.

(See Inclusion Policy for further details)

### **2. High Quality Care**

Children's experiences are always central to our practice. Effective and skilled staff will ensure that planned, or unplanned, activities are safe, yet challenging,

where children feel safe and can explore their surroundings with their peers.

### **Nappy Changing**

No child is excluded from participating in our setting who may, for any reason, not yet be toilet trained and who may still be wearing nappies or equivalent whatever their age. We work with parents towards toilet training at the appropriate age, unless there are medical or other developmental reasons why this may not be appropriate at the time. We make necessary adjustments to our bathroom provision and hygiene practice in order to accommodate children who are not yet toilet trained.

We see toilet training as a self-care skill that children have the opportunity to learn with the full support and non-judgemental concern of adults.

All staff are responsible for changing children. Children are changed in the class toilet. Parents will be informed if children have had an 'accident'

### **Safeguarding (including mobile phones)**

As in line with the school's safeguarding policy; staff, parents and visitors must not use mobile phones within the EYFS setting. Personal phones must be turned to silent and stored away. Class I-pads are used to capture evidence of learning to inform children's learning and development. Please refer to the 'Early Years Use of mobile Phones and Devices Policy'

## **3. The Curriculum**

We want all of our children to be confident and independent learners who engage well in learning experiences. Children will learn through a balance of play based learning experiences and adult led activities. We have a topic based approach, although flexible to plan and deliver activities to enhance children's interests. As many of our children enter nursery with low levels of communication and language and physical skills our curriculum places emphasis on developing and enhancing these skills which are crucial to children's outcomes. Language is specifically planned for. Please refer to the Early Years Language Statement. Children in nursery access daily Phase 1 Letters and Sounds activities which will be embedded throughout continuous provision (planned and unplanned) and further planned activities. Daily teacher directed activities, whether a maths, knowledge and understanding of the world or creative activity will always plan for specific vocabulary, whether new or revisited. In reception, children will experience further teacher directed activities and will access daily phonics delivered through Phonics Bug.

Please refer to the 'Intent, Implement and Impact of our Early Years Curriculum' for further information.

#### **4. Helping Children Learn**

A well planned learning environment is imperative to children's learning and development. At St Mary's and our Lady of Grace practitioners are skilled in planning and delivering a curriculum which will ensure that children will develop and learn new skills and to be curious about the world in which they live. Staff will help children learn and develop through scaffolding, modelling, sensitive guiding and encouragement, commenting and sustained shared thinking. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

#### **5. Assessment**

Adults will use observations and discussions with children to find out about what they can do and what their next steps in learning are. Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Our planning shows how the principles of the EYFS are put into practice and is always informed by observations we have made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning needs. All staff who work in the Foundation Stage are involved in this process. The planning within the EYFS is based around a half termly topic and children's interests. These plans are used by the EYFS team as a guide for weekly planning. However, we may alter these in response to the needs of the children. We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Once a week, all staff meet together to discuss observations of children, children's next steps, assessments and future planning. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of recorded observations using 'Evidence Me' which all staff are involved in and evidence in books. Parents and carers are encouraged to contribute to the children's profiles using 'Evidence Me'. Half termly 'drop in's' are also available to parents so that children's progress can be shared.

#### **6. Self-Regulation and Executive Function**

At St Mary's and Our Lady of Grace we have 4 school rules that children are made aware of when in the nursery. They are

- Respect God
- Respect Oneself
- Respect Others
- Respect for Property

In addition to these rules we have clear expectations for different situations such as when playing within the environment or when listening to a story (carpet time.) The opportunities we provide at St Mary's and Our Lady of Grace will enable our children to:

- Share resources, for example, working together in the role play or construction areas
- Wait and take their turn, for example, waiting their turn to speak during carpet time
- Make friends and be friendly
- Be kind to others
- Co-operate with others
- To be polite and to have good manners

Routines are crucial for supporting behaviour and building self-regulation. Daily routines are introduced during induction and are always supported by adults. For example, when entering the classroom, the children will be encouraged to

- Put their reading bag in the correct (colour) box
- Self-Register
- Hang up their coat
- Wash their hands

Staff will support and encourage the children to do this as independently as they can.

## **7. Partnership with Parents**

We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educators and we aim for the schools and parents and carers to work closely in the Foundation Stage. This has a very positive impact on a child's development but relies on a two-way flow of information and knowledge.

We will develop this working relationship between the school and parents and carers as follows:

- We will hold a parent consultation during the year to discuss children's progress

- The use of 'Evidence Me' will allow both the school and home to share and comment on children's experiences, learning and development
- A half termly topic overview and a weekly focus will ensure that all parents can be fully involved in their child's learning and development.
- We will operate an 'open door' policy that will allow parents and carers to discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner. Conversely, if Foundation staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss.
- We will provide  $\frac{1}{2}$  termly 'drop in' sessions where staff will be available for parents to discuss and issues or concerns or to discuss progress.
- We will conduct workshops and 'watch me learn' sessions for parents and carers to enable them to be familiar with the teaching methods used in school to make it easier to emulate them at home.

### **The Induction Process - Nursery**

During the Summer Term all new parents (for both nursery and reception) are invited to attend an induction meeting where induction information and early years practise is shared. During this meeting there is also the opportunity to meet foundation stage staff and other school staff such as the Principal, Head of School and learning mentor.

During the Summer Term, prior to starting school in September, foundation staff will visit pre-school settings from which September's intake will be taken. Each child and their parents and carers will be invited to spend some time at our settings in order to familiarise themselves with both the staff and the foundation stage environment.

When children join school in September the following procedures will apply in order that they can gradually adjust to their new surroundings:

- The foundation stage staff will visit each child in their home environment.

### **At St. Mary's:**

- During the first two weeks the children will be organised into 2 groups (sorted alphabetically). During the first week, Group 1 will attend for morning session only and Group 2 will attend afternoon sessions.
- During the second week, Group 2 will attend for a morning session only and Group 1 will attend afternoon sessions.
- During the third week all children will access their 15 hours funded time (8:45 - 12:00) and, if ready to do so, invited to stay for lunch and the afternoon

session. Therefore, those children accessing funding for 30 hours, or wishing to take up 30 hours, will do so from week three (8:45 - 3:00) However we acknowledge that some children may take longer to settle, and in these events, parents and staff will work together to devise a system in the best interests of the child to help them settle securely.

**At Our Lady of Grace:**

· Children will be integrated on an individual basis, parents can chose either morning or afternoon sessions to begin their child's induction. Those wishing for some full days will build up this time from half day, including lunch to full days. We aim to have all of the children inducted during the first three weeks of the academic year. However we acknowledge that some children may take longer to settle, and in these events, parents and staff will work together to devise a system in the best interests of the child to help them settle securely.

**The induction Process - Reception**

As both the nursery and reception staff and children work so closely together, the induction for those children who have attended the nursery is usually seamless. In the summer term of the previous academic year, all nursery children including those new to the school, spend some time in the reception class in order to familiarise themselves with the staff and the environment. At Our Lady of Grace, nursery and reception are integrated into the same environment with the same staff so the induction process is a smooth and easy transition.

In July, all nursery parents are invited to a Reception induction meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to inform parents of any changes, such as uniform and homework, and to become familiar with the new staff.

In September, Reception staff will visit any new children to the school in their home environment prior to the children formally starting school.

This policy was agreed by staff on: September 2024

This policy was approved by School Committee on: September 2024

This policy will be reviewed on: September 2027

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Chair of School Committee