

St. Peter's C.E. Primary School



Early Years Policy

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1. Introduction

Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. It is a holistic education that encompasses all learning and development.

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at St. Peter's C. of E. Primary School.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching adults.

In the policy the term 'setting' refers to the Early Years educational provision at St. Peter's C. of E. Primary School. This is available to children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old. These children are in the final years of the EYFS. In the National Curriculum this is referred to as the Reception Year, or YR.

In the policy the term 'practitioner' refers to the members of staff working with children within the setting.

2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

In the EYFS setting at St. Peter's C. of E. Primary School we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start in their school life, both intellectually and emotionally, in order to enable them to develop their full potential.

We aim to support each child's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Recognising that all children are unique and special.
- Understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates – physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued by the practitioners looking after them.
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community.
- Teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- Encouraging children's independence and decision-making, supporting them to learn through their mistakes.
- Developing children's understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously.
- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions which differ to their own.
- Understanding the importance of play in children's learning and development.

- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children’s personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.
- Providing experiences which build on children’s existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.
- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.
- At St. Peter’s we believe in nothing but the best!

3. The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

Teaching in the EYFS setting at St. Peter’s C. of E. Primary School is delivered in accordance with the government’s statutory document ‘The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage’ (March 2012). This document is a principled approach to Early Years education, bringing together children’s welfare, learning and development requirements through four themes: ‘A Unique Child’, ‘Positive Relationships’, ‘Enabling Environments’ and ‘Children Learn in Different Ways and at Different Rates’.

The curriculum is centred on 3 prime areas of learning:

1. Communication and Language
2. Physical Development
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Providers must also support activities through four specific areas which strengthen the prime areas. These are:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding of the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

Educational Programmes which practitioners deliver in the setting must involve activities and experiences from one of the following seven areas. These are:

1. Communication and Language
2. Physical Development
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
4. Literacy
5. Mathematics
6. Understanding of the World
7. Expressive Arts and Design

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 area given equal weighting and value.

At St. Peter's C. of E. Primary School, we believe that Early Years education is important in its own right and should not be viewed simply as preparation for the next stage of children's education. We believe that the EYFS framework allows a natural progression into the National Curriculum at the beginning of Year 1.

4. Active Learning through Play

At St. Peter's C. of E. Primary School, we recognise that young children learn best through 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. 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 the EYFS setting at St. Peter's C. of E. Primary School, practitioners provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences which will support children to discover, explore, investigate, develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity, and help to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts. Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding.

In providing these active learning opportunities through play we understand 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 within the setting.

5. Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the effective running of the EYFS setting at St. Peter's C. of E. Primary School. Regular, planned and focused assessments are made of children's learning and individual needs. A record of each child's progress in all areas of their learning is kept using the Classroom Monitor Assessment Tool.

The main EYFS assessment method is through practitioners' observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult focused activities and child initiated play. Observations take place on a daily basis (both formally and informally) Practitioners make time to carry out planned observations of individuals and groups of children regularly. They also make spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of children's learning. Observations are recorded in different formats (e.g. narrative style, post-it notes, whole class grids, photographs). All practitioners are involved in observing children. Practitioners use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. It informs them of children's abilities, needs, interests, play 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. 2 Build a Profile computer programme is used in the setting to record observations against the Early Years Curriculum. Other methods of assessing children in the EYFS setting include engaging alongside children in their play, annotation of children's written work, talk with children about their task or play and in Learning Journeys.

Learning Journeys record children's progress over the academic year in all Areas of Learning and Development of the EYFS framework. Samples of children's work are gathered, along with photographic evidence and observations.

There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development using the new Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (2012). This is updated at least once each term to track individual progress. At the end of the year it provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements. Baseline assessment is carried out using the EYFS Profile during the children's first four weeks upon entering the setting. Judgements made on children's development in the Profile are based on practitioners' evidence of children's behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated activities across all Areas of Learning and Development.

6. Photographs / Videos

At the beginning of the year, parents/carers are asked to give permission for their children to be photographed/videoed during their time at school. We use these images in the classroom on displays, in the children's individual Learning Journey and on the school website and Facebook Page. We respect the right of parent/carers to withdraw this permission.

7. Planning

The setting follows (and adapts) long term planning from the Dimensions Curriculum to ensure all learning goals are covered through topics and continuous provision.

Medium term planning is created with all early years practitioners involvement and takes into account the individual children's learning and developmental needs.

All Areas of Learning and Development are planned for and available to access within the setting. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child initiated activities indoors. The setting also makes use of the outdoor environment whenever possible.

Educational visits within the local community and further afield are also planned to support children's learning within the classroom.

8. Parents as Partners

At St Peter's C. of E. Primary School we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development. So, practitioners endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents.

We value the role of parents as children's primary educators. Through questionnaires and informal chats at the beginning and end of the day, practitioners encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports practitioners in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular letters, home to school books and informal chatting at the beginning and end of the day. The Foundation Stage/Year 1 leader is also available to discuss any queries and concerns. This also gives suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home, consolidating and building on what has been covered in the setting. We have a designated parents notice board and also operate a text system to keep parents informed. Class newsletters are sent home termly and whole school newsletters are generally sent home on a weekly basis. During the Autumn Term, parents are invited to attend Reading Workshops with the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 leader to inform how reading is taught and how they can help at home.

Parents are invited to attend parents' evenings during the course of the academic year. The first of these takes place during the Autumn Term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into school. Another parent's evening takes place during the Spring Term where practitioners will feedback on children's learning and development progress. There is an optional parent's evening in the Summer Term to discuss the end of year report.

Other opportunities for practitioners to share children's learning, development and well-being with parents include Learning Journeys, end of year reports and class assemblies, where children's achievements are recognised. Each term parents also receive up to date observations of their child's progress electronically via the 2 Build a Profile programme.

Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as educational visits and reading, as well as offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, art, music) to support children's learning.

The setting has a friendly, open-doors ethos and practitioners are available to talk to parents at the beginning and end of the day. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have.

9. Admissions and Induction

St Peter's C. of E. Primary School provides full-time Early Years education for children in the Reception Year. This is for children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old.

Before they start in the setting, all children are offered a series of visits during the Summer Term. The purpose of these initial visits is for the children to meet their new practitioners and start to become familiar with the setting environment. Practitioners will also go to visit the children in their current pre-school settings.

The aim of these visits is to support practitioners develop their knowledge and understanding of each child in order to make the transition period to St. Peters C. of E. Primary School as smooth as possible.

In the Summer Term, parents are invited into school to meet the setting practitioners. At this meeting, information regarding the induction process and what goes on in the setting is shared. There is also time for informal chat and parents' questions. School information packs will be distributed to parents at this meeting, detailing school routines and expectations. 'All About Me' induction packs will also be given out to parents as another way to support practitioners' knowledge and understanding of each individual child.

Initially in September, children attend the setting on a part-time basis for the first week after which they are able to attend full-time. Every effort is made to make children feel safe, secure and happy. There is a relaxed and open ethos in the setting. Established routines, a calm atmosphere and encouraging talk are some of the strategies practitioners use to maintain children's positive feelings about school.

See Admissions Policy for more information

10. Equal Opportunities

All practitioners at St Peter's C. of E. Primary School have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered in the EYFS setting.

All children, irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture or religion and social circumstances, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development within the EYFS setting at St. Peters C. of E. Primary School.

See Equal Opportunities Policy for more information

11. Safeguarding Children

The school takes its child protection responsibilities very seriously. Any concerns, which the school has, will be noted, and, if deemed necessary will be reported to the relevant agency. The safety of the child is always of paramount importance. The full Safeguarding Policy is available in school for parents to read if they wish.

12. Special Educational Needs

See Special Educational Needs Policy

Ms D. Mitchell – Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1 Leader – October 2014

Adopted by the Governing Body

