

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Early Years Policy November 2016



Mission Statement:

At St Joseph's we welcome all as members of our school family.
We learn and care for each other as brothers and sisters; enriched
by the teachings of Jesus.

We encourage Creativity; valuing our unique talents and skills as
gifts from God.

Working alongside pupils and parents/carers, we can all succeed
and realise great things.

Serving the communities within the Parish of St Joseph's and
St Francis and beyond, we reach out to all.
We respect each other, our different cultures and faiths celebrating
our richness and diversity.

Through worship and prayer we show our love; striving to achieve
our very best.

St Joseph's is graded as a GOOD school. It is small and friendly, we have a shared belief that each child is unique and a gift from God. Our small numbers mean that we know each child as an individual. The children know each other well; they themselves describe St Joseph's as a family. Visitors regularly comment of the warm and friendly ethos and describe the school as "an oasis of calm". The pupils make exceptionally good progress during their time at St Joseph's and the majority of pupils say that they enjoy school; with 94% saying that they feel safe in school.

Inclusion

All children and their families are valued within our school. We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate because of differences. All children at St Joseph's School are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or stage of learning. We do not group children based on notions of fixed ability. We teach the children that practice and effort lead to learning and improvement. Teachers plan low threshold, high ceiling tasks which enable all children to access the learning and to achieve as highly as possible. In the early years the children begin to learn to take responsibility for their learning and begin to understand the concept of challenge.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning. Planning for children with additional needs is in line with the Special Educational Needs & Disability policy.

In the EYFS we have realistic and challenging expectations and 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 through a creative curriculum and learning environment
- using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs
- providing a wide range of opportunities and environments to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which each child's contribution is valued
- monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary

It is vital that all children in the school are safe. We provide children with opportunities to help them develop the skills they need to keep themselves safe. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards both in the real and virtual world.

Introduction to the Early Years

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of Reception year. At St. Joseph's, most children join us in September of the year that they turn five. Parents* have the right to send their children in full time from the beginning of the autumn term, but in order to allow the children a more settled start to school life, we prefer to operate a staggered start for the first one or two weeks. Most children begin full time hours from September, but parents have the option to send their children part time until the term they are five. Parents of summer born children can request to be admitted to Year R in the September after they turn five, a year later than they would usually start school. Summer born children have birthdays between 1 April and 31 August, inclusive.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

A Unique Child
Positive Relationships
Enabling Environments
Learning and Development

A Unique Child

At St. Joseph's we recognise that every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

Child development

All children's individual needs are considered, and where necessary individual education plans are implemented. A balance of group work, independent and individual 1:1 work is employed to give pupils the best opportunity to achieve and succeed through a variety of teaching styles. A variety of teaching methods are used to encompass all children's styles of learning. Children are given a wealth of opportunities (both teacher-led and child initiated) to develop their social skills, confidence and self-esteem. Teachers have realistic expectations of every child based on information from parents, what children themselves 'tell' you and from observation, and use this information to develop targets for each child's learning, with an appropriate level of challenge.

Inclusive Practice

All children are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children are listened to and valued in the setting. Children are encouraged to recognise their own unique qualities and the characteristics they share with other children. They are also encouraged to discuss our differences and see them as a positive to promote anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that all children and families feel included, safe and valued.

To support children's social, emotional and educational needs during the transition between one setting and another, home visits and school appointments are conducted to allow children the opportunity to get to know the new teachers in a familiar setting. We generally find that children are more relaxed in their home setting, and so will open up and chat; happily sharing their home environment. During these home visits or school appointments prior to children entering the setting, parents are asked whether there is a need for any special services and equipment for children who may require additional support, which will be arranged prior to the child starting school, or monitored as the child develops in the setting. The setting is organised to be an inclusive environment to all pupils. Children learn about other cultures, religions and festivals and are encouraged to explore the traditions of these festivals. We encourage parents/carers to share their culture and faith traditions in order to support this learning.

Keeping Safe

The learning environment is set up to ensure all children are safe & secure within it, and feel confident to explore and play independently. We discuss and read stories about how the children can keep safe, who they can ask for help and how they can protect themselves from harm. Children are able to take 'safe risks' such as using knives in cooking or tools in gardening, in order to recognise how they can keep themselves safe from harm.

Clear and consistent boundaries and rules are set up to keep children safe and be independent within the setting, and also help children to distinguish right from wrong. Children are taught that they can say 'no' to others if they are uncomfortable with something and are taught that others can also do so. Children are given a warm welcome so that they feel secure in the environment and confident to express their wants and needs. Children are also listened to and given time to respond to support them in the environment. Parents are

included in the process of making children feel safe and secure in the environment in order to provide the children with a sense of belonging. Children are taught to make choices so they feel they have some control over the day and have the opportunity to express their wishes.

Health & Well Being

Children are supported in physical well-being through regular opportunities to exercise and develop their fine and gross motor skills. Children learn about the benefit from physical activity and the need to eat healthily including teaching on fruit tasting, cooking healthy foods and growing their own vegetables. They are taught about how to maintain their own personal hygiene, such as hand washing and changing and recognise why it is important to do so. To support physical well-being children are also given a clean and safe environment; mental stimulation; access to the outdoors and loving relationships. Children are supported in their emotional well-being i.e. supported with building relationships and making friends which will develop their own self esteem. They are shown that they are valued and listened to, and encouraged to express their ideas and opinions, with the use of activities and learning that match their interests and given the opportunity to play and explore these. All are given a sense of well-being through encouragement to take responsibility and to join in by helping with manageable tasks that interest them. Parents, Grandparents and other important individuals to the child are included in discussion about supporting their child's well-being in the setting, and are invited to visit the setting in open days, for assemblies and productions, to show the child secure links and support from the home to school. Whole class (and where necessary, individual) visual timetables are used to support children in understanding the routine of the day, and consistent rules with visual reminders are used to support children in the setting.

Positive Relationships

Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.

Respecting Each Other

Children are supported to make friends and help them to think about what makes a good friend. They are taught to understanding own & others feelings. For children needing specific support, nurture groups are set up to enable them a chance to express their emotions, with the use of some children as role models and emotional support. Regular discussions occur with parents about their feelings and to identify any concerns. Children's individual needs are considered to make an approach which best suits the individual child.

Parents as Partners

All parents have the opportunity to have a home visit or school appointment prior to their child entering school in order to build good relationships and discuss any concerns that they may have. We warmly welcome parents to visit the classroom during our Stay and Play and Phonics sessions. We operate an open door policy at the end of the day to discuss any concerns. We have two formal parent meetings in the the year to discuss their child's progress, but encourage parents to discuss any concerns before they become bigger issues at any time. Regular school newsletters are sent home informing parents of the events and aims of the school. All parents have the opportunity to join the 'Friends of St Joseph's association.

Parents have the opportunity to volunteer in the class and are also encouraged to join in on school trips. Parents are given information at the start of each term on the new learning journey and how they can support the learning this information is also published on the school website.

Supporting Learning

Children are respected, valued and listened to. Children who find it difficult to express themselves are supported with the use of symbols, Makaton and social stories. Children are encouraged to concentrate and teachers model active listening and good forms of communication. Shy or socially withdrawn children are encouraged in their efforts to communicate and practitioners take time to listen to their responses rather than interjecting for them. Parents are encouraged to inform the teacher about concerns regarding their child's development. They are expected to be involved in their child's learning through sharing books and supporting class topics by discussing it with their child at home. Children's work is differentiated to an appropriate level and children are encouraged to think deeper into their learning by the use of questioning.

Key People

The teacher and teaching assistant have equal weighting in acting as the key people to support children in the setting. Children will be introduced to the teacher and teaching assistant prior to them entering the setting by a home visit or school appointment so they have the opportunity to get to know them on a 1:1 basis to aid the transition for entering school.

Children have equal opportunity to work and be supported in their play by both the teacher and teaching assistant. When a 1:1 is necessary, another individual needs assistant will join the class team to meet the individual child's needs. A rotation system will then be employed so that all team members will take turns to work with the pupil. (However it will be the teacher's responsibility to devise the IEP and explain to other staff what they will be working on).

Enabling Environments

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.

Observation, Assessment & Planning

From the moment children begin school they embark on a learning journey moving them towards the expected Early Learning Goals. There is an early learning goal for each of the Areas of Learning and Development (see below). The learning journey of each child is recorded by collating key pieces of work and **using Tapestry (on online tool for recording evidence to support teachers assessments)**. Parents can access these records at any time. A range of assessment methods will be used including photographs, video, incidental observations, focused child observations and observations of an activity/teaching input to build a comprehensive picture of children's development. On entry baseline assessments will be made during their first month at school i.e. in September. These will be used to plan for each child's needs and to measure progress.

Ongoing observations of the children will be carried out to monitor their development towards the Early Learning Goals. We are fortunate that we have a high adult to child ratio because our classes are small; therefore we can ensure that no child will be left behind. Formal assessment of individual progress will be made on a half termly basis (6 times a year). Children making less than expected progress will be identified and provision put in place to support their development further. A range of opportunities for children will be planned for in the long, medium and short term. Assessments against the ELGs will be passed on to parents at the end of the year and the year 1 teacher to provide a comprehensive understanding of where the children are in their learning. The children will achieve an **emerging, expected** or **exceeding** level for each Early Learning Goal. Those achieving expected or exceeding levels of progress are deemed ready for the KS1 curriculum. Those children at the emerging phase will continue to work towards the ELGs.

Supporting Every Child

The environment will provide encouragement and support for children's efforts to communicate and shows them that their efforts are valued. The adults in the setting are sensitive and knowledgeable, knowing when and how to engage their interests and how to offer support at different times. Children are given and benefit from a range of experiences, including those that are predictable, comforting and challenging. The environment is designed to support children's physical and emotional needs so that they are more ready to take advantage of the play and learning opportunities on offer. Children are given opportunities to build on the things they have already experienced with new and interesting challenges, taking into account their individual interests and personalised to meet their needs.

The Learning Environment

Adults will ensure the environment is supportive of children's emotional development, empathising with the children and helping them develop their confidence to try new things, knowing that their efforts are valued in an environment which is warm and accepting of everyone, and makes children feel safe and secure. Children have free flow access to the outside space, and can move freely between the indoors and outdoors, in order to support their sense of well-being and develop all aspects of children's development. Through the use of the outside space children have opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales, giving children first-hand contact with weather, seasons and the natural world and offering children freedom to explore, use their senses, and be physically active and exuberant.

Children always have opportunities throughout the year to be outside and explore the rest of the school's outdoor environment, with lessons taking place outside and using the outdoors as a stimulus for the learning, and exploring safety and risk. The indoor environment provides a safe, secure yet challenging space for children, encompassing all areas of learning so that children are exposed to a broad and balanced curriculum. The indoor environment contains resources which are appropriate, well maintained and accessible for all children, allowing children to be as independent as possible in selecting their own resources where appropriate and maintaining the learning environment and keeping it tidy. This space is planned so that it can be used flexibly with quiet spaces to aid communication, especially for children where large groups and lots of noise can be too much. The resources and displays are regularly changed to provide a stimulating environment that is supportive of children's learning. Resources are open-ended to provide a stimulus for learning so it can be taken in many different directions to allow for a range of experiences.

The Wider Context

As well as home visits, children also have to opportunity to come into the school in the summer term prior to them entering school to get to know the setting. Close links are made across other childhood services to support all children as necessary, as well as close links with feeder nurseries and other schools within our cluster group. Practitioners have the opportunity for professional development through courses and visits are made to other settings to develop our setting. Parents and families are closely involved in supporting children's development. Children learn that they are part of the surrounding community and gain experience of it through visits out in the local community, and members of the local community coming into the setting to share their expertise. Strong links are made with the local church, and our priest visits regularly. The church is also used as a resource for R.E and topic work. Further educational visits are planned throughout the year on a wider scale.

Learning & Development

We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected. The children have time and freedom to become deeply involved in the activities and their learning.

Areas of Learning

The EYFS is made up of **prime and specific** areas of learning:

PRIME AREAS

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Physical Development

Communication & Language

SPECIFIC AREAS

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the World

Expressive Arts and Design

These areas are delivered throughout the topic and linked closely together. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. The EYFS class has their own outdoor area used all year round in all weathers. Being outdoors encourages learning in different ways. It offers the children more opportunities to be creative and explore on a larger scale as well as to be physically active linking the indoors and outdoors together.

The curriculum will be tailored to each individual with the next steps identified for each child's development based on observations made. Specific aspects of these areas of learning area focused on throughout the year in the main teaching.

Play & Exploration

Children throughout the day have the opportunity to engage in child initiated play, where they may select activities to develop all aspects of learning; developing physically, socially and emotionally. Children have the opportunity to engage in active exploration to make discoveries in order to extend their learning, and build up ideas, concepts and skills. Adults will play alongside children to support their social skills, model good play, scaffold children's learning and develop children's language skills. Practitioners will provide a range of resources for children to explore and adapt the resources in order to build on prior learning and offer a broad and balanced curriculum. Children have the opportunity to explore resources in order to solve problems Dens, dressing up and role-play areas are provided allowing children to take on and rehearse new and familiar roles and develop their language and imagination. Children are observed in their play so practitioners can adapt the resources appropriately to extend children's understanding and identify children for support if they find it hard to be included.

Active Learning

Children are encouraged to actively engage in the learning through the use of their interests. Learning opportunities are made and seized upon from the incidental discoveries children make in their play, thus engaging them in active learning. They are encouraged to actively engage in the learning so that they learn to solve problems for themselves, become self-

motivated, develop their creativity, and develop their self-confidence and self-esteem through the sense of achievement they gain from finding their own answers. Practitioners scaffold children's active explorations through key questions encouraging them to engage in further explorations to extend their learning. Children have input into what they will learn about through discussion at the start of the topic and with the opportunity to 'find out' together.

Creativity & Critical Thinking

Creativity is developed throughout the whole early year's curriculum, and the focus is on the process rather than the end product. Opportunities are provided every day in children's child initiated play to develop their creativity. Children are encouraged to make connections between experiences in their learning in order to develop understanding, and strong links are established with the children's home environment in order to make connections between home, school and the wider community. Opportunities are provided for children to talk to adults, to think and problem solve with them and in small groups, to develop their critical thinking skills and develop sustained shared thinking. Adults show genuine interest, offer encouragement, clarify ideas and ask open questions to support and extend children's thinking and help children to make connections in learning. Children's comments are recorded through observations and with annotated photographs. These are stored in both online and paper based learning journeys. Creativity is modelled in the teaching and the curriculum is delivered in a variety of ways.

Management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Key tasks for Foundation Stage Co-ordinator

- To monitor planning and pupils' work.
- To audit, provide and monitor the use of resources and materials.
- To ensure that the 4 principles outlined in the EYFS are embedded in the planning and FS environment.
- To update staff on new requirements and initiatives that will feed into KS1.
- To liaise with feeder nurseries & year 1 teachers to provide effective transition for all pupils.
- To set up & carry out transition work for the new September intake.
- To monitor assessments and **complete the EYFS profile at the end of the academic year**, submitting this to the LA & passing it on to the next teacher.

At St Joseph's we want to ensure that our children and their families have the best possible start to school life. The move to the 'big school' is an exciting and important time for children and their parents. Children look forward to it and parents see it as marking a significant milestone in their child's development.

We feel that children who have a positive start to school will become more confident learners as a result of their experiences at these early stages. We want children to feel safe, secure and comfortable and for parents to feel welcomed as part of our school community.

Footnote:

*In line with Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, we use the term parents to include:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person

•Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (having care of a child or young person means that the child lives with and is looked after by that person, irrespective of what their relationship is).