

St John's Primary School Early Years Policy



Rationale

At St John's we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent. We value the individual child and work alongside parents and others to meet their needs and help every child to reach their full potential.

Aims and Objectives

We adhere to the Statutory Framework of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the four guiding principles that shape practice within Early Years settings.

- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**

As part of our practice we:

- Provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven areas of learning (being Personal, Social & Emotional, Communication & Language, Physical Development, Literacy, Maths, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design), using play and guided activities as the vehicle for learning.
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. We provide early intervention for those children who require additional support.
- Work in partnership with parents and within the wider context.
- Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult-initiated and child-initiated, supported by the adult.
- Have a key person approach to develop close relationships with individual children.
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and out.

Early Years Curriculum

The Nature of Learning:-

Children learn through play. Play is a child's work and provides vital foundations for future learning. Play is the medium through which the Early Years Curriculum is experienced by children. It is a very serious business since it demands from the children concentration, perseverance and mental and physical effort.

Young children learn by experience. They need to look, touch, smell, listen, taste and explore with a variety of play materials. Within the group, all children are supported in developing their potential at their own pace. By means of developmentally appropriate activities and adult support, the curriculum leads to Early Learning Goals and prepares children to progress with confidence towards life in school.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning and the Prime and Specific Areas of learning and development are all interconnected. The ways in which a child engages with other people and their environment, playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically – underpin learning and development across all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner.

Prime Area

Personal, Social and Emotional

We see this area as of paramount importance, within a secure and stimulating environment children are supported in developing self-esteem and the confidence to work, co-operate and establish relationships with others in a group outside the family.

The children are encouraged to:

- Make and express choices
- Demonstrate independence in selecting activities and resources
- Explore new learning
- Take control and responsibility for their actions and needs
- Use initiative and their developing powers of reasoning to solve the problems they encounter in their work
- Develop the perseverance to engage increasingly complex play, working sometimes independently and at other times collaboratively with increasing concentration

The same problem-solving approach applies to areas of social conflict where children are supported in verbalising their feelings, acknowledging and respecting the needs of others and working towards mutually acceptable solutions so that they develop an understanding of both self, and the part they play in a group and of what is right and wrong and why. Adult example and support, activities, stories and the sharing of experiences help to develop an understanding of a range of feelings and care for all living things, property and the environment. The children are introduced to concepts of: sharing, caring, honesty, relationships, kindness, feeling and empathy.

Communication and Language

- Children are encouraged to extend their vocabulary, fluency and listening skills by hearing, participating in having fun with and responding to stories, songs and rhymes, some of which they will commit to memory. Children talk with others about personally meaningful experiences. They plan their work for the session, communicate with others during work time and describe events, objects and relationships when evaluating their work. Adult-initiated activities in small and large groups familiarise children with the pattern, rhythm of language and introduce them letter and sound recognition. Through role-play the children develop language skills by using different modes and styles of speaking for different people and situations. They need to listen to each other's contributions and learn to play co-operatively.

- For the children who need additional support with their speech and language skills we have a member to staff who has been trained to deliver Talk Boost sessions. Talk Boost is a targeted intervention aimed at 3-4 year old children with delayed language development helping to boost their language skills to help narrow the gap between them and their peers.

Physical Development

A range of large and small equipment and opportunities, both indoors and outdoors, allow children to develop confidence and enjoyment in the use and development of their own physical skills. Adult support enables children safely to meet physical challenges, developing increasing skill, co-ordination and control in moving, climbing and balancing. At the same time, children are supported in the development of the fine motor skills required to use tools such as brushes, pencils and scissors, to handle small objects with increasing control and precision and to choose the correct tool for the job. Children explore a variety of manipulative toys, which develop manual dexterity by slotting, pushing, pressing and threading.

Specific Areas

Writing

- In an environment rich in print and opportunities to write, our goal is to help children to understand the power of the written word as a basis for communication, knowledge acquisition and entertainment and, when they are ready, to encourage children to use written and drawn symbols for themselves in drawing, letter-like forms, invented spellings, dictated stories and emergent writing. A variety of mark-making implements for drawing and writing are offered to the children and they are encouraged to draw and write about things which interest them and which they want to communicate. Mark-making is a very important and necessary stage in the development of early literacy. Emergent writing is positively encouraged so that children learn to communicate in the written form. Every child's work is valued and respected. The children are encouraged to use mark-making tools in all areas of the unit, such as shopping lists, telephone pads, letters and notes. We encourage and help each to transfer its spoken language into the written form. The level of writing is matched to each child's ability. This also includes scribing for the children to enable them to compose at length. As the children gain in competence, their random marks become more precise, left to right orientation becomes apparent and their writing begins to contain recognisable letters. Children who are beginning to write independently are supported in their attempts by helping them to discriminate the initial letter sound of the work required. As competence increases, they are encouraged to discriminate and represent further sounds in these words. Children whose finer motor skills need a lot of input are encouraged to use fat crayons, paints, clay, dough and small manipulative toys to develop finer muscle tone in their fingers. The children are introduced to a cursive style of print from the beginning and this is developed by handwriting patterns and individual letter formation. Cursive writing is practised in the air, on paper, in sand, with paints, on white boards and is developed indoors and outdoors.

Reading

We encourage our children to love and respect books. Every day, a member of staff will share books with the whole class and at other times with individuals or small groups as required. We aim to share: fairy stories, poetry, factual books and picture books with the children. We help the children to develop pre-reading skills by touching

each word as it is read, enabling the children to match the spoken to the written word and to follow print in the correct direction. The children are encouraged to use pictures clues and to predict events. We discuss the content of the books to ensure understanding. All these activities help the children to discover the relationship between the spoken and the written word. They discover words and pictures have meaning and discover rhymes, rhythms and patterns of words. We run a Take Home Library session once a week where the children have the opportunity to look at books and chose their favourite story to take home to share with their parent/carer. We believe that storytelling and book reading is a good way for parents/carers to have regular, additional talking time with their children. Storytelling introduces structure and language patterns that help form the building blocks for reading and writing skills. Reading to children on a daily basis gives them the best start in life. We also offer parents an opportunity to take home our Electric Reader where they can find a range of stories that they can listen to with their child in a fun and different way. In our Early Years the children have the opportunity to take part in Playing with Sounds, Read Write Inc and Talk for Writing to support independent reading.

Letter and Sounds

Playing with Sounds falls largely within the Communication, Language and Literacy area of learning. The activities are mainly adult led with the intention of teaching young children important skills: listening, sound discrimination, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds, oral blending and segmenting. When the children are ready they move onto Read Write Inc where they are taught letters and sounds.

Read Write Inc

Read Write Inc developed by Ruth Miskin, provides a structured and systematic approach to teaching literacy. It is designed to create fluent readers, confident speakers and willing writers. The Read Write Inc programme is used to teach phonics to children who are learning to read. The programme is very structured and quickly gets children blending the sounds (phonemes) they have been taught to make words.

Talk for Writing

Talk for Writing developed by Pie Corbett is an approach to teaching writing that emphasises three teaching methods: Imitation (where children learn stories by heart, so they can discuss and dissect them) Innovation (where children adapt stories to create their own versions) and Invention (where teachers help pupils to create original stories.) These tasks aim to improve writing ability by giving children an understanding of the structure and elements of written language.

Maths

Mathematics enters every area of the Early Years and the development of mathematical concepts are happening all the time. Through their play and by means of adult-supported practical experiences children become familiar with sorting, matching, ordering, sequencing, recognising and creating patterns and counting everyday objects.

Elements of the daily routine such as preparing snacks, counting those present, number games, songs, rhymes and number-related activities such as jigsaw puzzles help children recognise and use numbers to 10 (and beyond, where appropriate.) Children use their developing mathematical understanding to solve practical problems and their developing mathematical vocabulary to describe shape, position, size and quantity, simple addition and subtraction, doubling, halving and sharing. Early mathematical concepts are developed such as sorting, matching, colour, shape, size and number.

Understanding the World

A safe and stimulating environment allows children to explore and experiment with a wide range of natural and manufactured materials. They learn to observe, talk and ask questions about and sometimes record features of objects and substances and to recognise differences, patterns, similarities and change. Children are assisted both indoors and outdoors in exploring and understanding their environment, their families and past and present events in their own lives. They explore, care for and recognise features of living things, e.g. in the garden and with visiting animals. The children explore a range of found materials. They are involved in planning and decision making, cutting, placing, fixing and fastening. Language skills are developed as children talk about what they have made. At times they are asked to make something to meet given criteria. They have the opportunity to explore a full range of materials and to select the most appropriate materials and make their desired model. They are encouraged to test their work and amend and improve as appropriate.

Children will have opportunities to go to the computer room and the classroom has a computer and interactive whiteboard. There is a range of programmes to enable the children to develop hand/eye co-ordination leading to fundamental keyboard skills. Our programmes allow the children to draw and paint pictures and engage in early reading and numeracy activities. We aim to give the children the experience of as many techniques concerned with the safe preparation of food as possible, such as stirring, chopping, grating, mixing, rolling and squeezing. Everyone has the opportunity to smell, feel, taste the foods and observe the scientific changes when foods are beaten, frozen, baked and mixed together.

Expressive Arts and Design

Children are encouraged to use their senses and a wide range of resources in order to express their own ideas and feelings and to construct their individual responses in two and three dimensions. Art equipment, including paints, glue, crayons, and pencils as well as natural and discarded resources provide for open-ended exploration of colour, shape and texture and the development of skills in painting, drawing and collage. Children join in with and respond to music, dance and stories and there are many opportunities for imaginative role-play, both individually and as part of the group. Weekly art and music sessions are planned for each week to widen the children's experiences and to give them opportunities for exploration and self-expression. The children experience guided role-play sessions through Mantle of the Expert. This is an educational approach that uses imaginary contexts to generate purposeful and engaging activities for learning.

Forest School

- The aim of forest school is to provide regular opportunities for all children to learn outdoors in a woodland setting. A Forest School Leader will plan for children to take part in positive learning experiences, where they will develop self-confidence and self-esteem. These activities can be self-chosen where the children can follow their own interests as well as taking part in guided sessions such as identifying trees, birds, flora and fauna, making fires, using tools and getting muddy! Forest school sessions bring learning to life and encourage the children to reflect and review their learning, take risks and become independent. Forest school is a very positive experience for both children and adults and our aim is for all children to have fun, learn and build on their experiences.
- The Forest School leader will have a full Forest School qualification. They will have completed an outdoor first aid qualification and will have the overall responsibility for planning sessions, ensuring that safety checks have been completed on the site of each visit as well as carrying out a risk assessment. The Forest School Leader will also ensure any adults taking part in the session will be fully aware of safety procedures and policies.
- It is important that all children have appropriate clothing suitable for all weather conditions. The school will provide waterproof jackets, trousers and high-viz fluorescent vests. Regardless of the weather all children are expected to wear long sleeves, long trousers and strong shoes at all times. This will protect them from the sun, stinging plants etc. Wellies should be worn on wet days. Sun hats are necessary for sunny days.
- The Forest School Leader will ensure the Forest School programme is progressive and take time to reflect on and evaluate each session with the children and adults who are present. From these evaluations it will help future planning building on the children interests and prior knowledge.

Planning

All staff are committed to planning as a team around the needs and interests of the children.

Long Term Plans

Long term planning provides a strong framework for working with 3-5 year olds. We base our plans on the Early Years Curriculum. This is the over-arching framework that informs all others stages of planning. It shows the range of experiences/learning opportunities that are available whilst the children are in Early Years. A long-term plan is a way of ensuring that all seven areas of learning are given equal emphasis and that all aspects of learning within the seven areas are covered regularly and frequently.

Short Term Plans

Short term planning is based on the long term plan and developed using ongoing observations and informal assessment of the children. It is usually drawn up on a weekly basis. It includes, for example, sequences of experiences and activities designed to promote new learning or to consolidate or apply things just learned. Observations of the children are taken into account and planning is adjusted to cater

for the interests and needs of the children and to capitalise on unplanned events, particularly those initiated by the children.

Observation and Assessment

As part of our daily practice we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform our future plans. We record our observations in a variety of ways. Everyone is encouraged to contribute and discussions take place. Significant observations of children's achievements are collated in their own personal learning journey, which are shared with parents.

Within the final term of school, we provide the parents with a report based on their child's development against Development Matters and each of the Early Learning Goals. The parents are then given the opportunity to discuss the children's achievements with the class teacher.

Assertive Mentoring Meeting

Every term we hold an Assertive Mentoring meeting with the children in our Early Years and their parent/carer. Assertive Mentoring outcomes and targets show what a child can do, and what they need to do to move to the next stage of learning. The process allows teachers to set achievable targets each term, and to work with the children to complete these. This then enables us to share these targets with parents/carers so that they can help their child to achieve even more quickly. During the meeting we share the children's Learning Journals celebrating what they can already do. We record on the children's development using an online assessment tool called Tapestry. This helps teachers, parents and carers to record, track and celebrate the children's progress in early years education.

Tapestry

Tapestry is an online e-learning journal to record the development of each child in our setting. This system allows us to work with parents and carers to share information and record the children's play and learning both inside and outside of the setting. Tapestry provides each individual child with their own e-learning journey. Parents and carers are given their own log-in details to allow them to access the system. Staff record and assess children linking to the EYFS curriculum, uploading photo or video media. Once saved and completed each observation is approved by the manager. An email is then automatically generated and sent to parents/carers set up on that child's account informing them that an observation has been added. They can then have a look and add any of their own comments to it.

Equal Opportunities

The school's purpose is to deliver a well-planned, balanced and appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of all children. We have high expectations of all our children and provide them with quality learning experiences covering all aspects of the curriculum. These are irrespective of race, gender, class or disability. The school's ethos supports the development of cultural and personal identities and prepares our children for full participation in society. Every child needs to achieve success in order to develop a positive self-image. We recognise that all our children, including those with special educational needs, require a differentiated approach in order for them to have access to the whole curriculum and therefore reach their potential. It is the responsibility of the SENCO and all members of staff to ensure that teaching strategies, resources and support are appropriate to the needs of each individual. The school policy is to provide special needs support earlier rather than later. This means staff are aware of the importance of any special needs as the result of early assessment and intervention.

Role of the parents

We believe that all parents and carers have an important role to play in the education of their child. We therefore recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role in educating the children. We do this through:

- Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school.
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns.
- Arranging for a staggered start to Nursery and Reception over the first two weeks of term, so that the teacher can welcome each child individually into our school.
- Encouraging parents to stay if there are problems with the child's admission.
- Offering a range of activities, throughout the year, that encourages collaboration between child, school and parents i.e. Stay and Play session and open days and workshops.

Safety

Children's safety and welfare is paramount. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We have stringent policies, procedures and documents in place to ensure children's safety.

We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways, including the provision of nutritious food, following set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.

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