

Saint Francis Primary School and Nursery

“Learning Together”

A policy to explain our approach to teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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At St Francis Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School and Nursery our aim is to provide a secure and stimulating learning environment, strongly rooted in Christian values.

Our Vision:

We believe that all children are a gift from God. That they are all special and should be allowed to develop and grow in a nurturing environment secure in the knowledge that they are cherished.

Learning in the Early Years is celebrated and promoted as a profoundly important stage of a child's life when vital emotional, physical and intellectual development takes place.

We believe that from birth, children are strong, competent, motivated and confident learners who will explore and test their ideas, solve problems and try to make sense of their world. We recognise that learning needs to be first hand, experiential and active; it should promote children's independence, encouraging them to take responsibility for initiating and making decisions. Experiencing personal success is key to generating motivation to tackle new challenges. Learning needs to take place in a social context and we believe that talk is central to the learning process. We also understand that learning cannot take place unless a child's emotional needs are met, and they feel safe to take risks.

We believe that parents/carers are the first and most enduring educator, who has the most impact on their child's life and education. Therefore we work in partnership with parents to seek their perspective of their child, to inform planning a meaningful and purposeful curriculum based on the interests and strengths of their children.

We value the process of learning and understand that individuals have the right to communicate and explore their learning in many different ways.

Above all we believe that learning is 'learnable' and strive to support children to develop specific learning capabilities which will enable them to be effective lifelong learners.

Learning happens best when it exercises and challenges the learners capacities, when it encourages them to develop talents. Young children need time and space to become resilient lifelong learners.

Aims:

- To challenge all children to reach their full potential, spiritually, intellectually, physically creatively and socially.
- To develop relationships where we all respect one another's beliefs, differences and ways of life, recognizing each other as unique individuals.
- To enable children to develop high self-esteem and encourage independence.
- To enable children to take a responsible part in their own learning and become self-motivated to attain their goals.
- To make our school a welcoming community for all, where families are encouraged to participate in school activities and in their children's education.
- To provide a balanced curriculum that is stimulating, creative and of the highest quality; that is delivered by a committed team who ensure that learning is an enjoyable experience for all.
- That our Christian beliefs and values inform everything we do and achieve.
- To encourage children within an ethos of trust to reflect on their own values and faith in a supportive environment.

Through effective teaching and learning opportunities we will ensure that all children are enabled to:

- Feel valued as an individual
- Show enthusiasm and confidence with high self-esteem and self-worth
- Be independent, curious, creative and resilient learners, interested in the world around them and following their fascinations
- Be courageous and take risks, challenging themselves and each other
- Know they have a voice and are heard, and that they can make a difference
- Be able to communicate their own needs and feelings
- Be empowered to meet their own needs
- Respect themselves and others, their environment and community
- Feel safe and secure and have a sense of belonging and secure attachments
- Establish effective and secure relationships and be able to work collaboratively
- Have high aspirations, build on their previous best and excel in the things they choose to do

The role of the Practitioner:

- To have a secure understanding of child development and an awareness of age appropriate needs, behaviour and learning
- To be attuned and attentive to individual's emotional needs, interests, stages of development and patterns of play
- To encourage children to communicate in a variety of ways and value 1st language and cultural heritage
- Develop planning that is personalised and moves children forward
- Ensure high quality interactions which support thinking, scaffold new possibilities, build on children's interests and the questions they ask.
- Encourage and support children's interactions with other children and adults
- Model feelings , learning characteristics and research approach learning
- To support children on their journey to become mastery learners, to ask questions, evaluate and take risks, develop resilience and have ownership for their learning
- To ensure the learning environment is safe, calm, challenging, purposeful and supportive
- To provide inspiring learning experiences and provocations in which children can become the leaders
- To maintain practice leadership, ensuring authentic connection with daily practise

The Enabling Emotional and Physical environment:

- The daily routine is structured to include time for personal exploration, small and large group sessions and social experiences.
- The routine ensures time for children to repeat, revisit and reflect on their previous experiences, which includes an uninterrupted 'explore time' during which children can really 'get lost' in their learning
- The routine is consistent, thus ensuring children feel secure and are able to operate independently. Within the elements of the daily routine varied and enriching experiences are planned to maintain and stimulate children's attention and learning. The concept of "surprise" is introduced early on so that children understand that changes can be manageable, exciting, and that they can build resilience in coping with change

- Children are emotionally contained- their home base is supported with access to pictures of their families or other significant people
- Boundaries are clear and consistent across the setting and are reinforced with visuals
- Children are empowered to manage their feelings, keep themselves safe and resolve conflicts using the Conflict/Resolution steps (appendix 1) alongside emotionally literate adults.
- Children have free flow access to the environment both inside and outside
- Planning for the environment is informed by children's interests, their learning styles and preferred ways of communication
- Resources are easily accessible, plentiful, well maintained and organised and appropriate - with an emphasis on open ended exploration and collaborative learning

Developing Learning Power:

We believe that children can become confident lifelong learners if equipped with the appropriate skills, attitudes and capacities for learning from an early age. Children need to become Resilient, Resourceful, Reflective and Reciprocal Learners (Claxton). In order to develop these appropriate attitudes we:

- Support children to initiate and carry out their own activities and make independent choices and decisions
- Encourage children to find, use and replace equipment and resources independently (in an organised, labelled and accessible learning environment).
- Encourage the children to make plans, modify plans, review and reflect on their own learning.
- Encourage the children to set themselves challenges and support them through the process of problem solving.
- Model and use the language of learning with both children and adults alike
- Use and encourage use of a range of interactions appropriate to the individuals stage of development (see appendix 2)

- Model 'being stuck' and learning from mistakes, using consistent strategies for what to do if you get stuck
- Encourage collaboration
- Enable children to see each other as tools for learning as well as the teaching staff
- Developing noticing skills
- Encourage absorption, and an awareness of distractions
- Plan for varied imaginative play situations
- Encouraging children to make connections from their experiences and explore possibilities.

This goes beyond the effective characteristics of learning identified in the EYFS.

Parents in Partnership:

Parents are children's first and most important educators. At St Francis we recognize that the parents role is fundamental to their child's education and we therefore foster and value this relationship.

We promote parent/school partnership through:

- An ethos of openness and honesty, that encourages parents to share their knowledge, understanding, hopes and concerns with us
- Ensuring access and removing barriers to engagement
- An open learning community where all learning is celebrated in small and large groups
- A range of opportunities to listen and value personal histories including home visits for each child, parent information evenings, curriculum workshops. In the Nursery children build individual "My Story" books with contributions from home and school throughout the year
- Daily opportunities for parents to speak with the class teacher so that questions can be answered and followed up.
- Up to date communication through website, schoop, noticeboards, displays
- Structured induction programme and information sharing with new teachers that keeps the needs of the individual child paramount and enables them to make smooth transitions

Assessment, Reflection and Planning:

We believe that every child has the right to a well-planned and meaningful curriculum that will provide them with the tools needed to succeed throughout their lives, regardless of culture, social class, gender, physical and cognitive capabilities and beliefs. Regular monitoring and evaluation of children's progress enables us to continually adjust our provision in response to any areas of underachievement that may be identified.

We plan using the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Development Matters guidance.

We respond to the development and learning of each child by planning a range of experiences which include the Prime and Specific areas of learning and the Characteristics of Effective Learning. We understand that in order for children to develop learning in the Specific areas, becoming secure in the Prime areas is paramount. This is balanced with opportunities to learn from diverse range of experiences.

We are committed to narrowing the gap, ensuring that no child underachieves, especially those from identified underperforming or underrepresented groups and those living in poverty.

Assessment is a fundamental part of the planning process. To help us decide what to provide we observe children in their play in a range of situations.

"On-going formative assessment is at the heart of effective early years practice." (Revised EYFS 2012 p.3)

Diversity and inclusion are our priority and therefore we differentiate our planning and provision to ensure every child can access the learning experiences at their stage of development. No child is excluded from activities.

Long Term Planning:

- The revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2012 provides our long term plan for learning across the Prime and Specific areas
- We plan an indoor and outdoor environment that enables children to develop independence in their day to day experiences

Medium Term Planning:

- Termly data for groups of children is collected which informs the termly plan with possible learning foci which will meet the needs of the children
- Plans are informed by contributions from practitioners and the children to ensure learning experiences are drawn from the interests of the children
- Plans are developed that ensure breadth and challenge

Weekly/Daily Responsive Planning:

- Staff record children's interests and use these to reflect on children's self-initiated learning, and possible lines of enquiry, this informs the enhancements provision plan
- Daily adult led 'group times' ensure that every child accesses a broad and balanced curriculum across the Prime and Specific areas of learning. Additional experiences are provided so that children have opportunities to re-visit and reinforce their understanding.
- Group and individual interests are identified and used to develop focus plans

Assessment tools

We use a range of assessment tools to assess children's development and progress:

- Revised EYFS Development Matters statements for the Prime and Specific areas of learning
- The Characteristics of Effective Learning, Attitudes and Dispositions to Learn, Leuven Well being and Involvement scales
- Welcom speech and language acquisition assessment
- Target Tracker

Our teaching is based on our knowledge of the children's current interests and developmental stage. This knowledge is gathered and updated through a variety of on-going assessments, which take the form of:

- Daily observations (learning journal)
- Termly entry in Target Tracker which show progress children make as data (including a baseline assessment)
- 2 x year joint target setting with parent/practitioner for individual children
- Online and paper learning journals
- Photo documentation

Reflective Practise:

Termly phase meetings are held where practitioners share how they have responded to new provocations and their understanding of new developments. The EYFS action plan is derived from these discussions, together with actions from the school development plan. It is reviewed 2x per year.

Appendix 1

Conflict Resolution Steps in Early Years

1. Approach calmly and with an open mind

Walk over and get down to their level.

2. Acknowledge feelings

Say "I can see you're feeling hurt/cross/upset/angry"

3. Gather information from both sides

Say "What's the problem?"

4. Restate the problem

Say "so the problem is..."

5. Ask for solutions and choose one together

Say "I wonder what we can do to solve the problem/help you feel better?"

6. Be prepared to give follow-up support

Keep an eye out for what happens next and give further support if needed.

Appendix 2

Developing Effective Interactions

Practitioners will support children to communicate using a range of strategies. It is understood that interactions can open up or close down children's responses. The most effective interactions are where children are empowered to question, explore and follow their interests. Practitioners adjust their interactions according to the child's early language and understand that personal contributions and phatics promotes quality interactions and rapid development in children's language skills.

1. Enforced repetitions' - repeat my words
2. Two choice questions - •The adult asks the child a question where there are only two choices - this includes either yes/no answers or 'forced alternatives'
3. 'Wh-' type questions - •Adult asks a question starting why, what, when etc
4. Personal contributions- •Adult avoids asking questions, but gives their personal contributions around something that the child is interested in.
5. Phatics - •Adult tries to say nothing with any 'content', just "makes the right noises". They try to avoid questions and take the child's lead

Top 10 techniques are:

1. Get the child's attention first
2. Make learning fun
3. Use simple repetitive language
4. Build on what the child says to you
5. Demonstrate rather than criticise
6. Imitate the child's language
7. Use all the senses to teach new words
8. Give the child time to respond
9. Be careful with questions
10. Use the full range of expression