

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School
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Early Years and Foundation Stage Policy

2024 - 2025

“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 Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five.

Published 8 December 2023, Effective from 4 January 2024

Intent

Our intent is to help children to develop to their individual potential both academically and personally and to be ready and confident to embrace their next steps in their learning journey.

We aim to nurture every child through a high standard of education and a wealth of exciting learning experiences. Through our early years curriculum and engaging learning environment, we promote growth mind-sets and positive learning behaviours that foster skills for life-long learning. Children learn responsibility for their behaviour, trying their best and being a thoughtful member of our community, both local and beyond. They explore and experience fairness and the place of justice in our local and global community, and consider wisdom while learning to understand the consequences of thoughts, words and actions; they learn about the importance of friendships and good relationships as they work and play together.

The ‘**Characteristics of Effective Learning**’ are at the heart of our early years curriculum, to ensure there is a clear progression for all the areas of learning. A significant number of pupils join our nursery from very low starting points, with language (communication, language and literacy) being often the biggest barrier to learning. Therefore, the offer in the early years ensures pupils engage in language and vocabulary rich experiences enabling them to learn new concepts and skills which will prepare them to achieve high standards by the end of Reception (Early Learning Goals). Our EYFS framework allows a natural progression into the National Curriculum at the beginning of Year 1 but we never lose sight of the link between the quality of provision and its impact on the children’s learning and development.

Implementation

We provide a foundation stage curriculum in accordance with the government’s statutory document, ‘Early years foundation stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers. Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five. Published: 8 December 2023 Effective: 4 January 2024. This document is a principled approach to early years education. 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 are given equal weighting and value. Practitioners working with the younger children will focus strongly on the three prime areas, which are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as the children move through the early years and grow in confidence and ability. Planning is done as a team based on a series of topics each of which offers experiences in all seven areas of the EYFS. These plans then inform our weekly planning which remains flexible for unplanned circumstances or children’s responses. Children have whole class and small group times, which increase as they progress through the EYFS. These include phonics session using ‘Read Write Inc.’, mathematics and literacy.

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We also:

- monitor and assess the development of every child and plan accordingly
- accurately assess, including thorough high quality observations
- provide a highly stimulating environment which reflects rich, varied and imaginative experiences that meet the needs of all children exceedingly well
- the understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching
- involve Parents/Carers in their child's learning programme by planning workshops, presentations, weekly newsletters and online home learning
- producing class files in English, topic (cross curricular), mathematics, religious education, and learning journeys in pre nursery/nursery.
- liaise with outside agencies as appropriate
- leaders ensure that ongoing professional development is available for all staff to ensure the curriculum requirements can be met

Impact

The impact of our curriculum on what children know, can remember and do is strong, children demonstrate this through being deeply engaged, highly motivated and very eager to join in. They show exceptional positive behaviour and high levels of self-control, cooperation and respect for others. The carefully planned curriculum helps children achieve the EYFS early learning goals and make sustained progress that leads to outstanding achievement. The children take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, social and emotional abilities. They communicate and talk about their learning speaking with increasing confidence and fluency, which means that they secure strong foundations for future learning, especially in preparation for them to become fluent readers. They demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning with high levels of curiosity, imagination and concentration. Finally the successful partnership between teachers and parents, enables our children to feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement.

At St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, we believe:

- that the EYFS is one of the most significant stages in a child's development
- that each child is a unique individual with gifts to be developed and celebrated
- that this stage of their education provides a firm foundation for future learning, time when attitudes and skills are beginning to develop and need to be carefully nurtured and nourished
- that children should receive encouragement, praise and motivation to help them to grow in confidence to explore new areas, develop and learn

Aims:

- we are a Catholic primary school with very strong moral values and a traditional approach to behaviour and discipline; we expect our families to subscribe to our values
- we value democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance; we believe in honesty and trust
- we seek to encourage the highest standards in academic achievement, social responsibility and personal development in a specifically Catholic environment
- we have an unrelenting focus on raising standards in all aspects of school life (spiritual, moral, academic and social) so that each student can develop their God-given talents to the full and be the best that they can be
- to promote the values expressed in our Mission Statement
- to provide a safe, supportive caring environment which encourages every child to become independent, confident and eager learners

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- to promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being
- to provide a broad, balanced, carefully planned curriculum, based on active learning to meet the needs of every individual child with play underpinning all learning, indoors and outdoors
- to organise and plan in order for children to become motivated to learn and to be involved, stimulated and challenged by the activities provided, which will promote independence and responsibility
- to foster a climate of high expectations where each child is given the opportunity and appropriate experiences to enable them to develop at their own pace
- to meet the individual needs of all the children regardless of race, gender or disability
- to provide strong home, school and community links
- to develop feelings of pride, belonging, ownership and respect for the environment
- to understand and respect the feelings, needs, culture and abilities of others

To achieve these aims, St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School endeavours to:

- provide a foundation stage curriculum in accordance with the government's statutory document, 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five'. This document is a principled approach to early years education
- monitor and assess the development of every child and plan accordingly
- accurately assess, including thorough high quality observations
- provide a highly stimulating environment which reflects rich, varied and imaginative experiences that meet the needs of all children exceedingly well
- provide religious education
- involve parents/carers in their child's learning programme
- liaise with outside agencies as appropriate

Religious Education

St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School is a community where the spiritual, cultural and personal worlds within which we live are harmonised to form the roots from which grow our values, motivation, aspirations and the moral imperatives that inform our choices and actions as persons. When pupils join our school they become part of this community. Every day starts with an Act of Worship, we give thanks before lunch and we end the day with a prayer. We believe that Christ is at the centre of all we do and therefore we offer each child a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum of the highest standard to meet their spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual and physical needs and to prepare them for the responsibilities of adult life.

In line with the school's religious education programme, we provide opportunities for the children to develop their spirituality and moral values. Each child is made aware that they are special, that God loves them and that they belong to God's family. We have excellent links with our parish church, The Shrine of Our Lady of Willesden, with the parish priest making weekly visits to the school as part of our pastoral programme. Religious education is taught to all children in the school for two and a half hours per week and is considered central to the whole school curriculum. We follow key teachings from Catholic traditions that are taken from the RECD (Religious Education Curriculum Directory).

We encourage children to develop ways of thinking, feeling and acting which lead children to be reflective, enquiring and reverent. They listen to appropriate stories from the Bible and participate in assemblies and celebrations.

Partnership with parent/carers

We recognise the important role parents play as educators of their children and we believe that a positive relationship with parents is vital to a child's learning and development.

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In recognition of this we have adapted the following practice:

- new parents and children are invited to spend a morning in the EYFS to become familiar with the new environment and meet the staff
- a meeting and a coffee morning towards the end of the preceding summer term provides the opportunity to meet the staff, become familiar with the new environment, and organise uniform
- in September EYFS parents and children come into school for an informal meeting where they meet their teachers, visit their classrooms and share information about their child's likes, dislikes and the parents and schools' aspirations
- parents are consulted about current progress and advised of targets set through highly successful strategies that engage parents and carers
- an appointment can be made at a mutually convenient time if a more lengthy discussion is necessary

The Early Years Foundation Stage framework

The curriculum is centred on 3 prime areas of learning:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

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

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding of the world
- 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 are given equal weighting and value.

Practitioners working with the younger children will focus strongly on the three prime areas, which are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as the children move through the Early Years and grow in confidence and ability.

Planning is done as a team based on a series of topics each of which offers experiences in all seven areas of the EYFS. These plans then inform our weekly planning which remains flexible for unplanned circumstances or children's responses. Children have whole class and small group times, which increase as they progress through the EYFS. These include phonics session using 'Read Write Inc.', mathematics and literacy.

At St Joseph's Roman Catholic 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.

The more general features of outstanding practice in our school that relate to the foundation stage are:

- the partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement
- the understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching
- the children are highly motivated, very eager to join in and consistently demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning with high levels of curiosity, imagination and concentration. They demonstrate exceptional positive behaviour and high levels of self-control, cooperation and respect for others
- the range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve all the EYFS early learning goals and make sustained progress that leads to outstanding achievement
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, social and emotional abilities
- the encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management
- the support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment
- the identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are regularly shared with parents
- the good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school
- the clear aims for our work, and the regular monitoring to evaluate and improve what we do
- the regular identification of training needs of all adults working within the foundation stage

Roles and Responsibilities

The EYFS leader will:

- communicate and understand the vision of the school and never lose sight of the link between the quality of provision and its impact on the children's learning and development
- have high aspirations for children's achievement, irrespective of their circumstances or starting points
- have high expectations of their team's performance and of the quality of teaching and learning
- ensure consistency of teaching, learning and all routines across the foundation stage
- alongside the foundation stage teacher will moderate assessments made on the EYFS objectives, set targets and monitor progress
- look for new and innovative early years ideas to create an exciting learning environment.
- carry out formal and informal monitoring
- plan with the foundation stage teachers an exciting and innovative curriculum
- maintain resources

The EYFS teacher will:

- have high aspirations for children's achievement, irrespective of their circumstances or starting points.
- ensure consistency of teaching, learning and all routines across the foundation stage
- will moderate assessments made on the EYFS objectives, set targets and monitor progress
- carry out formal and informal monitoring
- plan and deliver an innovative foundation curriculum meeting all EYFS standards
- maintain the aesthetics of the learning environment
- maintain resources

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Assessment

In the Early Years Foundation Stage at St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School ongoing assessments are an integral part of the learning and developmental process. This helps to ensure the children are making progress towards the Early Learning Goals. We make systematic observations and assessments of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles. These observations feed directly into assessment and planning to create a cohesive and efficient system where we plan relevant activities and opportunities for each child. Feedback is given to the child verbally and also shared with parents and carers. Each child has a learning journey (nursery), an English file mathematics file, topic (cross curricular file) and a religious education file to record highlights of their learning journey over the year.

When a child is aged between 2 and 3 (pre nursery), staff review their progress and provide parents and /or carers with a written summary of the child's development in the 3 prime areas. This 'progress check' highlights the areas in which a child is progressing well and the areas in which additional support is needed.

Within the first 6 weeks of starting Reception each child completes, 'The Reception Baseline Assessment' (RBA). It provides a snapshot of where pupils are when they arrive at school. It provides a starting point to measure the progress schools make with their pupils between reception and the end of primary school. In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, and no later than 30 June in that term, the EYFS Profile must be completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their attainment against expected levels, and their readiness for year 1. The Profile must reflect practitioners' own knowledge and professional judgement of a child to inform discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution. Each child's level of development must be assessed against the early learning goals. Practitioners must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). This is the EYFS Profile.

Behaviour

Positive behaviour is expected and encouraged in the foundation stage as within the rest of school. We operate reward systems and praise good behaviour and attitudes. Age appropriate strategies are used to develop a safe and secure environment for learning. We use a whole school approach to discourage disruptive behaviours. The children are encouraged and praised for following the school rules. (Please see behaviour policy.)

Monitoring and review

The coordination and planning of the EYFS curriculum are the responsibility of the EYFS leader, who also:

- supports colleagues in their teaching, by keeping informed about current developments in EYFS and by providing a strategic lead and direction for this subject;
- gives the head teacher an annual summary report in which she evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in English and indicates areas for further improvement;
- uses specially allocated regular leadership time to review evidence of the children's work, and to observe lessons in EYFS across the school.

Equal Opportunities

Children will be encouraged to develop a positive attitude towards people of different ethnic groups, cultures, beliefs, gender and ability.

Special Educational Needs

Where children are identified as having special educational needs the foundation stage staff will liaise with the SENCO to seek support from outside agencies to provide guidance, targeted support and information.

Admission Arrangements

Children attend the EYFS on a full and part time basis. Places in the EYFS are offered in accordance with Brent Local Authority and the school's admissions policies. St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary school offers places

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to all children who are 3 years and over and we offer places throughout the year. Subject to ratios we can offer 2 year olds places.

All 3-year-old children are able to access a Free part-time 15 hour place the term after their child turns 3. Many working parents of 3 - 4 year olds could be eligible to receive 30 hours funded childcare.

Fees are charged for all 2-year-old and 3-year-old places where parents are not eligible for funding.