



Learning to Love, Loving to Learn
Love God, Love Each Other, Love Learning

Early Years Policy

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Vision

Our Vision for the children at Sacred Heart RC Primary School is to Learning to Love, Loving to Learn, Love God, Love Each Other, Love Learning. Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School and Nursery is just like a family, where everyone is welcomed respected and cared for and where Love is at the heart of everything we do.

Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to the learning and development of all children from birth to the end of the Reception Year, which in Sacred Heart RC Primary School, is Nursery & Reception Class.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. It is not just a preparation for the next stage but is vitally important in itself.

Learning for children is a rewarding and enjoyable experience in which they explore, investigate, discover, create, practice, rehearse, repeat, revise and consolidate their developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes. During the Foundation Stage, many of these aspects of learning are brought together effectively through playing and talking.

Our early years practitioners aim to do all they can to help children have the best possible start in life, offering provision which enables them to develop their personalities, talents and abilities, irrespective of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities or gender.

We endeavour to provide the best possible teaching and learning for our children at Sacred Heart RC ensuring we give children the broad range of knowledge and skills that enable them to be 'school ready' and have the skills and attitudes of lifelong learners.

At Sacred Heart RC, we recognise that children are born with a natural desire to explore and learn and that practitioners can support them in this. We do this by creating an enabling environment (both physical and emotional) and through the relationships and interactions that the children experience. We do not plan ahead, rather we remain 'in the moment' with the children as they explore and learn. We observe carefully, and enhance the learning whenever we spot a 'teachable moment.' Our observations, interactions and the outcomes are recorded afterwards.



Aims/Objectives

At Sacred Heart RC Primary School, 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 learners. We value the individual child and work alongside parents and carers to help every child reach their full potential.

As outlined in the 'Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage':
'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.'

Statutory Framework of EYFS

We adhere to the 'Statutory Framework of the 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/ 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 curriculum areas, using play 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 carers;
- Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment and by the children's own ideas and interests;
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult-initiated, child-initiated and adult supported;
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and outdoors.



EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE CURRICULUM

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests, and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve their end points (ELGs).

All seven areas of learning and development are important and interconnected.

Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive, both in the EYFS and into Key Stage 1. These three areas are the **prime** areas:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Children are also supported through the four **specific** areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice.

Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

1. **Playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
2. **Active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties.
3. **Creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

Using the Characteristics for Effective Learning (EYFS 2020) alongside Sacred Heart RC 'Learning Powers'(Share, Have a go, Enjoy learning, Always improving, Resilient, Think) we endeavour to provide our children with the opportunities to develop varied interests and preoccupations. Our children have opportunities to play and explore the world around them, are encouraged to take risks developing a trial and error approach to problems. They are becoming motivated learners who bounce back after difficulties, enjoying and achieving what they set out to do. Practitioners ensure children have the chance to think critically, are encouraged to have their own ideas and choose different ways to do things by skilful interaction (**encourage, question, enable, correct, model, inspire**).

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which they can explore, think creatively and be active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.



We create long term plans (Whole Child) based on a series of topics each of which offers experiences in all seven areas of learning as well as using children's interests to drive our planning.

At the beginning of each topic the children are encouraged to share their ideas for learning experiences with us which we record in a class 'Floorbook'. These ideas are then used to inform our short-term weekly planning, alongside our observations which identify areas to focus on.

We always remain flexible to allow for unplanned circumstances and children's responses. Our planning is continually evaluated by all staff to ensure that children's individual 'Next Steps in Learning' and personalised learning needs are met.

Children will engage in whole group and small group activities alongside their independent learning. There are also allocated times for whole class daily 'carpet learning sessions'. These consist of Phonics (Little Wandle), Maths (Power Maths), Literacy, Prayer & Worship, Dinosaur School, Tales Toolkit & Topic.

The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined by the EYFS framework: *'Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities'*.

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those which are planned by adults. During children's play, the adults in class interact when appropriate to stretch and challenge them further.

In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and build these into our practice. We create a stimulating learning environment to encourage children to free-flow between inside and outdoors as far as possible.

At Sacred Heart RC, Foundation Stage Practitioners:

- **Go to the child.** The child is NOT called to come to the adult. We work this way because high level involvement occurs in child initiated activity.
- Are there to teach. They do this through **observing** and **interacting**.
- Have a secure understanding of child development.
- **Enhance** and **extend** the learning at the appropriate level for each unique child.
- Use the observation cycle on a **moment by moment** basis. The **focus children** are given extra attention, but all the children are busy and learning all the time and subsequently **WOW moments** are recorded for all children as and when they occur.
- Record activities that have occurred on the planning sheet, highlighting the adult input. The symbol "T" indicates "adult" e.g. "T suggests...encourages...models...asks...ponders...helps...offers resources...etc".
- Plan and enhance a learning environment, which takes into account children's development and interests. This is often centred around high quality, gender neutral texts which inspire and engage learners.



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- Plan weekly, learning opportunities and activities which challenge learners, across the 3 prime areas and 4 specific areas of learning and development. This includes 'direct teaching,' (Phonics, Maths, English, Big Maths, Dinosaur School, PE and Spanish) uniquely planned learning and 'enhancements' to support and encourage 'in the moment' activities.
- Plan specifically for the role of the teaching assistants so they are clear in their role and the interactions they make (encourage, question, enable, correct, model, inspire).
- Plan for daily phonics, in line with 'letters and sounds', speaking and listening opportunities and rehearsal of number skills (Number Fun).

PHONICS & WRITING IN EARLY YEARS

In Nursery & Reception we follow the Little Wandle Scheme.

In Nursery we work towards touching upon initial sounds in Phase 2. From the beginning of Nursery, we follow Phase 1 which focuses upon embedded our listening skills.

In Reception we recap Phase 1 in September in continuous provision and then move on to Phase 2 sounds until reaching Phase 3 & 4. In Reception children sit at tables to complete Phonics work as well as using whiteboards to record. By prompting good writing behaviours from the beginning of Reception this allows children to be 'Year 1 ready'. Developing a good posture is as important as developing a good pencil grip.

In order that children eventually acquire a legible, fluent and fast handwriting style we develop skills including:

- good gross and fine motor control,
- a recognition of pattern,
- a language to talk about shapes and movements.

Gross motor control is the term used to describe the development of controlled movements of the whole body, or limbs (arms or legs). Of particular importance in relation to handwriting is the development of good posture and balance. Activities such as dance, football, use of small apparatus, cycling, gripping climbing frames and building with large-scale construction kits all develop gross motor control.

Fine motor control is the term used to describe smaller movements, usually of the hand and fingers (or of the feet and toes for children who communicate using touch sensitive pads with their feet). Fine motor control is best developed through activities which involve small-scale movements such as dough disco, small construction toys and threading etc.

Reading Eggs

Reading Eggs is an app used throughout the school. It makes learning to read easy and fun for young kids as it is very interactive. It includes one-on-one lessons that matches a child's ability and feature fun characters, wonderful songs and interactive animations. Reading Eggs covers the five



components of reading which all children need to become confident readers: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, reading comprehension and fluency.

Practice Read Sessions & Take Home Reading Books

In Nursery all adults promote a love for reading by daily carpet reading as well as reading in the book corner. In most areas of provision, you will find books to link to the learning taking place in there. Nursery children take home a story book of their choice once a week and parents/carers are encouraged to develop the child's storytelling skills and how to handle books with care.

In Reception all adults also promote a love for reading as above. Daily practice reading sessions take place with an adult and up to 6 children at a time three times a week. This takes place throughout the week. Once they have read their reading book in school it goes home alongside a library book. Again as above parents/carers are encouraged to support their child at home with robot talking words, sound talking words and relaying key features of the text.

OBSERVATIONS 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 and everyone in class is encouraged to contribute. We assess and record using Tapestry, Floor Books, WELLCOMM, BLANKS, Key word books (Reception).

At Sacred Heart RC we capture children's learning through photographs, written descriptions & extended narratives. We use 'Tapestry' as an assessment and recording tool, alongside collecting examples of children's independent work. Each child has an online learning profile which is shared with parents. This is a working document that contains the learning documented over a year both at home and school. We work closely with parents and regularly share children's assessments on an ongoing basis. Each classroom in both Nursery & Reception have a WOW work display and work is celebrated by all. Both Nursery & Reception contribute to the Learning Journey Wall which displays week by week the learning that has taken place. This is evidenced using photographs and children's work as well as a teacher write up for the week. At the end of the half term this is then placed in a Floor Book to show children's progression throughout the half term.

Parents/carers are encouraged to upload their own observations to show us what their children are able to do at home.

These ongoing observations are used to inform the EYFS Profile/Development Matters bands. The children's progress is reviewed continually. Throughout their time in Nursery & Reception, parents/carers are welcomed in to share their children's learning; both informally through our planned stay & play sessions as well as our parent consultation meetings. When children are identified as '**focus children**' they send photographs via tapestry and fill out a '**whole child growing together**' sheet for the weekend. At the start of the child's focus week staff share the photos with the child and record their voice. This then informs '**in the moment**' teaching and learning. The



following week teachers meet the parents for a consultation meeting to share progress and discuss next steps.

At the end of the year the EYFS profile provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements including whether they have reached a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD).

Children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals (ELG) by the class teacher - who uses the exemplification documents, and their knowledge of the children to make a 'best fit' judgement.

The children are assessed as achieving a 1 or 2 against each area of the EYFS curriculum:

- 2 = Expected ELG – meeting the expected level
- 1 = Emerging ELG – not yet meeting the expected level

Teachers regularly attend moderation meetings provided by our local authority in which we work alongside other early years practitioners.

This profile data is the statutory data that is sent to the Local Authority and used to help school benchmark and identify improvements.

On entry to Nursery and Reception classes, staff undertake early baseline assessments using Development Matters (2020) to support their judgements. We recognise that high percentages of our children start Nursery significantly below 'typical' development for their age. Analysing this data enables staff to plan a 'tailor made' curriculum offering activities and interventions that support the growing needs of individual children. This enables children to rapidly make progress with their learning and development across the Foundation Stage, Nursery and Reception. We have introduced and embedded the use of weekly Tales Toolkit in order to enhance children's story telling skills. We have trained staff in WELCOMM, BLANKS and Elkan in order for children to receive the best speech and language interventions.

SAFETY INCLUDING SAFEGUARDING AND WELFARE REQUIREMENTS

The safety and welfare of our children is paramount at Sacred Heart RC Primary School. We have robust policies and procedures in place to ensure their safety.

In Nursery & Reception we provide a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to take risks, follow rules and stay safe. We comply with the welfare requirements set out in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage and understand that we must:

- Promote the welfare of all children;
- Promote good health;
- Manage behaviour effectively and appropriately;
- Ensure all adults working with children are suitable to do so;
- Ensure that the environment is safe and all equipment and furniture is fit for purpose;
- Ensure all children have a challenging and enjoyable learning experience.



Within EYFS we have developed the use of **The Colour Monster** book in order for children to identify their feelings and emotions on a regular basis. Children are able to discuss their own feelings with their peers as well as with adults confidently.

We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways, including the provision of nutritious fruit snacks, daily teeth brushing, access to milk & water throughout the day, allocating significant time for physical development and following set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.

Staff and visitors are prohibited from using their mobile phones in our classrooms, only the class iPads are used to photograph children (for Tapestry observations and assessment purposes) and children must be appropriately dressed in photographs.

Sacred Heart RC Primary School has robust systems in place to ensure that all practitioners who have regular contact with children are suitable for their role.

The EYFS staff hold the Paediatric First aid qualification, which is a statutory requirement of the EYFS.

The Child Protection Policy is in place to ensure the safety of all stakeholders at Sacred Heart Primary School. Backing up this policy is a dedicated safeguarding team which includes the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff have access to the 'CPOMMS' safeguarding system to log any concerns regarding any aspects of safeguarding and behaviour. All staff are vigilant in reporting concerns.

Each day, in line with school policy, staff are responsible for health and safety checks of the environment. Children are encouraged to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve and make a positive contribution (Every Child Matters, 2003).

Inclusion

We value all our children as individuals, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meet the needs of the individual child and support them at their own pace so that most of our children achieve the Early Learning Goals.

We work closely with the parents/carers of our high achieving children to ensure that their individual needs are met and their talents fostered. We ensure that these children are challenged appropriately to reach their full potential.

We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents/carers and outside agencies. We have a designated SENCO in school who supports us with any additional needs a child may have.



THE ROLE OF PARENTS/CARERS

We recognise the central importance of parents/carers as children's first educators. We believe they have a significant role to play in the lifelong education of their child. We strive to create and maintain partnerships with parents/carers as we recognise that together, we can have a significant impact on a child's learning. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate confidently in their child's education and care in numerous ways.

- Holding information evenings before the children start school;
- Talking to them about their child's interests and needs during our introductory sessions in school and at our home visits carried out each July;
- Being welcoming and approachable and having open communication through Class Dojo for parents to voice concerns/ask questions;
- Inviting them to a parent consultation in the Autumn, Spring and Summer Terms to discuss how their child has settled and share progress and next steps for learning;
- Valuing parents' contributions to online learning journeys;
- Inviting parents into school half termly for our themed 'Stay and Play sessions'.
- Encouraging parents to read with their child at home and make comments in their reading record books;
- Providing Knowledge Organisers for each topic, each term, highlighting how they can support their child at home;
- Inviting parents into school for 'parent phonics' sessions to demonstrate how we teach phonics and help them support their child;
- Providing parents with an end of year summary report detailing achievements and their child's EYFS profile;
- We also draw on our links with the community to enrich children's experiences by taking them on outings and inviting members of the community into our setting to talk about their lives, work and experiences.

We value parents as children's first and most enduring educators and recognise the importance of supporting home learning. Through parent workshops, morning sessions, drop-in's and parent consultation meetings, as well as regular communications through Dojo and social media, we are always looking at ways we can improve relationships and involvement with parents/carers to have the best possible positive impact on children's learning and development.

Monitoring of the EYFS

We are committed to providing the best possible experiences for our children. The EYFS Leader is responsible for monitoring provision, teaching and learning and children's progress. Information is shared with the Head teacher and EYFS team as appropriate and any necessary actions are taken.

All adults in the Nursery & Reception team have a key role in children's learning and development. Therefore, they are required to be knowledgeable and skilled in the EYFS curriculum. Any training needs for existing or new members of staff are identified and addressed in EYFS meetings.



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We ensure that our children are receiving high quality teaching and learning opportunities through planned, purposeful play and that the balance between adult led and child initiated learning is implemented through our monitoring, moderation and evaluation procedures. We regularly reflect on our practice to ensure our provision is appropriate for our children to successfully learn and develop.