

Early Years Policy

St Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy



Approved by:	Headteacher	Date: May 2023
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Our Vision of Discipleship

We are a distinctive Catholic community, which lays strong foundations and values of lifelong learning. We believe we are made in the image of God and are special in his eyes. We will endeavor to ensure that school, parish and home, work as one. Saint Patrick's is a unique place of learning where all are motivated to be the best they can be. We embrace the inspirational challenge to nurture a Christ-centred curriculum.

Our approach is to take pride in developing outstanding teaching and learning by holding the highest expectations of all our pupils and knowing the children well. By focusing on what unites societies rather than our differences, we strive to create a culture of tolerance, equality and friendship not just among pupils but all members of society.

We will provide a place where everyone can flourish, feel safe and are valued. We aim to provide innovative learning opportunities in a forward-thinking environment, where all are prepared to embark on future challenges with excitement and confidence. The world of learning will embed qualities such as integrity, honesty, faith and truth.

All children are challenged to strive for academic, creative, sporting and personal accomplishment within a broad, vibrant and rich curriculum. Our students are given time to explore subjects and develop deep understanding.

Our commitment is to enable our children to be confident, autonomous learners by developing a range of key learning skills including resilience, independence, patience, perseverance and teamwork. We want our children to be prepared for life in modern Britain and the global society and we understand the challenges our children will face in the next phase of life's journey.

Mission Statement

Saint Patrick's foundation stones are founded on a sacramental vision that is based on gospel values.

Every individual is valued and nurtured in their personal life journey.

We strive to inspire, motivate and encourage independence and recognise the unique nature of the individual.

Children are encouraged to have high expectations, an enquiring mind and appreciate the talents and beliefs of others that will lead to an enriched outlook on life.

The school community participates in mapping the future of education ensuring ownership and creating meaningful experiences.

Lifelong learning is a partnership where personal growth and human wholeness will enable children to travel the path of respect, integrity and all-encompassing love.

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1. Aims and Rationale:

The aims of Early Years at our school are to:

- To establish an entitlement for all children in the Foundation Stage
- To establish expectations for all staff working with children in the Foundation Stage
- To state the school's approaches to the Foundation Stage Curriculum in order to promote parents and carers understanding of the curriculum
- To promote continuity and coherence across the Foundation Stage, leading to Key Stage 1

2. Early Years Philosophy:

At St. Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy, 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 challenging 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.

As outlined in the EYFS '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.'

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 and/or carers

Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates

3. Principles into practice:

As part of our practice we:

Provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven areas of learning, 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 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
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and outdoors

4. 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 and exceed the early learning goals. The activities planned are cross-curricular and aim to develop the three Characteristics of Learning: Playing and Exploring, Active Learning and Creating and Thinking Critically.

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.

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.

The **specific** areas are:

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

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

As a team, we write long term and medium term plans using the EY Curriculum based on a series of themes, each of which offers experiences in all seven areas. These plans are reviewed by the Headteacher. Both teachers in FS1 and FS2 devise medium term plans together to ensure consistent approach across the Foundation Stage. These plans then inform our short-term weekly planning, alongside our observations, which remains flexible for unplanned circumstances or children's responses. All planning is reviewed and evaluated on a daily basis to ensure children's needs are met.

The teachers in FS1 and FS2 meet as part of internal moderation on a half-termly basis. They also attend external moderation meetings within local authority.

As a team, teachers and teaching assistants meet on a fortnightly basis in order to plan and evaluate outdoor provision. The team share their experiences and research new learning opportunities for the children.

Practitioners working with the youngest children in FS1 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, and become ready for school. The

balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as the children move through the Early Years at Saint Patrick's and grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas. Children with language needs will receive additional support through our school's Pre- Language programme, where children's vocabulary and understanding will be targeted.

Children have whole group and small group times which increase as they progress through the EYFS with times for a daily phonics session using 'Little Wandle', teaching aspects of Mathematics and Literacy, including shared reading and writing.

The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined by the EYFS.

'Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated learning'

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are planned by the adults. During children's play, early years practitioners interact to stretch and challenge children further. A rich variety of open-ended opportunities is available for all the children to stimulate their learning.

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

5. Outdoor Play

At St. Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy, we believe that all areas of learning can be addressed equally in the inside and outdoors. Well-planned outdoor play is a key way in which Early Years staff support young children to learn with enjoyment and challenge. It enables children to learn and explore their natural environment and become engaged by rich first-hand experiences.

At St Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy, we aim to:

- Value the outdoor environment and give it status through the active involvement of all practitioners with the children
- Allow access to outside as much as possible
- Provide inviting and stimulating learning environment for children to explore and actively engage in
- Provide access in most types of weather with children appropriately dressed
- Plan outdoor activities with the same thought and effort as those inside
- Plan for individual children outside as well as inside
- Develop activities according to children's interest and ideas.
- Ensure that the outside area meets health and safety criteria and that all have equal access

Staff will plan and develop an outdoor learning environment that includes:

- A defined boundary in which the children can feel safe, secure and confident
- Watchful adults to provide appropriate intervention to engage children in the learning process
- A range of large and small equipment and cross-curricular activities which help to promote interactive and independent play and sharing skills

Opportunities for self-initiated activities under adult supervision

6. Observation and Assessment:

As part of our daily practice we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform our future plans. Observations are made constantly whilst children are engaged in learning. Staff members use their time well to fully engage with the children, so the children are well known to the adult. Everyone is encouraged to contribute and discussions take place. Significant observations of children's achievements are collated, and are shared with parents. These ongoing observations are used to inform the EYFS Profile/developmental matter bands. The child's progress is reflected upon and reviewed on a daily basis through formative assessment, as well as discussions with staff and parents.

In the Autumn, Spring and Summer term, parents are invited to attend parents' evenings and end-of-year reports are written once a year.

Children's progress is formally discussed and analysed by the practitioners on a termly basis during Pupils' Progress Meetings.

7. Safety:

At St. Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy, 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/accident.

Please see our separate policies and procedures on Health and Safety and Child Protection.

8. Inclusion:

We value all our children as individuals at St. Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender and value early identification of special educational need. 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 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 and outside agencies.

9. Religious Education:

As a Catholic school the teaching of R.E is fundamental. The school belongs to the Hallam Diocese. The scheme taught in school is 'Come and See' which is tailored made to each year group. It encourages a 'Christ

Centered' approach allowing children to add a further dimension to their experience in school and explore prayer and spiritually.

Children's work is recorded via videos, photographs, written work and detailed observations and stored in a Come and See RE Folder.

10. Transitions:

Transitions are carefully planned for and time given to ensure continuity of learning. At any transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings, including nurseries and childminders. Children attend introductory sessions to FS1/FS2 to develop familiarity with the setting and practitioners. Children in Nursery enter at different times in the year, usually the term after which they turn three years old. FS2 children start full time in September. In the final term in FS2, the respective teacher and Year 1 teachers liaise to discuss the individual children, their needs and analyse the assessment data to inform transition and planning. A series of transition days are organised across the whole school in July. During that week, new FS2 children attend the school for a number of days and home visits take place in FS1 setting.

11. Roles and responsibilities

11.1 The governing board

The governing board will hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy. The governing board has delegated the approval of this policy to Mrs. Sharon McKeown [the headteacher].

11.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that Early Years Foundation Stage is well established and learning is taught effectively across Foundation Stage 1 and Foundation Stage 2.

11.3 Early Years Leader and Co-ordinator

The co-ordinator, Ms. Boardman, Early Years Leader and Coordinator, as well as Curriculum Lead is responsible for monitoring this delivery with Mrs. Sharon McKeown (Headteacher). They also have a responsibility for supporting other members of staff in the implementation of this policy and will provide a lead in the dissemination of the information relating to the Early Years curriculum and the provision of in-service training, as well as external training.

11.4 Staff

Staff in the Early Years are responsible for:

- Delivering an effective Early Years curriculum using quality resources and time to fully engage with children.
- Modelling positive attitudes
- Monitoring progress
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils
- Responding appropriately to parents and pupils who may have queries or concerns around the Early Years curriculum and wish to discuss or explore these further

12. Monitoring arrangements

The delivery of Early Years is monitored by Ms. Boardman, Early Years Lead, along with Mrs. S. Verdon-Smith, Curriculum Lead, as well as Mrs. S. McKeown, Head teacher through:

A selection of the following each term:

Learning Walks, Book Looks, Planning Scrutinies, Lesson Observations, Pupil Voice, Parent Voice, Staff Voice.

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the Early Years Leader. It is evaluated and reviewed by the whole staff and Governors annually to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the children, staff and parents, and that it is in line with current DfE advice and guidance.

At every review, the policy will be approved by Mrs. S. McKeown, Headteacher.

Implementation and Review of Policy

Implementation of the policy will take place after consultation with the Governors in the Autumn term 2024.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head teacher, Early Years Co-Ordinator, the Governing Body and Staff. The next review date is [Autumn Term 2025](#).

Links with other policies

This policy links particularly to the following policies and procedures:

- Child Protection Policy.
- Behaviour Policy.
- Anti-bullying Policy.
- Online Safety Policy

- SEND Policy.
- Relationships and Health Education Policy. (RHE Policy)
- Personal, Social, Health, Economic Education Policy. (PSHE Policy)
- Marking and Feedback Policy.

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