

## **Early Years Policy**

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At St James C of E Primary School, we value 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. We ensure quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress from their starting points.

Our approach involves both child-initiated and teacher-supported learning. We encourage children's learning and enquiry through interactions that aim to stretch their thinking to higher levels. Our aim is to have an environment that is welcoming, friendly, supportive and challenging. We wish for all children to have a happy and confident beginning to their school life at St James C of E Primary School.

### Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- A close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

### Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the [2024 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#).

The following documents should be read in conjunction with this policy: Admissions Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Acceptable Use of IT Policy, Behaviour Policy, Intimate Care Policy.

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

## Structure

Our EYFS is made up of two Reception classes, who are taught by teachers and supported by teaching assistants. Children attend full time school hours 8:45-15:15 (children can enter from 8:35) during the term time.

## Curriculum

We offer an exciting and challenging EYFS curriculum based on an observation of children's needs, interests and stages of development. We approach each block of learning through a key text which will lend itself to being investigated in a wide range of ways which will suit the children's interests and own curiosity. In partnership with parents/carers, the school promotes the learning and development of pupils to ensure they are ready for the next stage of education.

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2024 EYFS Statutory Framework.

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

A daily phonics session using the 'Little Wandle Letters and Sounds' synthetics phonics programme alongside other resources and strategies is used to support the development of reading and writing skills. Mathematics is taught using "Mastering Number" which informs our provision opportunities to practise and develop number sense through cardinality, comparison, composition, pattern and subitising.

The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach to cover the 17 Early Learning Goals as outlined by the Early Years Framework. We plan for a stimulating environment, drawing upon the interests of the children as well as key events both within our school community and worldwide. Children are encouraged to free-flow between inside and outside and 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 support and scaffold understanding further and provide challenge, with an emphasis on supporting the development of language across all areas of learning.

Guided by the Early Years Framework, staff reflect upon the characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- **Playing and Exploring** - Children investigate and experience things and “have a go”.
- **Active learning** - Children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties and enjoy their achievements.
- **Creating and thinking critically** - Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

## Planning

Staff plan activities and experiences for children that enable children to develop and learn effectively. In order to do this, staff working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime areas.

Staff also take into account the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

In planning and guiding children’s activities, staff reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice.

## Teaching

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play. We recognise that play is essential to pupils’ cognitive, imaginative, creative, emotional and social development. We aim to provide play experiences which have a balance between adult-led and child-initiated play; allowing pupils to explore their own ideas and apply what they have learnt in different situations. Staff respond to each child’s emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning.

## Assessment

At St James C of E Primary School, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child **starts reception**, staff will complete the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

At the **end of EYFS**, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels (‘emerging’)

The profile reflects ongoing observations, and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child.

The profile is moderated internally (referring to the Development Matters [guidance](#)) and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.

- Assessment plays an important part in helping the school to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, plan activities, and assess the need for support. Parents/carers will be kept up-to-date with their child's progress and development, and the class teacher will address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents/carers.
- In order to recognise pupils' needs, understand their progress, and to plan activities and support pupils' development, progress will be monitored.

We provide opportunities for two parent/carer consultation meetings so that parents/carers can discuss their child's progress. If needed, further opportunities for discuss can happen by appointment throughout the year.

### Working with parents

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. The progress check and EYFS profile helps to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

Each child has their class teacher as their key person, and the teacher consults with the wider staff team in EYFS.

We encourage parents to contribute to their children's learning journals with notable steps in development, we invite them in to school to take part in shared learning opportunities, we welcome them to support learning in a range of ways including reading and library support.

### 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 meets the needs of the individual child and supports them at their own pace so that our children meet age related expectation at the end of their foundation years.

The fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs are implicitly embedded in our curriculum. We welcome and celebrate difference and recognise that each of us are unique individuals that are valued members of our school community.

Discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated and we work to ensure that children understand and respect each other in line with our Anti-bullying Policy and practices.

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, we work closely with parents, the school's special educational needs co-ordinator and outside agencies.

### Safeguarding and welfare procedures

St James C of E Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Staff and volunteers are expected to share this commitment.

All staff know and understand our Child Protection Policy and procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of all children in our care. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is the Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Cowden.

We work closely with parents, families, carers and external agencies in order to support our children. Please also refer to our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy which is available as a paper copy in school and on our school website. We have a dedicated link Governor who ensures that our children are safe and have access to a rich and balanced EYFS curriculum.

Our staff ratio is high and each class within Reception is led by a qualified teacher and appropriately qualified teaching support assistants. At lunchtime, we use experienced lunchtime supervisors who ensure our children are well supported during lunch to facilitate their social skills development and positive eating habits.

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. The EYFS teaching team take part in supervised meetings on a regular basis with the EYFS leader to receive safeguarding updates and share effective practise.

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

## Transition

Transitions are carefully planned for and time is 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.

Before children join us in September for Reception, they are visited in their previous nursery/childminding or homeschool settings, parent meetings are held to get to know the child and their family better prior to them joining school and children attend introductory sessions to Reception to develop familiarity with the setting and the staff.

In the final term of Reception, the Year 1 teachers will meet with the EYFS staff and discuss each child's development against the Early Learning Goals. Taking their needs into account careful consideration is given to the planning and teaching they will receive when they join Year 1.

#### Appendix 1. List of statutory policies and procedures for EYFS

Statutory policy or procedure for EYFS	Where can it be found?
Safeguarding policy and procedures	See Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Procedure for responding to illness	See Health and Safety Policy
Administering medicines policy	See Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
Emergency evacuation procedure	See Health and Safety Policy
Procedure for checking the identity of visitors	See Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Procedures for a parent failing to collect a child and for missing children	See Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints	See Complaints Policy
Intimate Care Policy	See Intimate Care Policy