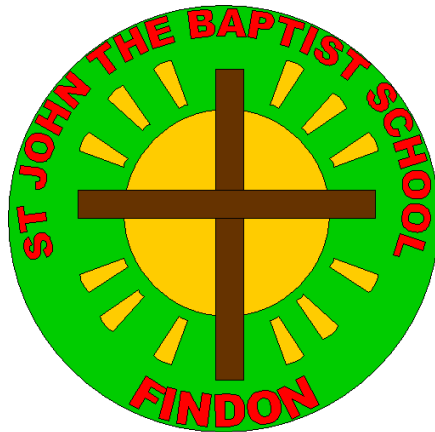


**ST JOHN THE BAPTIST C OF E PRIMARY
SCHOOL
FINDON**

EARLY YEARS POLICY



Reviewed:	December 2024
Next Review:	December 2026

Early Years Policy

"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, March 2021

Introduction

At St John the Baptist Primary School, we are committed to providing a nurturing and inclusive Early Years environment that celebrates each child's unique qualities, fosters positive relationships, and enables optimal learning and development. This policy outlines our core principles and practices in Early Years education.

The EYFS Curriculum

There are seven areas of learning in the EYFS curriculum. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. There are three prime areas that are crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for expanding their capacity to learn. These are:

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

There are then four specific areas through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

These are:

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

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

A Unique Child

We wholeheartedly celebrate the individuality of each child. Our approach is centred around offering personalised learning opportunities and fostering close collaboration with families and professionals from various settings who possess valuable insights into each child's development. Our highly skilled practitioners are well-versed in the intricacies of children's growth, development, and learning. To promote a positive sense of identity and culture, our curriculum and activities are carefully designed. We acknowledge that children learn in diverse ways and at different paces, and our provision is tailored to accommodate these variations.

Positive Relationships

We recognise that children are nurtured through secure relationships. Therefore, our goal is to establish caring, respectful, and professional connections with both the children and their families and caregivers.

We acknowledge parents as children's foremost and enduring educators and highly value their contributions in the educational journey.

Enabling Environments

At St John the Baptist Primary School, we place great emphasis on the role of the physical and human environment in supporting and extending children's development. We keenly observe children, assessing their interests, development, and learning to plan challenging yet achievable activities and experiences that stimulate their growth.

The Learning Environment

Our learning environments are thoughtfully organised to inspire children to explore and learn securely and safely. Our classroom is divided into distinct learning areas, where children can independently access equipment and resources. Our classroom has an enclosed outdoor area, providing children with the opportunity to seamlessly transition between indoor and outdoor learning environments. Outdoor activities offer unique possibilities for exploration and discovery. We plan activities and provide resources that encompass all seven areas of learning, fostering holistic development.

Observation, Assessment, and Planning

Our planning is rooted in continuous formative assessment of each child's progress. Additionally, we maintain long-term, medium-term, and short-term plans to ensure curriculum coverage while remaining adaptable to the needs of individuals and the class as a whole. Assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) relies on observations by all adults interacting with the child. These observations are documented using the iPad-based Tapestry Journal software and are aligned with The Birth to Five Document, which in turn informs our end-of-phase assessments in each child's EYFS Profile.

The Wider Context

We maintain close partnerships with external agencies to support children's development. When necessary, we involve health and social care professionals, family support workers, and members of the local community. We take pride in our diverse school community and actively promote community cohesion. We engage in regular meetings with local schools to ensure accurate assessment data for children transferring between settings and to strengthen continuity for families joining us from other schools.

Learning and Development

We acknowledge that children learn and develop uniquely and at varying rates. We hold all areas of learning and development in equal regard, recognising their interconnectedness. Our teaching and learning strategies are tailored to create a secure and nurturing school environment where children experience well-being and achievement. Our practitioners are well-versed in child development, and this knowledge informs their planning of learning opportunities.

We provide children with first-hand experiences, clear explanations, appropriate interventions, and opportunities for extended play, both indoors and in our outdoor environments. Our curriculum guides children towards achieving the Early Learning Goals throughout the EYFS, leveraging the richness of both indoor and outdoor experiences.

In our outdoor spaces, children have the chance to connect with nature and the world around them. Through activities such as growing vegetables, exploring our nature area, and engaging in woodwork projects, they acquire a deeper appreciation for the natural world and develop a range of practical skills.

We empower children to actively participate in activities that resonate with their interests and passions, fostering their intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development. Communication and reflection on learning are strongly encouraged, nurturing independence and self-management skills that will serve them well throughout their educational journey.

We also believe in the importance of involving parents in their child's development journey. Progress and future learning needs are identified through observations, which we share with parents. This collaborative approach ensures that each child receives comprehensive support and guidance as they progress through our Early Years Foundation Stage.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning in the Early Years

Play and Exploration

In the Early Years, we recognise three core characteristics that underpin effective teaching and learning. The first of these is "Play and Exploration."

Children's play is a reflection of their diverse interests and curiosities. We firmly believe that through play, young children unlock their highest learning potential. Play with peers holds particular significance in children's development.

Within the realm of play, our children embark on journeys of exploration, enabling them to grasp and make sense of the world around them. They experiment with and cultivate their ideas, acquiring skills in self-control and an understanding of the importance of rules. Through play, children tap into their creative thinking both independently and in collaboration with others. They communicate their thoughts and feelings as they delve into problem-solving, and they find a safe space to express and process emotions, including those that may induce anxiety.

Active Learning

The second cornerstone of effective teaching and learning in the Early Years is "Active Learning."

Children thrive when learning is a dynamic blend of physical and mental challenges. Active learning encompasses interactions with people, objects, ideas, and events that captivate and engage children for extended periods.

Motivation and interest are at the heart of active learning. We grant children a degree of autonomy and control over their learning, nurturing their confidence as they gradually assume ownership of their educational journey. As they develop, they gain the ability to make decisions, a process that brings them a profound sense of accomplishment and responsibility for their own learning.

Creativity and Critical Thinking

The third pivotal characteristic is "Creativity and Critical Thinking."

Children flourish when given opportunities to explore and engage with ideas across various contexts and with a diverse array of resources. Through these experiences, they forge connections and arrive at fresh and deeper understandings, refining their approach to problem-solving and decision-making.

Our practitioners actively support children's creative thinking and encourage them to make connections by expressing genuine interest, providing encouragement, clarifying ideas, and posing open-ended questions. Children are free to access resources at will and may choose to manipulate their learning environment to broaden their knowledge and experiences.

These three characteristics - Play and Exploration, Active Learning, and Creativity and Critical Thinking - form the foundation of our approach to teaching and learning in the Early Years. We are committed to

nurturing a rich and engaging learning environment that empowers children to thrive and develop holistically.

Home Visits

- We offer either a home visit or a telephone call during the first week of September. This allows you the summer break to ponder any questions or curiosities you may have.
- Two members of our staff will conduct the visit, and we will schedule the visit at a time and date that is convenient for you.
- The visit provides our staff with the chance to meet you and your child in a comfortable and secure environment.
- During these meetings, we aim not only to become acquainted with parents and children but also to explain our routines, schedules, and other pertinent information. These meetings serve as an opportunity to address any inquiries you may have about the school. They also allow our staff to interact with your child and discover more about their interests.
- These meetings serve as a platform for parents and the school to discuss mutual expectations and any potential support that may be available or required.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is a fundamental aspect of the partnership upon which our Early Years program is founded. We actively encourage parents to engage with and contribute to their child's educational journey in the following ways:

- **Weekly Learning Updates:** Parents are invited to read the weekly "What We Are Learning About This Week" letter, which provides insights into the curriculum and learning objectives. We encourage parents to use this information to engage in learning experiences with their children at home.
- **Workshops:** We offer a series of workshops in areas such as mathematics, literacy, and phonics specifically designed for parents of children in Reception. These workshops provide parents with a deeper understanding of how their children are taught and how they learn, fostering collaboration between home and school.
- **Tapestry Journal:** Parents are encouraged to actively participate in their child's learning journey by sharing experiences and achievements from outside of school within their child's Tapestry Journal. This platform facilitates communication and allows parents to play an active role in documenting their child's progress.
- **Academic Trips:** Parents are warmly invited to join us on academic trips, where they can actively participate in their child's educational experiences beyond the school premises. These trips offer opportunities for shared learning and exploration.
- **Partnership of Trust and Communication:** We believe that the education of our children is most effective when it is built upon a foundation of trust and open communication between parents and the school. This partnership enables our children to develop to their fullest potential by ensuring that learning is a collaborative effort between home and school.

We value and appreciate the active involvement of parents in our Early Years program, as it enriches the learning experiences of our children and strengthens the sense of community within our school. Through this partnership, we aim to provide a supportive and holistic education that nurtures each child's growth and development.

Children

At St John the Baptist Primary School, every child receives dedicated support from our team of practitioners.

Within the Foundation Stage, we are committed to providing children with a continuous stream of new experiences. These experiences are carefully designed to extend their skills, boost their confidence, and build upon their existing knowledge base. To promote deep understanding, we encourage children to actively engage in various ways, including play, dialogue, observation, planning, inquiry, experimentation, respect for others, self-reflection, and responsive interactions with adults and their peers.

Through thoughtfully crafted play-based activities, children embark on a journey of learning that is both enjoyable and challenging during the Foundation Stage. These learning experiences take place within a secure environment where all members contribute to fostering a positive ethos and a set of core values that define our school's culture.

Our practitioners embody this value system, ensuring that it is not only communicated to parents but also experienced by our children on a daily basis. This commitment to a nurturing and values-driven environment ensures that each child's educational journey at our school is enriching, supportive, and aligned with our shared principles.

Observation and Assessment

As an integral part of our daily practice, we consistently observe and assess children's development and learning to guide our future planning. These observations are documented using a variety of methods, and we encourage active participation and discussion among our team.

Significant observations regarding children's achievements are meticulously recorded in their individual Tapestry Learning Journal using iPads. These observations are subsequently shared with parents, providing them with valuable insights into their child's progress and experiences at school.

To further enhance communication and collaboration with parents, we schedule three meetings annually to discuss each child's next steps. During these meetings, we collaboratively determine the provisions that will support their continued development and suggest activities that families can engage in at home to reinforce their child's learning.

Additionally, upon completing their time in Reception, we compile an EYFS profile for each child. This profile is then shared with Year 1 teachers, informing them of each child's stage of development and learning needs. This information guides the planning of appropriate activities in Year 1, ensuring a smooth transition and continuity in their educational journey.

Transitions

At St John the Baptist Primary School, we place significant emphasis on the seamless transitions that children experience as they progress through their early years of education. These transitions are thoughtfully planned to ensure the continuity of learning and a supportive adjustment to new environments and challenges.

During transitions, we prioritise the individual needs of each child and foster effective partnerships with all those involved in the child's care, including previous nurseries or childminders. Our approach to transitions is designed to create a smooth and reassuring shift for every child.

As part of our transition process, children attend introductory sessions in Ash Class. These sessions serve as a bridge, allowing them to become familiar with the new setting and the practitioners who will be supporting their learning journey.

In the final term of Reception, a vital transition takes place as Year 1 approaches. During this crucial period, the Year 1 teacher collaborates closely with the Early Years staff. Together, they engage in comprehensive discussions about each child's development, measured against the Early Learning Goals. This collaborative effort is pivotal in ensuring a seamless transition to Year 1.

By assessing each child's progress and unique needs, the Year 1 teacher gains valuable insights that enable them to plan an effective, responsive, and tailored curriculum. This curriculum is specifically designed to cater to the diverse learning needs of all children, ensuring that they embark on their Year 1 journey with confidence, enthusiasm, and the necessary support to excel.

Our commitment to well-planned transitions reflects our dedication to providing a holistic and uninterrupted educational experience, where every child's growth and development are at the forefront of our approach.

Safety

The safety and well-being of our children are paramount at St John the Baptist Primary School. We are fully committed to creating and maintaining a safe and secure environment that fosters optimal learning and development. Our curriculum is designed not only to educate children but also to impart essential life skills related to safety, decision-making, and risk assessment.

We also prioritise the promotion of good health among the children in our care. Our efforts include providing nutritious meals and adhering to specific procedures in cases where children fall ill or have accidents. Our aim is to maintain a nurturing and protective environment where children can thrive and explore with confidence.

Inclusion

We deeply value each and every child as a unique individual. Regardless of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability, or gender, we celebrate the diversity of our school community. Our commitment to inclusion is at the core of our educational philosophy.

We meticulously plan a curriculum that is tailored to meet the specific needs of each child, allowing them to progress at their own pace. Our goal is to support every child in achieving and even exceeding the Early Learning Goals, ensuring that each child reaches their full potential.

We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial. This early identification enables us to provide the necessary support and resources to help every child thrive. In this endeavour, we maintain close and collaborative partnerships with parents and external agencies.

To further understand our commitment to inclusion, we encourage you to refer to our separate school policies on Equality of Opportunity, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and Teaching & Learning. These policies provide comprehensive insights into our dedication to creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all children in our care.

Ratios

At St John the Baptist Primary School, we prioritise the safety and well-being of our children by ensuring that our staff levels in the Early Years setting adhere to statutory guidance. Our aim is to maintain suitable levels of supervision to create a secure and nurturing environment for all children.

Children under our care are kept within sight and hearing of responsible adults at all times to guarantee their safety. To oversee the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision, we appoint an EYFS Leader who plays a pivotal role in maintaining a high standard of care and supervision.

The EYFS Leader is responsible for the following:

- Providing dedicated spaces or partitioned areas for children who may wish to engage in quiet relaxation or play, ensuring the availability of appropriate furniture to accommodate their needs.
- Planning daily outdoor activities and preparing outdoor resources to offer children a well-rounded learning experience that includes both indoor and outdoor exploration.
- Ensuring that there are appropriate adult-to-child ratios in place at all times, guaranteeing that each child receives the necessary attention and support.
- Maintaining the presence of at least one staff member with a current paediatric first aid certificate on the premises whenever children are present. This certification ensures that we are prepared to respond promptly and effectively to any medical needs that may arise.
- Conducting thorough risk assessments, both collective and individual, prior to engaging in any practical activities or excursions. This proactive approach ensures that the safety of the children is upheld during all learning experiences, both within and outside the school premises.

By adhering to these principles and guidelines, we aim to create a safe, enriching, and supportive environment in which our children can thrive, explore, and learn with confidence.

Reception Baseline Assessment

The Reception Baseline Assessment is a brief, interactive, and practical evaluation of each child's early literacy, communication, language, and mathematics skills as they embark on their journey in Reception. This assessment must be conducted within the first 6 weeks of a child starting school in Reception. If a child joins us mid-year from another country or school and has not participated in the Reception Baseline Assessment, we will carry out the assessment within 6 weeks of their enrolment with us.

The Reception Baseline Assessment is administered by the class teacher using an online program that can be accessed via an iPad or laptop. It is conducted on a one-to-one basis with each child. Once the assessment has been completed and the data input into the online program, it provides us with an insight into each child's starting point as they enter Reception.

The primary purpose of the Reception Baseline Assessment is to establish a baseline from which we can measure the progress of our pupils throughout their primary school journey. The data collected from this assessment will only be utilised by the Department for Education when each child reaches the end of Year 6. It serves as a baseline to track the progress of each child's year group from Reception to Year 6. A copy of the assessment can be given to parents on request.

Early Years Foundation Profile

The Early Years Foundation Profile (EYFS profile) assessment is a crucial evaluation conducted in the final term of Reception.

The primary purpose of the EYFS profile is to offer a reliable, valid, and accurate assessment of individual children's development as they conclude their Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) education.

EYFS profile data serves several essential purposes, including:

- Informing parents about their child's development in relation to the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) and the characteristics of their learning.
- Facilitating a seamless transition to Key Stage 1 (KS1) by enhancing communication between EYFS and KS1 teachers.
- Assisting Year 1 teachers in planning a responsive, effective, and suitable curriculum tailored to meet the unique needs of all children.

The EYFS profile contributes to a comprehensive national dataset, offering insights into the levels of child development at the conclusion of the EYFS. The Department for Education (DfE) utilises this dataset to monitor changes in children's development and their readiness for the next stage of their education, both at the national and local levels. It's important to note that school-level results will not be published in performance tables.

Safeguarding within Early Years Settings

Please see our School Safeguarding Policy

Our Early Years policy at St John the Baptist Primary School is rooted in the principles of celebrating individuality, nurturing positive relationships, providing enabling environments, and fostering a holistic approach to learning and development. We are committed to working closely with families and external partners to create a supportive and enriching Early Years experience for every child.