

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Policy on the Early Years

This policy is to be read in conjunction with our other policies

'Learn, love and respect through Jesus'

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Early Years (EY) extends from birth to the end of the reception year. Children enter our nursery in September each year.
- 1.2 The Early Years is important in its own right, and also in preparing children for later schooling. The stages of typical development detailed in the Early Years Outcomes and the Early Learning Goals set out what is expected of most children by the end of the Early Years.
- 1.3 Children joining our school have already learnt a great deal. Many have been learning in one of the various educational settings that exist in our community. The early-years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:
 - it builds on what our children already know and can do;
 - it ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
 - it offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
 - it provides a rich and stimulating environment.

2 Aims and objectives

- 2.1 The Early Years curriculum underpins all future learning by promoting and developing:
 - personal, social and emotional well-being;
 - positive attitudes and dispositions towards learning;
 - social skills;
 - attention skills and persistence;
 - language and communication;
 - reading and writing;
 - mathematics;
 - understanding of the world;
 - physical development;
 - creative development.

3 Teaching and learning style

- 3.1 The features of effective teaching and learning in our school are defined in our policy on teaching and learning. They apply to teaching and learning in the Early Years just as much as they do to the teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 or 2.
- 3.2 The more general features of good practice in our school that relate to the Early Years are:
 - a balance of quality adult directed and good quality child initiated learning opportunities, supported and extended by practitioners everyday;
 - the partnership between teachers and parents/carers that helps our children to feel secure at school, and to develop a sense of well-being and achievement;

- the understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this must be reflected in their teaching;
- the range of approaches that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions, and extend and develop the children's play, talk or other means of communication;
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards achieving the Early Learning Goals at the end of the reception year
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests, and develop their intellectual, physical, 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 space, facilities and equipment, both indoors and outdoors;
- the identification, through observations, of children's progress and future learning needs, which are regularly shared with parents and carers;
- the good relationships between our school and the other educational settings in which the children have been learning before joining our school;
- the clear aims of our work, and the regular monitoring of our work to evaluate and improve it;
- the regular identification of training needs for all practitioners working in the Early Years.
- the identification, through observations, of the characteristics of effective learning displayed by children, which are regularly shared with parents and carers.

4 Play in the Early Years

- 4.1 Through play, our children explore and develop the learning experiences that help them make sense of the world. They practice and build up their ideas, learn how to control themselves, and begin to understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively both alongside other children and on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears, or re-live anxious experiences, in controlled and safe situations.

5 Inclusion in the Early Years

- 5.1 We believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning (see our policy on inclusion).
- 5.2 In the Early Years, we set realistic and challenging expectations keyed to the needs of our children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of reception. Some children progress beyond this point and are working within the Key Stage 1 curriculum by the end of reception. We help them do this by planning to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able, of children with disabilities, of children from all social and cultural backgrounds, of children from different ethnic groups, and of those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.
- 5.3 We meet the needs of all our children through:
- planning from children's interests from thorough observations;
 - planning opportunities that build on and extend the children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;

- using a variety of teaching strategies that are based on children's learning needs and preferred characteristics of effective learning;
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children, and to help them to learn effectively;
- offering a safe and supportive learning environment, in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- employing resources that reflect diversity, and that avoid discrimination and stereotyping;
- planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- monitoring children's progress, and providing support (such as speech therapy), as necessary.

6 The Early Years curriculum

- 6.1 Our Early Years curriculum reflects the seven areas of learning identified in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Early Years Outcomes published by the DfE (September 2013). Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas.
- 6.2 The Developmental Stages of progress from birth to five in the Early Years Outcomes (September 2013) and the Early Learning Goals form the Early Years. By the end of Early Years, reception children are preparing for the transition into year 1 by having a heavier focus on adult directed activities and less time for child initiated learning.
- 6.3 The EYFS Development Matters Practice Guidance (2012), the Early Years Outcomes (September 2013) and the Early Learning Goals in the EYFSP provide the basis for planning throughout the Early Years. Practitioners plan from children's interests wherever possible and use a wide range of current resources to support their planning for individual children. Our medium-term planning is completed half-termly related to a theme, suggested activities are drafted under each area of learning, with a focus identified. Short term planning is very detailed, with input from all key practitioners and clearly identifies learning intentions, differentiation and deployment of staff.
- 6.4 The Early Years outside area is used simultaneously with inside throughout child initiated learning everyday, whatever the weather! The provision of child initiated learning resources for inside and outside are carefully planned by practitioners every week to ensure the pupils have a wide range of exciting resources to explore.

7 Assessment

- 7.1 Assessment in the Early Years takes the form of a rigorous weekly observation cycle of adult directed and child initiated learning, and this involves all practitioners, as appropriate. Observations are completed using the electronic Learning Journal software '2Build a Profile'. On all observations, staff also comment on the characteristics of effective learning displayed by the child to indicate *how* the child is learning. Observational assessments are collated and then recorded on each child's observation assessment sheet by highlighting their current developmental progress i.e. 30-50 months. A different colour highlighter is used each half term to clearly see progress in learning. Pupil progress within the developmental bands of learning within the Early Years is also recorded electronically using the Assessment Manager 7 Software, at least four times a year. This information will be analysed and scrutinised, and is particularly useful in pupil progress meetings.

- 7.2 All children's observations, photographs and work completed within child initiated and adult directed learning are included within each child's own 'Learning Journey' book. A selection of observations are shared with parents via email on a regular basis with details of the Next Steps that we are working on with the child to develop their learning further. The children's Learning Journey books are also shared with parents each half term. This may include parent consultations and Early Years class acts of worship.
- 7.3 The Early Years Profile is the nationally employed assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of reception, and to summarise their pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Early Years. At St. Thomas' we also use assessment sheets to record each child's progress against the developmental statements taken from the non-statutory guidance material and linked to the Early Years Outcomes. This is updated at least termly. The collection of assessment data in the Early Years Profile is a statutory requirement and is shared with parents during parent consultations and summarised within the end of academic year report.
- 7.4 Early Years Parents and carers receive an annual report that offers brief comments on each child's progress in each area of learning including a detailed report on how each child learns (the characteristics of effective learning). It highlights the child's strengths and development needs, and gives details of the child's general progress. We complete these in June, and send them to parents and carers in early July each year.
- 8 The role of parents and carers
- 8.1 We believe that all parents and carers have an important role to play in the education of their child. We therefore recognise the role that parents and carers have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:
- talking to parents or carers about their child before their child starts in our school;
 - visits by the teacher to all children in their pre-school setting or home setting prior to their starting school;
 - opportunities given to the children to spend time in school with their new peers and Early Years practitioners before starting school full time;
 - inviting all parents and carers to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school;
 - offering parents and carers regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress;
 - encouraging parents and carers to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns;
 - having flexible admission arrangements, and allowing time to discuss each child's circumstances;
 - encouraging parents and carers to stay if there are problems with the child's admission, if appropriate;
 - offering a range of activities, throughout the year, that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents/carers;
 - providing various activities that involve parents and carers, i.e. regular communication with home through the child's school diary, and inviting parents and carers to curriculum evenings, in order to discuss the kind of work that the children are undertaking;

- sharing observations of the child's learning and development electronically with parents on a regular basis using our 2Build a Profile software, and valuing the comments parents make in response to these.
- providing opportunities for parents to share stories, rhymes and other learning opportunities with the children in the Early Years classroom each term

8.2 There is a formal meeting for parents and carers in the autumn and spring term, at which the parents/carers discuss the child's progress with the teacher and nursery nurse. Parents and carers receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.

9 Resources

9.1 We plan a learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning. We use materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. We encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning.

10 Risk Assessment

10.1 Procedures are in place to ensure that the Early Years indoor and outdoor areas are checked and assessed for risks on at least a daily basis by the Early Years team. Wherever necessary staff are responsible for recording significant risk to children's safety on CPOMS which then informs staff practice and risk management.

10.2 Refer to the school's Health, Safety and Welfare policy (parts 1 & 2)

11 Monitoring and review

11.1 This policy is monitored by the governing body, and will be reviewed in two years, or earlier if necessary.

This policy was reviewed and ratified by Committee A of the Governing Body at their meeting on **13th May 2019**

