



St. Andrew's C of E (VA) Primary School

# **EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY**

**Approved by:** St Andrew's Governing Body

**Written on:** February 2025

**Next review due by:** February 2028

## **Aims**

At St Andrew's, we believe that children need to feel happy, safe and secure in our school family so that they can be challenged to achieve their potential. Our vision is rooted in John 10:10 "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full". We want all members of our school family to be understanding (and to be understood), respectful, loving, honest and have trust in themselves and others.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) we aim;

To give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life, establishing solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning;

To offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences and give them the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test them out along with their own, individual experiences;

To enable each child, through encouragement and high expectations, to develop to the full, socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.

To offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited opportunity for development;

To encourage children to develop independence within a loving, secure and friendly atmosphere;

To support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing, alongside the promotion of our core Christian values.

To help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

## **The Curriculum**

The EYFS statutory framework sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well, are kept healthy and safe, and have the knowledge and skills they need to start school. This document is available to download at:

[Early years foundation stage statutory framework – GOV.UK](#)

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected but three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive. They support children's learning in all other areas, these are known as the prime areas.

The prime areas are;

**Communication and Language** – Listening, Attention and Understanding and Speaking

**Physical Development** –Fine motor and Gross motor

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – Managing self, Self-regulation and Building relationships

The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. The specific areas are;

**Literacy** – Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing

**Mathematics** – Number and Numerical patterns

**Understanding the World** – Past and Present, The Natural World and People, Culture and Community

**Expressive Arts and Design** – Creating with materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive

## **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The EYFS Team plan activities within the Foundation classroom with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them. The three characteristics are;

**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 achievements

**Creating and Thinking Critically** – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

## **Teaching strategies**

We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In some cases the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible. By the summer term in Foundation the children will experience more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to year 1.

## **Play**

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classroom. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Using children's interests as a starting point, we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child initiated play, which is controlled, and adult led activities is very important to us.

## **Teaching**

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children

have understood and taken on. We follow a timetable with set routines in place, setting aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on phonics, or key skills linked to each area of the EYFS curriculum. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning; learning as a group; listening to the teacher; taking turns to answer; sitting still etc.

Reading and stories form an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern stories that represent the huge diversity in our classroom. We make sure that there are many opportunities to enjoy fiction and non-fiction books and role play activities. Every child is given their own book bag and receives a reading book linked to their phonic ability each week to share with an adult at home.

## **Planning**

We believe many children need to be given a starting point to learn new things and find themes which are linked to the children's interests are a great way to fire the imagination. The classroom will then be enhanced with objects, toys or materials linked to the interests of the children. In the past we have followed such interests as superheroes, penguins, Frozen, dinosaurs and trains, as well as many more! The themes and enhancements are flexible to ensure we also follow school themes and local or national events e.g. the Olympics. Staff will plan the next theme when the children's interests change, and organise visits or visitors to enhance the learning.

Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis using daily notes, observations and interactions with children to inform where the learning journey should move to. Long term, medium term and weekly plans are on display in the classroom. Although the class teacher is responsible for writing plans, the EYFS plan as a team, with Teachers, Teaching Assistants and Student Teachers on placement all giving an input whenever possible. Sometimes we use a published scheme, for example, Think Equal which is carefully designed to teach social and emotional learning to early years.

## **Visits and visitors**

Visits and visitors play an important part in the curriculum at St Andrew's, even in the Early Years. We aim to build up to three visits in the Summer Term; these can range from a visit to the local park, the library, or taking an imaginary plane journey! We actively seek parental support on trips, aiming for a ratio of one adult for five children. For safety reasons we say no to younger siblings coming along on school trips.

Visitors also really enhance a topic and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children, such as Austen from the local library. We often ask parents if they are able (and brave enough!) to share their knowledge or a skill, be it cooking, how to bathe a baby, reading a story in another language or playing guitar.

## **Classroom organisation**

Our Early Years classroom has clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. The classroom is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning and the classroom is clearly zoned to reflect these areas. As the children's interests and abilities change, the classroom is adapted to reflect this. We have a carpeted teaching area as well as a small breakout space in the KS1 corridor. Writing and maths are encouraged in all areas of the classroom, both inside and outside.

The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside for much of the day. We try to ensure that the range of activities outside reflects the different areas of learning. Physical activity often dominates, with climbing, running and other active games being key.

Each child has their own labelled tray outside the classroom and a labelled peg in the cloakroom. We encourage children to take responsibility for keeping their clothes, book bag and work safely in one place!

## **Assessment, observations and learning journeys**

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies all of which come together in their Learning Journey. We are very proud of our Learning Journeys: these are collections of children's work, photos and observations which create a detailed picture of the child. Where appropriate, we include individual next steps for children's learning. These next steps are discussed by the EYFS team in informal meetings at the start or end of each school day and then inform planning for the next day and week ahead. Each child's next steps are also displayed in the classroom for all adults to work on. Staff have access to three iPads which are used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning. We use Tapestry to create our Learning Journeys and the staff use the iPads to upload photos and observations via the Tapestry app. Parents also have access to the Learning Journeys through the Tapestry App. They are encouraged to contribute by uploading photos from home. The Learning Journey is given to parents when their child enters Year 1 or leaves our school.

We carry out the government's statutory Reception Baseline Assessments in the first six weeks of school in September and all members of the Foundation team also complete informal observations of the children. Throughout the Early Years the Class Teacher submits end of term assessment data to the Headteacher showing each child's development across the seven areas of learning. At the end of Foundation the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either 'emerging' or 'expected'. This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the Foundation child's end of year report and can be discussed during Parents' Evenings.

## **Role of staff and key worker**

The class teacher is the named key worker for each child in the setting. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Foundation classroom actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being now and their future successes. There are rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class and we aim to be consistent in who covers these absences.

## **Partnership with parents and carers**

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. As well as home visits, parent meetings and visit days we also offer parenting workshops and other sessions for parents, such as our successful phonics and maths open mornings!

When a child gains a place at St Andrew's, the Foundation Class teacher arranges a home visit to meet the child and their parents. This builds relationships between the class teacher and children and allows for a more successful transition. We also invite parents and children to attend our welcome meeting during the Summer Term. This allows them to learn a little more about our school, purchase uniforms and fill in registration forms. The children may also attend 4 afternoon sessions, one per week throughout the final

term, allowing them to get to know their peers and become more familiar with the Foundation classroom and team.

In September we have a staggered entry that allows the youngest children to settle in first. Children born between March and August attend on day one and children born between September and February attend on day two. These morning-only initial sessions allow the children to settle in and become familiar with new routines with just half the class at a time. Following this, all children attend school from 08.50 until 13.00, allowing them to stay for lunch. Children who are then ready for longer days attend from 08.50 until 15.15 daily. Following parental discussion, any children who are finding it difficult to settle can continue with half day sessions until they are ready. We aim for all Foundation children to be attending full days by the third full school week of September. We believe that this staggered approach gives the children the best start to school and allows them to feel happy and secure in their new environment.

Parents are invited to attend a Parents' Meeting in the Autumn and Spring Terms and teachers are available most mornings and evenings to talk and to discuss more urgent matters.

### **Transition to Year 1**

At St. Andrew's we favour a whole school approach to transition, allowing each class to feel fully prepared for moving up to the next class. In the Summer Term we hold 4 transition afternoons during which every class moves up to their new classroom and meets their class teacher and TAs. This gives children the chance to feel comfortable in their surroundings and also experience the routines and expectations for the following year.

### **Health & safety and safeguarding**

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2024) [Early years foundation stage statutory framework – GOV.UK](#) and our school Safeguarding Policy. This will need to be reviewed to reflect the changes to the EYFS safeguarding requirements from September 2025. The consultation responses can be found at [Early Years Foundation Stage safeguarding reforms - consultation response](#)

It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones or personal handset devices in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal handsets. This is in line with our Safeguarding Policy. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads and cameras to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in children's Learning Journeys, in class displays and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school website and on Tapestry through the paperwork in their initial starter packs.

We are a healthy school and our children receive free fruit and milk from a Government scheme. All children in Foundation are entitled to a free school lunch but can bring a healthy home packed lunch if they prefer.

We take all accidents seriously and always log and phone home immediately if a child bangs their head or has a serious injury. We have cold compresses stored in the kitchen freezer. We encourage all children to start school without nappies. We acknowledge that young children often have 'accidents' (i.e. wet themselves!) and have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. We ask parents to help keep our stocks of clothes high by washing and returning anything their child has borrowed. Children are encouraged to change themselves. Two adults will be present if a child requires help with personal care.

All large climbing equipment is checked by our site officer and externally inspected each year. Fire drills are held regularly in line with whole school policy. We follow whole school procedures for child protection (see separate policy). Miss Carys Lewis, Headteacher, is the Designated Safeguarding Lead and all safeguarding concerns are discussed with her (or her Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads) and logged on CPOMS. We have separate policies for Medicines in School and Off-site Visits.