

# Early Years Policy

## St. Matthias C of E Primary School



Date 2024-2026

This policy was reviewed/updated by Carl Salmon and is reviewed annually by the Trust and the LGBs.

Date: January 2025

Next Review: January 2026

Ratified by Local Governing Body: next meeting March 2025

in collaboration with



## School Vision

### **ASPIRE, BELIEVE, ACHIEVE**

‘Our school family values us all as unique individuals and children of God.

We **aspire** to be the best version of ourselves; **believing** that through the gifts God has given us, we can make a positive contribution, flourish and **achieve** together to make a difference in our ever-changing world.’

## Early Years Foundation Stage Vision

**In the Early Years we:**

- ✓ **aspire** to demonstrate the best version of our learning through reflecting on our previous learning and challenging ourselves to develop our independence
- ✓ **believe** that we all have gifts that we can contribute in the Early Years through spoken and written word and by valuing the uniqueness of the ideas of others we open our minds to the world beyond our own experiences
- ✓ **achieve** our goals through engaging in lessons, making positive contributions, working collaboratively with our peers and experiencing pleasure in our learning.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the academic year in which a child has their fifth birthday.

The EYFS is statutory and is detailed under the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* and the *Practical Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage*.

## INTENT

We follow the statutory framework and guidance detailed in the EYFS using our extensive experience we observe, plan and teach children in early years.

We provide a broad and balanced Early Years curriculum: -

- based on first hand experiences and purposeful interactions
  - through ‘in the moment planning’ opportunities and carefully planned adult or child-initiated activities
  - whilst having a regard for the skills and attitudes the Key Stage One curriculum will demand
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- We aspire to make the child’s first experience of school happy, positive and fun.
  - We believe that we foster a love of learning and develop enquiring minds.
  - We achieve this by instilling the Characteristics of Effective Learning such as independence, resilience and confidence
  - We promote emotional well-being
  - We build positive relationships and work in partnership with families (recognising that parents are their child’s first and foremost educator), carers and professionals to support every child to develop and learn.

## **IMPLEMENT**

### **Teaching and Learning Style**

Our school policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning throughout our school. These features equally apply to teaching and learning in the EYFS.

Within the EYFS the development of a holistic learner is recognised based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to humanitarian values that we as a school promote.

### **The EYFS Curriculum**

The EYFS is statutory and is important in its own right as a basis for developing essential skills such as listening, speaking, persistence and collaborating with each other. The three prime areas cover the knowledge and skills which are the foundations for future progress, and which are applied and reinforced by the specific areas. All areas of learning are equally important and are interlinked. The Development Matters and the Early Learning Goals guide our long term planning together with the termly topics. In Nursery the activities are planned around the children's current needs, schemas and interests to ensure all areas of the EYFS curriculum are embraced.

All areas of the EYFS curriculum are followed and planned for to ensure there is a broad, balanced and progressive learning environment and curriculum. The children will learn new skills, acquire new knowledge and demonstrate understanding through the seven areas of the EYFS curriculum:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Communication and Language
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

These 7 areas are used to plan children's learning and activities. Planning for this curriculum is designed to be flexible so that a child's unique interests are supported. During each week, the children will work with an adult to complete at least one 1:1 reading session as well as at least one adult led literacy task, one adult led maths task and a range of child initiated tasks through both the indoor and outdoor continuous provision. This allows children opportunities to engage in child-initiated play and develop their next steps in learning. Staff observe and question where appropriate, to ensure they have a deep understanding of the learning needs of each child and can plan accordingly to stimulate further progress. Continuous provision practise and principles begin in EYFS and support children to develop key life skills such as independence, innovation, creativity, enquiry, analysis and problem solving. During the school day, children will have an opportunity to work independently, work collaboratively with their friends and with members of staff. Daily guided activities are also planned to cover different areas of the EYFS curriculum and allow children to develop their next steps in learning. Through observation and discussion, areas of need and next steps are identified for all children to ensure good progress is made. There are also a range of stimulating and engaging activities which the children can access independently. In planning and

guiding children's activities we reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practise.

Medium term planning is completed half termly by staff and identifies the intended learning outcomes and takes into account children working at the exceeding level.

Weekly Planning focuses on day-to-day organisation of activities. It takes into account that children's learning is not necessarily sequential and that they may need time to consolidate, repeat and extend their learning in their own way. All planning is evaluated on an on-going basis and adapted in response to the children's needs and interests.

### **Teaching in the EYFS:**

- Has a carefully planned curriculum which aims for all children to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the EYFS.
- Involves creating adult and child-initiated opportunities that will encourage children to explore, create, investigate, rehearse, practise, repeat and discover
- Involves developing Characteristics of Effective Learning
- Uses a multi-sensory, fun play-based approach
- Shows awareness of the different ways and rates by which children develop and learn; that there are many factors affecting achievement including ability, emotional state, age and maturity, and how this informs teaching strategies.
- Has a high expectation of children's behaviour and attainment.
- Recognises the importance of emotional well-being.
- Is outside as much as possible ensuring children take ownership of their learning

### **Learning in the EYFS**

Through a comprehensive transition programme from home to Nursery and/or from a child's Nursery setting to our Reception Class we ensure prior learning and development is valued and the transition into School is supported.

We encourage cross-curricular links to ensure a seamless transition into Key Stage One by building on previous experiences and planning those for the future.

In the EYFS children are learning when they: -

- Collaborate and learn from one another through shared experiences
- Are supported to set their own challenges in their physical environment and in their learning
- Access resources independently
- Use their senses to explore and investigate
- Develop persistence and positive attitudes to learning as detailed in the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

## **Play in the EYFS**

We highly value play and the learning it brings in itself. Anyone who has observed play for any length of time will recognise that, for young children, play is a tool for learning.

Through play children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules thereby developing emotional resilience and self-regulation.

Children have the opportunity to think creatively and problem solve alongside others. They express fears or relive anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations as well as re-enact positive experiences building self-awareness and self-esteem.

## **Inclusion in the EYFS**

In consultation and working collaboratively with parents/guardians the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) will lead on provision for children who may experience barriers to their learning, which may relate to sensory or physical impairment, learning difficulties or emotional or social development in line with the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice (2014) and the school's SEN/Inclusion Policy.

We aim to meet the needs of all our children by: -

- Setting realistic and challenging expectations. We aim for all children to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the EYFS. We achieve this by planning for different learning styles, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities or medical needs, children from all social and cultural backgrounds as well as children with diverse linguistic backgrounds.
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contributions of all children are valued.
- Using resources, which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping which all children have equal access to.
- Monitoring children's progress and providing support where necessary, within the resources available to the school. This may include a phased transition programme dependant on a child's specific SEN needs.
- Children are assessed using Language Screen when they start Reception Class and needs that arise are then met within school.
- Early identification is crucial in the Early Years and staff are well trained at working with children and their families so that the best learning environment can be created for them.
- Providing specific targets detailed in Individual Educational Plans (IEP) and following external therapy or support programmes of work such as Speech and Language and NELI (Nuffield Early Language Intervention).
- Working collaboratively with families or carers, the SENCo and other professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists, Educational Psychologists and caseworkers.
- Ensuring a balance across classes, within each cohort, of gender, ability, children with additional learning or medical needs and summer born children.

## **Reading**

### **Our Approach to Reading**

In order to increase levels of attainment across the school, St Matthias has placed English at the heart of our curriculum. The school is to be supported by the St John Bosco National English Hub to further develop early reading in 2022-2024.

In spring 2022, the school introduced a Systematic Synthetic Phonics Programme (SSP) in Essential Letters and Sounds.

### **Early Reading in the EYFS**

#### **Language development**

Within the Early Years department, both the indoor and outdoor environment has resources to support the development of the children's language and reading skills.

The children are given time and space to concentrate on activities using a wide variety of resources that are challenging and interesting and can be revisited and enjoyed on numerous occasions. Through play, practitioners involve themselves in the children's language development by modelling thought processes and encouraging children to articulate their own actions/thoughts. They are given a varied diet of activities which support them to listen and respond appropriately including developing the ability to express themselves and explain with clarity.

#### **Phonics**

In EYFS, phonics is systematically taught following the Essential Letters and Sounds programme. Children are given opportunities to practice and apply the sounds they have learnt as well as blending and segmenting in writing activities. Opportunities to explore and apply developing reading skills (in school and at home) are regular and matched to the daily phonics session. All display resources, reading books and workbooks have fidelity to the ELS scheme.

#### **Class Novel**

Staff ensure children have frequent opportunities to listen to and access high-quality reading books, promoting reading for pleasure through sharing stories. Children are encouraged to listen to and participate in storytelling, talking about stories, and begin to develop their own narratives by connecting ideas or events. There is a focus on explicit teaching of vocabulary from the high-quality texts used in class novel time and developing concepts using Word Aware (Concept Cat).

## **Writing**

At St Matthias we have big focus on fine motor skills and early writing, especially in Nursery. Lots of modelling and opportunities for the children to mark make are given and the children have ample opportunity to talk about their mark-making.

Children complete writing activities matched to their phonics in Reception, learning through ELS resources. They begin to spell some words correctly using phonetically plausible attempts at spelling, are explicitly taught 'Harder to Read and Spell' (HRS) words and they write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others. Children are taught how to check and edit their writing including self-correcting errors.

## **The Environment and Resources in the EYFS**

A rich and varied 'enabling' environment is actively planned for and continuously developed with varied multi-cultural and inclusive resources to encourage exploratory play-based learning and challenge. The learning environment encompasses both indoor and outdoor provision, which are of equal importance. Children are encouraged to experience all areas of the learning environment in all weathers. We encourage children to plan their own selection of activities balanced with adult initiated activities.

There must be access to an outdoor area and that outdoor activities have to be planned on a daily basis (3.59: Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, 2021)

A well-planned learning environment, indoors and outside, is an important part of pedagogy (Development Matters, 2021)

- Being outdoors has a positive impact on children's sense of well-being and helps all aspects of children's development.
- Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors.
- It gives children first-hand contact with weather, seasons and the natural world.
- Outdoor environments offer children freedom to explore, use their senses, and be physically active and exuberant (EYFS)

To enable children to experience the outdoor environment we will ensure it is a continuation of the indoor environment with continuous provision available for all children in the setting including those with special needs.

The outdoor environment will be made available throughout the whole session providing a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led experiences.

## **Manager responsibilities**

- Ensure more than one staff member is First Aid trained and that there is always a trained member of staff on-site. A list of First Aid trained staff will be displayed.
- Ensure staff are aware of any associated conditions of the allergy, e.g. asthma
- Communicate to staff on measures to reduce the risk of an allergic reaction (allergy avoidance)
- Ensure there is a first aid box accessible at all times
- Fire exits and doors are free from obstruction
- Ensure there are suitable staff ratios outside
- Maintain secure boundaries
- Communicate with staff how the outdoor area should be planned for
- Regularly evaluate with staff how the quality of learning outside maximises the impact of the achievement, personal development and wellbeing of the child (Ofsted recommendation).
- Audit and purchase resources for outdoor learning

## **Staff responsibilities**

- Staff will ensure they are ever watchful, even if they are engrossed in an activity with a group of children
- Ensure access gates remain closed
- Maintain the correct staff to child ratios
- Ensure children are safe at all times and ensure consistent rules for behaviour are adhered to
- Model appropriate behaviour outside
- Communicate with other staff if you need to suddenly leave the area you are in e.g. assisting with individual needs (first aid, toilet, clothing etc).
- Ensure children are wearing shoes at all times
- Plan for the outdoor area
- The role of the adult outside should be much the same as the role of the adult inside; to scaffold learning, observe and record
- Children should be encouraged to make their own choices and lead their own learning with appropriate support from an understanding adult
- Through observation, staff should have a deep understanding of how individual children learn best, their interests and personal motivations and are therefore able to offer appropriate individualised support to them
- All staff are responsible for setting up and clearing away equipment
- Staff should be enthusiastic about the outdoors and understand the importance of outdoor learning. Staff need to display qualities that we would like young children to develop such as enquiry, motivation, willingness to try and a positive attitude.

## **Health and Safety**

At St Matthias we ensure that children have access to outdoor learning every day, all year round. A daily health and safety check of all outdoor learning areas and equipment is carried out before taking the children out and any hazards are removed. We ensure that children wear coats, hats, gloves etc in the winter and sun hats and sun cream during the summer period (Parents responsibility to send to school).

“Physically the area has to be safe but still allow risk and challenge. Safeness is about enabling things to happen, not shutting down opportunities”. (Learning outdoors in the early years – A Resource Book)

All staff will regularly discuss with our children about safety, taking risks and achieving goals and challenges in the outdoor environment.

## **Equality of opportunity**

At St Matthias we ensure that equality of opportunity outside is covered by the following:

- Ensure that all children have the ability or support to play and explore in the outdoor area.
- Monitor how children use the outdoor area.
- Provide opportunities suitable for all genders to ensure enjoyment and enthusiasm for all children.
- We will adapt the facilities and learning opportunities whenever possible, to enable all children to use them.

- We aim for our outdoor spaces to be accessible for wheelchair users.

## Example Timetables

### Reception

0845-0900	Settle and Name writing
0855 – 0900	Word of the Day (Concept Cat)
0900 – 0915	Assembly
09.15-9.40	ELS Phonics
9.40 – 10.20	Activities
10.20-10.40	Snack and Play
10.40 – 1100	English
1100-11.25	Activities
1125 – 1140	Maths
11.40-11.50	Handwriting / Story
1300 – 1325	ELS - Reading
1325 – 1345	PSED/Music/Topic input
1345-1445	Activities / Interventions
1445 – 1510	Story Time
1515	Home time

## Curriculum Overview (appx 1.1)

### Assessment in the EYFS

During the children’s first half term in the Nursery and Reception classes, the teacher assesses each child’s development and learning attainment against the criteria set out in Development Matters and the Early Learning Goals. The child is assessed at either ‘on track’ or ‘not on track’. It is also a time for the teacher to discover the unique personality and interests of each child.

We make regular assessments of children’s learning and use this information to ensure future planning reflects individual or group needs. Once a term, summative assessments are entered and discussed with the Senior Leadership Team in pupil progress meetings.

Formative assessment in the Foundation Stage is continuous and takes the form of observations, examples of child-initiated work and samples of dated work from books and photographs (class dojo). The teachers and teaching assistants keep observational records and use these to record examples of each child’s work. These are kept in a Learning Journey folder for each child and are available to parents and carers at all times. These records are passed onto the next class teachers to ensure a smooth transition.

We have two parents’ meetings that take place to ensure parents/carers are informed of their child’s progress and next steps in learning. In Nursery and Reception, in addition to parents’ meetings in the Autumn and Spring terms, parents receive an annual report that offers detailed

comments on each child's progress in each area of learning and their Characteristics of Effective Learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs.

In Reception Class all children will complete the Reception Baseline Assessment in their first six weeks of school. This will be shared with parents/carers and will give some indications on support that children may need to make rapid progress.

Reception children will be assessed using the Early Learning Goals by the end of their time in the Early Years. They will be assessed across the 17 areas of learning at either 'met' or 'not met'. This information is used to help with transition into their next class.

## **Communication with Parents / Carers**

At St. Matthias we believe that in order for children to receive quality care and early learning that suits their individual need, parents/carers and practitioners need to work together in a close partnership. The two-way sharing of information is key to this. The Early Years team welcomes parents/carers as partners and this relationship requires trust and understanding. It is important that we, as practitioners are able to support parents/carers in an open and sensitive manner. We believe that effective, regular, transparent communication is at the heart of any personal or professional relationship. In fact, it will make all the difference to a parent of a child in an Early Years setting. It will reassure, inform and build long term parental engagement.

Parents and staff have a responsibility to share information as they arrive and leave the Early Years setting, with particular reference to any specific information relating to the child, also discussing any key event information and incident / accident which has occurred during the day.

Parents must inform us of any third-party involvement at any time for example, social services, the police or a hospital visit. It is imperative that we have all the information regarding children in our care.

Staff should build 'relationships' with parents, keep them up-to-date with their child's progress, respond to observations that they share, involve them in assessments and support them to guide their child's development at home.

During these vital early years, it is crucial that nurseries are able to break down any boundaries between parents early on – the relationship benefits children in many ways:

Parents can be engaged in the learning process. Evidence suggests that joint working benefits children, who learn and develop better, by having the support of both their child care provider as well as their carer or parent. This can be done through Class Dojo.

Effective communication makes transitions throughout the setting smoother.

Effective communication can help keep children safe. Open communication helps with safeguarding and child protection as parents and carers feel safe enough to talk about any problems they may have especially at home.

At St Matthias we use class dojo as we believe it provides an effective way for parents to keep up-to-date with information and announcements.

## **Parents sharing information with St Matthias Early Years**

At St Matthias we ask that parents do the following to keep us informed:

- Complete the Admission Forms
- Ensure personal details are kept up to date on the admissions form
- Complete an 'All about Me' booklet with your child
- Inform us of any medical needs and medication required
- Complete the necessary medical administration forms
- Inform us of any changes to medication for your child
- Share information about your child during meetings
- Inform us of any hospital/medical appointments, absences on the day of absence by either telephone or email.

## **Further ways in which we will communicate with and involve parents**

- Telephone communication
- Face to face conversations
- Class Dojo messages to individuals
- Annual Parent Questionnaire/Survey
- Letters home
- Parent / Child Review Meetings (twice a year)
- Social Events, such as Christmas Nativity, Easter Bonnet parade, Summer Fete and stay and play sessions
- Parent Training / Information Sessions - A range of sessions are held for parents to support and inform on several topics, for examples Parent workshops on the EYFS or Oral Health and phonics.

## **Working with Parents/ carers and other significant adults i.e. childminders**

We recognise the importance of working alongside parents and other significant adults during a child's education. We do this through: -

- Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school. We will discuss the EYFS curriculum at St. Matthias as well as our Essential Letters and Sounds phonics programme.
- Giving the children the opportunity to spend several mornings or afternoons with their teacher before starting school. This is done in the Summer Term prior to the child starting school.
- Inviting parents into the classroom throughout the year. There will be stay and play sessions linked to our learning and cultural festivals. Parents will also be invited in for weekly reading afternoons where reading will be modelled alongside phonics.
- Providing formal meetings for parents during the school year to discuss children's progress.
- Welcoming parents to discuss any concerns with the teacher and/or teaching assistants.
- Working to build good relationships with families to promote a regular two-way flow of information. We encourage parents to talk to staff in the morning or after school and also have Class Dojo to support those parents who want to use that platform instead.
- Send out surveys to parents

## **Some Key Contacts**

General enquiries may be made to the administration team.

Early Years Lead – *Mr Carl Salmon*

Learning Support/SENCO – *Mrs Lauren Joyce*

Designated Safeguarding Lead – *Mrs Ginnie Beale*

Designated Lead for Looked after children – *Mrs Ginnie Beale*

Early Years Governor: *Mrs Claire Bird*

If you would like these staff members to get in contact with you, please phone or email the school.

## **IMPACT**

- The majority of children in Reception will reach the ELG by the end of Summer
- Children develop the characteristics of effective learning which helps them through the rest of school
- Children develop the ability to manage risks
- Children enjoy being independent in managing themselves and their learning
- Parents are happy with their child's progress
- Parents feel part of the school community
- Practise is improved year on year
- Everyone is included
- Children have high levels of wellbeing and involvement