



ST AUGUSTINE'S

CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Early Years Policy

DATE OF LAST REVIEW: January 2025

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: January 2027

The Governors of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and engage with staff in policy and practice developments and proactively encourages feedback.

Introduction

At St Augustine's Primary School we are dedicated to providing a high-quality early years' education which gives children a secure and confident start to their school life whilst nurturing a life-long love of learning. We strive to create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enriching learning experiences that enables children to become confident and independent. We value each individual child and work alongside parents and others to meet their needs and help every child to reach their full potential.

We are fully committed to the purpose and aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework outlined in the revised documentation (2024) that clearly states:

"All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years 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 provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential."

- "Early Years Foundation Stage Profile"

Department for Children, Schools and Families 2024

Aims

At St Augustine's we believe that every child has the right to experience an outstanding Early Years education that will provide them with a firm foundation for lifelong learning and development. We strive to ensure our Early Years provision:

- Addresses the children's social, emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development.
- Builds upon children's current level of development and takes what they already know and can do as their starting point.
- Is fully inclusive regardless of gender, race, culture, home, language, family background, special educational needs, disability or ability.
- Provides a rich and stimulating environment through a wide range of planned, meaningful activities and experiences.
- Offers an enabling environment that allows the children to make their own choices.
- Is a safe, secure and caring environment in which children become independent active learners.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based upon 4 overarching principles:

- **A unique child.**
- **Positive relationships.**
- **Enabling environments.**
- **Learning and development.**

A Unique Child

At St Augustine's we value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of differences. All children are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school. In our Foundation Stage 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 planning for their learning. In the EYFS we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are

more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from 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 taking action to provide support as necessary.

It is important to us that all children are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

Positive Relationships

We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families. Parents and carers are the children's first educators and we are committed to working in close partnership with them in order to enable each child to achieve his/her potential. We highly value the contribution that parents and carers make and seek to maintain an effective partnership between home and school by:

- Demonstrating that we value and respect the role of the parents/carers as the first educators by listening to accounts of their child's development and any concerns and aspirations they have.
- Ensuring that parents and carers are provided with detailed information prior to admissions enabling them to feel confident about the transition process.
- Ensuring arrangements for settling in are flexible enough to give time for children to become secure and for practitioners and parents to discuss children's circumstances, interests, skills and needs at the start of the school year.
- Demonstrating that we value linguistic diversity and provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning.
- Ensuring parents and carers are kept well informed about the curriculum and school life through workshops and weekly and termly newsletters.
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress and allowing free access to their children's online "Learning Journey" journals. (SeeSaw).
- Providing space in their child's "Online Learning Journals" for parents to leave comments relating to their child's achievements.
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between children, Reception classes and parents and carers, e.g. open mornings, fund raising days, themed activity days etc.
- Sharing information regarding a child's progress and achievements and how parents and carers can support the next stage of learning.

Enabling Environments

Our Early Years Team are passionate in creating an inspirational setting which nurtures children's independence and where adults can support children's learning by improving interaction and building on their interests throughout the learning environment. We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development and individuality.

The children are exposed to open-ended resources to inspire investigative thinking, role play resources to promote story and imagination, as well as natural materials to encourage creativity. Children can investigate through sand and water play, large construction, role play, den building and large-scale mark making.

Our indoor and outdoor environment offers **space which is engaging, motivating and offers deep level learning opportunities for children**. The classroom is set up in learning areas, where children can find and locate equipment and resources independently. The children are free to move between both classroom and the outdoor area where they find different learning areas including Water, Wet Sand, Dough, Paint, Workshop, Mark Making, Books Corner, Maths, Small World, Small Construction, Puppets, Science, Transient Art and Real-Life Domestic Role Play.

Learning and Development

We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are inter-connected. Features of effective teaching and learning that relate to the EYFS at St Augustine's are:

- The partnership between staff and parents/carers, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- The understanding that staff have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;
- The range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication;
- The carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards the Early Learning Goals throughout EYFS;
- The provision for children to choose 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 indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- The identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through photographic and written evidence using online journals, celebrating children's significant achievements. These are shared with parents and carers who can comment on, as well as upload evidence of their child's learning.

The Early Years Curriculum

The EYFS is made up of seven areas of learning:

3 Prime Areas

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)
- Communication and Language (CL)
- Physical Development (PD)

4 Specific Areas

- Mathematics

- Literacy
- Understanding the world
- Expressive Arts and Design

The EYFS Profile is based on the ongoing observations of the 3 prime areas and 4 specific areas and the three characteristics of effective learning. It consists of a level descriptor of the level of attainment in relation to the 17 Early Learning Goals and a short narrative of how the child demonstrates the three characteristics of effective learning. Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their progress against the ELGs and assessment scales.

In addition to this there are the 3 Characteristics of effective learning of the EYFS which underpin learning and development across all areas and support the children to remain effective and motivated learners.

Play and Exploring

“Children’s play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. “

Play is the highest level of child development where children make the choice of what they want to do, how they do it and when to move onto something new. Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They can think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own.

Active Learning

“Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.”

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfactions as they take ownership of their learning.

Creativity and Critical Thinking

“When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.”

Children should be given opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults can support children’s thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

None of these areas of learning and development can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other to support a rounded approach to early years’ development. All the areas will be delivered through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

The statutory early learning goals outline the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS. By the end of the EYFS, some children will have exceeded the goals. Other children, depending on their individual needs, will be working towards some or all of the goals – particularly some younger children, some children with learning difficulties and disabilities and some learning English as an additional language.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (2024) sets standards for learning, development and care of young children from birth to 5 years.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Good planning is the key to making children’s learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Our planning shows how the principles of the EYFS are put into practice and is always informed by observations we have made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning needs. All staff who work in the Foundation Stage are involved in this process. The planning within the EYFS is based around the children’s interests. These plans are used by

the EYFS team as a guide for weekly planning. However, we may alter these in response to the needs of the children. We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of photographic evidence, children's work and written observations. Observations of children's learning are undertaken by the teacher and those assessments are based on the whole child.

All Staff ensure that they make systematic observations and assessments of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles; use these observations and assessments to identify learning priorities and plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child and match their observations to the expectations of the Early Learning Goals.

In addition to this the parents and carers are given the opportunity to meet with the Foundation Stage Team through Open Classroom sessions and Parent Evenings where they will receive a summary of their child's progress, enabling school and parents to form a good relationship.

Baseline

Children are assessed on-entry by their class teacher using the Reception Baseline Assessment.

The purpose of the reception baseline assessment is to provide an on-entry assessment of pupil attainment to be used as a starting point from which a cohort-level progress measure to the end of key stage 2 (KS2) can be created.

The class teacher uses this baseline assessment, and their own observations and assessments to assess children's levels of attainment on-entry, so that the class provision and teaching can be adapted and planned accordingly.

Welfare Arrangements

At St Augustine's, we recognise our responsibility for promoting the welfare of our youngest children.

- All adults with access to our children will receive the appropriate level of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks
- All staff employed by the school will undertake regular Child Protection and Radicalisation, Extremism and Terrorism Awareness Training and are expected to follow the school guidance in following up a cause for concern.
- Staffing will be organised to ensure the safety of the children.
- All staff will be trained to the level appropriate to responsibility.
- First aid will only be administered by trained personnel. Procedures are in place to inform parents/carers of accidents involving their child.
- Procedures are in place to ensure security of children and the safe release of children into the care of individuals named by the parent/carer.
- As a healthy school, there is a focus on emotional well-being, healthy eating and physical activity. Good health will be promoted and appropriate action will be taken when children are ill.
- Routines are in place to support children's growing understanding of personal hygiene.
- Children's behaviour is managed effectively through the use of a whole school system, which is adapted to the stage and development of individual needs.
- Risk assessments will be undertaken and reviewed regularly.
- Premises, furniture and equipment will be regularly checked and repaired, washed etc as required.
- Records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting will be maintained.
- Policy documents will be available for parents and carers.
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Transition

Transition from Nursery to Reception

In Early Years we recognise the importance of a smooth transition from Nursery to Reception and Reception to Year 1. During the Summer Term 2 the Nursery children are given the opportunity to make planned visits to their new setting at St Augustine's. The sessions help them become familiar with the school, build new friendships and increase confidence and understanding of school life. Where possible, the Reception teacher will also visit the children in their Nurseries/pre-school settings. This enables the teacher to observe the children in their familiar setting as well as receive any information regarding the child's progress throughout their final year in their current setting. The information passed on allows the teachers to gain a fuller picture of individual children and the class as a whole. The class teacher will also meet with each parent/ carer in September individually so that the parent and child are given the opportunity to discuss any concerns or answer questions.

Transition from Reception to Year 1

In the Summer Term 2, the Year 1 teacher spends time observing the pupils in their Reception class setting. Meetings between teachers are held so that information can be passed on and detailed information gathered by new teachers to ensure they have a full picture of individual children and the class as a whole. The Year 1 teacher is then clear which children need to carry on the Early Years Curriculum and which pupils can access the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum. SEN meetings are held about individual children so that provision maps are in place immediately at the beginning of the new school year.

Partnership with Families

At St Augustine's we acknowledge the importance of strong partnerships with families. In Early Years families bring their children into the classroom door each day and are able to have informal discussions with the adults who teach them at drop-off time. If they require a more formal discussion they are able to make an appointment to speak to the class teacher after school. Families are kept informed about school activities and events through Termly News Letters and our online learning platform- SeeSaw. Teachers use class SeeSaw app to send parents messages and instant photographs of their children when those WOW moments happen. Parents can comment on photographs and send the class teacher messages. Parents also have access to their child's online journal which they can print comment on and print.

Admission Arrangements

Our current Pupil Admission Number is 30, organised into one Reception classes of up to 30 children. Children are admitted to Reception in the September following their fourth birthday and attend full time following a staggered intake over 2 weeks.

Policy Agreed: January 2025