

St Anne's Catholic Primary School Early Years Policy



October 2023

Updated by A.Jones
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Introduction

'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.'

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile - Department for Children, Schools and Families 2012

Principles

All children and their families are valued within our school as part of a Faith community, nurtured by our Catholic teaching and the mission of the Shrewsbury Diocese.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- **A unique child:** We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning
- **Positive relationships:** We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families
- **Enabling environments:** We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning
- **Learning and development:** The Foundation Stage unit is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active or be quiet and rest. The classroom is set up in learning areas where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. At St Anne's Catholic Primary School we cater for children from the term after they are 2 into our 2 Year Provision, children are admitted from the term after they are 3 to our Foundation 1 class then to Foundation 2 in the September following their fourth birthday. Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At St Anne's we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

Aims

- ❖ To give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life in which they can establish 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 fully 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;
- ❖ 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 Foundation Stage follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document, which is available from the school office or to download at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf

This clearly defines what we teach. The following policy details the specifics of our setting.

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected. However, 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 (DfE 2014: 1.3). They support children's learning in all other areas and are known as the prime areas.

The prime areas are:

- ❖ **Communication and Language** – Listening & Attention, Understanding and Speaking
- ❖ **Physical Development** – Moving & Handling and Health & Self care
- ❖ **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – Making relationships, Sense of Self and Understanding Emotions

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

The specific areas are:

- ❖ **Literacy** – Reading and Writing
- ❖ **Mathematics** – Number, Numerical Patterns
- ❖ **Understanding the World** – People and communities, The world and Technology
- ❖ **Expressive Arts and Design** – Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative & Expressive

Teaching strategies

In F1 & F2, 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 the 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 instances, 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 2, the children will experience many more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to year 1.

What is a play based curriculum?

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. Play based activities may also allow the children to develop their fine and gross motor skills in readiness for writing in Foundation 1 and to improve pencil control in Foundation 2. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience activities 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. Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. This looks quite different in the Foundation

classes. We set 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 our physical development, literacy and maths skills, phonics and speaking and listening. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc... We are a Catholic primary school and the children's faith journey is a priority at St Anne's. Children follow 'The Way the Truth and the Life' syllabus from Foundation Stage 1, this journey begins by teaching simple concepts, through story, role-play, video clips and pictures. Alongside this, children participate in daily prayers and songs about God or Jesus throughout the day.

Transition

Here at St Anne's we pride ourselves on our child centred transition. After many years of experience of children coming through our doors, we feel our individualised transition enables your child/ren to settle well into our setting. For 2 Year olds and F1 children, their transition begins with a half an hour visit with their parent, their second visit is an hour on their own and then we will endeavour to increase the time spent in the setting to suit each individual child – working up to their 15 hours usually by the middle of the second week. After following this model of transition for a number of years, we have seen excellent results with our children settling well and quickly. We are mindful of working parents and appreciate that a slow transition may not always work however, this is something we will discuss with parents during the initial meeting and this will always be accommodated so please don't worry.

30 Hours Provision

From September 2017, we have offered our F1 children 30 hours' provision. For those parents who receive the funding, eligibility codes need to be applied for a term in advance and given to the school office to ensure funding is received. The afternoon session for 30-hour children encompasses a more creative approach with the opportunity for working in much smaller groups and provides opportunity for a more creative curriculum.

Eager Explorers our 2-Year-Old Provision

From January 2021, we have opened a brand new 2-year provision. For those parents that receive funding, eligibility codes need to be applied for and given into the school office. We also offer the facility to pay for each morning session from 8.50am-11.50pm, which costs £15.00 (this will be reviewed annually in April) and we ask that children attend for a minimum of 2 mornings – depending on our numbers. Our 2 Year provision offers a child led curriculum and has a huge focus on 'In the Moment Planning'. Children are born with a natural desire to explore and learn and practitioners can support them in this. We do this by creating and enabling our environment (both physical and emotional) and through the relationships and interactions that the children experience. Work is not planned ahead, rather we remain '**in the moment**' with the children as they explore and learn. We observe carefully and enhance the learning whenever we spot a 'teachable moment'. Each key person will follow the cycle of - observation, assessment and planning. Observations will be carried out on a moment-by-moment basis.

Behaviour

At St Anne's we believe developing key learning skills is vital for every child. Our school rules are followed from when the children start with us – Be Ready, Be Kind, Be Safe and we promote the kindness principle in all that we do. Throughout the school, we also promote the 5Rs. These include Readiness to learn, Responsibility, Resilience, Respect and Reflection. These are displayed in our classrooms and promoted throughout our teaching and school. These skills are developed throughout our EYFS.

Assessment, observations and learning journals

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. Our curriculum is now designed for practitioners to spend more quality interaction with the children, without the need for formal recorded observations. All our staff ensure excellent relationships with all the children in their care and know how to move their learning forward.

From September 2021, all F2 children will undertake a statutory assessment provided by the DFE. Information from this assessment will be reviewed again in Year 6 to measure each individual child's progress.

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 a variety of different ways. These include 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 after school each day and inform staff for their planning the following week. Staff have their own iPad, which is used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning when deemed necessary. Eager Explorers and F1 use an online app 'Tapestry' to record some photos of the children and keep in touch with parents, we also love parents to send us pictures from home on the app too. Children in F2 use Class Dojo for rewards and also as a means of communication with parents. On entry to Eager Explorers, F1 and F2 we carry out baseline assessments for each child. Throughout the Early Years, the Class Teacher submits termly assessment data to the Head Teacher showing each child's development across the seven areas of learning. However, assessments are continually updated to inform planning and next steps. At the end of Foundation 2 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 F2 child's end of year report and can be discussed in the final Parents' Evening in Foundation 2.

Role of staff and key person

Staff

- **Alison Jones** – EYFS Lead and F2 Teacher
- **Claire Lyon** – F2 Teacher
- **Sarah Thompson** – F1 Teacher
- **Margaret Ballard** – F2 TA
- **Joanne Barber** – F1 TA
- **Kathryn Plant** – 2 Year Provision TA & 30 Hours TA
- **Casey Brady** – FS TA
- **Kerys Lillie** – 2 Year Provision TA

Children are allocated a key person within the setting. One of the roles of the key person is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs. Both the teacher and the teaching assistant together help the children become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years setting 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.

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. Our meetings, which are held before the children start, have proved a vital link between home and school and we have seen the positive impact they have had on how the children have settled into school. For our 2 Year old's, parents and the child are invited into school to have a look around the setting and have a chat with Mrs Jones before the child's settling in period. For F1 children, the class teacher meets with the parent and child which enables them to begin the relationship with parents in a positive way. In F2, the class teachers visit any of the external settings they may be at before the children start in September. 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 the F1 and F2 meetings, we offer a transition session for parents at the end of the previous academic year and offer 'stay and play' sessions for parents throughout the year. Transition is an important process at St Anne's and changes depending on the need of the cohort each year. We also have available to support our families at St Anne's Mrs A. Hampson, our home school development worker. To further develop our home-school link we regularly post photos on Facebook to enable the parents to see what is happening in school. We also hold termly 'Stay and Play' sessions which all parents or grandparents are invited to.

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 and there is a section in our school Safeguarding Policy that directly refers to practice in the EYFS. Mrs Jones is trained as a Designated Safeguarding Lead.

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. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in children's books, floor books, 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 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 on a daily basis. At times children may have the opportunity to try different foods as part of a wider learning experience. We will always inform our parents when this will happen to ensure that they are aware and happy for their child to be involved.

We take all accidents seriously and always log any incident immediately. If we feel it is necessary we will always contact home and ask that someone can come and check their child. We take part in whole school fire alarms which are held regularly in line with school policy and we follow school procedures for child protection (see separate policy). Mrs Prescott, head teacher, is the named Child Protection Officer and all concerns are discussed with her. We have separate policies for medicine in school and off-site visits.

Applications

Application forms for Eager Explorers and F1 are available from our school office. F2 applications will be completed through the local authority.