

1 Introduction

1.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the first year at school. At St Faith's children join us at the beginning of the school year in which they turn five. Compulsory schooling begins at the start of the term after a child's fifth birthday. The EYFS is important in its own right, and in preparing children for later schooling. The Early Learning Goals set out what is worked towards during the EYFS.

1.2 Almost all children joining our school have attended a preschool setting, in the maintained or independent sectors, ranging in style from full time day care to sessional nursery school places. A few children each year have no pre-school experience outside the care of their parents. 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, stimulating, challenging and safe learning environment drawing upon children's interests;
- it provides an atmosphere in which every child and adult feels secure and valued;
- it reflects the way young children learn by preserving the place of talk, play and first-hand experience;
- it places an emphasis on developing independent learning skills.

2 Aims of our EYFS

2.1 The curriculum of the EYFS underpins all future learning by supporting, fostering, promoting and developing children's learning and development in the following areas:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development;
- Physical Development
- Communication and Language
- Literacy
- Maths
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and design

Using the 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage' and Department for Education guidance 'Development Matters', we use the seven areas of learning and experience to define and plan the curriculum. By the end of the Foundation Year at St Faith's most children meet, and some exceed, the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS.

3 Teaching and learning style

3.1 Our school policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective practice in our school. These apply to teaching and learning in the EYFS just as much as they do to the teaching in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.

3.2 The more general aspects of good practice in our school that relate to the EYFS are:

- the partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- the understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching and the setting up of the learning environment;
- 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 achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the EYFS;
- 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;
- the encouragement to develop independence and self-management;
- the identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are shared with parents;
- the good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school;
- the clear aims for our work, and the regular monitoring to evaluate and improve what we do;
- the regular identification of training needs of all adults working within the EYFS.

4 Play in the EYFS

4.1 Children learn most effectively from first hand experiences and when they are actively involved and interested. They practise and build up ideas and learn how to cooperate, negotiate and solve problems. Young children learn from everything around them and do not separate their learning into curriculum areas. Play:

- is the natural and enjoyable way for young children to learn
- develops imagination and creative thinking
- allows children to develop, consolidate and apply new skills and ideas in different situations
- allows children to investigate, experiment and solve problems through extended periods of time engaged in one activity
- allows children to explore and make sense of the world around them
- allows children to express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations
- allows children to learn about making choices and decisions
- gives children ownership of their curriculum, resources and space
- enables children to develop their personal qualities and attitudes
- enables children to develop social skills and form relationships
- allows children to take risks without fear of failure
- which is physical and energetic is an essential part of keeping healthy

5 Inclusion in the EYFS

5.1 In our school we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best and value each child's accomplishments. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

5.2 We set each child realistic and challenging expectations to enable most children to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Year. Some children will progress beyond this point. We do this in order 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.

5.3 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 or extension as necessary; seeking advice where necessary.

5.4 We believe that everyone should be encouraged to value and celebrate diversity.

6 The EYFS curriculum

6.1 The curriculum for the EYFS in our school is based on the seven areas of learning and the Early Learning Goals. The experiences that our children meet often enable them to develop a number of competencies, skills and concepts across several areas of learning.

6.2 'Development Matters' provides the basis for our planning. Our medium term planning is completed termly. Our weekly planning identifies the intended learning, with success criteria for children.

6.3 The curriculum provides opportunities that promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

6.4 Opportunities are planned to develop the children's learning habits and Characteristics of Effective Learning

6.5 Play is our children's important work and because of this we plan for play opportunities which are both structured and unstructured. We make provision for children to initiate and develop their own ideas and interests.

6.5 Staff are aware of the importance of transition for children as they move into Year 1. Care is taken to ensure continuity and progression, through liaison and the sharing and review of assessments.

7 Assessment

7.1 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 observations, regular informal assessments and standardised assessments in reading and maths conducted by the EYFS team.

7.2 During the children's first half term in the Foundation Year, the teacher assesses the ability of each child using early observations. We use this information to modify the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children. We share the initial observations with parents at the parental consultation meetings in October.

7.3 The teacher completes the final assessment at the end of the child's Foundation Year. The child's next teacher uses this information to make plans for the transition to Year 1 and ongoing programmes of study.

7.4 Parents receive in the summer term a written report on their child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights their child's strengths and development needs and gives details of their general progress. The end of year report contains a section called the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning' and this outlines the child's approach to learning.

8 The role of parents

8.1 We believe that parents have an important role to play in the education of their child and recognise the role that parents have already played. We do this through:

- welcoming them to Open Mornings, play sessions and school events
- providing the opportunity for their child to spend time with members of staff before starting school
- asking parents to provide information about their child in a 'Getting Ready for My New School' booklet
- providing information to parents about the start of the year and about the curriculum through meetings and in written form
- offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress
- encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns, significant events, or things to celebrate
- arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents

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.