St. James' Church of England Primary School

'Building One Faith, One Family, Our Future'

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Reviewed and revised by B.Scholfield - Summer 2025
Approved by Governors – Summer 2025

Review Date – Summer 2026 (Standards Committee)

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

This document provides an overview of the policy, philosophy and practice in the EYFS at St James' Primary School. It outlines our intentions in the EYFS and how we implement this within our provision.

"The education of even a very small child does not aim at preparing him for school but for life."
Maria Montessori, 1967

At St James', all teaching staff deliver an EYFS curriculum through immersion in high quality teaching alongside an enriched learning environment. Our philosophy is to nurture every child's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, developing both skills and confidence as they take their first steps on their own unique journey of learning.

Intent

"We offer a holistic curriculum that champions our community and is aspirational."

The intent we have for our children in Reception class is to enter the next stage of their education ready to tackle new challenges with confidence and a positive mindset.

We will:

ENGAGE our pupils in a stimulating environment led by the children themselves, facilitated by adults, providing a curriculum responsive to individual starting points and needs.

INSPIRE our children to take the lead in their own learning, encouraging confidence to explore new ideas, think about problems, take risks, make links and seek challenge.

DEVELOP high levels of engagement, curiosity, collaboration and cooperation so the children become highly adept at managing their own behaviour in the classroom and in social situations.

Help the children to **EXPRESS** themselves with confidence in a meaningful way, respecting the opinions and values of themselves and others.

Implementation

Our approach is influenced by the work of educationalists, researchers and practitioners who have guided our knowledge of how children learn and develop and how adults can support this learning and development.

Here at St James', provision is underpinned by a complementary relationship between adult-led, adult-initiated and child-led learning. (Definitions in glossary)

We are ambitious in our approach using a continuous cycle of observation and assessment, planning/teaching, alongside structured and systematic lessons and guided group work.

Principles of the EYFS

The EYFS is based upon four distinct but complementary themes which guide the work of all practitioners. These are:

- **A Unique Child**
  Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- **Positive Relationships**
  Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- **Enabling Environments**
  Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time.
- **Learning and Development**
  (Recognise the) importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates.

All children develop in different ways and development is not a linear or automatic process. It depends on each unique child having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments that encourage their engagement and recognise their strengths. All children have agency and curiosity to learn and will interact with other people and the world around them in different ways. Understanding these different ways of knowing about the world is central to understanding who children are and how best to support their development.

"Young children learn from those they trust and with those who foster enthusiasm for learning."
Trevarthen, 2002

Learning & Development

Early adopter curriculum 2020 – At St James' we follow the EYFS Early Adopter Framework (2020)

Our classroom and wider learning environments are organised to allow children to actively explore their surroundings, taking into account the prime and specific areas of learning within the EYFS. All of the below areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

The EYFS comprises of seven areas of learning. Within these seven areas of learning there are a total of 17 aspects of learning (shown below):

Prime Areas

These prime areas are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving.

- **Communication and Language**
  - Listening, Attention and Understanding
  - Speaking
- **Physical Development**
  - Gross Motor Skills
  - Fine Motor Skills

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**
  - Self-Regulation
  - Managing Self
  - Building Relationships

Specific Areas

The specific areas help children to strengthen and apply the prime areas.

- **Literacy**
  - Comprehension
  - Word Reading
  - Writing
- **Mathematics**
  - Number
  - Numerical Patterns
- **Understanding the World**
  - Past and Present
  - People, Culture & Communities
  - The Natural World
- **Expressive Arts & Design**
  - Creating with Materials
  - Being Imaginative and Expressive

Throughout their time in Reception class, our children partake in an ambitious curriculum which is designed in a sequential way to ensure progress towards the end of reception goals. These goals are defined as Early Learning Goals (ELGs). The descriptors for these can be found in the appendix.

Our curriculum incorporates learning through play, learning by adults' modelling, by observing each other and through guided learning and direct teaching. Our plans are always flexible to allow us to respond quickly to children's new interests and/or needs.

Achievement of the prime and specific areas of learning is underpinned by the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning'. These are weaved into the EYFS curriculum here at St James'.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

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

These elements underpin how we reflect on each child's development and adjust or practice accordingly. Supporting children and recognising their individual learning behaviour as well as observing the context of children's play is essential and recognised by us all.

'What children learn is important, but how children learn is even more important if they are to become learners in today's society.'
Helen Moylett (2011)

Continuous Provision

'To continue the provision for learning in the absence of an adult.'
Alistair Bryce-Clegg, 2013

Resources are organised, indoors and outdoors, to develop children's skills in personal interaction and exploration and are linked to current assessment data. Resources are carefully selected to meet the development needs of all children, in order to enhance the potential for new learning and the consolidation of prior learning.

Continuous provision includes all areas of learning and equips children with the opportunity to demonstrate the three characteristics of effective learning. Children are given the freedom to make independent choices and encouraged to take control of their own learning whilst being active learners.

The Learning Environment

The importance of each adult to support progression is crucial however, we equally understand that in times when a child is on their own independent learning journey the environment plays a significant role in development.

"When it comes to what we have and where we have it, then nothing should be left to chance."
Alistair Bryce-Clegg, 2015.

At St James' each area of the classroom is informed by assessment. As the needs of the children change, as they grow and develop, so does their learning space. Using resources that are open ended encourage creativity, imagination and high order thinking skills. For example, the creative area may contain ribbon, lace, pinecones or lolly sticks.

Outside role play is deconstructed with access to logs, planks, sheets and tyres. These resources can become anything and have unlimited potential. Our timetable allows for long uninterrupted periods of continuous provision that allow the children time to reach a deep level of involvement as they engage, play, investigate and talk.

The Role of the Adult at St James'

Research shows that progress will be significantly enhanced by the effective support and role models of adults within a high-quality learning environment.

Within our Reception class, interactions between children and adults will look like this:

- Tuning in to what is happening or a child's thinking.
- Showing genuine interest.
- Respecting children's own choices and decisions.
- Inviting children to elaborate on their play and ideas.
- Offering personal experience.
- Clarifying ideas.
- Using specific praise e.g. that is a good idea because…
- Offering an alternative viewpoint.
- Interacting, not interfering.

Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do.

Adults have a deep understanding of how play of different types supports children to develop and learn and be able to discuss this with parents.

"It is through others that we develop into ourselves."
Lev Vygotsky, 1981

Promoting Voice and Inclusion

Inclusion is a process of identifying, understanding and breaking down barriers to participation and belonging. We listen to children's voices and recognise these are expressed in a range of ways, including non-verbally. By identifying what each of our unique child 'knows and can do' is fundamental to our inclusive Early Years practice.

Understanding that each child is unique includes considering them in relation to others. We make sure that our early years practice meets the needs of all the children, and this means thinking about children in context.

We aim to break down barriers to participation and belonging. We recognise that inclusive early year's practice is about anticipating, paying attention, responding to and reflecting on the needs and interests of all children.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we highly value the contribution that parents make. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in supporting their child/ren's development.
We do this through:

- Talking to parents about their child before they start in our Reception Class.
- The children having the opportunity to spend time with staff prior to starting at our school as part of transition.
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's development and progress and allowing free access to their children's Learning Journal.
- The use of Class Dojo to enable teachers and parents more opportunities to talk and be a part of their child's Reception class journey.
- Encouraging parents to talk to the Reception Staff about any concerns they may have. Staff from the Reception Team are present at the Reception gate during every drop off and pick up each day to improve parent communication and relationships.
- Offering various activities throughout the year that involve parents/ carers in the life of Reception for example, community events.
- Supporting parents/carers whose first language is one other than English.

Keeping safe

It is important to us that all children are and feel 'safe'. We help children become familiar with safety, 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. We aim to protect the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of all children. (See our Safeguarding Policy)

We understand that we are required to:

- promote the welfare of children;
- promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill;
- manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs;
- ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so;
- ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose;
- ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs;
- maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Health and Well-being

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.
Each child self-registers by putting their name into a feelings box at the star of the day so that we can check-in with them if needed.

Children's health is an integral part of their emotional, mental, social, environmental and spiritual well-being and this is recognised at St James'. We promote healthy snacks and offer foods from different cultures to develop their taste preferences.

Daily toothbrushing sessions ensure the importance of oral hygiene in Reception Class. This is part of the children's daily routine and children enjoy this.

Activities relating to the food cycle are interwoven in planning e.g. planting seeds, gathering preparing and eating.

Assessment

Observation

Throughout 'continuous provision', observation forms a fundamental aspect of the pedagogy of EYFS at St James' Primary School.

"Young children demonstrate language, mathematics, science, creativity, physicality – sometimes all within one activity – and the task of the practitioner is to make sense of what is seen, to recognise any significant steps in learning that may have taken place and to identify where help and support are needed to make further progress."
Jan Dubiel, 2014

Observation and responding to children's thinking inform our planning of experiences and opportunities, how we create our environment for thinking, the strategies the adults use to extend learning (modelling, scaffolding, questioning, discussion, shared sustained thinking) and how we capitalise knowledge of children's interests to ensure high levels of engagement. All adults record stand out learning moments – when a child does or says something that demonstrates progress or skill in a particular area and these are shared with home as well as celebrated in class.

Summative Assessments

In addition to the continuous cycle of observation and formative assessment which informs each child's next steps, summative assessments are carried out for phonic development, the stable order principle in number and an assessment of each child's stage of development for each of the 7 areas of learning. These take place termly and inform planning of subsequent teaching and learning.

Transitions

At St James' we recognise that starting school and moving up classes has the potential to be a stressful time for parents and children. We aim to make these transitions as smooth as possible.

All children starting in Reception class have home visits prior to their child starting school. This gives children the security of meeting with their teacher in a safe, familiar environment and gives parents time to ask questions and share knowledge or any concerns they may have about their child. In addition to this the class teacher will visit the children at their nursery where possible to gain further insight into their learning and give children another opportunity to meet them in an environment that is familiar to them.

All children starting Reception class will be offered transition sessions in July. This will be in a smaller group, allowing them time to explore their new classroom and build relationships with adults and other children.

Before starting school fully there will be induction days where children come in smaller groups. This aims to gradually ease them in and to make sure their first day isn't too daunting for them. These induction days have been very successful and valuable over previous years. All children will receive a starting school pack in the summer term before they start school which includes a 'school readiness' booklet.

In the summer term all our Reception children visit their new Year 1 teacher and support staff prior to them starting Year 1. Reception class staff pass on their knowledge of each child's development, progress and achievement towards the Early Learning Goals to ensure that their new teacher has a well-rounded picture of each individual child prior to starting the new school year.

Leadership and Accountability

Our Early Years lead is our Reception class teacher.

Our Early Years lead will:

- always have the child at the heart of everything;
- have energy, enthusiasm and a principled care and educational vision;
- employ a whole setting approach, support collaborative working and the collective identification and clear expression of research in formed pedagogical objectives related to the EYFS framework that promote wellbeing and achievement for all children;
- recognise the value of continuous quality improvement and how it impacts on children's wellbeing and achievement;
- be open to change and see value in supporting staff to voice and trial their own ideas;

- engage in self-evaluation and quality improvement processes as the basis of ongoing internal review – assessing what the setting offers against robust and challenging quality criteria;
- draw on the wide range of quality improvement tools available, ensuring the tools are fit for purpose;
- lead a collaborative learning culture – providing time and space for sharing knowledge and support for continuous professional development for all staff.

Monitoring takes place through the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Governing Body, BwD central team, 1-1s/appraisals, performance management and through Ofsted inspections. We evaluate as a staff and SLT with parents/carers, our multi-agency partners and the community.

Continuous Professional Development

We are committed to all staff accessing Continuous Professional Development. Individual training will be chosen or identified based on individual's interests or remits, linked to appraisal or performance management and in response to Ofsted inspections and national/local initiatives. We have systems in place to cascade this information with others and ascertain the impact of the training on our provision.

B.Scholfield
Early Years Lead
Summer 2025

Appendix

The Early Learning Goal Descriptors

Communication and Language

ELG: Listening, Attention and Understanding

- Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions.

- Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding.

- Hold conversation when engaged in back and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.

ELG: Speaking

- Participate in small group, class and one-to one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary.

- Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes, and poems when appropriate.

-Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

ELG: Self-Regulation

- Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly.

- Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate.

- Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.

ELG: Managing Self

- Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience, and perseverance in the face of challenge.

- Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly.

- Manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet, and understanding the importance of healthy food choices.

ELG: Building Relationships

- Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others.

- Form positive attachments to adults and friendships with peers.

- Show sensitivity to their own and to others' needs.

Physical Development

ELG: Gross Motor Skills

- Negotiate space and obstacles safely, with consideration for themselves and others.

- Demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing; Move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping, and climbing.

ELG: Fine Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases.

- Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery.

- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

Literacy

ELG: Comprehension

- Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary.

- Anticipate – where appropriate – key events in stories.

- Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes, and poems and during role-play.

ELG: Word Reading

- Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs.

- Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending.
- Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.

ELG: Writing

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters.

- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others. Mathematics ELG: Number

- Have a deep understanding of number to 10, including the composition of each number.

- Subitise (recognise quantities without counting) up to 5.

- Automatically recall (without reference to rhymes, counting or other aids) number bonds up to 5 (including subtraction facts) and some number bonds to 10, including double facts.

ELG: Numerical Patterns

- Verbally count beyond 20, recognising the pattern of the counting system.

- Compare quantities up to 10 in different contexts, recognising when one quantity is greater than, less than or the same as the other quantity.

- Explore and represent patterns within numbers up to 10, including evens and odds, double facts and how quantities can be distributed equally.

Understanding the World

ELG: Past and Present

- Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society.

- Know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class.

- Understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling.

ELG: People, Culture and Communities

- Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps.

- Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class.

- Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, non-fiction texts and –when appropriate – maps.

ELG: The Natural World

- Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants.

- Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class.

- Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter.

Expressive Arts and Design

ELG: Creating with Materials

- Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools, and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function.

- Share their creations, explaining the process they have used.

- Make use of props and materials when role playing characters in narratives and stories.

ELG: Being Imaginative and Expressive

- Invent, adapt, and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher.

- Sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs; Perform songs, rhymes, poems, and stories with others, and – when appropriate – try to move in time with music.

Glossary

Adult-led learning – the practitioner knows exactly what outcomes they want to achieve. They have planned with care, using prior knowledge of the child's learning experiences and guidance from the EYFS document 'Development Matters', 2012.

Adult-initiated learning – the practitioner has a clear purpose for planning an activity or experience. Knowledge of the child or children, and of their previous learning, gives the practitioner evidence to plan either for consolidation of that learning, or to explore its next steps.

Child-led learning – situations that evolve independently, the practitioner approaches not knowing what it is that the child or children are trying to do or what scenario they have been creating. Often spontaneous and frequently unpredictable. In this situation, the practitioner must wait and watch before deciding whether and when to intervene.