

St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School



Early Years Foundation Policy

January 2026

Mission Statement

'Nurturing Hearts and Minds'

God's love is at the heart of all that we do at St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School. Hearts and Minds are nurtured in a stimulating and safe environment. We believe that every child is unique and we nurture each child through a creative and rounded curriculum to reach their full potential. Talents are celebrated and differences are respected within a strong, supportive Catholic community.

At St Gabriel's, children learn to love, respect and care for each other and God's entire world. Our school is a place where children are filled with a love of life and learning.

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

“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 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 2025)

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I. Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life.
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.
- A close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

Intent

At St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School, our aim is to create an early learning environment that supports, enhances and invites a child's curiosity, confidence and individual competency to flourish regardless of backgrounds, circumstances or needs. We believe that all children deserve an education rich in memorable experiences alongside the development of key skills and knowledge. We aim to encourage independent, enthusiastic learners. It is our intent that children who enter our Pre-School and Reception class develop a love of learning, giving them the best chance to become well-rounded, happy individuals, ready to succeed in an ever-changing world. We support this lifelong learning journey by helping them to develop physically, verbally, cognitively and emotionally whilst embedding a positive attitude to school and our 'Be Values'.

We ensure to take into consideration the children's starting points and needs as they begin their learning journey with us and make sure every child has access to a broad, balanced curriculum. We recognise the importance of giving our children the best possible start to their education by planning and implementing teaching and learning opportunities that support them to reach their full potential.

It is our intention to provide a stimulating, well-structured, safe learning environment where all children can work with adults and peers in a climate of mutual respect to develop confidence in their ability to learn.

2. Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that applies from September 2025. Our EYFS provision operates in accordance with:

- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2025)
 - Children Act (1989, 2004)
 - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)
 - Equality Act (2010)
 - SEND Code of Practice (2015)
 - Data Protection Act (2018) and UK GDPR
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3. Principles

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School, this comprises of one Pre-School and one Reception class.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

A Unique Child

At St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School, 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, 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/sharing assemblies and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Positive Relationships

At St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School, we aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with all of the children and their families. We value the importance of positive relationships and the impact this has on a child's overall experience of education.

Enabling Environments

At St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School, we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development and we aim to create an attractive and stimulating environment where the children feel confident, secure and challenged. The Pre-School and Reception classrooms are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely whilst enabling them to access resources independently. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision.

Effective learning builds and extends upon prior learning and following children's interests. Planning for an effective environment begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, stage of development and preferred ways of learning, before developing challenging, achievable activities and experiences. Play based learning is paramount and children direct their own learning from carefully planned opportunities provided by staff. Staff will enhance play and provision as needed to support and further extend individual learning.

Learning and Development

At St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School, 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 interconnected.

4. Curriculum

Areas of Learning

The EYFS is made up of three prime areas of learning:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional development

Additionally, there are four specific areas of learning:

- Literacy
- Maths
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Achievement of these prime and specific areas of learning is completed by promoting the characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- Playing and exploring (engagement)
- Active learning (motivation)
- Creating and thinking critically (thinking)

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a broad and balanced combination of adult led and child-initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELG's) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

Implementation

We recognise that children will learn most effectively when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults who care for them. We provide a setting that encompasses this and where children are supported to achieve their potential. At St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School, we follow the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2025)

Our curriculum progression has been mapped out from the Development Matters to ensure children are on track to achieve the Early Learning Goals. In Pre-School and Reception, we combine short, intentional teaching sessions and adult-led activities with child-initiated activities and continuous provision. This balance supports independence whilst guiding the children's learning and ensuring they are progressing well. Focus children are identified in each area of learning and these children are supported by an adult in provision.

Our curriculum has been written to give the children broad and memorable learning experiences. Children are given the opportunities to apply learning from across the curriculum in practical ways whilst also applying the knowledge and skills they have learnt. Each half term, there is an over-arching topic which creates exciting learning opportunities and encourages the children to explore their interests within new topics. Our children are able to appreciate and understand the world around them by asking questions and learning about different cultures, celebrations, music, dance, art and history.

Teaching and Learning Style

Our policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our school. These features apply to teaching and learning in the EYFS just as much as they do to the teaching in Key Stage 1 & 2. Features 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 a solid understanding 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 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, 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 observations, which are shared with parents;
- the good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school;

Playing and Exploring

“Children’s play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children’s development.”

Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which in turn help them make sense of the world. They practice and build up ideas and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

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. Active learning provides children with a sense of satisfaction 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 are given opportunities to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults 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.

Inclusion/Special Educational Needs

All children and their families are valued at St Gabriel’s Catholic Primary School. Children are treated as individuals and have equal access to all provisions available. All children at St Gabriel’s Catholic Primary School are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. We do not discriminate against children because of differences. Our children are given 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.

Assessments consider contributions from a range of perspectives to ensure that any child with potential special educational needs is identified at the earliest possible opportunity. Early identification of special needs is crucial to enable staff to support the development of each child in the best way. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage and appropriate steps are taken in accordance with the school’s policy for SEN.

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.

5. Assessment

Impact

Our children are actively involved in their learning. All children in Pre-School and Reception experience a curriculum that provides enriching learning experiences and opportunities.

Baseline assessments are done on entry into Pre-School and Reception. Children in Reception

complete a statutory baseline assessment, a government-mandated check at the start of the school year, conducted on an iPad to assess early literacy, communication, and numeracy skills. In addition, teachers carry out their own baseline assessments by spending time working with children individually or in small groups to evaluate their early skills more closely.

Throughout Reception, children are assessed on their progress towards the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). Evidence is gathered through a variety of methods, including informal observations and interactions, as well as recorded work in exercise books and photographic documentation. Next steps are identified and addressed in real time, both during continuous provision and in adult-led focus activities. Summative assessments are finalised in the summer term, providing a comprehensive overview of each child's development against the ELGs. Children who achieve the expected standards across the prime areas of learning, alongside literacy and mathematics, are considered to have attained a *Good Level of Development (GLD)*.

The children at St Gabriel's experience a smooth transition between Pre-school, Reception and beyond. Effective communication and collaboration ensure the children leave the EYFS with a solid foundation of learning of which to build upon. We use floor books, supplemented with exercise books, which evidence the children's successes throughout their time in Reception.

We help children to develop a positive attitude towards life and learning through our school 'Be Values' (Be kind, Be honest, Be respectful, Be safe, Be your best) and enable them to become responsible and active members of our community.

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 curriculum planning shows how the principles of the EYFS are put into practice and are always informed by observations we have made of the children in order to understand and consider their current interests, development stage and learning needs. All staff who work in the Early Years Foundation Stage are involved in this process.

The planning within the EYFS is based around particular themes which is enhanced depending on the children's interests. These plans are used by the EYFS team as a guide for weekly planning. However, we 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 observation, conversation with the children and recording in individual books. Children needing further support with their Next Steps are identified within our weekly provision plan.

In Pre-School we use Tapestry Learning Journals to record observations of children as they work towards their Next Steps. Both Pre-school and Reception will record observations of children on First Concerns and School Support Plans, to support evidence of progress towards their targets.

Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written report to parents, reporting their progress against the ELGs. We provide an opportunity for the parents to discuss these judgements with their teacher.

6. Working with Parents

Parents and Carers as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating their children:

We do this through:

- talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school;
- the children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school during transition sessions;
- inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school;
- providing a curriculum overview on the website at the beginning of each term, outlining the themes, areas of learning, diary dates, any trips, visits and creative days for that term;
- communicating with parents via Class Dojo in Pre-School and Reception
- offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress. There are formal meetings for Reception parents twice a year at which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress. Parents receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.

Transition is very important to us at St Gabriel's. The EYFS Reception teacher and staff based in St Gabriel's Pre-school meet during the Summer term to discuss new intake children. Pre-School children joining St Gabriel's school, visit the different areas of school regularly to familiarise them with the building (Reception classroom, toilets, hall) and staff.

7. Safeguarding and Welfare Procedures

Welfare

["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."](#)

It is important to us that all children in the school are safe. We will 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.

We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. (Please see Safeguarding Policy) At St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School, we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2025).

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;
 - ensure children are safe and supervised when eating
 - maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Intimate Care

Intimate care can be defined as any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out a procedure to intimate personal areas which most people usually carry out themselves but some pupils are unable to do because of their young age, physical difficulties or other special needs. Examples include care associated with continence as well as more ordinary tasks such as help with washing, toileting or dressing.

In EYFS, there are occasions where children may have accidents and may soil or wet themselves. On these occasions, the class teacher and teaching assistant would support the child with cleaning and changing into fresh clothes. In Reception class, there may be occasions where we feel it necessary to involve parents in the intimate cleaning of a child.

For any children who required regular assistance with intimate care, perhaps because of an additional need or disability, an intimate care plan would be agreed. Parents/carers will be informed the same day if their child has needed help with meeting intimate care needs (e.g. has had an 'accident' and is wet or soiled themselves).

8. Monitoring Arrangements

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to follow the principles stated in this policy.

There is a link Governor responsible for the EYFS. This governor will discuss EYFS practice with the practitioners regularly and provide feedback to the whole governing body, raising any issues that require discussion.

The Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher and subject leaders will carry out monitoring within the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.
