ST. GEORGE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

2026-2027

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth until the end of their Reception year. At St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, children may join our Nursery the term after their third birthday and will transition into Reception after their fourth birthday, in the year they turn five. In partnership with parents and carers, we enable the children to begin the process of becoming active, independent and lifelong learners. We endeavour to ensure that children "learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe." We aim to support children through "teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and … the right foundation for good future progress through school and life." (Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2025)

AIMS

At St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children therefore giving them the strong foundation for their future and to ensure that all our children develop into independent and lifelong learners.

"When we give every child the best start in their early years, we give them what they need today. We also set them up with every chance of success tomorrow." Development Matters Sept 2023

Our high expectations will enable children to develop socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally and to achieve their full potential. We will ensure that all our children are kept healthy and safe and that they achieve the knowledge and skills they need to start in Key Stage 1.

The EYFS is centred around four principles:

1. That every child is **a unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
2. That children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
3. That children learn and develop well in **enabling environments** where teaching and support from adults responds to their individual needs and interests. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioner and parents/carers to help them build their learning over time.
4. The important acknowledgement that the **learning and development** of children happens in different ways and at different rates.

This policy explains how our practice is underpinned by these four themes.

THE UNIQUE CHILD

We value every child and believe that every child can make progress given the correct support. We recognise and celebrate that every child is unique and develops in their own way, at their own pace. We support each child to become resilient, competent and confident learners by meeting them where they are at and nurturing their growth and development. At St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, we use timely feedback, praise and encouragement, and rewards systems to encourage a positive and can-do attitude towards learning.

We value and respect all children and their families here at St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery. All children are given fair and equal access to all provisions available with staff adapting and supporting when necessary. Curriculum planning considers the needs and abilities of all children to ensure each child can thrive. Early identification of special educational needs (SEN) is crucial to enable staff to implement the correct support and provision, as early as possible. Any concerns are always discussed with parents and carers at an early stage and the school's SENCo is on hand to offer advice, guidance and support to both staff and family members.

Should any child require support from external agencies, appropriate steps are taken in accordance with the school SEND and inclusion policy.

To meet the needs of all our children, we:

- Plan opportunities for children to revisit and review their previous knowledge so that their knowledge can then be securely extended.
- Provide a wide range of learning opportunities that motivates and engages children.
- Use a variety of teaching strategies based on the learning needs of the current cohort.
- Track and observe children's progress, organising interventions where necessary.
- Integrate the Education Endowment Foundation's 'Five-a-Day' into our daily pedagogy to ensure teaching is high quality.
- Use and source resources that reflect our diverse world and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.
- Consistently promote the positive self to develop self-esteem and acknowledge successes.
- Create a safe and supportive learning environment in which all children's voices are heard, valued and celebrated.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

We aim to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment where children feel confident and secure and challenged. 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 interest. Effective planning is informed by observations of the children to ensure we follow their current interests 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 extend as needed to further individual learning. The **Education Endowment Foundation (EEF, 2021)** emphasises that **high-quality interactions are central to children's learning and development in the Early Years**, particularly when adults use purposeful back-and-forth conversation to extend thinking and language. In response to this, our practitioners prioritise purposeful, responsive interactions throughout the day, using open-ended questions, modelling language, and sustained shared thinking to extend children's learning, deepen understanding, and support communication and language development.

Within our indoor environments, we offer permanent areas of provision such as role play (home/kitchen), fine motor skills (playdough, funky fingers), creative (craft, drawing and painting), construction (block play and small world), water and sand play, musical exploration, reading, phonics, and mathematics. The latter is more discrete within our Nursery setting, filtering mathematics into all areas of provision. Should children in our cohorts have any additional learning needs, staff will enhance continuous provision or source specific resources to support their individual needs.

Outdoor learning in our setting supports and challenges children's physical development, particularly their gross motor skills. As an Early Years team, we have designed and implemented bespoke outdoor equipment and sought-after natural resources to compliment the outdoor learning environment in our setting. Adults take on the same role as indoors, supporting children's learning and encouraging their curiosity and exploration of the natural world around them whilst still supporting early language and mathematics.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

At St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, we understand that children learn best when they have positive relationships with the adults who are caring for them. Therefore, we strive to develop strong, respectful and professional relationships with all children and their families.

Parent Communications

We recognise that parents and carers have a pivotal and enduring role as their child's primary educator and therefore greatly value parental contribution. In order to develop a secure partnership with parents and carers we:

- Hold a 'New to St. George's' parent meeting during the term prior to their child(ren) starting at St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery. In addition to this, we have hosted stay and play sessions, teddy bear's picnics and more formal meetings if required.
- Support children in their transition into Nursery by staggering start dates, easing children into school life by managing class numbers.
- Have our Nursery Teacher arrange a home visit during the term prior to children commencing at our Nursery provision.
- Hold a 'Phonics and Reading' meeting for all parents and carers during the first half term of Reception to offer information on Phonics, how it is taught at St George's and how early reading can be supported at home.
- Arrange face-to-face parent meetings during the first half term for all children in the Early Years. This offers staff an opportunity to discuss children's transition into St. George's, their baseline assessments and their overall progress in Autumn 1.
- Hold formal parent meetings twice a year where parents/carers and staff can have a confidential dialogue about each child's progress – Autumn 1 and Summer 1.
- Parents receive an end of year report on their child's attainment and progress. For Reception, this will include their notification of whether or not a Good Level of Development (GLD) has been achieved.
- Organise and promote a range of activities and roles throughout the year to encourage collaboration, mutual respect and engagement e.g. stay and play mornings, school visits and trips, weekly mystery reader, voluntary support for reading, nativity performances, special assemblies and many more.

Much of the above is scheduled for specific points in the academic year, however in order to stay in touch with parents and carers on a more regular basis, we use the platform ClassDojo. ClassDojo enables staff and parents/carers to communicate with ease, to share learning from class and to relay any important messages. Parents and identified carers are the only people who are permitted access to the class page and each child is allocated a maximum of 4 linked adults.

We endeavour to update parents and carers with their child's activities and progress each week. Updates will be given in the form of photographs (an individual or whole class photograph) each week to demonstrate what we have been learning.

At St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, we feel that the above should be met in effort to maintain a good relationship with parents and carers and for them to feel involved in their child's school journey.

Our Early Years team maintain an open-door policy whereby parents/carers are welcome to talk to staff members at the door during morning drop off and afternoon pick up. Moreover, more regular meetings are available upon request and will be conducted in a confidential and professional space. As staff members we aim to feedback to each parent/carer about their child at the end of the day, disclosing any behaviour concerns and/or celebrating 'WOW' moments.

Staffing

Each child must be assigned a key person. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. Within Nursery and Reception classes at St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, children are assigned to a 'key worker'. Although the class teacher is the overarching link between school and home, your child's key worker is a main point of contact who can discuss your child's progress more specifically. Having key worker groups allows for a smaller number of children per adult thus offering more opportunity for close observation and individual support.

All Early Years providers working with children from birth to 5 years old must follow the regulations on the EYFS staff:child ratios. This is the number of qualified staffs – at different qualification levels – that an Early Years setting needs to have in order to meet the needs of all children at different stages of development and ensure their safety. These regulations are as follows:

For Nursery (aged 3 years and over) – 1:13 ratio for a qualified teacher teaching directly and another member level 3 member of staff.
For Reception (aged 4 years and over) – 1:30 ratio for a qualified teacher teaching directly.

Teachers and teaching assistants at St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery support the curriculum delivery of a Nursery and Reception class up to a cohort size of 30 children.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Early Years at St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery follows the statutory guidance as outlined in the EYFS Framework. The 7 areas of learning are as follows:

Prime Areas:
1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2. Communication and Language
3. Physical Development

The prime areas develop in response to our children's relationships and experiences and support learning in all other areas. They continue to be fundamental throughout the EYFS.

Specific Areas:
4. Literacy
5. Mathematics
6. Understanding the World
7. Expressive Arts and Design

The specific areas include essential skills and topical knowledge. They grow from the prime areas and provide important contexts for foundational learning.

All seven areas of learning and development are important and interconnected.
Through careful assessments and observations, including information provided by parents and other settings, children's development levels are assessed. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of

learning as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas. However, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child. This may also include a discussion with the SENDCo in order to access Special Educational Needs support.

At St George's, each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is used as an essential part children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. There is an on-going judgement to be made by practitioners about the balance between activities led by children, and activities led or guided by adults. Practitioners must respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. As children grow older, and as their development allows, it is expected that the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults, to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for Year 1.

To know you more clearly, our whole-school Religious Education curriculum, is also taught in the Early Years as a core subject. Our children are supported and nurtured on their religious and spiritual journey from the beginning of their school life here through formal lessons, celebrations of the word, spontaneous prayer, religious events, and informal, in-the-moment religious links.

The **Characteristics of Effective Learning** underpin our Early Years practice and help us to support children to become **motivated, resilient and independent learners**. We recognise the importance of **playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically**, and we provide a stimulating environment where children are encouraged to follow their interests, take risks, persevere with challenges and develop their own ideas. Practitioners observe, interact and respond sensitively to extend children's learning and promote positive attitudes to learning that will support them throughout their education.

Planning

Our Early Years curriculum is planned responsively to meet the needs, interests and developmental stages of the children in our care. We build on prior learning, identify the key knowledge and skills we want children to develop, and sequence experiences carefully so that learning becomes progressively more challenging over time. This approach reflects the Education Endowment Foundation's guidance that effective teaching should be adapted in response to children's understanding and should build securely on what they already know and can do (EEF, 2021).

For example, learning may be carefully sequenced so that children first explore **animals and their young in Nursery**, then deepen their knowledge of **animals and their habitats in Reception**. This learning is then built upon in **Year 1** through the **classification of animals**, before being revisited in **Year 2** with greater depth, challenge and complexity, enabling pupils to secure and extend their scientific understanding over time.

Throughout our topics, emphasis is placed on communication and language and developing our children's vocabulary. Within Reception, we plan deliberate communication and language opportunities where adults can extend and support speech, grammar and spoken English such as discussing objects during snack time, sustained shared thinking and story time questioning. Woven into our daily practice across the department is rhyme time, where children learn new nursery rhymes and poems in effort to expose them to new language and early poetry. We feel that supporting early language development is vital and has positive effects on our children's learning, growth and development more generally. As Early Years practitioners, we constantly and consistently support our children to become confident and competent communicators who have, and can use, a rich vocabulary. We

are also supported by an independent Speech and Language Therapist, Mrs Chapman, who advises the department on best practice for developing communication and language.

Every Child Matters

Responsive planning enables practitioners to meet the needs of every child by adapting provision in response to observation, assessment and children's interests. This supports the **Every Child Matters** agenda by helping children to stay safe, enjoy learning, make progress and develop the skills they need for the future.

ASSESSMENT

We assess children's learning, progression and development through a range of assessment types.

Ongoing formative assessment is at the core of our teaching practice in the Early Years. This involves observing children in their play, any everyday activities and planned, adult-led tasks. Using Development Matters, we assess where an individual child might be in their developmental pathway and consider how we can strengthen and deepen existing knowledge as well as possible areas in which to challenge and extend the child's current learning, moving the child forward. This continuous cycle of assessment is the heart of our Early Years setting to ensure planning and teaching is responsive and adaptive to the needs of the cohort.

Summative assessment enables staff to review children's progress and identify any aspects that need support. Staff will assess children holistically each half term. Development Matters is then used as a guide to making best-fit judgements about whether a child is showing typical development for their age (on track) or if they may be at risk of delay (not on track). At the end of Nursery, parents/carers will receive a formal report that comments on children's progress in the prime areas between ages 36 and 48 months. At the end of Reception, parents/carers will receive a formal report detailing their child's EYFS Profile. Summative assessments offer secure information that can then be shared with parents, colleagues and other agencies.

Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)

The RBA is a statutory assessment for children entering Reception on or after September 2021. The RBA is a short, interactive assessment of each child's early literacy, communication, language and mathematics skills using resources and subject matter that most children will be familiar with. The RBA is a baseline for measuring the progress primary schools make with their pupils from Reception to Year 6. The Reception teacher will carry out the assessment on a 1:1 basis and will record results on the DfE portal. Children's baseline results will be discussed with parents/carers during meetings in Autumn 1. Parents/carers may request a copy of their child's RBA report.

TRANSITION

To our Nursery:

Children may begin Nursery once they are 3 years old and toilet trained. Our Nursery admissions include **two annual intakes, in September and January**. Following registration of interest, children's details will be shared with Nursery staff, who will contact families individually to arrange a **home visit** in **May or September**, depending on the intake date.

Home visits allow staff to build a clearer picture of each child's development, observe the child in their home environment, and discuss any learning or development needs with parents and carers. They also provide a valuable first opportunity for children to become familiar with Nursery staff and begin developing secure relationships ahead of transition days and their start date. Information gathered during the home visit, together with parental preferences regarding attendance, will be used to confirm each child's pattern of days and hours for the first half-term. We understand that transition into Nursery is an important milestone and aim to make this experience as smooth, reassuring and positive as possible.

To our Reception:

During the Summer term, the Reception teacher will contact external pre-school settings to discuss transition and arrange, where possible, a teacher visit to meet each child. Pre-school settings are asked to send across their end of year report for the child to enable staff to glean information about the needs and abilities of the child before the academic year begins.

Prior to commencing Reception, parents/carers are given a pack during the 'New to Reception' meeting. This contains a contact details form and an 'All About Me' pack; a short information booklet which allows staff members to understand each child's personality, interests, routines and any other important information. Parents/carers must also complete a medical form from Mrs Jones (Bursar) if any medication is to be kept and administered during school hours.

At St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, we organise a whole school 'shunt up' day where children can visit Reception, meet their teachers and familiarise themselves with their new learning environment. Children from other pre-school settings are invited to join the existing Nursery cohort and enjoy a stay and play session.

From Reception to Key Stage 1

Of course, the existing Reception cohort will 'shunt up' to Year 1 for the morning to facilitate a smooth transition into KS1. We pride ourselves on our transition from EYFS to KS1 and believe that the close-knit nature of our staffing and school layout enables children to feel comfortable, confident and settled when leaving Reception.

In effort to prepare children for Year 1 routines and expectations, the Reception teacher will gradually increase the frequency and/or duration of inputs and adult-directed activities. A real strength of our transition from Reception to Year 1 is the importance that is placed on the carry-over of continuous provision within the Year 1 classroom. Children are motivated by the opportunity to use their initiative, create and re-create scenarios, problem solve, and collaborate and negotiate with their peers.

Transition from Reception to Year 1 is carefully planned to ensure continuity and consistency for every child. Our phonics scheme, reading groups and maths approach remain the same across both year groups, helping children to feel secure and supported as they move into Year 1. Reception and Year 1 staff work closely together through detailed handovers and joint moderation of key areas of learning, enabling the Year 1 teacher to have a thorough understanding of each child's strengths, needs and gaps in learning so that teaching can be appropriately planned and targeted from the very first day in September.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

All members of the school community are valued as individuals. We are committed to meeting the needs of all pupils, taking into account gender, ability, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, age, special

educational needs, disability and social circumstances. Staff recognise the importance of a curriculum that reflects cultural diversity and prepares pupils for life in a diverse and multi-faith society.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

At St. George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery there are clear procedures for assessing risk which details how we keep children safe during outdoor learning as well as during trips and outings. To uphold children's health, safety and wellbeing, we ensure that:

- We have a strict medicines procedure which sees only prescribed medication being administered at school, only if written permission has been completed by a parent/carer. Training is provided for staff where the administration of medication requires technical and procedural knowledge. Parents/carers are informed of their child's medication record on the same day.
- A first aid box is accessible at all times and a record of accidents and injuries is maintained. Paediatric first aiders: Mrs M Quigley, Miss J Murray and Miss O Fitton.
- Fire and emergency evacuation procedures are understood by all staff and children are coached on what happens if the Fire or Lockdown alarm sounds and where our assembly point is located.
- Staff follow the health and safety policy by identifying and reporting any accidents, incidents, hazards or faulty equipment.
- The Safeguarding policy is upheld by all staff. All cameras that are used for professional use are the property of St. George's Catholic School and Nursery and are not used for personal use at any time. Personal mobile devices are to be switched off and stored away at all times during the teaching day.
- Any safeguarding concerns are to be recorded on CPOMS in a timely manner by teacher or teaching assistant – see safeguarding policy.

FOOD SAFETY

We follow current food safety guidance to reduce the risk of choking and ensure that mealtimes are safe for all children. Food is prepared and served appropriately for children's ages and stages of development, including removing stones and pips, cutting small round foods lengthways and into quarters, slicing hard fruit and vegetables, removing bones, and avoiding foods that present a higher choking risk such as whole nuts, whole seeds, popcorn, hard sweets and marshmallows. Children are always seated safely and supervised while eating, and staff remain within sight and hearing at all times. In line with the EYFS, a member of staff with a valid full paediatric first aid certificate is always present in the room when children are eating.

ALLERGIES

Our Early Years setting follows up-to-date guidance to ensure that children with allergies are identified, supported and kept safe. Parents and carers are asked to share any allergy information on entry to the setting, and this is recorded, communicated to all relevant staff and reviewed regularly. Individual care plans and risk assessments are put in place where required, and staff are made aware of symptoms, emergency procedures and any medication that may need to be administered. We aim to maintain a safe environment through clear food management, good hygiene practices and staff training, and we work in partnership with families to minimise risks and respond promptly to any allergic reaction.

We recognise that children may have individual food preferences, cultural food choices or dietary requirements, and these will be respected. Staff will work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that children are offered suitable alternatives and that mealtimes remain positive, inclusive and supportive.

SLEEP

Children in our nursery and reception do not routinely sleep; however, if a child falls asleep or requires rest in exceptional circumstances, they will be supervised appropriately and provided with a safe, comfortable resting space in line with their needs and the setting's safeguarding procedures. Staff will monitor the child closely and will contact parents or carers to inform them if their child falls asleep. Any rest arrangements will be managed sensitively, using the resources available within the setting, and in accordance with the child's wellbeing and safety.

REVIEW

The St George's Catholic Primary School and Nursery EYFS Policy is to be reviewed annually by the EYFS Lead, SLT and Headteacher. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to relevant staff members and governors. All EYFS staff are to familiarise themselves with the processes and procedures detailed in this policy as part of their induction.

Date to be reviewed: September 2027

Reviewed by Sanchia Daly