St Ambrose Primary: Early Years Policy

Introduction

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 old 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 statutory framework - Department for Education 2026)

The EYFS sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

The EYFS is about what children learn, as well as how they learn. Effective practice is a mix of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other and through adult-guided learning.

The EYFS seeks to provide:

• Quality and consistency in all early years settings, so that every child makes good progress, and no child gets left behind.
• A secure foundation through planning for the learning and development of each individual child and assessing and reviewing what they have learned regularly.
• Partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers.
• Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

Overarching principles

Four guiding principles should shape practice in early years. These are:

• Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured.
• Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
• 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. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
• Importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates. (See "the characteristics of effective teaching and learning" at paragraph 1.18). The framework covers the education and care of all children, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

This policy is based upon the requirements set out in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which applies from September 2026.

The EYFS applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At St Ambrose, we offer Nursery provision for children in the academic year before they start Reception.

At St Ambrose we value the importance of the EYFS, it lays strong, secure foundations for future learning and development. The EYFS prepares children for both the next stage of learning and the skills needed for adulthood.

Our school values:



Teaching and Learning

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

The EYFS specifies requirements for:

1. Learning and development
2. Assessment
3. The safeguarding and welfare

1. Learning and development:

There are seven areas of learning and development, which are all important and interconnected.

The Prime Areas

The three Prime Areas are particularly important for learning and forming relationships. They build a foundation for children to thrive and provide the basis for learning in all areas.

- Communication and language
- Physical Development
- Personal, social and emotional development

The Specific Areas
The four Specific Areas, which help strengthen and develop the three prime areas, and ignite children's curiosity and enthusiasm.

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Expressive arts and design

Aims and intentions

At St Ambrose, we work to ensure all our children feel loved and valued. We support them in an inclusive environment to reach their full potential and develop the gifts and talents given to them by God. Alongside this, we strive to provide an exciting, creative and challenging curriculum. Jesus is at the heart of all that we do and following in his footsteps, we learn and grow together.

Our principles of "Be ready, be respectful and be safe" provide a foundation to implement our school Gospel values. These values impact positively on behaviour and learning throughout the school.

Intent:

Our curriculum is designed to foster a language-rich environment that actively builds strong oracy and conversation skills. By focusing on these core elements, we equip children with the foundational skills necessary to thrive throughout their entire school journey. At the heart of this, we guide pupils to recognise and understand their emotions, empowering them to become resilient learners who are well-prepared to succeed in their future lives.

The Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning provides children with opportunities to:

- Play and explore - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- Active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements.
- Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Implementation:
We follow Development Matters, this is a non-statutory guidance document within the EYFS framework, offering a clear and supportive approach to understanding early childhood development. It supports educators in creating a nurturing and effective learning environment where children can thrive and grow. Click on the link https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64e6002a20ae890014f26cbc/DfE_Development_Matters_Report_Sep2023.pdf

Through long-term curriculum planning, we introduce a new theme to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. We plan for both the inside and outside classroom to enhance our continuous provision and we enable the children to explore, practice and develop their interests and learning. We encourage the children to become resilient, independent learners so they can question and observe the world around them.

Communication Language and Literacy (CLL)
We create a language rich environment and strive to use ambitious vocabulary in all that we teach. Emphasis is put-upon high-quality texts and giving children the opportunity to extend their language and communication skills in play. We have high expectations of our learners and help them to develop their listening and attention skills, enabling them to become active learners. Children are encouraged to be curious and open with each other and the staff, using vocabulary and language to talk about their experiences and the world around them.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)
We understand the importance of Personal, Social and Emotional Development through a child's life and want our children to feel safe, secure and happy at school and home. We teach the PSHE objectives from Development Matters and the TenTen scheme of work for Early Years. We have high expectations of ourselves and each other and model these at all times while supporting children to cooperate, make friends and resolve conflicts as and when they arise.

Physical Development - We support the children's physical development through a variety of approaches such as, fine motor activities e.g. cutting, sticking, playdough and threading. The children have daily access to the outdoor environment where they can explore and be active. We also deliver PE lessons using the PE hub which aligns directly with the Development Matters framework, supporting children develop their:
• Gross and fine motor development.
• Confidence in movement and spatial awareness.
• Social interaction and problem-solving through physical play.
• Characteristics of effective learning: playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically

Read, Write Inc. (RWI) - We follow the DfE approved RWI programme to ensure consistency across the school. From the beginning of Nursery, phonics is taught daily. Children are monitored closely for progress and are given the support they need. Reading is at the heart of our school. Reading is the gateway to all learning and is the foundation skill all children must secure as early as possible. Our highly trained and experienced staff teach the programme with fidelity every day to smaller groups of children to maximise their progress. Children begin by learning the Set 1 initial sounds and matching pictures (called Set 1 Sounds) before learning 'special friends' (where two or more letters make one sound eg. 'ch' and 'th'). Children then learn to blend these sounds independently until they can decode and read words accurately. Reading at home has a huge positive impact on children learning to read fluently and we encourage all families to prioritise reading in the same way.

For Mathematics we follow the White Rose Maths scheme of work which follows a mastery approach. Children are explicitly taught new mathematical skills in short whole class inputs where they then work in small groups with their teacher to put their new learning into practice. Children also consolidate their maths learning in different activities throughout the classroom during their provision time. The scheme is broken down into blocks and each of these blocks are broken down into easy, logical steps. We use books, games, rhymes, daily routines, and outdoor activities to nurture an enjoyment of the subject from an early age. We let children explore mathematical concepts with curiosity and without a fear of making mistakes.

For our RE we follow The Vine and The Branches. It introduces Nursery and Reception to God's love, Christian values, and Bible stories. Curriculum branches are the way the programme of study presents its model curriculum. The model curriculum presents the expected outcomes in six curriculum branches that correspond to the six half-terms of a school year. As they revisit each branch in each year of school they come to a deeper understanding of its significance for Catholic belief and practice, which allows children to make links between the four knowledge lenses within the context of the narrative of salvation history.

Our wider curriculum is delivered through the EYFS learning areas of Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design. Staff have a strong understanding of how the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) provide the foundations for, and support progression into, the National Curriculum. This is reflected in our robust curriculum planning and carefully developed continuous provision opportunities.

Children are encouraged to explore, investigate and develop their understanding through hands-on experiences in meaningful contexts. Early Years Staff plan exciting, purposeful activities that build on children's natural curiosity, interests and prior learning, providing opportunities to deepen knowledge and develop new skills.

Our approach also builds on our strong focus on oracy. Children are encouraged to talk about their learning, share ideas, ask questions and explain their thinking.

Subject-specific vocabulary is explicitly introduced and developed through meaningful experiences, with Early Years Staff consistently modelling and reinforcing new vocabulary both verbally and through visual prompts and resources. This enables children to develop confidence in using increasingly ambitious language and equips them with the vocabulary and communication skills needed for future learning.

Continuous provision
We carefully plan our provision both indoor and outdoor to allow children to develop skills, consolidate learning, expand thinking and extend speech and vocabulary. Through a combination of child-initiated play, planned provision and 'in the moment' planning, we can respond to children's interests and extend their learning.

Inclusion / SEND
At St Ambrose Catholic Primary School, we believe that all children and young people are entitled to an appropriate education, one that is appropriate to their needs, promotes high standards and the fulfilment of potential. This should enable them to: achieve their best, become confident individuals living fulfilling lives, and make a successful transition into adulthood, whether into employment, further or higher education or training (Code of Practice 6.1)

Oracy
Vocabulary is very important in our curriculum and is shared with children during lessons. At every opportunity we expose children to new words and teach them how to use them. We learn poems, retell books and encourage children to question and give opinions. We use stem sentences and ambitious vocabulary in Maths lessons, providing opportunities for children to use these in context.

Impact
We measure the impact of our EYFS curriculum through regular, accurate assessment of every child's learning and progress. This informs future planning, identifies next steps and highlights any gaps in knowledge or skills. Early Years Staff draw upon their knowledge of each child, observations and professional judgement to ensure learning opportunities meet individual needs and support every child to make progress.

As a result, children become happy, confident and resilient learners, developing the independence, curiosity and positive attitudes needed to succeed in the next stage of their learning journey.

2. Assessment

The RBA (Statutory Reception Baseline Assessment)

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is a short assessment, taken in the first six weeks in which a child starts reception. The assessment focuses on 'Language, Communication and Literacy,' and 'Mathematics.'

WellComm

WellComm is a speech, language, and communication toolkit which is designed to assess children's speech and language skills. We use WellComm to assess all children in Nursery.

NELI (Nuffield Early Language Intervention)

All children in Reception are assessed using the NELI screening programme. NELI, is a 20-week intervention to build children's vocabulary, listening and storytelling skills through targeted small group and individual sessions.

Ongoing Observations

Ongoing assessments are an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves Early Years staff understanding children's interests, what they know and can do, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. In their interactions with children, practitioners make and act on their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and/or carers share.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP

At the end of the Reception year, children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals and the EYFSP is completed. Children will be assessed as Emerging or Expected.

Transition

Children have a phased transition to Year 1 over a number of weeks at the end of their Reception year. The impact of this is seen through a successful transition into the wider school community and curriculum.

Parent and Carers Partnership

We believe in having a good partnership with parents and carers. Together we can help your child to become a happy and successful learner!

You can help your child by:

- Sharing and enjoying books and stories with your child
- Encouraging your child to write for different purposes, for example shopping lists and birthday cards
- Provide opportunities for counting and look out for numbers within the environment

- Regularly talking to them about starting Reception and what to expect
- Encouraging independence in eating lunch, getting dressed and looking after their own belongings

We hold parents meetings throughout the year. In the September we invite parents and carers to Meet the Teacher, where we inform parents about what to expect over their child's time in the EYFS. Individual parents meetings are held in the autumn and spring term. We provide a written report to parents in the summer term.

Tapestry
Tapestry is a secure online learning journal that allows us to record photographs, observations and comments about your child, in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. This builds up a record of your child's experiences while they are with us and enables us to monitor their progress and plan their next steps. All the information held on this platform is stored securely and can only be accessed by practitioners and parents / or carers. Tapestry is a fantastic way for us to work collaboratively with you, as you can add comments and send photographs and videos from home.

3. Safeguarding
We follow 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026'.

Statutory Framework - click on the link

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69fb1c28d0e316a40f269a5b/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2026_a_guide_to_multi_agency_working.pdf

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the people caring for them. The school is committed to ensuring the safeguarding of all the children. Safeguarding is the responsibility of all staff.
Designated safeguarding Lead: Bernadette Knight,
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Gemma Kelly and Helen Rainer

No child will be handed over to the care of any adult other than a parent / carer or person nominated by the parent and known to the EYFS staff. If an alternative adult is collecting a child, the parent needs to inform the school office or Early Years staff in advance.

Our Early Years environment is checked frequently for Health and Safety and the risk is assessed. Medication is kept in the school office and is administered in accordance with Supporting Children with Medical Conditions Policy. Inhalers are stored in a designated place within the EYFS classroom.

First Aid - In the Early Years we have at least one person who has a current paediatric first aid certificate. A list of paediatric first aid trained staff is displayed throughout the school.

Allergies in school

Before a child is admitted to the setting we obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies and intolerances that the child has, and any special health requirements. This information is shared with all staff involved in the preparing and handling of food.

We have implemented the following to keep the children safe in school:

- St Ambrose has two Allergen Leads in School; Mrs Rainer and Mrs Garratt. We also have a named Governor, Mrs McCann.
- St Ambrose has an Allergy Safety Policy which will be reviewed and updated annually. This is published on the school website.
- Parents must ensure that allergy information is kept up to date and provide any medication needed should an allergic reaction occur.
- School have spare Auto-Adrenaline Injectors in school for use in **Emergency Situations** and are labelled **Emergency Anaphylaxis Kit.** The expiry date will be checked regularly.
- St Ambrose has a whole school awareness approach ensuring staff are aware of allergies, the importance of avoiding the individuals' allergens, signs & symptoms, how to deal with allergic reactions and ensure procedures are in place to minimise the risk of exposure. Near misses and incidents are officially recorded and reported.
- Children with a food allergy are identified with photographs and allergen information. These are displayed in classrooms, the school kitchen, the staff room and the school office.
- Children who have a food allergy are given a **purple tray** so that they are easily identified in the dinner hall.
- School staff and catering staff have received allergen training and this will be refreshed annually.
- St Ambrose will ensure children are included in trips and activities. Allergen risks will be included in the risk assessment for these activities.

Safer Sleep

We follow specific safe sleep principles under the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework.

Sleeping Position & Supervision

Back to Sleep: We encourage children to lie on their back to rest, even if older reception children roll independently once asleep.

Active Monitoring: Children must remain within sight and hearing of staff at all times while resting or sleeping. Staff conduct regular visual checks on breathing, position, and body temperature.
Clear Area: We ensure mats are clear of loose toys, cords, blind strings, or soft items.
Class Setup & Policy Best Practices
We have a Flexible Quiet Area with clean mats that can double as a rest space if a child falls asleep during the school day.
Parental Communication: We maintain a dialogue with parents regarding individual children's rest routines, especially during the transition into full-time reception.
Risk Assessment & Policy: We follow the rest procedures for reception-aged children in line with GOV.UK Early Years Guidance and recommendations from The Lullaby Trust.

Key Person
Each child is assigned a key person, this will be the Early Years class teachers.
Safer eating

Intimate care
During children's time at St Ambrose, children may need intimate care. This can be when cleaning a child up after a toileting accident or helping them to change their clothes when wet. Staff follow our Intimate Care Policy.

This policy is a working document and will be reviewed as necessary.
Full Policy Review in 2028