

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School

Early Years Policy



1 Introduction

1.1 The Early Years extends from 0-5 years. Entry into our primary school is at the beginning of the school year in which the children are 5 (although compulsory schooling does not begin until the start of the term after a child's fifth birthday).

1.2 The Early Years is an important phase in its own right, and also in preparing children for later schooling. It is the Early Learning Goals that set out what is expected of most children by the end of the Early Years.

1.3 Children joining our school already have a great wealth of knowledge. Many have been learning in one of the various educational settings that exist within our community. The Early Years education we offer our child is based upon the following principles:

- It builds upon what our children already know and can do;
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children, and activities that provide learning both indoors and outdoors;
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment;
- It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers.

2 Aims

2.1 The Early Years curriculum underpins all future learning by promoting and developing the prime areas of:

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

and the specific areas of:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive Arts

3 Teaching and Learning Styles

3.1 The features of effective teaching and learning within our school are defined within our policy on teaching and learning. They apply to teaching and learning in the Early Years just as much as they do to the teaching and learning in Key Stage One and Two.

3.2 The more general features of good practice within our school that relate to the Early Years:

- The partnership between teachers, parents, carers and other settings that help our children feel secure at school, and to develop a sense of well being and achievement;
- The understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this must be reflected in their teaching;
- The range of approaches that provide first hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions, and extend and develop play, talk or other means of communication;
- The carefully planned curriculum that helps the children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Early Years;
- The provision for children to take part in activities that build upon 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 space, facilities and equipment, both indoors and outdoors;
- The identification, through observations, of children's progress and future learning needs, which are regularly shared with parents;
- The good relationship between our school and other educational settings in which the children have been learning in before joining our school;
- The clear aims of our work, and the regular monitoring of our work to evaluate and improve it;
- The regular identification of training needs for all adults working within the Early Years.

4 Play in the Early Years

4.1 Through play our children explore and develop the learning experiences that help them make sense of the world. They practise and build upon their ideas learn how to control themselves, and begin to understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively both alongside other children and on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

5 Inclusion in the Early Years

5.1 We believe that all of our children are important. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning

5.2 At the beginning of Reception we set realistic and challenging expectations keyed to the needs of our children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the stage. Some children progress beyond this point. We help them do this by planning to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able, of children with disabilities, of children from all social and cultural backgrounds, of children from different ethnic groups, and of those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

5.3 We meet the needs of our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build on and extend the children's knowledge, experiences and interests, and develop their self esteem and confidence;

- Using a variety of teaching strategies that are based on children’s learning needs;
- Providing a wide range of opportunities that motivate and support children, and to help them learn effectively;
- Offering a safe and supportive learning environment, in which the contribution of all children is valued.
- Employing resources that reflect diversity and that avoid discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their communication and language skills;
- Monitoring children’s progress and providing support as necessary.

6 The Early Years curriculum

6.1 Our curriculum for the Early Years reflects the areas of learning identified in the Early Learning Goals. Our children’s learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas.

6.2 Our Reception class has a daily phonics session, following the guidance in the “Letters and Sounds” document.

6.3 The Early Learning Goals provide the basis for planning throughout the Early Years. Teachers use national schemes of work, where appropriate, to support their planning for individual children. Our medium term planning identifies the intended learning, with outcomes, for children working towards the Early Learning Goals, and also for those exceeding the Early Learning Goal.

7 Assessments

7.1 The Foundation Stage Profile is the nationally employed assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the Early Years, and to summarise their pupil’s progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage; we record each of the children’s levels against the seventeen Early Learning Goals as Emerging, Expected or Exceeding. We make regular assessments of children’s learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessments for the Early Years take the form of observation, and this involves children, teacher and other adults, as appropriate. The collection of assessment data in the Foundation Stage Profile is a statutory requirement.

7.2 During the first term in the Reception class the teacher assesses the ability of each child. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children.

7.3 The teacher carries out assessments on a regular basis, and at the end of each term the school progress graphs and the local authority tracking sheets are updated accordingly. This provides a summary for each child which then feeds into the whole school assessment and tracking progress. We record each child’s level of development to be emerging into, working within or securely working within each of the age bands. At the end of the final term in Reception a final summary of our assessments are sent to the local authority for analysis. We also share this information with parents in an end of year report.

7.4 The teacher keeps progress records, learning journals and records of examples of each child’s work. This wide range of evidence is shared with parents during the Autumn and Spring term parent meetings.

7.5 Parents receive an annual report that offers brief comments on each child’s progress in relation to the characteristics of effective learning. A level for each of the seventeen Early Learning Goals is also provided.

8 The role of parents

8.1 We believe that all parents and carers have an important role to play in the education of their child. We therefore recognise the role that parents have played, and their further role, in educating their children. We do this through:

- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts our school in September;
- Where possible, visits by the teacher to all of the children in their pre-school setting;
- Opportunities given to the children to spend time with their teacher before starting school (four INSPIRE sessions);
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress through our "open door" policy;
- Encouraging parents to talk to their child's teacher if there are any concerns;
- Offering a range of opportunities, throughout the year, that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents;
- Providing various activities that involve parents, through regular communication with home (including whole school newsletters, class newsletters and home-school books).

8.2 There is a formal meeting for parents in the autumn and spring term to discuss their child's progress. Parents also receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.

8.3 Our parents are encouraged to contribute to their child's Foundation Stage profile. Parents can make assessment contributions by completing home observations and sending them into the class teacher. Observations can be sent via the 2build a profile 'Engage Parents' programme, via email to earlyyears@athertonsacredheart.wigan.sch.uk and by paper using the 'I'm a proud parent' observation sheets.

9 Resources

9.1 We plan a learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning and reflects the individual's interests, passions and abilities. We use materials and equipment that reflect both the community and the wider world. We encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning. We ensure that resources and spaces are safe to use and are checked regularly.

Policy written by: Nicola Worrall (**Early Years Leader**)

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