



The Diocese of Coventry  
Multi Academy Trust

**Early Years Policy**

St John's C of E Academy

**Written:** September 2023

**Review Date:** September 2025

**Changes to policy 2023:**

P6 – Clarification of acronyms

P6 – Changes to show the current process for recording assessment evidence, taking into account workload expectations

P7 – Explanation of ability to discuss end of year report with class teacher

## **Introduction**

*'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and 5 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 learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.'*

**Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage- Published 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, Effective 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021**

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of their Reception Year. At St. John's Church of England Academy, we believe that early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives, The children start our school in Reception, in the year following their fourth birthday. We greatly value the importance that the Early Years plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development.

## **Aims**

- To give each child a happy and positive start to their school life, enabling each child, through encouragement and high expectations, to develop socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- To provide each child with a growing understanding our school vision and values and how they can be used to build and manage relationships as well as foster a deep love of learning. Our vision is 'I will shine!' and our core values are:
  - Identity
  - Drive
  - Excellence
  - Character
  - Teamwork
  - Stewardship
- To excite, engage and inspire pupils with a relevant, inclusive, and memorable curriculum that makes learning irresistible, offers new and exciting experiences, ignites children's curiosity, raises aspirations and instils a passion for lifelong learning.
- To offer a structure for learning (with a range of starting points and unlimited opportunities for development!), which encourages children to develop independence and self-regulation within a loving, secure and friendly atmosphere, providing opportunities to consolidate, explore and test out ideas.
- To help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements by experiencing success and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.
- To provide regular 'WOW' moments for the children to have fun, encounter challenges and develop problem-solving strategies- finding ways to overcoming barriers to learning through growing resilience and perseverance.



## **Our Curriculum**

### **Statutory Requirements**

Our Reception provision follows the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, a copy of which can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/974907/EYFS\\_framework\\_-\\_March\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf)

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected:

The prime areas are;

- **Communication and Language** – Listening, Attention and Understanding, and Speaking
- **Physical Development** – Gross Motor Skills and Fine Motor Skills
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – Self-regulation, Managing Self, Building Relationships

The specific areas are;

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

### **The Characteristics of Effective Learning**

Reception also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The teachers plan activities within the Reception classrooms with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them.

The three characteristics are;

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

### **The St. John's Curriculum Approach**

In St Johns EYFS, we encourage children to **discover** a passion for learning. Therefore, in Reception we weave a **captivating** and memorable learning journey based on both key learning areas and the children's interests. Our big picture ensures children have a broad, balanced, and relevant curriculum covering key concepts and celebrations- explored through enquiry questions- with purposeful links to our school values, in keeping with our whole school curriculum vision. There is sufficient time within the big picture overview for learning based around the children's interests, with flexible timings allowing teachers to ensure children **flourish** alongside things they love and introducing new concepts that **excite** our children.

We have used a range of research and resources to break down the end of year Early Learning Goals into small steps in progression, considering the context, abilities and experiences of the children on arrival to our school. These small step progressions are taught through adult-led teaching sessions, group times, 1:1 teaching and through our wider environment learning.

Phonics teaching starts following the 'Reception' transition period, once children are in full time they begin phonics sessions. Phonics in Reception and Year 1 is taught using the Reading Planet Rocket Phonics scheme. Reading Planet Rocket Phonics is a DfE validated SSP programme aligned to Letters

and Sounds 2007. This is taught through steady pace and progression, whole class teaching and consistent daily phonics practice. As part of the phonics sessions, the children also learn correct letter formation building up to writing short dictated and independent sentences. To further embed and reinforce their phonics learning, the guided reading sessions are taught using books from the Reading planet Rocket Phonics scheme.

For Reading, we encourage and enable children to read stories every day. We read an array of high-quality, captivating, and exciting books that are a range of text types and from a variety of authors following our St John's Literacy Spine. These books help enrich children's vocabulary and encourage a love of words and reading for pleasure. Home reading books are sent home each week in line with their phonics knowledge, enabling children practise and apply sounds they know. In Reception, children also participate in whole class reading regularly throughout the week, listening, discussing, and discovering books together.

For Writing, we use a range of texts including traditional tales, classic stories, contemporary fiction, poetry and nonfiction texts to support children with their writing. Through the hook of stories children are given the opportunity to explore different text types including letters, instructions, postcards, recipes and stories. Children have opportunities to complete star challenges each week based around a writing task discussed in group sessions and in addition to a range of writing opportunities in the wider learning environment. Writing sessions involve teachers modelling thinking out loud strategies, constructing sentences, segmenting words, transcription of sentences and checking sentences. Writing lessons often use symbols from Jane Considine's FANTASTICS to support children in their writing, giving a theme to each sentence and a purpose for their writing.

For Maths, we teach a broad and balanced diet that includes number, shape, space, measure and numerical patterns. These are built on in both our adult led teaching sessions, small group work and within our wider learning environment. Within maths, we follow the White Rose Maths Scheme of Learning ensuring that children are immersed in all areas of maths throughout their year. Within a maths session, children complete a practise of a key skill and then a main teach often involving a 'my turn, our turn, your turn' approach to scaffold, develop and challenge learning. Maths concepts taught within group times are made available in the wider learning environment to enable children to discover and develop their knowledge and skills further.

## **Pedagogical Approaches**

### **Learning through play**

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years approach. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Where appropriate, we use children's interests as a starting point and we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences (indoor and outdoor) in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child-initiated play through sustained shared thinking- observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play.

### **Adult-led direct teaching**

We include direct, carefully planned, adult-led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult- led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills, vocabulary and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see

how much of this learning has been understood and taken on. Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place; however, this can be flexible to support the children's needs and extend their learning.

Each day, the children take part in adult-led small group sessions for Phonics, Maths, Literacy, Reading and the wider curriculum. RE is taught weekly. The length of these sessions increases across the year, in line with child development and increased stamina and concentration.

### **Assessment**

On entry to Reception, staff complete the National Reception Baseline Assessment Framework to secure a base line judgement across early literacy, communication, language and mathematics skills. In addition to this, teachers use initial observations to secure baselines across physical development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, enabling teachers to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children across the first half term. This first assessment also takes into account any other records we receive from previous Nursery settings, parents and childminders.

Staff formally assess children every term, using school-generated progression and milestone documents for each of the 7 areas. These progression documents support teachers in the assessment of the cohort at specific points within the year (on entry, end of autumn, end of spring and end of the academic year). Teachers complete milestone assessments each term which is evidenced in children's individual journals. These milestone assessments have been generated from the progression documents which build skills to support children staying on track to achieve Early Learning Goals (ELG). We analyse these results and plan activities to address 'gaps in learning'. Early years teachers have the opportunity to meet SLT every half term to discuss pupil progress and to identify children making rapid or limited progress. Next steps (through Shine Times and targeted in-class provision) are planned to support these children further. In addition, Reception staff meet weekly to discuss individual/groups of children. They use observations gathered from group and independent learning to address 'gaps in learning' and plan appropriate activities linked to these gaps and the interests of the children.

The EYFS team continually assess children informally, meeting ~~once a~~ weekly to discuss as a staff team progress specific children have made and areas for development for specific children identified. Through informal discussion, teaching staff identify children needing support or additional input in the coming week.

### **How evidence is recorded**

At our school, each child has their own paper learning journal. During the first 3 weeks of entering Reception, evidence of the children's attainment in the statutory National RBA (Reception Baseline Assessment) for early literacy, communication, language and mathematics skills, is recorded on the governments Baseline ePortal (BeP), as well as our school baselines for physical development and PSED.

Following this, learning for all of the above areas as well as Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design, is added to the journals to evidence key attainment steps for the child. This evidence is personal to each child, dependent on their interests and stage in learning. Learning is evidenced through learning outcomes, adult observations, QR codes (video evidence) and photographs.

Children always have access to these journals and are encouraged to regularly re-view and build upon their learning. Quality time is built into the curriculum to enable staff to support the children

with this. Regular opportunities for parents to come into Reception are planned and parents are encouraged to share their child's learning journal.

### **Partnership with Parents and Carers**

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore we work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. As well as Reception visit days with their new teacher, we offer all new children to St. John's Church of England Academy a home visit to develop these home/school links as well as a visit to children in their Nursery settings. We have a staggered entry into Reception to provide a smoother transition experience. This staggered approach offers parents time to support settling their child into the new school environment and build positive relationships with the EYFS team.

All of our parents in Reception are given the opportunity to attend a presentation and meet the teacher session prior to starting with us. Here, we offer parents information about our setting whilst also providing a learning pack to support children at home! We also run regular Parent workshops throughout the year- from coffee mornings where Parents enjoy learning alongside their children in class to parent workshops which may provide information of key curriculum areas and how they can support their child at home.

Parents are also invited to attend a Parents' Meeting (Termly Learning Conferences) each term where parents, the teacher and the child can discuss learning, progress and wellbeing. During these meetings, parents are also invited to visit the classroom and look through their child's learning journals, celebrating their child's achievements and reflecting on learning.

Parents receive an annual written report that offers comments on each child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child's strengths and developmental needs, and gives details of the child's general progress. We complete these in the Summer Term and send them to parents before the end of the school year. An opportunity to discuss this report with the class teacher is also provided before the end of term.