

# St. Margaret Clitherow's Catholic Primary School

(Part of St. Oswald's Catholic Voluntary Academy)



CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY  
PRIMARY ACADEMY

## Early Years Foundation Stage Policy October 2015

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At St Margaret Clitherow's School our Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) work closely together to provide quality provision for the children in our care.

### **The Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- To provide a broad and balanced curriculum which embraces the themes, principles and commitments of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the seven areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- To provide a happy, secure, stimulating and challenging environment.
- To provide opportunities for children to make choices which will facilitate independent learning, creative thinking and enable them to feel confident as learners.
- To provide opportunities for children to develop their communication, linguistic, investigative and problem solving skills through interaction with adults and other children.
- To promote children's imagination in play through stimulating resources and activities within the inside and outside classrooms.
- To develop a partnership with parents/carers based on a shared understanding of the learning needs of the children.
- To provide quality first hand, play based learning experiences that are well planned and contain an appropriate balance between different types of play, permeating all aspects of the curriculum.
- To provide a range and balance of child initiated, adult initiated and adult focused activities indoors and outdoors.
- To provide a smooth transition between the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 – Year 1.

### **In the Early Years Foundation Stage at St Margaret Clitherow's School we believe:-**

- That all children in our care have an entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum (irrespective of learning needs, race, gender, cultural/social background, or religious persuasion).
- That what each child can do is the starting point of his/her learning.
- That how we provide for and interact with children has a profound effect on their well-being and learning.
- That information provided by parents/carers is valued and seen as a vital link in forming a partnership with families and in building a picture of each child.
- That the Early Years Foundation Stage is the springboard to an excellent start in their education at St Margaret Clitherow's School.
- That play is a major vehicle through which young children learn and gain access to all aspects of the curriculum. Play is a natural process. It puts children in charge of their own learning. It helps children to make sense of their world and enables them to develop their personal qualities, attitudes and higher order learning.
- That children learn more effectively in a lively, rich and stimulating environment with opportunities to access all areas of the curriculum indoors and out.

Essentially we want children to make decisions, become independent learners, interact with people, enjoy learning and become confident with themselves, others and our world.

## **Staffing**

Staff knowledge and expertise is seen as a prerequisite for an effective Foundation Stage department and this is accomplished by:-

- Foundation 1 and 2 staff working closely together so that knowledge and expertise is shared by all parties.
- Members of the team keeping abreast of relevant research and information.
- Staff attending in-house and external courses, conferences and working collaboratively with other foundation staff teams from schools in St Oswalds Academy Trust.
- Ensuring that all staff has appropriate training and experience with knowledge of child development and the Early Years. They will have the ability to structure and support young children's learning, lead and manage the team and work closely with other agencies.

## **Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum**

A vital part of the EYFS framework is the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. At St Margaret Clitherow's school our teachers plan activities 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 even 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.

Learning experiences are planned for both indoor and outdoor settings and are linked together through topic work which encompasses the seven areas of learning and development as stated in the EYFS framework. All of these areas are important and interconnected but three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, they are known as the '**Prime Areas**'.

The '**Prime Areas**' of learning, focused on initially within Nursery (building links to the 'Specific Areas' below) are:

- Communication and Language – Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking.
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development – Making Relationships, Managing Feelings and Behaviour and Self Confidence and Self Awareness.
- Physical Development - Moving and Handling and Self Care.

The '**Specific Areas**' of learning develop essential skills and knowledge they are focussed on equally alongside the Prime Areas within Reception. They are:

- Literacy – Reading and Writing.
- Mathematics – Number and Space, Shape and Measures.
- Understanding the World – People and Communities, The World and Technology.
- Expressive Arts and Design – Exploring and Using Media and Materials and Being Imaginative.

## **Planning**

Each setting considers how to provide for the children in their care. At St Margaret Clitherow's school we believe our children need to be given a starting point to learn new things and find topics are a great way to fire imagination.

Although our topics encompass many of the areas of learning, in our Nursery and Reception classes they are usually based around a 'Literacy' and 'Communication and Language' focus.

Generally, our planning consists of:

**Long term** - This is informed by the Development Matters statements and Early Learning Goals the children need to meet in their development. Continuous Provision plans show how each area of the environment supports the children's learning.

**Medium term** - These plans cover the half term topic work each year group will deliver. They include the details of possible learning activities and opportunities in each of the 7 main areas of learning indoors and outdoor.

**Short term**- The weekly/fortnightly plans for each year group identify the learning intentions/outcomes to be taught along with evaluations linked to the activities provided. The needs of individual learners, based on observations, are catered for within this framework.

At St Margaret Clitherow's school we adopt a 'stage not age' approach in our Foundation Stage settings, therefore, learning objectives are differentiated so that the able are challenged and those that need additional help are supported. Pupils who show high levels of ability or talents in specific areas of the curriculum are encouraged to join Key Stage One classes when ready.

### **Teaching and Teaching Strategies**

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 and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood.

Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. This can look very different in the two different settings – Nursery/Reception classes. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc.

Reading and story play is an important part of our day. At St Margaret Clitherow's school we want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern classics. At least three times a day we make sure there is time for whole class story and that there are many opportunities for the children to enjoy books at other times. Each child is encouraged to take a reading book home every evening to share with someone at home.

We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to a child builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In some cases the adult will ask a child to complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible.

### **Transitions**

In the Summer Term, children in both Nursery and Reception begin activities to support their transition to their next classes. A structured programme of activities and events begins to expose the children to experiences from their next school year to support a smooth transition. Activities undertaken include:-

- Learning walk- children walk through their new year group classrooms with their current teaching staff.
- Transition days - Children experience days in their new settings/classes with their new teachers.

The children's next classes (especially those children transitioning to Year 1) will involve more adult led and adult initiated activities, alongside some outdoor and child initiated ones. The balance of activities will be adapted to suit the needs of the particular cohort, but the aim is to extend children's concentration through more focused sessions.

## **Play**

At St Margaret Clitherow's school learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Using children's interests as a starting point, we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences 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 and experience 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 observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child initiated play, which is controlled, and adult led activities is very important to us.

## **Classroom Organisation**

At St Margaret Clitherow's school our early years rooms have defined areas with clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. Each setting is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning. Classrooms have a writing area, maths area, creative area, book corner, role play area, malleable materials area, investigation area, construction area, small world area, ICT provision/computer area, sand and water play. A variety of activities and challenges are planned for and set up in the different areas each day. The teachers and support staff move to whichever area their focus for the session/day is.

## **Outdoor Area**

At St Margaret Clitherow's school we recognise the importance of outside play and we aim to create an outdoor area which is stimulating, exciting, takes account of the children's interests and is used throughout the year as a learning environment.

### **We will:**

- Use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning.
- Include the outdoor area when planning for continuous provision.
- Include children when planning for learning outdoors.
- Provide the opportunity for children to freely access the outdoor area on a daily basis.
- Ensure that the outdoor area offers children the opportunity to investigate, explore, problem solve and use their imagination and creativity.
- Ensure the outdoors offers children the opportunity to develop their gross and fine motor skills.
- Encourage the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things.
- Give children the opportunity to manage and use the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors.
- Give children the opportunity to work alone or in collaboration with peers or adults.
- Teach the children to use tools safely and appropriately.

### **Method:**

- We regularly audit our provision and develop an action plan.
- We will work together as a team to plan for learning.
- We will include the children in the planning process by observing them and asking them what they would like to do outdoors.
- We will take time to track areas on a regular basis to monitor use and effectiveness of the provision.
- We will enhance and/or change provision when necessary.
- We will provide access to suitable clothing and footwear in the EYFS in cases of extreme weather conditions and for when the children are involved in specific messy/wet activities.
- We will provide sun hats and ensure sun cream is applied as and when necessary. (Parents permission will be sought beforehand.)
- We will conduct a risk assessment each day ensuring the area and resources are safe.
- All staff will be mindful of safety whilst outdoors and if they feel safety is compromised in any way they must report it to the EYFS lead.
- We will ensure that there is a first aider available and an adequate first-aid kit to hand in the case of an accident.

## **Observation, Assessment and Record Keeping**

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

On entry to Nursery or Reception we use our professional judgement to assess the age band children are working 'within' across the EYFS 17 areas of learning.

### **Expected Standards for Early Years are;**

#### **Nursery**

30-50 months = In line with ARE (Age Related Expectations)

Any age band below this stage on entry into Nursery is deemed as = Below ARE

#### **Reception**

40-60 months = In line with ARE (Age Related Expectations)

Any age band below this stage on entry into Reception is deemed as = Below ARE

As the year progresses children are monitored on their development and progress in all areas of learning. Examples of children's learning, showing their individual level and stage of development are built up throughout the year. To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies all of which come together in their individual portfolio. We are very proud of our portfolios: these are collections of children's work (in reception this includes evidence in each child's literacy, maths and RE books), photographs and observations which create a detailed picture of the child. To assist us in this task we use iPads and a software package called '2 Build a Profile' to create and store observations. Where appropriate, we include individual next steps for children's learning. These next steps are discussed by the EYFS team in informal meetings after school each day and in the weekly planning meetings, these next steps inform planning for the next day and week ahead.

In Nursery and Reception, at the end of each term, the class teachers submit assessment data to the Head Teacher showing each child's development across the 17 areas of learning. At the end of Reception, the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding'. This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report and can be discussed in the final Parents' Evening in drop in session.

### **Role of staff and key person**

Although our early year practitioners are designated as key workers with children for observation and group work purposes, ultimately the class teachers are the named key person for each child in the setting. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within our early years setting actively seek to form positive, respectful relationships with the children in their care. At St Margaret Clitherow's school we strongly believe that the formation of healthy relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being now and their future successes.

On the rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class we will always aim to be consistent in who covers these absences.

### **Partnerships with parents and families**

At St Margaret Clitherow's school we believe that partnership with parents and families is paramount. We understand that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore strive to work very closely to ensure that all parents and carers 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.

To develop this partnership we provide the following opportunities:

### **Visits to school:-**

- Before a child turns 3 years old, in Nursery, the children are welcome to attend school every Friday afternoon with their parents/family members so they can become familiar with the setting and their peers before starting full time.
- A 'Welcome' meeting for Reception parents/carers is held in the Summer term, prior to the children starting in the class in September.
- Parents are encouraged to stay after the welcome meeting to accompany and assist their children in receiving their first school lunch.
- Parents/carers are invited to come to a range of events through the year including monthly school Masses, class collective worships, Christmas Worships/Performances, Sports Day and Christmas and Spring Fetes.
- Open Coffee Morning and Afternoon Sessions are offered for parents and carers to visit for to see how the class runs in a 'normal session', interact with their children at play and then have the opportunity to ask questions about what they have seen.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to attend training sessions on phonics/maths learning to assist their children further at home.

### **Meetings with parents:-**

- Home visits are undertaken by our Nursery teacher and Academy Attendance and Welfare Manager for nursery starters.
- Foundation Stage staff are available to speak to parents/carers before and after school.
- Class teachers have a parent/teacher consultation meeting in the Autumn and Spring terms.
- In the Summer term, there is a reception 'drop in' afternoon for parents and carers to meet with their child's class teacher in order to look through their child's work and also have the opportunity to discuss the end of year profile assessment scores.

### **Information sharing:-**

- Reception Welcome Packs are given to each parent/carer at 'Welcome Meeting' or if they are unable to attend a pack is sent to the home address. Within this pack there is:
  - A School Prospectus
  - St Oswalds Academy Holiday Policy Leaflet
  - Primary Pupil Acceptable Use Agreement /eSafety Rules
  - Medical Form Information
- Parents/carers are encouraged to become involved in their child's learning by:
  - Receiving weekly home work tasks in the home learning communication books.
  - Receiving a literacy/maths pack at the Autumn parents consultation meeting and being provided with guidance on how to use the contents with their child at home.
  - Provided with 'Parent Observation Forms' and encouraged to make notes/observations of their child's development and learning out of school.
- Nursery and Reception reports are produced in the Spring and Summer term for parents.
- A questionnaire is sent out to Foundation Stage parents/carers.
- Weekly school newsletters are given to parents/carers every Friday.

- Termly curriculum newsletters are sent out to inform parents/carers about the activities and topics that are being covered.
- EYFS parent guide available on school website and copies are made available at parent consultation evenings.