

ST. ANNE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL EARLY YEARS POLICY DOCUMENT

INTRODUCTION

This Early Years Policy has been produced by the staff at St Anne's Catholic Primary School in an attempt to clearly document the plan of action that we pursue within the Foundation Stage.

Policy documents need to be specific to our own setting. They must reflect what we believe and do and our rationale for explaining and justifying our practice to others, David Fontana "Despite the many changes in educational theory and practice that have taken place in recent years, there is still little doubt that early learning and early experience remain crucial to later development".

St Anne's School Foundation Stage includes both Nursery and Reception children in two vertically grouped classes. We have also formed close links with the teachers in feeder nursery classes at schools such as Blacklow Brow and The Orchard. Hence in developing this document our discussion has drawn upon our own beliefs, our work with children and material from a variety of sources particularly Early Years Adviser for Knowsley LA, Jan Smyth.

The Early Years team are now able to plan and work together to ensure continuity and progression in learning, and to facilitate a seamless transition into mainstream schooling and throughout their primary years. (See Transition Policy)

GENERAL STATEMENT

At St Anne's we believe that the time spent in Nursery and Reception is the foundation on which children build their lives; drawing on a variety of pre-school experiences which will allow the children to grow as individuals. It is not solely preparation for the National Curriculum at Key Stage 1 and beyond; it has an importance in itself, as is reflected in the Foundation Stage Curriculum i.e. The Early Learning Goals.

We also believe that every child has abilities that can be identified and promoted with the starting point being what children can do. We recognise that children develop at different rates and in different ways – socially, emotionally and intellectually we believe each of these areas to be important and interwoven with one another.

To ensure the all-round development of each individual child we intend to develop a broad thorough balance of relevant knowledge, understanding, skills, experiences, attitudes and values. All children will follow the curriculum at a stage that is suitable for their ability. Therefore, each individual will have the opportunity to achieve his/her full potential.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

To ensure equal opportunities for every one of our pupils; families, students and staff is of great importance within St Anne's school, the development of self-esteem, self respect, tolerance and respect for others is a key aim and one that we promote vigorously. Our provision, curriculum, resources and relationships are monitored to ensure that we model respect for all peoples and communities, whatever their age, gender, health, faith or economic circumstances.

When planning activities in the classroom or on visits we try to ensure equal access for all children, challenging stereotypes and always aiming to provide appropriate role models.

When work involves parents and carers we try to make our invitations and activities as open to all as we possibly can.

AIMS

It is the aim of staff and governors at St Anne's that children in the Foundation Stage :-

- Feel safe, secure, comfortable and successful
- Create and develop warm and positive friendships with other children and adults
- Have empathy and respect for people of all races, gender and abilities
- Are well behaved and self motivated
- Enjoy learning and have a positive disposition towards school based activities
- Have effective communication skills and the ability to use language effectively and appropriately
- Are able to make informed choices and decisions
- Are confident and competent decision makers
- Are imaginative and creative
- Further develop their intellectual, physical, emotional, moral, spiritual and social characteristics

FEATURES AND OUR EARLY YEARS PRACTICE

We believe that there are distinct characteristics of good and outstanding early years practice. At St Anne's we aim to employ such aspects, therefore, we openly highlight them to parents/carers through the introductory information that we provide and also through discussion at parents evening etc.

These features are those of a process of active learning and are clearly identifiable.

It is our policy that :-

- Learning is through real and relevant activities that involve the children
- Children will be given opportunity to learn by doing and talking and by trying and testing things for themselves
- Activities will allow children to be confident and curious and learn from their own mistakes
- Planned teaching and learning will be appropriate to the age and ability of the children and will involve opportunities for the children to work collaboratively in large groups, small groups or independently
- Children are encouraged to play together purposefully, to share and to spend time with friends
- Children are encouraged to be inventive and imaginative, to explore, manipulate, experiment and solve problems.
- Children are encouraged to look after their school and classroom and to try their best to think for themselves.
- Adults will support and develop each child's self esteem, involve themselves in learning activities and help extend children's understanding by asking and answering questions. Adults will also encourage children to verbalise and represent their thoughts and actions and help them derive meaning from their experiences through reflection.

ROOM ARRANGEMENT

Our classrooms are split up into different areas of learning, which reflect the Early Learning Goals, these are :-

- Writing Area
- Maths Area
- Book Corner
- Role Play Area
- Workshop/Creative Area
- Computer Area
- Construction Area
- Investigation Area
- Small World
- Malleable Area

We firmly believe that early years children must be taught within a well structured and supportive learning environment. This allows for a range of stimulating and mentally appropriate learning opportunities and for children to make ongoing decisions. Our policy is that our learning environments, both indoors and outside are planned to :-

- Be orderly, bright and attractive
- Allow children to find, use and return resources for themselves
- Have areas with furniture that offer children opportunity to be quiet and relaxed

It is also our intention that children will have opportunities to share the following :-

- A writing area with a variety of paper, card, scissors, glue and other equipment
- Large construction equipment and small world area
- Mathematical, scientific and musical equipment
- An attractive, comfortable and quiet place to read a wide range of books
- Display tables of models/objects to handle

- Sand tray and a variety of equipment
- An imaginative role-play area
- A computer area
- ICT area
- An art area with a variety of creative media
- Some baking and cooking activities may utilise other parts of the school premises
- An outdoor environment that reflects opportunities from inside on a bigger scale

HEALTH & SAFETY

The children may use the toilet freely whenever they need to do so, but must ask a member of staff first. They are encouraged to flush the toilets and wash their hands thoroughly afterwards.

We explain to the children why they need to wear appropriate aprons for certain activities, they will be shown how to put them on and put them away afterwards, and practice doing it.

When the children start school they will be expected to follow certain rules and guidelines in and around the classroom for safety reasons, these will be emphasised regularly.

Regular risk assessments are carried out to ensure safe environments both indoors and outside.

PLANNING

At St Anne's we have clearly defined strategies for planning of teaching activities and learning opportunities throughout the school. All aspects of our planning are kept under constant review.

We follow the EYFS Curriculum and endeavour to ensure all children work on the Development Matters Statements and work towards achieving the Early Learning Goals.

LONG TERM PLANNING

Long Term Planning outlines certain topics that the children will be taught about, these include, Seasons, Animals, and Cultural Celebrations including Chinese New Year. Other topics covered are recorded on a retrospective plan as many themes are based on responsive planning.

Long term opportunities through continuous provision are displayed in each area of learning. These set out the resources and possible learning outcomes available in different areas through the indoor and outdoor environment.

MEDIUM TERM PLANNING

Medium term plans for Literacy and Numeracy are completed in the same way as the rest of the school but they utilise the Development Matters Statements and Early Learning Goals. This helps to ensure a smooth transition as it prepares the children for KS1 curriculum.

SHORT TERM PLANNING

Written plans for the forth coming week will be based upon :-

- An evaluation of the past week.
- Knowledge of children's prior experiences and interests
- Observation of children by staff to identify individual needs and interests
- Long term and medium term planning

Short term planning also includes :-

- Enhancement planning which shows additional resources that will be added to all areas of learning to support specific topics.

Weekly planning grid showing the focused activities, vocabulary, resources will be used throughout the whole year. The content and expectations are increased throughout the year. Weekly Literacy and Numeracy planning grids are also used, showing the development of both strategies throughout the Foundation Stage and ensuring a smooth transition into the year one class.

ASSESSMENT

The Nursery and Reception classes are part of the whole school "Assessment Policy". We believe in the need for careful assessment and record keeping based upon daily observation of the children, this then helps to ensure continuity and progression. Effective assessment and recording then informs discussion with formal reporting to parents/carers. It also assists us with the early identification and support of children who have additional educational needs.

LEARNING STORIES

Learning Stories are an important part of assessment in Nursery and Reception. Learning Stories are observations written to the children as a letter, they are designed to celebrate the children's learning and achievements. These Learning Stories are sent home and parents respond to the learning that has taken place, this also enables the children to continue their learning at home.

INTRODUCTION BOOKLETS

These are given to parents/carers prior to the children starting Nursery/Reception and gives opportunities for parents to inform the school of any relevant aspects of the child's pre-school experiences, which in turn helps with planning.

ASSESSMENT RECORDS

Each child has their own Individual Learning Journey Book. This book documents the child's learning. It contains information on the child's ability and achievements in relation to Early Learning Goals throughout the year.

The books contain photographs, observations and pieces of the children's work, including Learning Stories and Learning Stories from home.

BASELINE ASSESSMENT

Every effort will be made to receive any assessment from feeder schools in an attempt to aid future planning and assist when Baseline Assessments are carried out in the Reception class. From September 2015, St Anne's will be trialling NFER Baseline Assessments and the results will be communicated to parents.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

We believe that parents are the child's first educators and that their early years are the most important period for establishing positive links. We aim to make parents/carers feel welcome and valued. It is our intention that partnership with the Parish Priest, Community Policy Officers and others will positively contribute to the children's personal, intellectual and spiritual development.

STORY MORNINGS

Parent/Carers of Foundation Stage children are invited into Foundation Stage once a week to share quality story time with their child.

INITIAL CONTACTS

Every effort is made to ensure a smooth transition between feeder nurseries and our Reception Class.

Open afternoons – children come into the school and have an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the classroom and its layout and are encouraged to talk informally to staff and parents also have an opportunity for a more formal meeting and are welcomed to the school.

Visits to feeder nurseries are also arranged in order to observe the children in a familiar setting, these provide an ideal opportunity for the children to meet their new teacher in a relaxed and informal manner, and also for staff to pass on any relevant assessment materials that will help the children with their move into St Anne's School.

At St. Anne's Foundation Stage we work alongside parents and carers, and believe as the children's first educators, partnership with parents is paramount. We pride ourselves in providing the children with opportunities to ensure they meet their full potential. We do this through high quality provision both indoors and outside. Our learning environments are engaging and dynamic and both entice and challenge the children on a daily basis. A balance of both planned and responsive themes ensure that the children receive a broad and balanced curriculum. Children are nurtured and supported in becoming confident and independent learners.