

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE CURRICULUM POLICY

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Aims

At St Thomas' C of E Primary School we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children.

Our aims are:

- ♣ To give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life in which they can establish solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning
- ♣ To offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences and give them the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test them out along with their own, individual experiences
 - ♣ To enable each child, through encouragement and high expectations, to develop to their full potential, socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally
 - ♣ To offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited opportunity for development
 - ♣ To encourage children to develop independence within a loving, secure and friendly atmosphere
 - ♣ To support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing, ensuring all children feel respected
 - ♣ To help each child to aim high and recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

Children's achievements are celebrated across the Foundation Stage and are valued by all as laying important foundations for future learning and development.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based on four themes:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

A Unique Child

At St Thomas C of E Primary School we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals within the school. All children at St Thomas C of E Primary School are treated fairly whatever their race, gender, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school. In our school we believe that all our children matter. 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 planning for their learning.

In the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- ♣ planning developmentally appropriate opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- ♣ using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- ♣ providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- ♣ providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- ♣ using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- ♣ planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- ♣ tracking and monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

Welfare

‘Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.’

(Statutory Framework for EYFS 2014)

It is important to us that all children in the school are ‘safe’. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. (See Whole School Safeguarding Children Policy)

At St Thomas C of E Primary School we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage.

We understand that we are required to:

- ♣ promote the welfare of children.
- ♣ promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- ♣ manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children’s stage of development and individual needs.
- ♣ ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- ♣ ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- ♣ ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- ♣ maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

We endeavour to meet all these requirements.

Positive Relationships

At St Thomas C of E Primary School we recognise that children learn to be strong, confident and independent from being in secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

Parents and practitioners work together at St Thomas C of E Primary School. We value being partners with parents in their child's education through:

- ♣ Communicating with parents about their child on an on-going basis through a variety of means e.g. face to face, electronic
- ♣ Offering children the opportunity to spend time in the Foundation Stage before starting school.
- ♣ Operating an open door policy for parents with any queries.
- ♣ Sharing regularly the children's experiences and achievements
- ♣ Encouraging parents to share children's experiences and learning at home with us through Wow moments and on Parent Share
 - ♣ Holding parents workshops every year on topics such as Phonics, Early reading and Maths.
- ♣ Offering two parent/teacher consultation evenings per year.
- ♣ Sending a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of the school year.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

The planning within the EYFS is based on the Development Matters statements from the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. These plans change in response to the needs, achievements and interests of the children. This fostering of the children's interests develops a high level of motivation for the children's learning. We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations. These observations are recorded in a variety of ways, and contribute to the child's overall profile. At the end of the reception year in school, the child's progress is recorded on to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Each child's level of development is recorded against the 17 Early Learning Goals.

Enabling Environment

At St Thomas C of E Primary School we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observation we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs, before planning challenging, achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning. The Foundation Stage classroom is organised to allow children to explore

and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, quiet, creative etc.

The classrooms have defined learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

The Foundation Stage has an enclosed outdoor area, and children are able to free-flow between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Being outdoors offers the children opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. They are able to explore, use their senses, develop their language skills and be physically active. We plan activities and resources both inside and outside enabling the children to develop in all the areas of learning.

Learning and Development

Through play, children develop both physically and emotionally, allowing them to use their experiences to extend and build up ideas, concepts and skills. We encourage children to try things out, solve problems and be creative. We believe that children need to feel at ease, secure and confident, and that active learning occurs when children are interested in finding things out for themselves. Adults challenge and extend their thinking. Through sustained shared thinking, adults support and challenge children's choices by getting involved in the exploratory process with them. Adults show genuine interest, offer encouragement and clarify ideas through open questions.

Areas of Learning and Development

The EYFS is made up of 7 areas of learning and development. At St Thomas C of E Primary School we believe that all of these areas are important and they are all connected. There are 3 Prime Areas which are particularly important and crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These are the seven areas of Learning and Development:

Prime Areas:

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

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Specific Areas:

- ♣ Literacy
- ♣ Mathematics
- ♣ Understanding the world
- ♣ Expressive arts and design

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Nursery and Reception teachers plan activities within the Nursery and 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.

Teaching and Learning Style

We recognise that features of effective teaching and learning in the EYFS are:

- ♣ the partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- ♣ the understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;
- ♣ the range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication;
- ♣ the carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards the Early Learning Goals throughout EYFS;
- ♣ the provision for children to take part in activities that build on 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;

- ♣ the support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- ♣ the identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations.

Play

Play is considered as a crucial part of the child's natural world, a key way of learning. Through planning play experiences through an approach which starts with the children's interests, the Foundation Stage staff at St Thomas' CE Primary School aim to provide the pupils with 'hands on experiences' and learning challenges that interest and inspire the children. These will allow the children to extend their own knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They will be encouraged to learn to solve problems, make predictions and re-arrange and develop ideas. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experiences at their own level and pace.

The staff will act as a 'scaffold', assisting each child as he/she explores new things, negotiates and interacts with each other. 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.

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

Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. 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. In these slots we focus on our maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. 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 an important part of the day. 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.

We make sure there is always time for whole class story at the end of the day but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times.

Active Learning

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

Creativity and Critical Thinking

Children should be given an opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults can support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

Special Educational Needs

We want all children to fully access their education at St Thomas C of E Primary school and we aim to create an ethos and educational environment that is person centred and has the views and needs of the child at its heart. We will ensure that all sessions will be differentiated to meet the needs of the children in that group and will provide appropriate levels of challenge for every child so that they can all make progress at their own rate. We encourage a strong focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND which will enable them to succeed in their education. We aim to be proactive in enabling full access for pupils with SEND to all manageable aspects of the school curriculum.

Transition

Starting school can be a difficult time for young children; we therefore plan this time carefully to support children with the transition and to ensure it is as smooth as possible for each child and that they settle in to their new class quickly and happily.

Starting Reception

Parents of all children starting in the next academic year will be invited to an Induction Meeting in the Summer term to meet their child's new teachers and other key staff and learn more about the Reception curriculum.

This is an opportunity for staff to

- To go through the school handbook

- Explain about uniform, PE kit and school dinners/ free school meals
- Explain about holidays and absences
- Order uniform
- Explain the arrangements for induction in to Reception

New class sessions

The children are given the opportunity to come in to school to meet their new class teacher and other children in their class. They will spend a morning in their new class. Parents can leave their child during this session. This means that before they join their new class the Reception environment is already a familiar place to them. Arrangements are also made for the children's new class teacher to visit them in their current nursery setting.

Starting in Key Stage 1 (Year 1)

Throughout the Reception year, each child's involvement in whole school life will have been built upon; many of the teaching and support staff will already be familiar people to them. They will have taken part in Key Stage and whole school assemblies as well as sharing playtimes with the Key Stage 1 children. Children have the opportunity to meet their new class teacher and spend a morning in their new class during the summer term.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of those working in Foundation Stage to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Headteacher and EYFS co-ordinator will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. The Curriculum Committee of The Governing Body will also be part of this process. This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or sooner if deemed necessary.

Covid 19

Following the outbreak of Covid 19 all EYFS staff have had training on the Government guidance 'Planning guide for early years and childcare settings' and adhere to all practices outlined within, including advice surrounding hand washing and hygiene.

It is recognised that children in EYFS may not be able to understand social distancing and that it is unreasonable to expect them to adhere to these rules in an educational setting.

The mental health of our pupils is important to us and as a result, staff work hard to ensure that the children's experience in school is as close as it can be to the norm.