



Early years foundation stage (EYFS) policy

**Last updated by the head of
early years**

September 2024

**Last reviewed by the Principal
and advisory board**

September 2024

Next review due

September 2025

Introduction

This policy outlines the provision we offer to children in our Pre-Prep. (Nursery) and Prep. One (Reception) classes. These two classes make up our EYFS department.

- Our EYFS is led by Mrs. Michelle Aylott (BEd, QTS, SLE) who is an experienced EYFS leader. She is also the Head of Pre-Prep. Our Head of Prep. One is Mrs. Fiona Winterhalder (BA Hons, EYTS), also an experienced EYFS teacher. Each class has two or three members of support staff, some of whom are also qualified teachers and others are level 3 teaching assistants. The Head of Year is the key worker for every child in their class.
- Children may spend up to five terms in our Pre-Prep. class, as they have the option to join immediately after their third birthday. Children must attend for five days a week, but can choose between full days or half days, and we offer both morning and afternoon sessions. There is an option to stay until 16.30 in both classes.
- We are fully compliant with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and have used this guidance to carefully develop an ambitious and innovative curriculum, to ensure every child achieves the Early Learning Goals. The EYFS Statutory Framework is audited every term in order to ensure full compliance.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Feedback/Marking Policy
- SEND Policy
- First Aid and Medication Policy
- Risk Assessment policy
- Health and Safety Policy

Aims

At St. John's, we place great value on the development of children as individuals and our aim in the EYFS is to build strong foundations, rooted in academic success, so that children go on to be active citizens and curious, life-long learners.

We strive to:

- provide excellence in education
- bring out the best in every individual child
- develop moral integrity and the confidence in children to be themselves
- nurture children from childhood to adulthood
- build a sense of community and environmental awareness.

EYFS Principles

At St. John's Prep., we embrace The Statutory Framework of the EYFS and the four guiding principles that shape practice within our Early Years setting. These principles are:

A unique child

- We recognise that every child 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 appropriately as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning.

Positive relationships

- We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.

Enabling environments

- We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting, extending and celebrating the children's learning. Classrooms and outdoor spaces are designed each term to reflect a chosen topic and to enhance the children's sense of awe and wonder. There are areas where the children can be active, quiet and restful.

Learning and development

- Early Years areas are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. Through observations we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and appropriate activities and experiences to extend their learning. Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At St. John's, we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in and of itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as both a preparation for and a part of life, not solely preparation for the next stage of education.

At St. John's we believe that children learn in a variety of ways; through their senses, through investigation, experimentation, listening, watching, social interaction, questioning and exploring. A safe, secure environment is provided for the children in which to interact and explore rich and diverse learning and developmental opportunities. During their time in the Early Years classes, all children are given the opportunity to gain independence, constructive feedback and a positive self-image. There are opportunities to develop skills and understanding of the world around them through a range of planned activities both in and out of the classroom, broadening what they know and deepening their understanding.

Curriculum

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years' settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. The three prime areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These three areas, the prime areas, are:

- **communication and language**
- **physical development**
- **personal, social and emotional development.**

Support is also provided for children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- **literacy**
- **mathematics**
- **understanding the world**
- **expressive arts and design.**

Communication and language

The children are given opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

Physical development

We provide opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, fine and gross motor skill and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, to make healthy choices in relation to food and to manage their basic needs independently.

Personal, social and emotional development

We deliver focused PSHE education lessons through weekly circle time sessions, following the whole school 'Jigsaw' scheme. This encourages children to:

- reflect and be mindful about their learning
- recognise that children are good at different things
- learn to respect themselves and others, and build respectful friendships
- follow their own interests and be themselves
- develop self-esteem and confidence in their abilities.

Children are taught about growth and fixed mindset through the medium of 'Mouse' and 'Gruffalo'. 'Mouse' has a growth mindset and is willing to tackle challenges, and children are encouraged to 'be like mouse'. Gruffalo is not willing to challenge himself and therefore does not further his learning. This helps children to overcome adversity and persevere when faced with a challenge.

Literacy

We encourage children to link sounds and letters, mark-make at every opportunity and begin to read and write. Children are given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.

Mathematics

In mathematics, we use the *White Rose Maths* scheme in Prep. One, which takes a mastery approach with an emphasis on studying key skills of number, calculation and shape so that children develop deep understanding and the acquisition of mathematical language. Pre-Prep. children begin to develop these key skills during daily mathematics activities where they explore the six key areas of early mathematics: cardinality and counting, comparison, composition, pattern, shape, and space and measures, using the NCTEM progression maps. Children learn through games and tasks using concrete manipulatives which are then applied to their own learning during exploration in our mathematics playroom and across both the inside and outside classrooms.

Understanding the world

We guide children to make sense of the physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment. We welcome parents to come into class to share their own celebrations and experiences with the children.

Expressive arts and design

We enable children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance and role-play.

The above areas are underpinned by The Characteristics of Learning:

- **Playing and exploring** – showing curiosity and seeking challenge
- **Active learning** – concentration and determination
- **Creating and thinking critically** – ideas and decision making

These involve assessing how the children are learning in order to provide quality experiences, guiding them to be reflective, independent learners.

- Our ambitious curriculum provides children with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to prepare them for the challenges of Key Stage One and beyond. We embed the right habits for learning through recognising the importance of nurturing the Characteristics of Effective Learning, encouraging problem solving, creativity and communication, fostering children's natural curiosity and promoting innovation and reflection.
- Our children learn within a coherent and progressive framework as we carefully select topics, core texts and schemes to ensure they experience the challenge and enjoyment of learning and understand the purpose and value of learning. We offer vibrant indoor and outdoor provision and warm,

skilful adult interactions. We seek to create a sense of fascination and enjoyment in learning, offering a host of memorable experiences that provide the cultural capital our children need for future success. Our investment in specialist teachers for music, languages, games and forest school mean our children continually receive the highest quality teaching across all areas of the curriculum.

- Children learn through a balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities with a gradual shift from the former to the latter as children move through our EYFS, in preparation for Key Stage One. In Prep. One, the timetable is carefully structured so that children have directed teaching in literacy, mathematics and phonics every day. These sessions are followed by focused group work where children work with a member of staff to develop their individual targets. This focused group time means the teacher can systematically check for understanding, quickly identify and respond to misconceptions and provide verbal feedback which results in a strong impact on the acquisition of new learning.
- Topics are mapped out in advance to ensure clear progression and coverage of the curriculum. They are carefully sequenced to coincide with seasonal changes and national celebrations. Both classes engage in the same topics at the same time, with clear differentiation of key knowledge and vocabulary to ensure they are building on prior knowledge in Prep. One. This also allows for us to plan and share exciting and memorable experiences to launch and conclude topics. Topics are flexible and can be adapted to ensure we respond to children's needs and interests. Within these topics, we plan around a core text each week, allowing us to put high-quality texts at the heart of our curriculum.
- We share half-termly 'Themed Days' across the EYFS, celebrating different festivals or focusing on a theme such as the environment or healthy lifestyles. We also have a comprehensive enrichment programme comprising workshops and trips that are based on the children's interests and link with their current learning. For example, when learning about 'The Little Red Hen' Prep. 1 would visit The Mill Green Museum and Mill to see how flour is made. This first-hand experience makes a learning memorable experience.
- Children in the EYFS have assemblies in their classroom each week based on the whole school theme. Both classes have a reflection book, where the children have a chance to express their feelings and learning taken from the assemblies.
- Music, Games, Art, Drama, French and Forest School are delivered by specialist teachers following whole school progression maps. EYFS staff participate in these sessions to ensure we know exactly what our children are learning in each subject area and can build on these outside of direct lesson times. Including the EYFS at the beginning of each subject progression map leads to seamless transitions into their next stage of learning.

Principles into practice

Teachers:

- Enable children to make an effective and happy transition from home to school, through effective liaison and support.
- Plan stimulating activities using the early learning goals to ensure progression from the EYFS to Key Stage one.
- Provide a curriculum that is delivered through a range of child initiated, independent and teacher directed activities, achieving a healthy balance with clear learning intentions and objectives.
- Use information from baseline entry level assessment to track progress and identify the different learning needs of each child.
- Value children's own experiences, imagination, curiosity and the range of skills that they bring into school and to use these as starting points in their learning.
- Promote an atmosphere that encourages confidence, reflection and independence.
- Make use of the outdoor provision to provide challenge and stimulation across the seven areas of learning.
- Use observations and assessments to identify individual's ongoing next steps and the differing needs and abilities of the children.
- Inform parents if progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern and agree how to support the child.
- Plan for differentiation, including necessary support for children with EAL and children with SEND, ensuring that all children are given tasks that will appropriately challenge and stimulate their thinking, including enrichment.
- Ensure through planning and appropriate resources, that all children have equal access and opportunities.
- Record children's progress in autumn and summer term written reports to parents.
- in the final term of prep. one, assess each child against the early learning goals.
- Value parents as partners in the education of their child. share observations with parents and encourage parental involvement; keeping parents well informed about the curriculum and their child's progress. conducting regular parent consultations.
- Pass up to date records and assessments to the next class teacher, together with face-to-face discussions about each child referring to skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning.

Planning and assessment

- Planning is based on each child's ongoing formative assessment. We also have long, medium- and short-term plans to ensure continuity of curriculum coverage, but these do change according to the needs of individuals and the class.

- Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of observation by all adults working with the child. These observations, which are made using the iPad-based Tapestry Journal software, are linked to Development Matters which in turn informs the end of phase judgements made in each child's EYFS Profile.

Early reading

At St. John's we are proud to offer our children a text rich learning environment where imagination and creativity are fuelled. Through our rigorous phonics curriculum, we ensure children develop the skills and knowledge they need to develop as confident readers with a love of books. Reading is essential for developing the language skills that enable our children to participate fully as members of society; only children who learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently, are able to effectively participate in wider society. To achieve this, we ensure that:

- there is a sharp focus on ensuring that younger children gain the phonic knowledge and language comprehension necessary to read and write.
- reading is prioritised to allow children to access the full curriculum.
- a rigorous, sequential approach to the reading curriculum develops children's fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading.
- at all stages, reading attainment is assessed and gaps are addressed quickly and effectively for all children.
- at the early stages of learning to read, reading materials are closely matched to the children's phonic knowledge.
- our chosen systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme is the DfE accredited *Essential Letters and Sounds*. This scheme distils Letters and Sounds to its purest form - its essence - to ensure every phonics lesson is taught to the highest standard. Only the essential elements are included, ensuring simplicity and consistency. Lessons are delivered whole class, by the class teacher, using consistent and familiar resources and routines. Children receive a daily phonics lesson from Pre-Prep (nursery) to Prep.2 (year 1) and the scheme continues into Lower Transitus (year 2) for those that still need it.
- Our chosen reading scheme is *Rocket Phonics* as it corresponds closely with our phonics scheme. We also have access to the entire *Reading Planet* online library. Children are sent home with a *Rocket Phonics* book once a week that carefully matches the phase they are working within and uses the sounds they have learnt so far to ensure they experience blending success at home. These books also include comprehension questions and a parent guide at the front, pointing out tricky words and the sounds to focus on. In addition, they can also be assigned books from the *Comet Kids* and *Galaxy* range, within the same reading level, to offer breadth and variation in their home reading. Teachers read 1:1 with all children, a minimum of twice a week. Any children identified as working behind expectations are read with daily.
- Children learn to encode, using the sounds that they have been taught, throughout phases 2-5 of *Essential Letters and Sounds*. At this stage, children should be able to spell words phonemically although not always correctly. In Lower Transitus, children are becoming more fluent readers and more accurate spellers. Therefore, it is appropriate at this point for our children to start our whole school spelling programme, following *Headstart Primary Spelling*.

Children are introduced to taking spelling lists home and participating in weekly spelling tests.

- Evidence suggests that teaching cursive letter formation can hinder phonics progress. Therefore, we follow the Cambridge University's *Penpals Handwriting Scheme* throughout the whole school. This was launched from Pre-Prep to Prep. 2 in September 2021. It will move up with the children as they progress through the school.
- Our whole school literacy curriculum is based around engaging and age-appropriate children's texts. In the EYFS, reading is at the heart of the curriculum, with each week designed around a 'book of the week' that links to the current topic. We also send home 'reading for pleasure' books in addition to our reading scheme books. All teachers read to their children every day, modelling enthusiasm for reading and sharing a variety of inspiring children's fiction. We have a popular weekly book club which is well attended by children in the lower school. We are in the process of improving our classroom reading areas and have recently updated our selection of independent reading books in the lower school to include a greater variety of fiction and non-fiction, poetry books and books that celebrate diversity, particularly within our school community.
- All parents are invited to a Phonics Workshop in the first term of Prep. 1. This is a practical workshop where parents are introduced to our phonics scheme and taught the basics. They are introduced to our reading scheme and taught how to support their child at home with phonics and their home readers. Children have reading records to enable staff and parents to exchange information about individual children's reading progress. Parents are regularly kept informed of their child's phonics progress through termly consultations and reports. *Essential Letters and Sounds* also includes training videos for parents, including videos on pure sounds and blending for reading.
- The *Essential Letters and Sounds* scheme includes an online training portal that comprises a comprehensive set of training videos, covering every element of subject knowledge required to be a phonics expert, and each aspect of the teaching, including interventions, modelled by the authors of the scheme. All staff across the school have accessed this training, and all phonics teachers use these videos regularly to ensure we are delivering the scheme with fidelity and rigour. Further training is offered for the phonics lead, via live online sessions, to guide the leadership of the scheme. Post-pandemic, *Essential Letters and Sounds* trainers plan to visit schools to offer in-person support and training. All teachers delivering phonics attend a bi-weekly practice session in which we practise our phonics teaching on each other, ensuring expert delivery to the children. The phonics lead observes lessons once every three weeks, offering feedback and modelling aspects of the lesson where necessary.
- *Essential Letters and Sounds* combines continuous and reactive assessment and robust interventions. All children are assessed in the fifth week of each half term, to enable class teachers to identify individual gaps and address these before the end of term. There is an online assessment tool that allows us to assess children one-to-one and then provides an analysis, at an individual level and cohort level, to inform subsequent teaching.

- *Essential Letters and Sounds* have designed their scheme to ensure that children 'keep up rather than catch up' through thorough assessments and timely interventions. There are immediate, in the lesson interventions, designed to offer immediate support for children that may need it during each lesson. There are also three further interventions, that are delivered one-to-one or in very small groups, by the person most qualified to do so in each classroom. These interventions are 'Oral Blending', 'GPC Correspondence' and 'Blending to Read' and are very short sessions, aimed to address gaps in knowledge or provide targeted practise in areas of difficulty. These children also receive *daily* one-to-one reading with their class teacher.
- All children in Prep.2 participate in the national phonics screening check, which is carried out in June each year. We consistently aim for 100% of our children to pass. However, any child who does not attain the required standard will repeat the screening check in Lower Transitus.

Supervision of staff

The statutory framework for the EYFS requires that settings must have appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff who have contact with children and families. The leadership and management structure must be clear, with all clearly knowing to whom they report. Supervision is not appraisal; it is a regular one to one meeting/discussion with the Head of EYFS.

The purpose is to:

- enable key persons to immediately share information and even the slightest concern with a class teacher and the Head of EYFS.
- develop a positive relationship with members of the team as individuals, enabling them to understand where the setting is going and how they can be involved and contribute to it; improve communication and share responsibility.
- reiterate organisational expectations; manage performance, capabilities and workload; reflect on, evaluate and respectfully challenge practice; make appropriate changes; allow disagreements to be recorded and solutions explored.
- value, motivate and empower; coach and discuss training opportunities.
- ensure that children and their families receive the highest quality care and education.
- maximise safeguarding of children and safer working practices.

At St. John's we ensure that the frequency of supervision meetings are:

- For new staff, staff undergoing training and ECTs – half-termly
- Full-time staff – termly
- Our regular monitoring of teaching and learning is regular and rigorous, undertaken Subject Leaders so that teachers develop a good subject knowledge and are effectively supported. We tailor our staff CPD to be early years specific and are focused on moderating outcomes across the phase

so that every member of our team feels confident in making accurate judgements about where individual children are and their next steps for learning.

- We work hard to ensure positive relationships with parents, inviting them in for training workshops and school events to ensure they understand our expectations and can effectively support their child at home, particularly with phonics, early reading and handwriting, and to encourage them to celebrate their child's achievements and successes

Safeguarding within the early years

St. John's ensures compliance with the specific safeguarding and child protection duties set out in the Childcare Act 2006 and the latest EYFS statutory guidance. We ensure that children taught in the EYFS classes are able to learn and develop and are kept safe and healthy so that they are ready for school by providing a safe, secure learning environment that safeguards and promotes their welfare, and takes appropriate action where there are child protection concerns.

All safeguarding and child protection policies within the school apply equally to children in the EYFS so far as they are relevant to that age group. Please also see our School Safeguarding Policy.

In addition, the School has the following child protection policies and procedures specific to EYFS:

EYFS mobile technology use

To ensure the continued safety of our children within the EYFS, this policy outlines the protocols for the use of mobile phones and cameras.

Staff

- The use of personal mobile phones, iPads, video recorders or cameras is not permitted in the EYFS setting when in the presence of children.
- Personal mobile phones, iPads, video recorders or cameras must always be stored securely in a designated area.
- Staff are permitted to use personal mobile phones and cameras in designated areas only or during non-contact time.
- Contact with parents / carers must be made on a school phone only, except in exceptional circumstances.
- Staff may use their mobile phones when on school outings in either an emergency or for contact reasons.

Photographic assessments

- Photographic assessments of children in the EYFS must be taken on school equipment only. This includes cameras and iPads.
- School cameras and iPads containing these assessments must be stored securely.

- Children featured on evidence photos are subject to parental permission.
- To avoid unauthorised access, the app is locked with a user-defined PIN code.
- The app can be remotely deactivated should a device be lost or stolen.

Parents and carers

For the purpose of this policy the term parent implies any person or body with 'parental responsibility', such as foster parent, carer or guardian.

- Parents are not permitted to use their mobile phones within the EYFS setting. This is shared with parents at the induction meeting.
- In the case of school productions, parents are not permitted to take any photographs. This is announced at the beginning of any performance

Collection of children

The safety of children in our care is of prime importance. We therefore have certain procedures in place for the collection of children at the end of a day or a session, in accordance with the EYFS statutory framework section 3.63:

- When registering a child at St. John's Preparatory School, we request names of those who have been given permission and will be picking the child up on a regular basis. These are listed in writing by the parent on a collection authorisation form and we also ask for a photo of each parent.
- When someone other than one of the main named carers is collecting a child, we ask that we are informed on a daily basis when they bring the child to school – or by contacting the school office during the day.
- We ask that the person collecting is a responsible adult (over 18) and is known to the child
- We require relevant identification and, ideally, we would have met the person previously.
- If there is any cause for concern or clarification, the parent will be contacted before the child is released to anyone's care.
- If a parent has not informed us that someone else is collecting, we will not allow the child to leave without first checking with the parent.

Uncollected child procedure

This procedure applies to any child uncollected at the end of a school or from after school care. In the event of a child not being collected, the following steps are taken:

- If it is at the end of the school day, reassure the child and settle them in Prep.
- Check if a message has been received by the office.
- Ask the office to telephone the child's parents.
- Ask the office to contact the emergency contacts for the child

- If the office is closed, the staff member in charge should gain the child's contact details from the school database, and emergency contacts details from the child's collection form.
- If no contact is made with the child's carers, inform the Head of EYFS or a senior leader on site, who will assume responsibility for the child if he / she has not been collected by the end of Prep.
- If necessary, arrange for the child to be fed.
- If the child's parents have not been traced by the evening, a senior leader will assume responsibility for the child, and the DSL, Principal and police will be informed.

Ratios and Qualifications

Staffing arrangements in our Pre-Prep and in all our Prep. One class meet the needs of all the children and ensure their safety. We are compliant with the statutory requirements for staff: child ratios which state that for children aged three or over:

'In Reception classes, where the majority of pupils are five or over within the school year, the staffing ratio is 1:30 (as in maintained schools) provided that a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status or another suitable level 6 qualification is working directly with the children. Such a person may be an overseas qualified teacher or an 'instructor' (someone with the necessary qualifications or experience or both, where the governors/proprietor are satisfied with the qualifications or experience)'

In other EYFS classes for children of three and above, with a person with Qualified Teacher Status (or other suitable person as defined above), the ratio is 1:13, and at least one other member of staff is required to hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification. In EYFS classes for children of three or above, without a person with Qualified Teacher Status (or other suitable person as defined above), the staffing ratio must be at least 1:8. At least one member of staff must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification and at least half of all other staff must hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification.

- Children are usually within sight and hearing of staff members and always within sight or hearing.
- A full risk assessment is in place and updated regularly. At lunch times Reception children eat in the main dining room where they are supervised by qualified members of staff and all the teaching staff are also present.
- These ratios are adhered to at break and lunch times.
- Any sleeping children are checked frequently.

Medical care

- All staff members working in the early years at St. John's Prep. are trained in paediatric first aid.

- Parents are provided with the relevant medical forms during the admissions process; this ensures relevant medical information is shared in order to promote the good health of children.
- Please see First Aid Policy /Administration of Medicines Policy for further information. The detail within these policies, including the procedure for responding to children who are ill or infectious, is shared with parents.
- All accidents and first aid treatment are recorded and communicated to parents as soon as possible or appropriate.
- Training is given to any member of staff for administration of medicines that require medical or technical knowledge.
- Prescription medicines must not be administered unless prescribed by a doctor, dentist, nurse or pharmacist.

Accidents and injuries

- Staff are aware of their duty to inform parents of any accident or injury sustained by the child on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable and any first aid treatment given. First aid boxes are accessible from all areas of the school. All first aid administered is recorded online.

Risk assessments

- Risk assessments are routinely carried out and utilised to minimise a range of risks relating to daily life in the classroom or the school grounds, special activities, trips and clubs.
- These are kept either on the classroom wall or centrally, as appropriate. They are updated and reviewed at suitable intervals.
- Daily Risk assessments are completed to cover the areas inside and outside of the Early Years classrooms and are held by the Head of Early Years.
- Risk assessments identify risks that need to be checked on a regular basis, when and by whom, and how the risk will be removed or diminished.
- Risk assessments for outings are always conducted. These always take account of adult to child ratios and the steps taken to remove, minimise and manage identified risks and hazards.
- All health and safety concerns are reported to the principal without delay.