

St Peter's C of E Academy Early Years Policy

As a church school, we believe that **'Giving children the keys to unlock their future'** will enable all pupils to flourish within our care and achieve their full potential. This is underpinned by the words of Jesus:

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

"I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 16:19)

Rationale

At St Peter's C of E Academy, we believe that learning in the Early Years will be primarily first hand, experiential and active. We will give young children opportunities and space to explore and discover in a secure environment. We recognise that although all children follow sequential patterns of development every child is unique, having their own competencies which need to be brought out and built upon. Young children's learning will be embedded in what is familiar involving play as an essential and rich part of the learning process. Learning will always be a pleasurable and rewarding experience; taking place in a social context. We encourage children's independence and autonomy with them taking responsibility for their learning as much as possible in an atmosphere of security and self-discipline.

Aims and Objectives for the Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage seeks to provide:

- Quality and consistency in all Early Years settings, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind;
- A secure foundation through learning and development opportunities which are planned around the needs and interests of each individual child and are assessed and reviewed regularly;
- Partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers;
- Equal opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.
- Provide a caring and secure environment, indoors and out, where each child is valued as an individual.
- Develop every child's confidence and self-esteem to help them become caring and social individuals.

Foundation Stage Curriculum

We adhere to the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2014) and the four guiding principles that shape and guide practice within our Early Years setting. These are:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates

A Unique Child

At St Peter's we recognise that every child is a competent learner, can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates.

Inclusion

All children and their families are valued and treated fairly at St Peter's C of E Academy regardless of race, gender, religion or ability. Children are treated as individuals and have

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equal access to all provisions available. All children are encouraged to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. Early identification of special needs is crucial to enable staff to support the development of each child. Concerns are always discussed with parents at an early stage and the schools Special Educational Needs Coordinator is called upon for further information and advice.

Positive Relationships

At St Peter's we recognise that children learn to be strong, confident and independent from being in secure relationships. We always aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners and the Wider Community

At St Peter's we recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contributions and support that they give their child and us. This process is developed and strengthened by:

- Our open school ethos where prospective parents are given the opportunity to visit and gain a feel for how our Foundation Stage and other classes function in a normal school day.
- Induction Meetings where our aims are presented to, and discussed with, the parents.
- Our Induction Process, offering both parents and children the opportunity to spend time in the Foundation Stage before starting school.
- Always operating an open-door policy for parents with any queries.
- Offering a home visit and parent evenings throughout the course of the year.
- A home school contact book and an opportunity to add to 'Tapestry' the on-line learning journey to celebrate the children's achievements witnessed by parents outside of school.
- Holding workshops for parents throughout the year, offering support with the EYFS curriculum, Reading, Letters and Sounds, Mathematics.
- Sharing the children's online Learning Journey with the parents and valuing the ongoing contributions to these from parents.
- An end of year summary report detailing the children's strengths and areas to help them move forward in their learning.
- Developing a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between the child, school and parents. (Parent events and Open sessions).

Before a child starts at St Peter's Academy, parents will be asked to attend a "paperwork" induction meeting where parents and carers are given the opportunity to discuss and fill in various questionnaires. These documents provide the teacher with valuable information regarding the children's level of development, health concerns and family background. Sharing this information allows the parents to raise and share any concerns that they may have regarding their child starting school and begins to form the close link between the teacher and the four-year-old.

We have developed strong links with the large number and variety of Pre-schools and Nurseries that feed into St Peter's. The Foundation Stage Staff meet with all providers to discuss each individual child and their transition into school, at their setting and through Cluster meetings throughout the year.

Enabling Environments

At St Peter's Academy we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences.

The Learning Environment

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, be quiet, creative etc. The Foundation Stage has its own outdoor classroom area. The free flow between the inside and the outside has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

Learning and Development

We plan a relevant, stimulating and challenging curriculum that is based upon our observations and assessments of all the children. By assessing the children's needs and stages across the seven areas of the curriculum we allow them to achieve and exceed the Early Learning Goals.

All seven areas of learning and development, in combination with the Characteristics of an Effective Learner, are important and inter-connected. Three areas (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.

The Prime Areas are:

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

The four Specific Areas are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Children are supported through the four Specific Areas through which the three Prime Areas are strengthened and applied.

The way in which the child engages with other people and their environment underpin learning and development across all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning are:

- Playing and Exploring
- Active Learning
- Creating and thinking critically.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Foundation Stage staff (Teachers and Teaching Assistants) use observations as the basis for planning. Foundation Stage Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning and ensure that the children's interests are explored and developed. This fostering of the children's interests develops a high level of motivation for the children's learning.

The Planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Development Matters Statements from the Early Years Foundation Stage document. 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. At the end of their foundation year in school the children'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. Their development is also tracked using the EYFS baseline assessment at the start of the year and at regular intervals throughout their first year at school.

Resources

Provision of learning resources will be reviewed at least every term to ensure that equipment is in good condition and replaced or updated as necessary and as resources allow. If any member of staff or helper becomes aware of any health and safety issue they should stop children using that equipment or area and inform the class teacher as soon as possible. The class teacher will then inform the head teacher. Specific areas are checked through our ongoing 'Daily Health and Safety check' to ensure that all areas are clean, safe and appropriate for use by all of the children.

Staffing

The ratio of teaching staff is kept as high as finances allow. Teaching Assistants (TAs) within the unit are used to support children's learning, working alongside teaching staff. They are expected to work under the direction of the class teacher, following written /oral directions given to them in daily and weekly planning. At all times they should help support children achieve learning intentions in as independent a manner as is possible at their stage of development. TAs are expected to report back to teaching staff noting success as well as concerns either verbally or through observation assessments.

Admissions

Children are admitted to school following the procedures outlined in the Wiltshire County Council admissions policy. All the children, regardless of when their birthday is within the specific academic year, will begin school at the start of September.

Some children find full days very tiring; we do have the flexibility to offer a more staggered entry into school to suit a child's individual needs if either the parent, or Head teacher, feels that is more appropriate. This is in agreement with the Local Board Members.