

**St Joseph's Catholic Primary School,  
Pontefract**

**A Voluntary Academy**

**Early Years Foundation Stage Policy  
2020-2022**



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St Joseph's Catholic Primary School,  
Newgate,  
Pontefract  
WF8 4AA

Tel: 01977 701493

Email: [admin@sjp.bkcat.co.uk](mailto:admin@sjp.bkcat.co.uk)

Headteacher: Mrs Michaela Velayudhan Tomlin



## **Our Mission**

*Here, under the guidance of our patriarch, St Joseph, and inspired by centuries of Catholic teaching, we begin to learn how to serve each other and our world with the same faithful joy which we see in Jesus, our saviour and our Lord.*

*To Him be glory and praise for ever*



## Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. Our Early Years Foundation Stage accommodates children from the age of 3 to 5 years. In our school we have one part-time nursery class and one full-time reception class.

The nursery class has 52 part time places and children are offered a place in the September, January or April (dependent on intake) following their third birthday. In nursery there is one teacher, a Nursery Nurse and a teaching assistant. As attendance to our nursery classes is on a part time basis this allows places for 52 children attending either for 15 hours at the beginning of the week or the end of the week, morning or afternoon. We can also offer some 30 hour provision for any children who are eligible.

The majority of our nursery children go on to secure a place in our reception classes however parents/carers have to apply for this place through the local authority.

We have one reception class, with thirty places available. The reception class has a full time teacher and a full-time teaching assistant. To ensure best practice and continuity our foundation stage classes work closely together and share planning, activities and an outdoor learning environment.

### **Aims**

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Foundation Stage we aim to give each child a positive and meaningful start to their school life, in which they can establish solid foundations on which to develop into independent lifelong learners.

We will encourage children to develop independence within a secure and friendly atmosphere; to support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing; to help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and by developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

Our high expectations will enable each child to develop socially, physically, intellectually, spiritually and emotionally and to achieve their full potential. We will offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited availability for development through a wide range of new and exciting first-hand experiences that will give children the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test their skills, knowledge and understanding alongside existing experiences. We will ensure that children are kept healthy and safe and that they achieve the knowledge and skills they need to start school

### **The Curriculum**

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary we follow the 'Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework' published by the Department of Education, for both our Nursery and Reception Classes. It sets the

standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to 5. Presently, the framework is being reviewed and 'new reforms' will be in place from September 2021.

As we are keen to be at the forefront of any new initiatives that are aimed at improving the learning and development outcomes of children we have signed up to take part in the 'Early Adopters EYFS Framework' which includes the reforms. The safeguarding and welfare requirements of the 2017 EYFS framework continue to apply but there are some changes to the areas of learning and the early learning goals. These will have some impact on how we assess the children's learning and development but the good news is that we can continue to provide the same high quality and stimulating early years curriculum that we always have.

### **The EYFS is based upon four principles:**

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

#### **A Unique Child**

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, 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/ sharing assemblies and rewards using Class Dojo, to encourage children to 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 and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests and stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.

#### **Learning and development**

Our foundation stage has one nursery classroom, one reception classroom and an outdoor classroom, which is shared. All our learning environments are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The seven areas of learning are defined so that children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

#### **Areas of Learning**

The EYFS is made up of **three prime** area of learning:

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

There are **four specific areas** of learning:

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

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School all areas are delivered through a well-planned play based approach, with a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. Throughout the foundation stage our long, medium and short-term plans ensure that each child has the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in every area at the appropriate developmental level. Our long term planning ensures coverage so that all children have opportunities to work towards and achieve the Early Learning Goals (ELG's) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS. We follow a half termly topic based approach which allows flexibility to ensure that both children's needs and interests are taken into account. Our topics are also linked to books and stories to promote an early love for reading.

### **Play**

Learning through play underpins our approach to teaching and learning in the foundation stage. We embrace the fact that young children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them to learn. In doing so we can provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning and to help them make sense of the world. Children 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 experiences at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests, inspire those around them and consolidate their understanding and skills. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. Our adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating, teaching and extending play, skills and language.

### **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning and the nursery and reception teachers plan activities with these in mind. The characteristics 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.

### **Inclusion**

Our whole school ethos, as well as that of the foundation stage, embraces inclusion. We recognise and respect the abilities and strengths of our children at all levels of development and the wealth of knowledge and experience that they bring from their differing backgrounds and cultures.

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 and we set realistic and

challenging expectations that meet the needs of individual children, so that children are able to reach their full potential. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. We aim to 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

We will provide: a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively; a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued; resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping; challenging activities for all children and for those whose ability and understanding are advanced. We will monitor children's progress and take action to provide support as necessary. Where a specific need is suspected we will liaise with the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator and seek advice from outside agencies, such as the speech and language service, the educational psychologist amongst others. We adhere to the Equal Opportunity and Inclusion policies of the school.

Early Years Pupil Premium – we will endeavour to identify our least advantaged pupils and inform parents or carers of their opportunity to apply for their child's entitlement to extra funding in school. All extra funding we receive will be used to support areas in which we identify that the child will best benefit. We will track children's progress to ensure that they are making good progress and to ensure that support is adjusted to target specific areas as the child develops.

### **Assessment**

Throughout nursery and reception children's knowledge, understanding, skills and achievements are assessed and tracked using the developmental stages set out in the document 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)'.

Our assessment depends on us getting to know our children very well and to this end we gather information from a range of sources; observations of the children in play, in adult led activities, through discussions with parents and carers and through talking to the children. We use an electronic profiling system called 'Tapestry' to record evidence of observations and activities to contribute to a child's learning journey. Parents/carers are invited to add comments and contribute to their child's electronic profile from home.

At the end of the Foundation Stage we currently complete the Foundation Stage Profile, where we assess children's achievements in all areas of learning. Observational evidence and samples of children's work throughout the school year will be used to assess children as 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding' based on their understanding and achievement of the Early Learning Goals set out in the EYFS curriculum.

### **Partnership with Parents**

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what their child does at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child and to feel comfortable in our setting. We invite parents to attend 'stay and play' sessions during the school year so they can experience their children's learning environment. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to share information about their child, to ask questions and to discuss their child's learning with the teachers. We have weekly Collective Worship and also a weekly parent/carer reading group to allow parents to contribute to their children's learning experience on a regular basis.

Formal parents meeting are offered twice a year, where parents have the opportunity of speaking with the teachers to discuss their child's progress and development and their next steps in learning. Parents are always welcomed to discuss their children informally at the end of the school day.

### **Health & safety and safeguarding**

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. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2017) and we adhere to the school's safeguarding policy alongside the BKCAT health and safety policy.

We promote healthy eating and our children under 5 receive free milk and all children have access to fresh water and free fruit from a Government scheme. Reception children who stay for lunch are eligible for free school meals or can choose to bring in a healthy packed lunch.

Each foundation stage classroom has access to their own toileting facilities and we teach the children the importance of hygiene, hand washing techniques and throughout the year we plan cooking activities to give children experiences of a range of healthy food.

### **Community Links**

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School the foundation stage classes enrich learning and encourage links with the local area. We ask visitors to come in and share their experiences and we also work closely with other child-care providers in the village.

### **Transitions**

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School we recognise that starting school and moving up classes has the potential to be a worrying time for both children and parents. To this end we have established a strong procedure for transitions to ensure that our children and parents are as confident and secure as they can be when facing the challenges of each year group.

We hold a 'new parents' meeting in the term before the children start school either in Nursery or Reception, to provide parents with key information, school expectations, knowledge on our curriculum and assessment and advice on how they can help their child. Nursery children are invited to 'stay and play' sessions prior to starting. New Reception children are offered a home visit prior to starting their new Reception class. New Reception children who attended our school Nursery are offered a 'jump up' session with their new teacher before moving to their new year group.

At the end of reception children have the opportunity to meet with their new teachers in their classrooms prior to starting Year one. At the end of each school year teachers have the opportunity to share their knowledge of each child's knowledge, understanding and achievements, including end of year assessment data, with their next class teacher to ensure that all teachers have a well-rounded picture of the children prior to the new school year.

During children's time in nursery and reception a range of shared activities are planned for all classes to help develop children's confidence and to ensure continuity in experiences throughout the foundation stage. Children in both nursery and reception make use of the whole school facilities, such as the hall and adventure playground for appropriate activities to ensure that children are confident and well prepared for moving around the school and for mixing with older children when they start school.