



St. Thomas' CE Primary School

EYFS Policy

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Approved by Governors
Review Date

September 2024
7th October 2024
September 2026

This document is a statement of the aims, objectives and strategies for teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage at St Thomas' C of E Primary School

Will be reviewed Autumn term 2023

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Policy Aims

This policy document has been written to provide staff in school with guidance and support for the teaching of the Foundation Stage (EYFS). It establishes the importance of curriculum guidance and the key objectives for the statutory delivery of the EYFS.

Introduction

The Foundation Stage is a statutory stage of education. It has its own legal status and responsibilities, its own curriculum aims, structure and guidance. These can be found in the Practice guidance for the EYFS. Assessments form an integral part and in addition, the Foundation Stage has its own documentation on planning and the organisation of the learning environment.

The Foundation Stage applies to children from three years of age to the end of the Reception year when they will be five. At St Thomas Church of England School most

children attend nursery before starting in Reception. Children also start in Reception from other settings within Stockport.

The early years education we offer is based on the following ethos and aims.

“ Our aim is to meet the diverse needs of all children by providing opportunities for them to learn and have fun through the focus of play, in a caring and stimulating environment. ”

Intent - Our intent is our curriculum and plan of what we are going to teach starting with the child. A balance between child initiated and adult led activities, bringing together the best methodologies with carefully planned continuous provision that evolves to meet the needs of our children in our care.

Implementation - Our implementation is our pedagogy what we do and how we teach and deliver our curriculum. What we do every day to ensure the children make progress through communication, an enabling environment and quality first teaching in all areas of the curriculum

Impact - Our impact is reviewing our 'quality first teaching and assessing the learning that is taking place. The children make good progress from their starting point. Impact is shown through our ongoing observations, formative and summative assessments for each child throughout the year which enables us to plan their next steps in learning and provide intervention for any gaps in their learning.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

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

A Unique Child

At St Thomas' CE 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, 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, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children at St Thomas' are treated fairly regardless of race, 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 EYFS 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 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;
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

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)

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."

At St Thomas' CE 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 2024. 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 all EYFS support staff hold Paediatric First Aid certificates.
- 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' CE Primary School we recognise that children learn to be strong independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:

- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school – New Parents Meeting
- The children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school during “Stay and Play” sessions / Transition Activities.
- Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school;
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress in our / Nursery/ reception class through Parents Evenings and allowing access to the children's learning through 'Seesaw'.
- Encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. There is a formal meeting for parents each term at which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress in private with the teacher. Parents receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year;
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents: Reading Workshops, Mathematics Workshops Stay and Play Sessions.
- Welcoming parental involvement through Seesaw . Allowing parents to comment and provide evidence of learning at home.
- Weekly newsletters, that let parents know what activities will be happening in the classroom so that they can support their child's learning at home. (Shared via Dojo and the School website)

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. At our school the teacher within each Nursery / Reception acts a 'Key Person' to all children in their care, supported by a Nursery Nurse. We are in the process of developing links with Private nurseries in our catchment area and also have our own School Nursery which “feeds” our reception intake. The EYFS teacher meets with staff to discuss new intake children. Where children attend outside provision, we aim to ensure continuity and coherence by sharing information about the children's achievements.

Enabling Environments

At St Thomas' CE Primary School 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 to extend the children's learning.

We aim to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment where children feel confident and secure and challenged. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision. Effective learning builds and extends upon prior learning and following children's interest. Effective planning is informed by observations of the children to ensure we follow their current interests and experiences. These observations are recorded in the children's individual profiles on Seesaw. Play based learning is paramount and children direct their own learning from carefully planned opportunities provided by staff. Staff will enhance play and extend as needed to further individual learning.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

The Planning within the EYFS follows the schools' Long Term Plan and Medium Term Plans (MTP's), which are based around half termly /weekly themes based around the children's ideas. These plans are used by the EYFS teacher as a guide for weekly planning, however the teacher may alter these MTP's in response to the needs (achievements and interests) of the children. This will be indicated on weekly planning.

We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of observation, and this involves the teacher and other adults as appropriate. **These observations are recorded in children's individual profiles within Seasaw.** They also contain information provided by parents.

We use 'SIMS' (Whole school) to record judgements against the EYFS Profile. Each child's level of development is recorded against 17 assessment scales derived from the ELG's. Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their progress against the ELG's and assessment scales. We give parents opportunity to discuss these judgements with the EYFS teacher. The results of the Profiles are monitored by the Local Authority and are discussed with Year 1 teachers to ensure a smooth transition to the next year group.

The Learning Environment

The EYFS classroom is 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 classroom is set up in Continuous Provision Areas, where children are able to find and located equipment and resources independently. The setting has its own enclosed outdoor area. This 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. It offers the children to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that help the children to develop in all 7 areas of learning.

Teaching and Learning Style

Our policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our school. These features apply to teaching and learning in the EYFS just as much as they do to the teaching in Key Stage 2. : At St Thomas' we follow the seven key features of effective practice:

1. The best for every child

- All children deserve to have an equal chance of success.
- High-quality early education is good for all children. It is especially important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- When they start school, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are, on average, 4 months¹ behind their peers. We need to do more to narrow that gap.
- Children who have lived through difficult experiences can begin to grow stronger when they experience high quality early education and care.
- High-quality early education and care is inclusive. Children's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly. All children promptly receive any extra help they need, so they can progress well in their learn

2. High-quality care

- The child's experience must always be central to the thinking of every practitioner.
- Babies, toddlers and young children thrive when they are loved and well cared for.
 - High-quality care is consistent. Every practitioner needs to enjoy spending time with young children.
- Effective practitioners are responsive to children and babies. They notice when a baby looks towards them and gurgles and respond with pleasure.
- Practitioners understand that toddlers are learning to be independent, so they will sometimes get frustrated.
- Practitioners know that starting school, and all the other transitions in the early years, are big steps for small children.

3. The curriculum: what we want children to learn

- The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the early years setting wants the children to learn.
- Planning to help every child to develop their language is vital.
 - The curriculum needs to be ambitious. Careful sequencing will help children to build their learning over time.
- Young children's learning is often driven by their interests. Plans need to be flexible.
- Babies and young children do not develop in a fixed way. Their development is like a spider's web with many strands,
- Depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way

4. Pedagogy: helping children to learn

- Children are powerful learners. Every child can make progress in their learning, with the right help.
- Effective pedagogy is a mix of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other, and through guided learning and direct teaching.
- Practitioners carefully organise enabling environments for high-quality play. Sometimes, they make time and space available for children to invent their own play. Sometimes, they join in to sensitively support and extend children's learning.
- Children in the early years also learn through group work, when practitioners guide their learning.
- Older children need more of this guided learning.
- A well-planned learning environment, indoors and outside, is an important aspect of pedagogy.

5. Assessment: checking what children have learnt

- Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know. It is not about lots of data and evidence.
- Effective assessment requires practitioners to understand child development. Practitioners also need to be clear about what they want children to know and be able to do.
- Accurate assessment can highlight whether a child has a special educational need and needs extra help.
- Before assessing children, it's a good idea to think about whether the assessments will be useful.

- Assessment should not take practitioners away from the children for long periods of time.

6. Self-regulation and executive function

- Executive function includes the child's ability to: - hold information in mind - focus their attention - think flexibly - inhibit impulsive behaviour.
- These abilities contribute to the child's growing ability to self-regulate: - concentrate their thinking - plan what to do next - monitor what they are doing and adapt - regulate strong feelings - be patient for what they want - bounce back when things get difficult.
- Language development is central to self-regulation: children use language to guide their actions and plans. Pretend play gives many opportunities for children to focus their thinking, persist and plan ahead.

7. Partnership with parents

- It is important for parents and early years settings to have a strong and respectful partnership. This sets the scene for children to thrive in the early years.
- This includes listening regularly to parents and giving parents clear information about their children's progress.
- The help that parents give their children at home has a very significant impact on their learning.
- Some children get much less support for their learning at home than others. By knowing and understanding all the children and their families, settings can offer extra help to those who need it most.
- It is important to encourage all parents to chat, play and read with their children.

Play in the Foundation Stage

The Early Years Curriculum at St Thomas' is based around play. Play is the most natural way in which children explore the world around them. As they play children utilize their inbuilt learning behaviours and through their actions and interactions develop an understanding of themselves and key aspects of the world around them. They also learn how to express their knowledge and understanding, their ideas and feelings. These early play experiences provide the foundations for later learning.

The three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

Playing and Exploring Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Active Learning

"Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods."

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.

Creating and thinking critically

“When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.”

Children should be given the 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.

At St Thomas we aim to provide a rich and stimulating environment. With a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children through activities both inside and out. We aim to build on what each child already knows and include all children. The curriculum of the Foundation Stage underpins all future learning by supporting, fostering, promoting and developing children in the following areas.

Areas of Learning

The EYFS is made up of seven areas of learning:

Prime Areas

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

Specific Areas

- Mathematics
- Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Expressive Arts and Design

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELG's) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

Curriculum and Teaching Aims

Through the teaching in the Foundation Stage, we primarily aim to :

- To help every child achieve the “The Every Child Matters” outcomes of Staying Safe, Being Healthy, Enjoying and Achieving, Making a Positive Contribution and Achieving Economic Well Being.
- In our teaching, learning and planning we aim to take account of the four themes of the EYFS Framework: A Unique Child, Positive Relationships, Enabling Environments and Learning and Development.
- We will ensure that we meet the legal requirements for safeguarding and promoting children’s welfare, health and safety by ensuring we employ suitable people and our premises and equipment are safe and fit for purpose.
- Raise standards in children’s learning through Development Matters of the EYFS document to the Profile Points.

- To meet national expectations.
- To foster children's interests in the seven areas of learning.
- To help children to feel secure so that they become confident learners.
- To develop an understanding of their own learning and themselves as individuals.
- Assess children's development through ongoing observations.
- Acknowledge children's previous learning experiences so to plan for personalised learning.
- Plan experiences that are child initiated, imaginative, enjoyable and challenging.

The features of good practice at St Thomas' that relate to the foundation Stage are:

- Parents as partners – the partnership between teachers and parents – We welcome parents into school on a weekly basis to support both children and staff.
- The range of approaches used that provide first hand experiences and make learning fun and meaningful.
- The staff's understanding of how children develop and how this affects their learning.
- The carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve the Early learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage
- The encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to become independent within their environment.
- The clear aims of our work and the regular monitoring to evaluate and improve on what we deliver and do.
- The provision provided for learning both inside and outside.
- The regular identification of training needs of all adults working within the department.

Safeguarding Procedures

We follow the safeguarding procedures from the Statutory Framework in Section 3:

- safeguard children;
- ensure the suitability of adults who have contact with children;
- promote good health;
- manage behaviour; and.
- maintain records, policies and procedures.

The Early Years Co-ordinators Role

The Early Years co-ordinator is responsible for:

- * The planning, assessment and evaluation of the Early Years Curriculum within school.
- * To lead staff meetings and discuss the Foundation Stage in order to facilitate a good understanding of the Early Years Curriculum.
- * Act in a supportive role with colleagues, advising and working alongside staff.
- * Assist in the evaluation of pupils work and liaise with appropriate staff.
- * Liaise with other educational bodies in conjunction with Early Years.
- * Monitor the schools standards of attainment and quality of education.

Review of the Foundation Stage policy

This policy is a statement of our intent to deliver an appropriate curriculum to the Foundation Stage. We will assess our management of the curriculum as we work in school. Both formal and informal discussions between Nursery and Reception Staff contribute to the ongoing review of work in the Foundation Stage. Any changes deemed necessary in light of further government guidelines or advice from the Local Authority could be implemented before a further review is carried out.