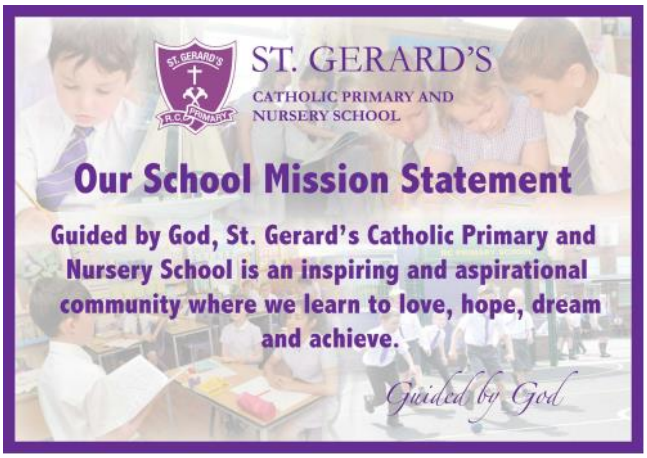
Early Years Policy
2022-2023



St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

"Guided by God, St Gerard's Catholic Primary and Nursery School is an inspiring and aspirational community where we learn to love, hope, dream and achieve."



SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

"St Gerard's Catholic Primary and Nursery School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment".

Aims:

At St Gerard's Catholic Primary & Nursery School 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 and fearless lifelong learners.

We will encourage children to develop independence within our 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 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.

At St Gerard's Catholic Primary & Nursery School we aim to:

- Provide an atmosphere where children can be happy, contented, safe, valued, gain confidence and achieve greater independence.
- Provide a child-friendly environment that is safe, caring and stimulating.
- Provide an environment where no child should be excluded or disadvantaged.
- Build upon what children already know and what they can do.
- Promote children's social, intellectual and physical development through play and directed activities.
- Provide, through a stimulating environment, opportunities for the child to develop a positive attitude to learning and an active interest in the world around them.
- Develop a working partnership between parents/carers and the school in order to establish an accurate understanding of each child's individual needs.
- Work within the guidelines of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

What is the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)?

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up."

(The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework 2017)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

The EYFS 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.
- Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

All schools and Ofsted-registered early years' providers must follow the EYFS, including childminders, preschools, nurseries and school reception classes.

At St Gerard's Catholic Primary & Nursery School, we greatly value the important role that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. We also believe early childhood is valid in itself, as part of life and therefore it is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

We are committed to our strong links with the parish and the Catholic community and strive to enrich pupils' religious, spiritual, moral and social education from Nursery to Year 6. We are renowned, not just locally, but in the wider world for its caring attitude to all children. The Catholic faith and the living out of the Gospel values are central to school life.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a statutory framework for children from birth to five years of age. The final year of the EYFS is referred to as Reception. Within Nursery and Reception the children will be tracked and assessed using the updated 'Early Years Outcomes' document and then will be assessed at the end of the academic year using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP). This information is collated by the school leaders and sent to the Local Authority to monitor school and children's performance.

We acknowledge that all children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning. It is the role of the practitioners working in the Foundation Stage, with support of parents, to build upon the children's prior learning and life experiences. This is done through a holistic approach, ensuring that parents/carers, support staff and teachers work effectively in partnership to support children's learning and development.

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, 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, a reception classroom and a large 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.

The Areas of the Curriculum

Children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. The 7 Areas of the curriculum, as set out in the EYFS, are equally important and interdependent. They are split into areas which are:

Prime Areas

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

Specific Areas

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

We aim to deliver all the Areas of Learning through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of child-initiated and adult led activities, as guided by the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage which states

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning 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; and
- **Creating and Thinking Critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things."

As children move through Nursery and Reception they will transition into more formalised learning and longer, focused, carpet time activities. This will ensure they are taught what is required in order to achieve a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD) at the end of Reception.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Effective planning builds on and extends what children know and can do and is the key to making their learning exciting, varied and progressive. In order to understand and consider the child's current learning and development needs, planning starts with observations of the child. Assessments are then made on the basis of observations about the child's learning and development. These assessments are then used to inform planning the "next steps" of the child's learning and experiences.

- Observations are carried out in variety of ways – individually, in small groups, as part of class, adult led but mostly child-initiated. (This will be gathered via 'Evidence Me')
- Learning Receipts, tracking activities, photographs, WOW Moments – Class Dojo Photographs (parent/carer contributions) and other methods of evidence collection are used and then analysed to highlight achievements and/or need for further support.
- Assessments are the decisions then made about the child's learning/development. Ongoing assessment from observations is known as *formative assessment* or *assessment for learning.* Assessments used to give a summary of a child's achievements at a certain point in time are known as *summative assessment.* The EYFS Profile is used as a summative assessment at the end of the Reception year. It summarises and makes statements about the child's progress towards the revised Early Learning Goals. (September 2021)
- Planning has three stages – long term, medium term and short term. 'Long Term' planning shows an overview of the experiences to be covered and skills to be taught. The 'Medium Term' shows in more detail how the Principles of the EYFS will be put into practice through specific activities and 'Short Term' planning (weekly/daily) shows how each child's learning and development is to be supported.

Staffing and Organisation

There are 2 learning zones within the Foundation Stage at St Gerard's; Foundation Stage 1 (Nursery) and Foundation Stage 2 (Reception).

There are two Full-Time class teachers and two Full-Time teaching assistants;

- Nursery Class Teacher (QTS)
- Nursery Teaching Assistant (Level 3)
- Reception Class Teacher (QTS – Assistant Headteacher) **0.6 Job Share**
- Teacher (QTS - SENDCo) **0.4 Job Share**
- Classroom Assistant (Level 2)

The Learning Environment

We are proud of our attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment which encourages all children to explore, investigate and learn. The staff ensure that the environment is a place where children feel secure and confident and are challenged to develop their independence.

The Foundation Stage is organised into 2 classrooms, one for Nursery and the other for Reception. Within the classroom the 7 Areas of Learning are offered to the children through continuous provision, alongside a wide variety of child initiated and adult led activities to support and stretch their learning.

St Gerard's has a partly covered, purpose built outdoor area which children have continual access to. The wonderful outdoor environment offers experiences and activities that extend those from indoors and also offers learning experiences that are unique to the outdoors.

Indoor Areas of Learning:

- Role Play Area
- Reading / Book Area
- Number Area
- Mark Making/ Writing Area
- Small World Area
- Computer / Interactive Whiteboard Area
- Listening Area,
- Construction Area,
- Art Area
- Creative Area
- RE focal point
- Central carpet area for whole class designated activities

Outdoor Areas of Learning:

- Water Area,
- Sand Area,
- Quiet area,
- Construction Area
- Music Area,
- Funky Fingers Area,
- Large Chalk Board
- Climbing Area

Children are encouraged to be independent in their choices and to be responsible for tidying and organising resources and activities they have used. The Foundation Stage operates a system of "self-regulating", whereby the children monitor how many people are already in an area and check to see if there is space for them to join.

Transition to Key Stage One:

Please see the separate policy on Transition Arrangements

Parents as Partners:

We recognise that Parents/Carers are children's first and most enduring educators. When Parents/Carers and practitioners work together in early years' settings, the results have a positive impact on children's development and learning. A successful partnership is one which develops a two-way flow of information and knowledge. At St Gerard's we aim to foster this by;

- Meeting informally with parents/carers through the initial Induction procedures at playgroup/pre-school settings.

- Meeting formally with parents/carers at the meeting in July, outlining the curriculum and the value of supporting their child's learning at home.
- Including this Policy in the Starting School pack
- Register all parents/carers onto Class Dojo using the Parent/Carer Registration
- Encouraging parents/carers to complete the "Transition Book" with their child
- Encouraging parents/carers to complete the Home-School agreement with their child
- Holding a meeting with parents/carers in the Autumn term to outline the expectations of that particular phase of the EYFS.
- Making the planning accessible in the setting so that parents/carers are informed of the learning that will be taking place
- Operating an "Open Door" policy, whereby parents/carers can come and discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner
- Inviting parents/carers to join us in our "Stay and Play" sessions
- Encouraging parents/carers to participate in the weekly Learning Together activities, sent home each Friday and based on the child's learning that week
- Encouraging parents/carers to contribute to their profile, sharing news of things their child has achieved outside school.
- Encouraging parents/carers to hear their child read daily and record their comments in the Reading Record book.
- Inviting parents/carers to join us in our half termly open afternoons, participating in activities related to our theme that half term.
- Holding parents/carers interviews each term to discuss progress and individual targets in relation to the EYFS.
- Providing an annual written report to parents/carers in July, summarising the child's progress against the early learning goals.

Equal Opportunities

At St Gerard's, we aim to provide all children, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning abilities, disabilities or gender, equal access to all aspects of school life and work to ensure that every child is valued fully as an individual. As role models, practitioners are aware of the influence of adults in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical ideas.

For further information see "Equal Opportunities Policy"

Inclusion

The diversity of individuals and communities is valued and respected. No child is discriminated against.

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEND) will be given appropriate support to enable them to benefit from the curriculum. This includes children that are more able, those with specific learning difficulties and those with disabilities.

The school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo) is responsible for providing additional information and advice to parents/carers and practitioners and for arranging external intervention and support where necessary.

For further information, see "Special Educational Needs & Disability Policy"

Further Reading:

EYFS – Early Years Foundation Stage Profile 2022
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1024319/Early_years_foundation_stage_profile_handbook_2022.pdf

EYFS Statutory Framework – September 2021
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf

Development Matters – September 2021:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/988004/Development_Matters.pdf

Early Years Outcomes 2021:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/919681/Early_adopter_schools_EYFS_profile_handbook.pdf