



## Love Friendship Courage Hope

# Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Date of issue	September 2024
Review Date	September 2025
To be reviewed	Head teacher, Staff and Governors
Authorised by	Head teacher and Governors

### Introduction

*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. (DfE, 2023)*

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. In our school, all children join us at the beginning of the school year in the September after their fourth birthday. This is in accordance with the Wiltshire admissions policy. The children have a phased introduction to school by attending:

- Until 12pm during their first (part) week.
- Until 1pm during their second week (includes lunchtime).
- For the full school day, until 3.15pm, from their third week onwards.

At St. Nicholas C of E (VC) Primary School, we recognise that all children deserve the very best start in life. We endeavour to give every child the start they deserve through a carefully balanced blend of adult-led and child-initiated activities based on and valuing each child’s efforts, and interests.

Young children experience the world through play and exploring their environment. Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives and the EYFS in our school is viewed as preparation for life and not just preparation for the next stage of education.

### Aims

We aim to support all children to become independent and collaborative learners. We will provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to reach their full potential.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage we will:

- Create a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging programme of learning and development to provide experiences based on children’s interests which will appeal to children with all learning styles.
- Provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 (Years 1 & 2) and beyond to enable choice and decision making;

encourage curiosity and a love of learning; and foster independence, self-confidence and self-esteem.

- Provide a caring and inclusive learning environment which is sensitive to individual children's requirements including those who have additional needs.
- Build positive relationships with parents and carers to create strong partnerships to support their children; and foster links with the wider community and St. Nicholas Church.
- Promote good behaviour for learning through high expectations and positive role models.
- Use, value and build on what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to make progress.

The Early Years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do.
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged.
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of our young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors.
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment.
- It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers.

The EYFS curriculum is based upon four principles:

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

#### A unique child

At St. Nicholas School, we recognise that every child is a unique and competent learner, who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in different ways and at different rates. We use praise and encouragement as well as rewards and celebration assemblies to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

In our school, we believe that every child matters and we give all children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking into account our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning. We value the diversity of individuals within the school and all children and their families are valued as part of our school community.

We set realistic and challenging expectations for all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests and build self-esteem and confidence.
- Using a range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs.
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which all children and their contributions are valued.
- Using resources that reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.
- Planning challenging and enjoyable experiences for each child in all areas of learning and development.
- Monitoring children's progress, and taking action to support as necessary.

The EYFS states that *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 are responsible for keeping children safe and we aim to educate the children about boundaries, rules and limits and help them to understand why these are necessary. We believe that children should be allowed to take risks but also that they need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

### Positive relationships

At St. Nicholas School, we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents/carers as partners – Parents/carers are the children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents play by:

- Talking with parents/carers about their children before they start in our school.
- Offering an early home visit to get to know our new children in a safe and familiar home-environment.
- Offering parents/carers regular opportunities to talk about their children's progress.
- Encouraging parents/carers to talk to their children's teacher/s if there are any concerns. Our school holds formal meetings for parents/carers twice a year at which the parents/carers may discuss their children's progress with their teacher/s. Parents/carers receive a report on their children's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between the children, school and parents/carers such as: learning themed sharing days, Sports Day, offering volunteering opportunities to support children and share their own skills.

### Enabling environments

The learning environment plays a key role in supporting and extending 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 their learning.

*Observation, Assessment and Planning* – The planning within the EYFS follows the school's Long Term Plan (LTP) and Medium Term Plans (MTPs). These plans are used by the teachers as a guide for weekly planning, however, teachers may alter these MTPs in response to the needs, achievements and interests of the children with the focus always on progress and development of each child.

We make regular assessments of children's learning and use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs and progress. Assessment in the EYFS mainly takes the form of continuous observation.

Each child's level of development is recorded against the EYFS Early Learning Goals (ELGs) and during the final term of the academic year, we provide a written summary to parents/carers reporting their progress. We welcome parents/carers in to discuss these judgements with the EYFS teacher/s.

*The Learning Environment* – The EYFS classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely, enabling the children to access the seven areas of learning within the EYFS within scaffolded continuous provision, small group work and some more structured input sessions. The classroom is set up in learning areas where children are encouraged to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

The classroom has its own enclosed outdoor classroom area and children are encouraged to bring suitable clothing for all weathers so they can access the outdoor provision at all times. This outdoor play has a positive effect on children's learning as they are able to explore their learning in different ways and on a larger scale than indoors. We also provide outdoor learning sessions (Woodland Wonderers) and these, combined with other outside the classroom opportunities, encourage the children to explore, use their senses and be physically active.

### Learning and development

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.

Three areas are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving.

These are the prime areas:

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

Early Years staff also support 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

If a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child.

### Characteristics of effective learning

Research has shown that the most successful learning in young children happens when they have high levels of involvement and well-being, when they are secure and confident in their environment and where adults respect and encourage children's developing autonomy and decision making. We incorporate the three EYFS characteristics of effective teaching and learning into our school learning environment and our EYFS curriculum:

***Playing and exploring*** - *Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.*

Through play, staff can encourage children to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'. Children explore and develop their learning experiences through their play and this helps them to make sense of the world they live in. Children practise and build on their experiences in controlled and safe situations; they have opportunities to be creative by themselves or with other children; they learn to communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems while learning self-control and understanding the needs for rules.

***Active learning*** – This is when children concentrate, keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements. Children need to have some control and independence in their learning and active learning happens when children are motivated and interested. Early Years staff at St. Nicholas School support the children, using their own ideas and interests, to develop their confidence and take ownership of their learning.

***Creative and Critical Thinking*** - Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things. Early Years staff at St. Nicholas School support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children are encouraged to use different resources to extend their learning and they can access these freely and independently.