

St Christopher's School

Early Years Policy

Aims and objectives:

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfill 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."

"Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage", 2012.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At St Christopher's School we greatly value the important role that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development, however we also believe early childhood is valid in itself, as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

All children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning. It is the privilege of the practitioners working in EYFS to take on the task of building upon that prior learning and experience. This is done through a holistic approach to learning, ensuring that parents/guardians, support staff and the EYFS teachers work effectively together to support children's learning and development.

Unique Child:

As part of St Christopher's School, the Foundation Stage follows the same main aims as the school. In the Early Years we aim to provide a happy, safe, caring, stimulating and well organised environment in which children learn by building upon what they already know and can do. We encourage all children develop to their full potential academically, socially and physically, so that they acquire knowledge and understanding relevant to life.

At St Christopher's we aim to:

- provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage and beyond.
- provide opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development.
- use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- enable choice and decision-making, fostering independence and self confidence.
- ensure that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development.
- provide experiences for all children, whatever their needs, which are inclusive.
- promote partnerships between parents and school. We value the importance of positive relationships with parents and carers as an essential feature of high quality early years practice. All children are treated as individuals and are valued, supported and encouraged to achieve the main aims of the school.

Objectives

- To provide a well-planned and resourced curriculum following the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (March 2014) covering all 7 areas of learning and working towards achieving and exceeding the Early Learning Goals.
- To promote independence and self management through a stimulating and attractive environment.
- To provide planned and purposeful differentiated activities that provide opportunities for teaching and learning both indoors and outdoors.

- To structure quality and stimulating play situations, making appropriate interventions in order to develop and extend learning.
- To continually monitor and assess children, through assessment and tracking in both Kindergarten and Reception.
- To work together as a team to ensure continuity and progression between teaching and planning in Kindergarten and Reception and to ensure a smooth transition from Kindergarten into Reception and also from Reception into Year1.

The Organisation of Early Years

Organisation of Kindergarten

The Kindergarten has 30 places in the lower class and 30 places in the upper classes providing pre-school education for 60 children. The morning session begins 8:30am finishing at 12.15am. The afternoon session for upper classes begins at 1.30pm and finishes at 3.15pm on Monday and Tuesdays (and Wednesdays in the Summer term). Children are admitted to Kindergarten at the start of the term that their third birthday occurs in, dependant on a place being available and order in which they are registered. Places are given in age order.

Organisation of Reception

Children enter the Reception class in the year in which they will be five. The school day runs from 8:30am until 3:15pm. We run two Reception classes with 18 children in each class. The school day consists of a half hour morning break and a 1¼ hour lunch break.

Planning and Teaching

Medium Term:

The curriculum is planned on a half termly or termly basis. Learning objectives for the term are identified into the seven areas of learning and form the basis of the short term plans.

Short Term Planning:

The short term plans consist of detailed weekly plans and daily plans where the teachers plan the activities in order to achieve the objectives in the medium term plans.

Literacy & Numeracy: The Literacy and Numeracy strategies are taught on entry into Reception as formal lessons most days of the week. By the end of the Reception year both strategies are in place to help with the transition to Year One. This is linked with the foundation stage curriculum and covers the areas of Communication and Language, Literacy and Mathematics. For the other areas of learning, the children are given opportunities within the classroom and outside to develop these areas and they are also covered in specialist lessons. The remaining areas are Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development, Expressive Arts and Design and Understanding the World.

Teaching Strategies

In the Foundation Stage we value the importance of play both indoors and outdoors as it has an important role in educating and developing young minds. We therefore plan opportunities to learn through play in both the outdoor and indoor setting. The majority of our teaching is interactive and based upon first hand experiences, using resources which inspire and motivate children to learn. We aim to give the children clear explanations and expectations and provide a range of teaching strategies to cater for all needs.

Adult planned Activities: Children are encouraged to partake in direct teaching from an adult throughout the week. During these activities the adult will demonstrate and teach the children new skills and techniques.

Child Initiated Activities: Resources are set up around the setting to allow children time to independently explore, consolidate and build upon skills they already have, either individually or in a group. Appropriate interventions are made to develop their play to extend their learning.

Whole class Activities: The amount of time teaching children as a whole class increases towards the end of the Foundation Stage, to prepare them for the more formal teaching in Year One.

Differentiation: In order to maximise each individual child's potential we use a variety of teaching strategies and approaches to enable all children to partake in activities fully and effectively.

Monitoring/Evaluation

Roles and Responsibilities

Early Years Co-ordinator – Charlotte Jones - Overall responsibility for monitoring, planning and teaching and ensuring continuity and progression in the Foundation Stage and transition into year 1.

Reception Teachers: Vanessa Cornish and Alex Chamadia

Reception Assistants: Sarah Craig and Denise Cremer

Kindergarten Teachers: Rachel Hinkins (LKG), Charlotte Jones and Emma Conway (UKG)

Kindergarten Assistants: Lauren Coombs-Organ, Tamsin McGruer, Kat Prince, Katherine Salim, Kristen Meacock

Planning

The Early Years co-ordinator collects in and monitors medium term planning from both Reception and Kindergarten ensuring continuity and progression. Together we look for ways to improve and develop the areas of provision and resources within them.

Teaching

Teaching is monitored in the Early Years by the Early Years Co-ordinator, the Head and Deputy Head Teacher, constructive feedback is given with ideas for ways forward.

The 2 to 3 year old check

Around the time a child is 2 ½ years old, the setting that the child spends the majority of their time in is required to carry out a progress check. At St Christopher's, this takes place in the Lower Kindergarten class and is carried out by the teacher. The basis of this check are observations of the individual child in the three prime areas of learning, Communication and Language, Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development. The teacher collates the information into a short report and then gives the parents an opportunity to contribute to the report too. Once completed the parents then receive a copy of this report as well as any relevant agencies that might be connected with the child. The final report should be completed within 8 weeks of the child entering the Kindergarten.

Continuity and Progression (Transitions in the Foundation Stage)

Entry into the Kindergarten

When a child is due to start in the Lower Kindergarten class they are invited to come in and spend time in the classroom with their peers and their carers. During this time the parents are given an opportunity to talk to each other and the teacher, informing the teacher of any important information about their child to help them settle. In the summer term to prepare them for Upper Kindergarten, children visit their new teacher and class for a session. Meetings occur between the Lower Kindergarten teacher and Upper Kindergarten teachers when the children move to the new classes in September.

Kindergarten to Reception

In the Summer term to prepare them for Reception, the Kindergarten children visit their new teacher and class for a session. Throughout the Early Years the teachers complete summary sheets indicating their progress and next steps in each area of learning, to enable the new teacher to plan appropriate activities to move them forward. The Kindergarten profiles are also provided for the new teacher to look at. The Upper Kindergarten teachers also meet up together to discuss the children with the respective Reception teacher..

Reception to Year One

The Reception teachers work closely with the Year One teachers to pass on information and assessments regarding the children moving up. The children also get the opportunity to visit their new class and teacher in the summer term. In Year One a more formal curriculum is taught to pupils, they are expected to complete activities independently and remain on task without adult intervention – with a weekly opportunity to participate in child initiated activities in the first term to help with the transition into Year One.

Assessment/ Record Keeping

Assessment in the Foundation Stage is continuous and involves assessment of planning and regular observations of the children engaging in activities. We use these observations of the children's learning to inform our future planning.

Kindergarten Early Learning Journeys - In Kindergarten children have individual Early Learning Journeys, with observations, photographs and samples for the different areas of learning. They also contain records of their progress and the teachers also include a summary of the child's achievement each term that can be viewed to see the progression and assist planning for each child. At the end of the year the teachers write a formal report for the parent of each child.

Reception Profiles – In Reception we continue to collate observations, photographs and examples of the children's work for each term. At the end of the year the teacher reviews the information collated and will complete the EYFS Profile (formal report), identifying individual children's progress with reference to the Early Learning Goals. A copy of this is given to the Year 1 teacher. A formal report is written at the end of the first term and at the end of the year for each child.

Throughout the entire EYFS at St Christopher's, formal tracking of individuals in all 7 areas of development takes place every term so that we can identify trends in the children's learning. Observations also take into account the child's Characteristics of Learning. This also helps inform any future planning within the Foundation Stage and areas that need to be addressed.

Special Educational Needs, Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

We take into account the range of life experiences our children have when planning. This ensures every child has the opportunity to achieve their potential regardless of race, gender and ability. When choosing our resources we ensure they reflect the diversity of the wider world and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.

We plan challenging activities to extend our more able children whose ability is in advance of their peers. We monitor all our children's progress, identifying any areas of concern, and taking action to provide support if required. If a child is of concern then the SENCO is informed, and a Pupil Passport is completed if necessary. Then outside agencies may be involved (e.g. speech therapist, occupational therapist, educational psychologist).

Please see the school's policies on Special Educational Needs, Inclusion and Behaviour policy.

Child Protection and Safeguarding

The Early Years staff of St Christopher's The Hall School fully recognise the responsibility it has to the safeguarding and protection of pupils. All staff, including volunteers, have a full and active part to play in protecting children and young people from harm. All staff believe that our school should provide a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment which promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual pupil.

Please see the school's policy on Child Protection and Safeguarding, including section 7. Prevent Duty

British Values - The fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs are embedded in the Early Years Foundation Stage. We actively seek to promote these values through modelling behaviour, challenging stereotypes and ensuring that our children receive a rich and varied curriculum. When appropriate we demonstrate democracy in action, and support the decisions that children make and ensure they are given opportunities to develop enquiring minds in an atmosphere where questions are valued. We provide opportunities for children to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and increase their confidence in their own abilities. We allow children to explore the language of feelings and responsibility, reflect on their differences and understand we are free to have different opinions.

Home school Links

We recognise the crucial role parents play in the education of their child and we therefore strive to develop an effective partnership with parents and make them feel welcome and valued. We are keen to speak to parents about their child before they start school.

- Parents and practitioners (Kindergarten and Reception) work together to ensure their child is settled and are encouraged to speak to the practitioner if they have any concerns.
- We encourage Parents to contribute to their child's Early Learning Journey by sending in photos and observation forms of milestones or important events in their child's life. This helps the teachers gain an overall picture of each child.
- In the Summer term a meeting is held for the parents of children who are due to start in reception in the Michaelmas term to inform and reassure them of the routines of Reception.
- Throughout the year we hold meetings to inform parents of how they can support their child with their learning and how their children are progressing. They also give the parents an opportunity to look through their child's Early Learning Journey.
- Contact books are also used in Kindergarten and Reception as a form of communication.
- An annual report is sent to parents at the end of the school year in all years in the Foundation stage. The report gives comments on a child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights their strengths and identifies a child's next steps.
- In Reception an extra report is sent home at the end of the Michaelmas term to inform parents of their child's progress and targets for the following terms.
- Formal parent interviews are held at the following times of year:

Michaelmas Term (Reception): To discuss with parents how their child is settling in to their new class.

Lent Term (Reception and KG): To discuss with parents their child's progress and to set them targets.

Summer Term (Reception): Parents are given the opportunity to make an appointment to discuss their child's report.

Policy Created in: Lent 2011

Reviewed: October 2016

Review Date: October 2017