St Ralph Sherwin
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

The Federation of All Saints and St Margaret's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Review Date	Changes Required	Name & Position
07.10.21		Caroline Ingham
27.9.22	Few minor changes	Caroline Ingham
27.9.23	No changes made	Caroline Ingham
10.11.26	Updates to EYFS framework & changes to document	Amiee Bamford

Introduction

Early years education opens the door to a lifetime of learning. Its holistic approach supports every aspect of children's learning and development, laying strong foundations for their future schooling.
This policy describes the purpose, approach and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at All Saints and St Margaret's Catholic Voluntary Academy.

All practitioners in our EYFS setting, including teaching and non-teaching staff, share responsibility for putting this policy into practice.

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

At All Saints & St Margaret's, we want every child to make the best possible start to school life, both intellectually and emotionally. We nurture each child's potential and support their welfare, learning and development by:

- Celebrating every child as a unique individual, created by God.
- Recognising that each child develops in their own way and at their own pace physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- Creating a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and valued by the practitioners who care for them.
- Nurturing confidence and self-esteem as children discover their identity and their place in the wider community and church community.
- Enriching children's early language skills and helping their vocabulary grow.
- Helping children find appropriate ways to express their needs and feelings while developing self-regulation.
- Building independence and decision-making skills, with opportunities to learn from mistakes.
- Developing the social skills, values and expectations of behaviour that enable children to work harmoniously with others.
- Fostering care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with different beliefs, cultures and opinions.
- Valuing play as an essential part of children's learning and development.
- Creating play-based experiences that draw on children's interests and curiosity, sparking their enthusiasm and motivation to learn.
- Offering experiences that build on what children already know, challenging their thinking and extending their learning and development.

- Opening up effective learning opportunities across a range of indoor and outdoor environments.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

Teaching in the EYFS follows the government's 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage' (2026). This framework brings children's welfare, learning and development together through a principled approach to early years education. Four themes underpin this approach: 'A Unique Child', 'Positive Relationships', 'Enabling Environments' and 'Learning and Development'.

Our curriculum begins with three prime areas of learning:

1. Communication and language
2. Physical development
3. Personal, social and emotional development

Four specific areas build on and strengthen these prime areas, giving children further opportunities to apply their learning:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding the world
4. Expressive arts and design

Together, these closely connected areas support children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. Our holistic, child-centred curriculum helps children make meaningful connections across their learning.

When planning and guiding activities, practitioners respond to the different ways children learn. Three characteristics shape effective teaching and learning:

1. Playing and exploring – children investigate, try new experiences and 'have a go'.
2. Active learning – children sustain their concentration, persevere throughdifficulties and enjoy their achievements.
3. Creating and thinking critically – children develop their own ideas, make connections and explore strategies for doing things.

At All Saints & St Margaret's, we value early years education in its own right, not simply as preparation for what comes next. The EYFS framework also supports a natural progression into the National Curriculum at the start of Year 1.

When children enter Reception, they begin the 'Meet in my name' religious education scheme, which works alongside and complements the EYFS curriculum.

Pedagogy

Children learn through active engagement with people, objects, ideas and events that capture and sustain their interest. At All Saints & St Margaret's, we bring together a range of teaching approaches to support this learning each day, including short whole-class teaching sessions and carefully planned, practitioner-guided small-group activities.

Play is at the heart of children's learning, supporting every area of development. It encourages creativity and helps children grow their ideas, understanding and language. Its flexibility allows practitioners to respond to children's preferred ways of learning and offer varied routes to exploring skills and concepts.

Our practitioners carefully organise indoor and outdoor spaces to invite high-quality play. Practical, first-hand experiences encourage children to discover, explore and investigate, follow their interests and make sense of the world as their understanding grows. Adults sometimes join the play to model language and help children develop new concepts.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing assessment helps us understand each child and plan meaningful next steps. Practitioners mainly assess learning by observing children in a range of contexts, including adult-led and child-initiated activities. These observations build a picture of children's abilities, needs, interests and learning styles. Practitioners evaluate what they observe, identify learning priorities and plan opportunities to support further progress.

Practitioners also assess learning by joining children in their play, annotating written work and talking with children about their activities and ideas.

Learning Journals capture children's progress throughout the academic year across all EYFS areas of learning and development. They bring together samples of work, photographs and observations.

Within their first six weeks in Reception, children complete the short Reception Baseline Assessment alongside our own assessment using the PITA statements.

At the end of the academic year, we assess Reception children against the EYFS Early Learning Goals. We record whether they are meeting the expected levels of development ('expected') or are not yet reaching them ('emerging').

Planning

Development Matters provides our main curriculum guidance for the EYFS educational programmes. Our medium-term planning uses half-termly topics shaped by individual children's learning and development needs. We plan for every area of learning and development and make each accessible within the setting. Children explore these areas through adult-led and child-initiated activities, indoors and outdoors.

Planned educational visits, both locally and further afield, bring fresh experiences that support and extend classroom learning.

Parents / Carers as Partners

Strong relationships with parents and carers are central to our work at All Saints & St Margaret's. By working together, home and school can make a positive difference to children's learning and development.

We value parents as their children's primary educators. Transition visits and informal conversations at the beginning and end of the day give parents opportunities to share what makes their child unique, including their characteristics, interests, experiences, likes and dislikes. These insights help practitioners create stimulating learning experiences that respond to each child's needs and interests.

Regular letters, reading records and informal conversations at the beginning and end of the day keep parents and carers connected with life in the setting. We also share ideas for supporting learning at home, helping children consolidate and build on their classroom experiences.

Parent consultations provide time to talk together during the academic year. In the Advent term, practitioners and parents discuss how children have settled into the setting. A further consultation in the Lent term focuses on children's progress in learning and development.

End-of-year reports and celebration assemblies offer further opportunities to share children's learning, development and wellbeing with parents and carers, and to recognise their achievements.

We welcome parents and carers into school life, whether helping with reading and educational visits or sharing skills such as cooking, art and music. Open afternoons, when children share their work, and other special events provide further opportunities to take part.

Our friendly, open-door ethos encourages parents and carers to feel welcome and share any concerns. Practitioners are available for conversations at the beginning and end of the day.

Admissions and Inductions

All Saints & St Margaret's offers full-time early years education for children in the Reception year.

A series of visits in the term before children start helps them get to know their practitioners and explore their new surroundings. During the same term, parents are invited to meet the practitioners, learn about induction and receive school information packs. There is also time for informal conversation and questions.

See Admissions Policy for more information

Equal Opportunities

Every practitioner at All Saints & St Margaret's is responsible for fostering positive attitudes towards diversity and difference, making inclusive practice part of everyday life in the EYFS setting.

Every child has the opportunity to enjoy a challenging and engaging programme of learning and development at All Saints & St Margaret's, regardless of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture, religion or social circumstances.

See Equalities Policy Statement for more information.

Special Educational Needs

See SEND policy for more information.