

English Martyrs Catholic Voluntary Academy  
Early Years Policy



Adopted: June 2016

Review: June 2018



## Aims and Objectives

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. Early Years education is a vitally important stage in itself and not just the preparation for the next stage. This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of early years education at English Martyrs. Using the guidance of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and through delivery of both the Learning and Development and Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements we aim to provide :-

**quality and consistency** 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.

## Teaching and Learning

There are seven areas of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, the *prime* areas, are:

- communication and language;
- physical development;
- personal, social and emotional development.

Providers must 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.

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is essential for children's development, building their

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confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. We believe that children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. Through topic work, carefully selected resources and a wide range of activities all areas of learning are covered. We encourage the children to become involved in their own learning and development. Our planning for each topic area is done in collaboration with the children; we find out what they already know about the topic and then encourage them to think about what they would like to know and find out. This helps them to take ownership of their learning and also of the learning environment. Children learn at different speeds and in a variety of different ways so a wide range of teaching strategies are employed within the classroom to ensure that all children make progress. We aim to create a balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities within the classroom to help build children's confidence, self-esteem and independence.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults, to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for Year 1.

In our planning we look at the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our 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;
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

### Assessment

The children are carefully observed and monitored from their first day in Reception so that each child's individual interests and needs are fully met. If necessary children are supported through our special education needs program .

We use the information passed from their previous setting and our own baseline assessment to initially assess the children on entry and then formally assess their progress 6 times during the academic year before making a final judgement against the early learning goals at the end of the academic year. Informally we assess the children continually and all children have an Electronic Learning Journey where observations, photographs and examples of their work are placed. The Learning Journeys are used to inform our planning and as an assessment tool when completing each child's EYFS Profile.

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### **The Learning Environment**

*“Children are born ready, able and eager to learn. They actively reach out to interact with other people, and in the world around them.*

*Development is not an automatic process, it depends on each unique child having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments.”*

*( development matters in the early years foundation stage document 2012 )*

Well planned, purposeful play, both indoors and outdoors, is the foundation of development and learning for young children. Children learn in a variety of ways: watching others, talking, asking questions, listening, exploring and investigating. Learning through play is both enjoyable and challenging and helps children to develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally.

Our learning environments provide the opportunity for children to access all of areas of the Early Years curriculum. Although the classrooms are divided up into specific learning areas, they are all interconnected and there is free flow of children and resources between the areas. The children are encouraged to access resources independently. The learning environment is closely linked to the topic being covered and so resources are frequently changed to help provide challenge, stimulation and freshness.

We have direct access to an outdoor area and children are encouraged from the very start to see this area as an extension of our classroom. This area gives the children a space to develop different ways of playing outside of the normal restrictions of the classroom.

The children also have access to other learning environments as well as their immediate classroom which include a hall, a large playground area, school field, vegetable boxes, wild area and an on site orienteering trail. We also plan off site visits to local places of interest especially to begin a new topic or help to develop a role play area for the children. The children access swimming in term 4 and 5 and forest school activities during the academic year.

All these opportunities provide further scope to challenge and stimulate the children.

### **The Role of Adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

Within the Reception classroom there are at least two members of staff at all times. One is the classroom teacher and the other is a teaching assistant, both fulfil the duties of a named key worker. The classroom teacher is responsible for the long term planning, but the classroom teacher and the teaching assistant communicate daily discussing planning and assessment. It is important that this is done together as it is vital that the adults working within the foundation stage have a clear understanding of where the children are and their next steps.

All the Early Years staff have a responsibility for observing and reflecting on the children’s spontaneous

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play, as well as on the adult-led activities they carry out. These observations are placed within the children's Learning Journeys as well as being used to inform our planning to ensure that all children's development needs are being met and that the activities are appropriate for the individual needs of each child.

The Classroom teacher and the teaching assistant are also responsible for the displays in the classroom as this is an important part of the children's learning environment. A large percentage of the children's work is displayed within the classroom or within the school promoting a sense of pride and achievement.

Both the Classroom teacher and the teaching assistant attend courses regularly to keep up to date with any new developments and staff attend local network meetings as well as the yearly moderation meeting at the end of the academic year.

### **Parents as partners.**

*"Parental involvement in children's education from an early age has a significant effect on educational achievement, and continues to do so into adolescence and adulthood"*

( The impact of parental involvement in early education - DCSF 2008 )

We recognise that parents' influence is important throughout childhood. Parents guide, encourage and teach their children. Research has shown that parental involvement in a child's schooling is the most important factor in the success of the child's educational achievements in adolescence.

We encourage parents to play an active role in their child's schooling. To this end we work hard to forge strong home-school links. The settling in process plays a key role in this process but it does not end there.

To enable parents to work in partnership with the school we:

- Have an open door policy ensuring that the Early Years staff are accessible both at the beginning and end of the day. Parents are encouraged to participate at the beginning of the school year in the early morning activities with their children. More formal appointments can be made through the school office.
- Encourage parents to take an active role in the development of their child by providing evidence for individual learning journeys through sharing children's achievements, becoming involved in theme days held at school, helping in the classroom and on trips, attending class assemblies and weekly achievement assemblies.
- Provide a newsletter at the beginning of each term with information on the topic and how they can become involved at home. Weekly overviews of the activities are always posted onto the information board at the beginning of a new week.

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- Informal meetings held regularly for parents focussing on different areas of development for example reading, phonics programme, numeracy etc.
- Provide feedback on the children's progress through two parent consultation meetings and an end of year report.
- We have an open door policy and we encourage parents / carers to share any issues with us.

### **Settling in process and transition.**

In the Summer term a meeting is held for the parents of those pre-school children joining us in September. This meeting enables the parents to meet their child's new teacher and the other members of staff, ask any questions, look around the classroom and the school and find out a little more about the Foundation Stage curriculum. This meeting takes place before the children are invited in for their induction visits.

The children are invited to attend induction sessions towards the end of the summer term in preparation for them joining in September. These induction visits give the children the opportunity to explore their new classroom, their new school and it gives both the children and us a chance to get to know each other a little better.

We offer each child the opportunity of either a home visit or visit to the child's current setting during the Summer term. The children get to meet us again in a safe environment, the parents have an opportunity to ask us any questions they may have and we get a chance to see the children in their home or nursery which gives us a better understanding of them as an individual.

### **Reception to Year 1**

To make this transition as smooth as possible, Year 1 teachers spend some time in Reception during the summer term to meet the children. The children also get the opportunity to visit their new classroom and teacher as a class for an introductory session towards the end of the summer term. We ensure that initially Year 1 staff adopt similar routines, expectations and activities found in Reception.

Reception staff and Year 1 staff meet to discuss each child's Foundation Stage Profile, end of year report and any transitional issues which may arise. The Year 1 Curriculum includes a balance of child initiated learning and teacher led practical activities.

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### **Health and Safety and Safeguarding**

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 they are working with. We follow statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements guidelines detailed in the EYFS statutory guidance 2017. Our staff do take photographs for ongoing assessment evidence using school mobile devices only and with permission from parents obtained at the beginning of the academic year outlined in the home, school agreement . We obtain separate permission for our online learning journey when the children first begin in reception and this document impresses on parents the need not to share information from these observations on any social media sites and each parent has a secure password to view only their child's learning journey.

All aspects of school safeguarding is covered within our child protection policy which is updated annually and all areas of health and safety are found in our separate school policy. We also have a school E safety policy and First Aid policy which includes administering medicines.