St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

"with Jesus at the centre of all we do and say"

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Introduction

At St Joseph's, our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision reflects our commitment to nurturing the whole child—spiritually, emotionally, socially, and academically. We provide a welcoming, safe, and stimulating environment for both nursery and reception children, recognising each child as a unique creation of God.

This policy outlines how we deliver a high-quality, play-based curriculum that promotes learning, wellbeing, and faith development. It describes how we support children's growth through play, exploration, and high-quality adult-child interactions, while fostering strong partnerships with families and embedding our Catholic values throughout every aspect of daily life

Aims

Through our EYFS provision, we aim to ensure that all children:

- Develop confidence, curiosity, and independence in their learning
- Experience a love of learning in a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment
- Grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, and academically, recognising their individuality as God's creation
- Build a strong foundation for future learning in Reception, Key Stage 1, and beyond
- Benefit from high-quality interactions with adults and peers that support language, communication, and problem-solving skills
- Develop an understanding of God's world, moral values, and their place within our caring Catholic school community
- Form strong partnerships between home and school, recognising parents and carers as key educators

Learning and Development

Our curriculum is carefully designed to meet the developmental needs of both nursery and reception children. It follows the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework (DfE 2021) and is informed by *Development Matters*, which helps practitioners observe, assess, and plan for children's learning at different stages.

Play-based learning and high-quality adult-child interactions are central to our approach. We recognise that younger children, especially in nursery, benefit from rich language exposure, imaginative play, and hands-on exploration. Adults engage with children in their play, model new vocabulary, scaffold thinking, and support problem-solving, ensuring that learning is meaningful, engaging, and personalised.

Prime and Specific Areas of Learning

Our curriculum builds on three Prime Areas, which provide the foundation for all other learning, and four Specific Areas that extend children's knowledge and skills:

- **Prime Areas:**
    - *Communication and Language*: Listening, attention, understanding, and speaking are developed through daily interactions, stories, songs, and play.
    - *Physical Development*: Activities promote gross and fine motor skills, coordination, and healthy habits.
    - *Personal, Social and Emotional Development*: Children learn to manage emotions, build relationships, develop confidence, and understand their responsibilities within a community.

- **Specific Areas:**
    - *Literacy*: Early reading, comprehension, and writing skills are developed through phonics, storytelling, and play-based literacy activities.
    - *Mathematics*: Children develop number sense, spatial awareness, and pattern recognition through practical activities integrated into daily routines.
    - *Understanding the World*: Children explore people, communities, past and present, and the natural world, fostering curiosity and respect for God's creation.
    - *Expressive Arts and Design*: Creativity and imagination are encouraged through art, music, role play, and construction activities.

Characteristics of Effective Learning
Opportunities are planned to help children:

- Play and explore, investigating and experimenting
- Engage in active learning, concentrating and persisting
- Think critically and creatively, making connections and solving problems

Through these experiences, children grow holistically—socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, and spiritually—reflecting our Catholic ethos by encouraging empathy, moral understanding, and a sense of community responsibility.

Planning

At St Joseph's, our curriculum for nursery and reception children is carefully designed in line with the 2025 EYFS Framework. It is ambitious, well-sequenced, and builds on what children already know and can do, with clear progression across the year. Practitioners plan learning that reflects children's prior experiences and next steps in development, using high-quality adult-child interactions and play-based learning to support curiosity, exploration, and language development.

We use Development Matters checkpoints to identify children who may be at risk of delay, ensuring that early intervention is provided to support their development.

Our curriculum planning is structured in three stages:

- Long-term planning:
    - Provides an overview of themes, topics, and core texts for the year
    - Includes Religious Education, ensuring children experience a broad and balanced curriculum grounded in Catholic values
    - Offers a flexible framework that can adapt to the needs, interests, and experiences of both nursery and reception children
- Medium-term planning:
    - Sequences knowledge and skills across each half term
    - Balances adult-led, adult-guided, and child-initiated activities
    - Regularly reviewed to ensure a suitable balance of activities to meet developmental needs
- Short-term planning:
    - Responsive to children's interests and next steps
    - Provides a weekly overview of teaching and learning activities
    - Includes:
        - Adult-led or adult-guided activities
        - Enhancements to continuous provision
        - Activities supporting individual children's interests

        - Whole-class and small-group learning opportunities
    - Supports routines for younger children, such as snack times, and outdoor exploration

This structured approach ensures that all children, including our nursery learners, receive a curriculum that is dynamic, engaging, and developmentally appropriate, with play-based experiences and high-quality interactions at the heart of every learning opportunity.

Assessment

Assessment is ongoing and integral to learning. Practitioners observe children throughout the day, using professional judgment to identify achievements, interests, and next steps. Key developmental checkpoints from *Development Matters* help ensure all children, including nursery learners, are progressing as expected.

We minimise unnecessary paperwork, focusing instead on in-the-moment observations and high-quality interactions that inform planning and interventions. This ensures children's learning is documented meaningfully without detracting from their experiences or relationships with staff.

Organisation and Learning Environment

Our classrooms and outdoor areas are carefully designed to be welcoming, safe, and stimulating, encouraging children to explore, experiment, and develop independence. The environment reflects our Catholic ethos, with spaces that foster a sense of community, respect for one another, and opportunities for reflection and prayer.

Children move between indoor and outdoor areas, engaging with zones designed to promote curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving. These include role play areas, creative and construction zones, writing and maths spaces, small-world areas, sand and water play, and quiet book corners. Outdoor learning is integral to our approach, offering opportunities for physical development, exploration of the natural world, and practical learning experiences.

The environment is rich in language and resources, supporting communication and literacy development. Vocabulary is modelled, reinforced, and extended through planned interactions, high-quality texts, songs, and storytelling. Children are encouraged to use new words in context, express ideas, and discuss their learning, with adult support to scaffold their understanding.

Displays and resources throughout the environment celebrate children's achievements, support their learning, and reflect our Catholic faith through prayers, reflections, and celebrations of the liturgical year. Learning is planned to be hands-on, interactive, and meaningful, giving children opportunities to explore at their own pace while being guided by skilled practitioners.

By combining carefully structured areas, opportunities for play, and purposeful adult interactions, our learning environment nurtures the whole child, supporting social, emotional, spiritual, physical, and cognitive development.

Nursery Care and Wellbeing

Nursery-aged children have specific needs for care, rest, and routines. We provide clear procedures for toileting and nappy changing, ensuring hygiene, dignity, and consistency

between home and nursery. Children are offered opportunities for rest and sleep, and routines are flexible to meet individual needs.

Infection control is prioritised, with thorough handwashing, cleaning of equipment, and clear policies for managing illness. Oral health is supported through supervised tooth brushing and education about healthy eating, fostering lifelong habits. These measures ensure that nursery children are cared for in a safe, nurturing environment that supports learning readiness.

Staff, Professional Development, and Supervision

Staff are central to the quality of EYFS provision. Class teachers and teaching assistants act as key workers, forming trusting relationships with children, supporting language, communication, and learning. Our staff meet statutory ratios and hold the required qualifications with additional safeguarding and Paediatric First Aid training.

Professional development focuses on early language, dialogic reading, sustained shared thinking, and interventions for children with speech and language delays, reflecting the 2025 EYFS Framework. Supervision meetings ensure reflective practice, professional accountability, and continuous improvement

Transitions

Transitions are significant milestones in a child's early education, and at St Joseph's, we take a thoughtful, structured approach to ensure all children feel secure, confident, and ready to learn at each stage. We recognise that smooth transitions are crucial for starting school, as well as for children moving into Reception and then into Year 1. Our approach is guided by best practice and underpinned by our Catholic ethos, promoting care, community, and respect for each child's individuality.

Introducing Nursery Children

Starting nursery is often a child's first experience away from home, and we aim to make this as positive as possible. Families are invited to pre-start visits to explore the environment, meet staff, and begin forming relationships. Staggered starts allow children to settle at their own pace, while key workers ensure each child has a familiar adult who knows their interests, strengths, and needs. Practitioners observe children carefully and work closely with parents to adapt routines, support emotional wellbeing, and build confidence. Play, language-rich interactions, and nurturing relationships are central to helping children feel secure and ready to explore their new environment.

Transition into Reception

Moving from nursery to Reception is managed gradually to support continuity of learning and wellbeing. Structured transition visits allow children to become familiar with their new classroom, routines, and teachers. Records, observations, and assessments from nursery staff are shared with Reception teachers to ensure continuity in learning and development. Reception practitioners continue to prioritise play-based learning, high-quality adult-child interactions, and language development, while gradually introducing elements of structured

learning. Children are encouraged to develop independence, take increasing responsibility for their learning, and build confidence in a larger classroom environment.

Transition from Reception to Year 1
As children prepare to move into Key Stage 1, we ensure the transition is smooth, supportive, and developmentally appropriate. Reception and Year 1 staff work closely together, meeting to discuss each child's progress and needs. Children are gradually introduced to the routines and expectations of Year 1 while still benefiting from elements of play-based learning to maintain confidence and engagement. Celebrating achievements and promoting self-esteem, resilience, and social skills helps children adjust successfully to more structured learning. Targeted support is provided for children who may need additional help to ensure they are ready for the next stage.

Supporting Families Throughout Transitions
Parents and carers are actively involved in each stage through meetings, sharing of information, and engagement in school activities. Our aim is to provide reassurance, continuity, and guidance so that families feel confident in supporting their child's development during these important stages.

Links with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are the child's first and most enduring educators. We encourage strong partnerships through regular communication, termly newsletters, Stay and Play sessions, and participation in school events and faith-based activities such as the Prayer Bag and Travelling Nativities. Parents are invited to engage in reading and home learning activities, and daily home time conversations provide ongoing dialogue about progress and development.

Inclusion and Inclusivity

At St Joseph's, we are committed to creating an inclusive environment where every child is valued as a unique creation of God. All children, including those with special educational needs (SEN), disabilities, or from diverse cultural, linguistic, or socio-economic backgrounds, are supported to access learning and thrive. We believe inclusivity nurtures confidence, independence, and a love of learning, including for our youngest nursery learners.

Our approach includes:

- Individual Support Plans: IEPs set clear, achievable targets in learning, social, emotional, and physical development, with regular reviews and active parent involvement.
- Differentiated Learning: Activities, resources, and the environment are adapted to meet diverse needs, ensuring all children, including nursery and reception, can engage fully.
- Cultural, linguistic, and social inclusivity: Children's home languages, cultures, and family experiences are valued and embedded into learning, fostering respect and belonging.
- Staff expertise and professional development: Staff are trained to meet a range of needs, including speech and language, social-emotional, and sensory challenges, supported through ongoing CPD.
- Collaboration with external agencies: Specialists such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and educational psychologists provide tailored support where needed.

- SENCO role: The SENCO guides staff and parents, coordinates interventions, and ensures every child, including nursery learners, receives appropriate support.
- Promoting equality and respect: Practitioners model fairness and empathy, challenging stereotypes and reflecting our Catholic values of dignity, community, and compassion.

Through this approach, St Joseph's ensures that all children—regardless of ability, background, or starting point—are included, supported, and celebrated, enabling them to grow academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually within our Catholic school community.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is central to all EYFS provision at St Joseph's. We ensure that nursery and reception children learn, play, and grow in a safe and secure environment through the following measures:

- Rigorous staff recruitment and training: All staff undergo thorough recruitment checks, safeguarding training, and Paediatric First Aid certification.
- Child protection procedures: Staff are trained to recognise and report concerns about children's welfare or safety.
- Personal safety education: Children are taught age-appropriate personal safety, including road safety, stranger awareness, and online safety.
- Hygiene and health routines: Regular handwashing and oral health practices are taught and reinforced.
- Safe learning environments: Indoor and outdoor spaces, equipment, and resources are regularly checked for suitability, safety, and accessibility, including for nursery children.
- Risk assessments: Conducted for all trips, visits, and outdoor learning activities to ensure enriching experiences are also safe.
- Promoting wellbeing: Staff actively monitor children's emotional and physical wellbeing, providing support and guidance as needed.

Through these measures, St Joseph's ensures safeguarding underpins every aspect of our EYFS provision, helping children grow confidently, explore safely, and thrive spiritually, socially, and academically within our Catholic school community.

(C Naylor EYFS Lead Sep 2025)