

St Matthew Academy

EARLY YEARS AND FOUNDATION STAGE Policy

St Matthew says *'let your light shine.'*

At St Matthew Academy we let our light shine by:

- Growing our inclusive, caring Catholic community
- Nurturing faith, discovering talents and cultivating ambition
- Transforming each other through integrity, courage and service

enabling everyone at St Matthew Academy to flourish.

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Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' Matthew 19:14

1. Philosophy of EYFS

Every child deserves the best possible start in life, and support to achieve their full potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important, providing the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. Parents expect the provision to keep their children safe and help them to thrive. The Early Years Foundation Stage is the framework that provides that assurance, within which British Values and Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural values are implicitly embedded.

2. Aims of the Foundation Stage

Children join EYFS at 4 with many different experiences, skills and interests. The Foundation Stage aims to develop a child's learning from whatever their starting point is.

The curriculum in Reception class is divided into 7 areas of learning and within them The Early Learning Goals support learning and development. The 7 areas are split into 2 categories – Prime and Specific. Children need to meet the expected standard in the Prime areas of Communication and Language, Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development and in the Specific areas of Literacy and Maths in order to achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD). Within the Specific area of Literacy, our core priority is early reading with phonics. Children have daily phonics sessions and guided reading sessions 3 times a week. From Autumn term 2, children will be sent home with reading books appropriately matched to their stage of phonics, with the aim of having all children 'blending by Christmas.' Our rigorous assessment system enables early intervention, allowing each child to keep up and catch up to ensure no child falls behind.

Throughout the course of the reception year, teachers should observe and work with children individually to build their knowledge of what each child knows and can do. This evidence should then be used to assess the child's level of development in relation to each Early Learning Goal (ELG).

The Early Learning Goals

Prime area

Communication and Language – Listening, Attention and Understanding ELG, Speaking ELG

Personal, Social and Emotional Development – Self-regulation ELG, Managing Self ELG, Building Relationships ELG

Physical Development – Gross Motor Skills ELG, Fine Motor Skills ELG

Specific area

Literacy – Comprehension ELG, Word Reading ELG, Writing ELG

Mathematics – Number ELG, Numerical Patterns ELG

Understanding the World – Past and Present ELG, People, Culture and Communities ELG, The Natural World ELG

Expressive Arts and Design – Creating with Materials ELG, Being Imaginative and Expressive ELG

Throughout the year, teachers will evidence the child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective teaching and learning; Playing and Exploring, Active Learning and Creating and thinking critically. If a child's progress in any area gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's

parents/ carers and agree how to best support the child. This may include a discussion with the SENCo in order to access Special Educational Needs support.

The Early Learning Goals define expectations for most children to reach by the end of their year in Reception (EYFS).

3. Four Basic Principles of EYFS

- *A Unique Child*

We believe that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others. A positive attitude to learning is encouraged through praise, encouragement, rewards, as well as celebration/ sharing circle times.

- *Positive Relationships*

Children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

- *Enabling Environments*

Environment plays a key role in supporting and extending a child'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.

- *Learning and Development*

Children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected. (Please also refer to British Values Policy).

4. Safeguarding

The statutory Framework for the EYFS (updated 2022) links with the expectation that early years' practitioners will promote fundamental British Values and comply with the Prevent Duty.

Early Years settings have responsibility to:

- Provide staff with sufficient training to be able to recognise this vulnerability (Radicalisation) and be aware of what action to take in response
- Understand when to make referrals to the Channel programme and where to get additional advice and support. (Report concerns to MASH for OCC settings)
- Keep children safe and promote their welfare.

Early Years settings will also have responsibility to:

- Be alert to any safeguarding and child protection issues in the child's life at home or elsewhere
- Take action to protect children from harm and be alert to harmful behaviour by other adults in the child's life
- Focus on children's PSE development.

Early Years settings will also have responsibility to:

- Ensure children learn right from wrong, mix and share with other children and value other's views, know about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and challenge negative attitudes and stereotypes (in an age appropriate way)

To do this practitioner will:

- Listen to children
- Share appropriate information with parents
- Listen to parents
- Report Concerns
- Challenge negative behaviour
- Focus on what children need
- Support children's Personal, social and emotional development

5. Admissions

Children are admitted to Reception from the age of 4 years. There is no catchment area for these children because they have not yet met the legal age that they need to attend school. Criteria used when offering a child, a place are:

- Catholic looked after children and children looked after by Catholic families
- Catholic children
- Looked after children
- Siblings attending the Academy
- Baptised Eastern Orthodox children
- Children of other Christian denominations
- All other applicants.

Children begin the Reception class in September and there is a staggered start so that children can acclimatise to their new surroundings. Children born from September to January will start the first week and then proceed to attending for a full day the second week back in September. Children born from February to August will begin by doing half days the second week then move to full days the third week. All children will have a school dinner when they do half days as they will leave at 1.00pm.

Parents should telephone the academy to inform of any absence. For further information, see the Admissions Policy.

6. Academy Open Days

Open days/evening are held in November and January for parents and the children who are due to enter full-time education the following September. During the day they meet the Headteacher and other staff and are shown around the Academy. Parents are given the opportunity to observe the school in action. Once offers have been made, children alongside their parents are invited in to a number of 'taster' sessions throughout the summer term to support transition into school.

7. Home visits

Home visits enable us to build a relationship with our parents/carers and children, to share and to gather important information that will help the child to settle into school and be safe.

Reception home visits take place in July, prior to the child starting school in September.

8. Parents as Partners

Parents/Carers are the child's first and most enduring educators. When Parents/Carers and practitioners work together in early year settings, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. A successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise. We aim to develop this by:

- Outlining the Reception curriculum to parents/guardians during the new parents meeting in July, to enable them to understand the value of supporting their child's learning at home
- Encouraging parents/guardians to complete the home/school admissions booklet
- Sending home, a termly topic letter, informing parents/carers of the learning that will be taking place at school, with suggestions of the types of activities that could be carried out at home to support that learning
- Star of the week certificates, celebrating the children's achievements.
- Operating an "open door" policy, whereby parents/guardians can come and discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner
- Inviting parents/guardians/volunteers to help in an Early Years class and to accompany children on school visits - CRB check required.
- Information boards and letters home to communicate events and activities
- Encouraging parents/carers to listen to their child read each night and to comment on reading progress in a home/school reading diary
- Encouraging relevant learning activities to be continued at home e.g. Tricky words of the Week, and ensuring that experiences at home are used to develop learning in school
- Discussing individual targets with parents/guardians at parents' evenings in November and July (informed by the EYFS Profile)
- Providing an annual written report to parents/carers in July summarising the child's progress against the Development Matters, Early learning goals and EYFS assessment scales

9. Transition into School

A smooth and successful transition to school is facilitated by:

- Visits to partnership pre-school establishments
- Visits to school for the parents and children during the summer term prior to starting Reception classes
- Invitations to our 2 open mornings (May and June) for the children to take part in a range of activities and the parents to receive information
- Liaison with outside agencies
- Parents completing a starting school booklet, sharing information about their child with the school
- Home Visits by their child's class teacher
- A staggered intake of Reception children

10. Transition from Reception to Year 1

Reception and Year 1 teachers work together to ensure smooth transition from Early Years to KS1. This is achieved by:

- Planned opportunities to develop independence, encouraging children to dress/ undress on their own, and to organise personal belongings throughout the reception year
- Planned activities to encourage independence and less adult support during the Spring- Summer terms
- Guided reading sessions (involving group rotation) are introduced by Reception during the Autumn term
- Reception children meet year 1 teachers during the summer term

- EYFS Profile end of year class summary is passed on to year 1 teachers
- Reception and Year 1 teachers meet to discuss individual needs of children in July at a dedicated handover meeting
- Reception children visit their new year 1 class and teacher for a half day in July
- Literacy and numeracy groups, with free flow in the afternoons (as used during Reception year) are used at the start of Year 1
- Reception classes use Key Stage 1 playground in the summer term
- Children in Year 1 will take part in the national Phonics Screener in the summer term

11. Celebrating Achievement

Each class has a recognition board. The purpose of these boards is to visually reward behaviour and characteristics that go above and beyond our basic expectations of all children as set out in the SMA Behaviour Way. For each recognition a child receives they receive one achievement point. The creative method and end reward is left to the teacher's discretion to promote individuality and team spirit within the class.

Staff award achievement points to pupils for displaying one of the three academy virtues or learning characteristics in either their learning, how they live out the ethos of the school or participation in extracurricular activities.

Within Early Years rewards include:

- Stickers and Praise – to reinforce desirable behaviour
- Points and outstanding achievements will also be shared with the school community in the weekly celebration assembly and via postcards and phone calls home. Teachers will send postcards follow up with a phone calls to make parents and carers aware of any outstanding behaviour or achievement when this
- Star of the Week/Term – Teachers select one pupil who has shown exceptional work/behaviour – 'Going above and beyond' for learning, ethos and extra-curricular consistently throughout the week/term.
- Wonderful Writer/Wonderful Reader – These are awarded to the 2 children that have shown amazing literacy work throughout the week
- Class rewards given out by the teacher to celebrate children that have gone above and beyond that week.

12. Health & Safety

If a child becomes ill or has an accident, this will be dealt with by the class teacher. If further attention is required, a registered First Aider will attend to the child, and where necessary, Parents/ Carers will be contacted.

13. Planning

Good planning ensures highly positive, memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high quality learning. All children attending Reception in September will be taking part in the National Baseline Assessments. There are three stages of planning the curriculum:

- Long Term Planning

This framework gives structure and coherence to the curriculum. Topics are planned for each of the six terms and early learning goals and educational programmes are distributed over the terms to determine broad and

balanced coverage. Early learning goals and development matters points provide a focus for certain terms, particularly those relating to Understanding the World.

- **Medium Term Planning**

More detailed planning provides links between areas of learning and development, and opportunities for ICT. Medium term plans include: broad learning objectives, assessment opportunities, and activities and experiences for each area of learning and development.

- **Short Term Planning**

These most detailed plans include specific learning objectives, activities, differentiation, deployment of adults and resources, to meet the learning needs of the children on a weekly and day-to-day basis. These plans need to remain flexible, enabling adults to respond to individual children's needs and interests, for revision and modification, informed by on-going observational assessment.

14. Learning through Play

Children's learning is supported through planned play activities. Teachers decide when child-initiated or adult-led play activities would provide the most effective learning opportunities. No distinction is made between work and play and it is important for adults to support children's learning through play, by getting involved in the play themselves.

15. Assessment, Recording and Monitoring

Baseline assessment provides details about a child's attainment upon entry to the school. Early Years assessment focuses on PSE (making relationships), CL (understanding and speaking), Literacy (reading and writing) and Mathematics (number). These are fully tracked throughout the child's time in the class.

Assessment for learning enables teachers to plan the next steps to meet development and learning needs of children within Early Years. All practitioners who interact with the child, together with parental observations, contribute to the assessment process.

- **Formative Assessment**

Assessment and observations informs our planning, enabling us to complete the profiles and to deliver a curriculum that is specific to the children's needs.

- **Summative Assessment**

Teachers must complete an EYFS profile for each child. The EYFS Profile summarises the assessment undertaken and makes statements about the child's achievements towards the 17 ELGs. It is completed in the summer term of the academic year in which a child reaches age 5 years. The main purpose of the profile is to support a successful transition to KS1 and provide a valid, reliable and accurate assessment of each child's attainment at the end of the EYFS. Teachers will use their professional judgement to make these assessments based on their knowledge and understanding of what the child knows, understands and can do. The ELGs should support teachers to make a holistic, best-fit judgement about a child's development and readiness for year 1.

Termly moderation takes place to ensure that children are making adequate levels of progress within the ELGs and so support and intervention can be put into place. Teachers undertake in-house and local cluster group moderation. The foundation co-ordinator monitors teaching and learning across the foundation stage each year and analyses EYFS Profile data in conjunction with the head teacher. For further information, see the Assessment Policy.

Children are defined as having reached a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of EYFS if they have achieved at least the expected level for the ELGs in the prime areas of learning: Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Physical Development, and the specific areas of Literacy and Mathematics. Children who are not yet reaching the expected level of development for each ELG are Emerging. Where a child has an outcome of 'emerging' for one or more ELGs, the teacher will pass on additional information to the year 1 teacher, alongside the EYFS profile judgements.

Photographing and Videoing

Each child has an individual Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile folder in which this evidence is stored including photographic evidence. Practitioners use the platform of Educate Me to capture evidence of children's learning against the Early Learning Goals (ELG). These are used to formulate a holistic and informed judgement of the level the children are working at.

16. The Learning Environment

An attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment encourages children to explore, investigate and learn through first hand experiences. We aim to make it a place where children feel secure and confident, and are challenged to develop their independence.

Activities are planned for both the inside and outside areas. Children have the freedom to move between the indoor and outdoor classroom throughout the school day. The learning environment is divided into different areas, carefully arranged to encourage quiet and more active learning. Children are encouraged to become independent learners and to take some responsibility for initiating their own lines of enquiry and investigation.

In Early Years, Reception children have the opportunity to attend our onsite Forest School. Forest School encourages children to learn through positive outdoor experiences in a natural, safe, woodland environment.

It is a holistic approach, which helps children to grow in confidence, encourages independence, stimulates senses and builds on learning experiences.

17. Equal Opportunities

We are committed to providing an inclusive education in an attractive environment, where children can feel safe, secure and valued. Whilst recognising that every child is unique, we aim to provide a meaningful and enjoyable education, which ensures a firm foundation and guides its pupils to make the right choices. Children are nurtured socially and morally to become independent learners, where concerns are listened to and their efforts are acknowledged and celebrated. For further information, see Equality Policy.

18. Inclusion

Within the school diversity of individuals is valued, we do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children at St Matthew Academy are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school. We set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. Children's needs are met through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, to develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;

- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

It is important to us that all children are 'safe'. We educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. (See our Safeguarding Children Policy)

19. SEND

The SENCO will be informed of any child assessed as having SEN before they enter the EYFS. If a child is identified as having SEN after entering the setting, the parents/carers will be asked to come in and discuss their child with the class teacher and SENCO. Parents/carers will be informed of outside agencies to help the child and their parent i.e. Speech Therapists, GP's, etc. ***The SENCO will only be able to involve other agencies through the school system once the child is over five years of age.***

For further information, see Special Educational Needs Policy.

20. EAL

When an EAL child starts at school they will be placed with a class buddy. If possible, we will try to place a child with another child who has the same language background. The child will be monitored and if the child becomes too distressed before the end of the session then the child's carers will be called. If this happens the child will be slowly weaned into the setting.

In Reception when a child is placed into the class they will be expected to attend on a full time basis. The child will be monitored and if the child is distressed the child's parents/carers will be contacted and a plan of settling in will be arranged with the class teacher.

Please see the EAL policy for further information.

21. Pastoral/ Intimate Care

All children have a right to safety, privacy and dignity when contact of a physical or intimate nature is required and should be encouraged to act as independently as possible. It is a child's right to refuse assistance. In all cases parents should be contacted. Where children require assistance, this will be given by a first-aider and one other person, following first aid guidelines e.g. wearing gloves.

If a child requires actual intimate personal help with (un) dressing, toileting, etc. then the school should draw up a Personal Care Plan, with advice and support from the Local Authority, parent, guardian and medical services (school nurse, family doctor and paediatrician). The plan should have regard to any hazards posed by the plan and a risk assessment may be necessary.

For more information, please see the school's Health and Safety policy and the intimate care policy.

22. Passwords and Collection of children

St Matthew Academy has a password system. When children arrive in September the teacher will ask the parents to leave a password that will be kept on the school system, so that if someone else is instructed by the parents to pick a child up then the password should be given to the class teacher. **CHILDREN CANNOT BE COLLECTED BY ANYONE UNDER 14.**

23. Uniform

Uniform is compulsory in Reception. We encourage the children to wear black shoes or trainers with no logos/markings. We can provide wellington boots and waterproof clothing for the children to attend Forest School but also encourage them to have their own as outdoor activities are regularly done in Early Years. Parents are also encouraged to purchase elasticised waist trousers for the children for ease when going to the toilet. Jumpers and the gold polo shirt with logo are available from our 2 main school outfitters (leaflets in the Admissions pack).

Within the Foundation Stage children spend a lot of time outside. Therefore, it is important that children are dressed suitably for the weather-warm and waterproof in winter, but cool and covered in summer. Parents need to mark all items of clothing clearly with their child's name.

CHILDREN MUST NOT WEAR JEWELLERY, SUCH AS NECKLACES OR BRACELETS AND BANGLES. See Uniform Policy for further details.

24. Role of the Co-ordinator

It is the role of the Early Years Co-ordinator, under the guidance of the Head Teacher:

- To organise the delivery of Early Years Curriculum and to ensure progression and development.
- To monitor planning and quality of delivery within the curriculum.
- To keep data analysis of the attainment of the children and to provide guidance and support to the team where necessary.
- To keep abreast of developments within Early Years and carry out INSET when required.
- To monitor and update resources and draw up a budget.
- To liaise with and support within the Partnership link.

25. Review of Policy

The Governing Body will review this policy every year and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the Academy.