



**Mexborough St John the Baptist
Church of England Primary**

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

*“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning.
But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of
childhood”*

Fred Rodgers

Our Vision for EYFS

Intent

At Mexborough St John the Baptist, we value all of God's children, creating an inclusive environment that helps all to flourish. From the beginning, our intent is to deliver a quality early education which we believe is a key element in children being successful in later life. We believe by focusing the interests of pupils, alongside carefully planned inquiry questions, we will ensure that our curriculum is ambitious, motivating, and stimulating. We ensure coverage of all 7 areas of the statutory framework and work towards achieving the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The foundation stage provides children with their initial school experiences. We want these experiences to be memorable and pleasurable for all.

Implementation

We follow Julian Grenier's Development Matters 2021 publication to support our teaching and learning. Communication and Language is at the heart of both our EYFS curriculum and the Development Matters 2021 publication. Planning to help every child to develop their language is vital. We strive to support all our pupils in becoming competent speakers and learners from the moment they walk through our doors.

Alongside this document, our in-depth progression and skills maps have been developed to ensure we cover all aspects of the seven areas of learning at an appropriate rate. These documents ensure learning is sequential, builds on prior knowledge and provides children with the skills and knowledge needed to reach the seventeen Early Learning Goals (described in the Early Years Foundation Stage).

Curriculum Organisation focuses on a variety of high-quality learning experiences are provided. We believe this will lead to purposeful learning and high levels of engagement. Children are also provided with inquiry questions at the start of each half term. The children then explore what they already know and what they would like to find out. "Children don't know what they don't know", In other words, we must still provide a certain amount of guided learning whilst considering interests. We believe that using the inquiry questions allows us to influence learning to an extent, whilst still providing flexibility to be interest led.

Resources are planned for and provided the following week based around the enquiry questions and children's interests. enquiry questions are explored using a good quality storybook or age-appropriate non-fiction text. It is difficult to overstate the benefits of instilling a love of reading in a child. According to research by the OECD, reading for pleasure is more important than a family's socio-economic status in determining a child's success at school. Therefore, we value our daily story time sessions and the use of texts during direct teacher-led activities.

Using books in this way allows children to see that books and reading are of high importance. The books we use then create our individual class book spines; these books are always accessible to our pupils. Stories have so much to offer: they develop listening and communication skills, improve concentration and memory, bring experiences alive, create a sense of wonder and help sequence events. They can also provide information, widen vocabulary and make important links between the spoken and written word, as well as stimulating an interest and enjoyment of books.

A range of teaching methods are used within our EYFS including child-initiated learning, whole class teaching and group teaching. As many activities as possible are play-based. Play is widely recognised as a leading context for the child's acquisition of communication and collaboration skills. This includes, play which is child – led, play which is sensitively supported and extended by adults; and play which is guided towards specific educational outcomes. Within our FS1 setting, we use an objective-led planning approach which allows practitioners to support all children to primarily learn through play. However, there is also a need for direct teacher-led activities to ensure children gain

essential knowledge and skills from their teacher. All activities are expertly modelled, and children are given sufficient time, support, and resources to repeat and practise them.

Impact

The impact of our curriculum will be seen not only in measurable attainment and progress (see our school data) but, that St John the Baptist Primary School creates polite, well-mannered caring members of our school community who understand and respect everybody's differences and needs.

Curriculum

We organise pupils learning so a variety of high-quality learning experiences are provided. As mentioned above, we base our curriculum mostly on children's interests. We believe this will lead to purposeful learning and high levels of engagement. Children are provided with inquiry questions at the start of each half term, the children then explore what they already know and what they would like to find out. "Children don't know what they don't know", In other words, we must still provide a certain amount of guided learning whilst considering interests. We believe that using the inquiry questions allows us to influence learning to an extent, whilst still providing flexibility to be interest led.

Learning and Developing

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in early years' settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. None of the areas of learning can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas.

The three Prime areas of learning are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development

Staff will also support children in four specific areas of learning, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The Specific Areas are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Children's development levels are assessed and as the year progresses, the balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning, as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.

However, if a child's progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents/carers and agree how to support the child.

Foundation pupils also participate in a daily phonics session, following the guidance from the 'Little Wandle' scheme.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning. These characteristics underpin the foundations of highest quality provision as outlined in the Development Matters guidance, 2021:

Playing and Exploring - children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.

'Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development.' Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules.

They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

Active Learning - children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements. *'Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.'* Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

Creating and Thinking Critically - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things. *"When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions."* Children will be given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults will support children's thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning.

Assessment

Planning is completed on a weekly basis within both of our foundation stage classes. Our progression maps are used to inform class teachers judgements about planning and next steps. As mentioned above, we ensure that we follow children's interests where appropriate. However, our long term plans and inquiry questions support our planning of 'topics' if necessary.

Observations are used in the Foundation Stage as the basis for planning. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations support the direction of the planning. Relevant and significant observations are recorded electronically in the children's Learning Journeys on EvidenceMe.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, photographic evidence and through planned activities. We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to inform future planning. The EvidenceMe electronic system is then used to record and track the progress of each child's level of development towards the Early Learning Goals throughout the year and reflect identified needs.

The Foundation Stage Profile is the nationally employed assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the Foundation Stage, and to summarise their pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.

Transition

Starting school can be a difficult time for young children; we therefore plan this time carefully to support children with the transition and to ensure it is as smooth as possible for each child and that they settle in to their new class quickly and happily.

Starting FS2. Parents of all children starting in our FS2 class will be invited to an Induction Meeting in the Summer term to meet their child's new teacher and other key staff and learn about school and Foundation Stage two.

New class sessions. Foundation Stage practitioners work closely together throughout the year. In the summer term, children visit the FS2 setting regularly from FS1. Children from other settings are also invited to attend sessions in FS2.

Transition into Key Stage 1 (Year 1). Throughout the Reception year, each child's involvement in whole school life will have been built upon; many of the teaching and support staff will already be familiar people to them. They will have taken part in Key Stage and whole school assemblies and

eaten their dinner in the hall. Children know their new class teacher and spend time in the new class during the summer term during our whole school transition week.

Children with additional needs. We will produce a more specialised transition plan for children with additional SEN needs. Class teachers and our SENCO will meet with parents prior to the summer holiday and ensure their child is provided with the smoothest transition possible.