

St. Winifred's Catholic Primary School

Early Years

Teaching and Learning Ethos Policy



Agreed by the Teaching and Learning Committee: November 2021

Review Date: November 2022

MISSION STATEMENT

At St Winifred's Catholic Primary School:

- We nourish a happy, safe and supportive school community in which every individual is welcomed, valued and respected for being unique
- We inspire a search for excellence by offering the best possible learning environment
- We provide a Christ-centred education, helping our children to develop and grow in faith and teaching them to promote the Gospel values of love of neighbour, fairness and forgiveness, both in school and in the wider community.

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Structure and Ethos

This paper summarises the structure of the Early Years setting at St Winifred's where teaching and learning takes place throughout the day.

Settling in each day

Nursery

- When the children arrive, they are dropped off by the parents or carers at the door. **All parents and carers are able to talk to the key staff to discuss their child's needs.** Where children aren't happy to separate immediately, the parents or carers come in to help them settle until they are engaged in an activity. Most children are helped by staff to **settle**, then they put their things away, find their name cards and select an activity.
- Adults in the room use this valuable time to **engage in conversation** with children and to extend their thinking and play.

Reception

- On arrival children put their book bags in their trays, find their name cards then find an activity to be engaged in. Parents and carers use this time to give key staff information about their child where needed. During these ten minutes of **settling**, staff **engage in conversation** with all the children to ensure they are happy and ready for the rest of the day. At 8:45am the children come to the carpet for register and the beginning of the first carpet session.

Reading

Nursery

- During the course of the day there are many opportunities to **share a book**; during whole class carpets, spontaneous book **reading** in the book corner with an adult or when sharing books between children in the book corner. **Story telling** happens in other ways, through songs and nursery rhymes or during music sessions. These experiences develop **auditory awareness** of sounds, words, rhyme and rhythm, in line with Phase 1 of the Letters and Sounds phonic programme.

Reception

- **Twice a week, an adult will read with a child.** This happens in small, guided reading groups on one day, while on another this happens on a one to one basis. The children read from phonically decodable texts, based on their level of phonic knowledge.

- Children can **choose books** daily from the book corner to take home and share with adults.
- **Shared reading** takes place daily at carpet time, where high quality texts are chosen to enrich their experiences of story structures, language and style.
- There are opportunities throughout the day for children to tell adults their stories, which are recorded through the **helicopter story** method. These stories are retold and shared during whole class carpet sessions.
- **Discrete Daily Phonics teaching.** Initially this is Phase One consolidation with a view to starting **Phase Two** within a few weeks into the autumn term. Individualised support is put in place for children identified on entry as being 'working within' Phase Two.
- Within the **spring term** children start learning **Phase Three phonics**, with additional support for some children still consolidating their Phase 2 knowledge.
- The **summer term** is spent consolidating the children's knowledge of Phase 3 and learning **Phase 4** phonics, in readiness to move on to Phase 5 in Year 1.
- Throughout the **year**, specific support is given to children, based on their ability, in order to help them make good progress by the time they reach Year 1.
- **Resources** are available throughout the continuous provision, to support and consolidate phonic learning, such as display walls, sound mats or signs and labels in the environment.

Writing

Nursery

- The children are prepared for writing by building up their **fine motor skills** so that they can hold a pencil properly and use it with some strength and precision. There are many activities that build their **strength**, such as playdough modelling, cutting with scissors or chopping vegetables in the mud kitchen. **Precision** is developed through regularly using tools or resources that require a good degree of manipulation e.g. building with Lego.
- During the day there are many opportunities to **mark make**, both inside and out, as part of the continuous provision.
- Nursery children have access to their name cards and they are encouraged to learn to **write their names** independently.
- Carpet books are written with the children, with the adult **scribing** for the child or using the **shared pencil** method of writing with the child. **Every** half term the adults sit with the children **annotating** their work, photos and pictures in their **Learning Journeys**.

Reception

- **Throughout the week there are whole class shared writing experiences**, usually linked to a book or the topic and then a small group adult-led/ adult-initiated writing focus for the week
- Once children have settled in they will take part in a **weekly small group adult-led writing experience**. The theme/genre is selected according to the current learning, children's interests and sometimes children are encouraged to choose their own purpose for writing, either individually or as a group. All adult led writing evidence is stuck into children's writing portfolios with the children and is annotated by the adult.
- **Each term, adults story-scribe with all children individually**, at least once, gradually encouraging the child to take over some of the writing, aiming for them to be writing most of the story by the end of the year. This works in conjunction with regular carpet sessions modelling rich story language and vocabulary through access to a wide selection of stories and storytelling by adults.
- **From Easter there are adult-initiated writing opportunities provided fortnightly** which often link to the adult-led writing or the topic and the expectation is that those children who are capable of doing so will complete this, and adults monitor closely the quality and quantity of what children are doing, targeting children towards it. Those children that don't tend to access these opportunities are targeted more by adults to writing opportunities that tie in with their particular interests.
- **Child-initiated writing opportunities are provided throughout the continuous provision**. These are linked to things children naturally choose to write e.g. tickets, maps etc. Adults model how to use these in adult led activities, but also encourage children to make use of these during free-flow time. Where possible, adults conference with children in their child-initiated writing, annotating and helping them with next steps as appropriate for individual children.
- **The writing area** is well stocked with challenging and inviting resources such as pencils, pens, bookmaking, envelopes, notebooks etc. It is regularly audited by staff to ensure it remains relevant and stimulating.
- Both adult-initiated and child-initiated **writing is annotated** where possible, with the children's writing interpreted and filed in their evidence book or recorded on 2Build if the child wants to take their work home.

The abbreviated annotations are as follows:

CI – Child Initiated (the child has initiated the writing activity and subject independently)

I - Independent (the child has carried out the writing on their own with no adult assistance)

AS – Adult Supported (the child has had some support and guidance to help them complete their writing task)

AL – Adult Led (the child is encouraged to write about a topic or in a genre suggested by an adult and is guided through the process).

Maths

Nursery

- Counting and number knowledge is built into **normal class routines and during carpet times** where the children participate in number-based nursery rhymes or counting songs.
- During the day there are many opportunities to **use and see numbers in the setting**, both inside and out, as part of the continuous provision.
- **Adults initiate or support the children in their play** which involve number such as counting or ordering.
- The **setting is configured to encourage children to find pattern and shape** in it. For example, the children sit on their own shape on the carpet, or resources are returned to shelves with the same outline.

Reception Class

- **Maths carpet inputs are delivered daily.** These are planned the week before and/or adjusted to meet the evolving needs and interests of the children and to mirror the current learning at that time.
- **There is a planned weekly adult led maths focus for all children.** This is linked to the carpet sessions in order to introduce new teaching or consolidate prior learning. Children are usually invited in small groups to take part in an interactive maths activity.
- **Assessment and collection of evidence** of the above learning opportunities is via annotations, photographs and notes using 2Build, and recording made by the children where appropriate. These are annotated and filed in their Evidence Books. The emphasis should be on what knowledge the child has demonstrated and evidence of learning that has taken place within the context of the activity.
- **Mathematical opportunities are available throughout the continuous provision.** These are linked to things children naturally choose to do e.g. games, items of curiosity, mark making. Adults model how to use these in adult led activities, but also encourage children to make use of these during free-flow time. Where possible adults conference with children in their child-initiated play, commenting on what they are doing and helping them with next steps as appropriate for individual children.
- The **maths area is stocked with challenging and inviting resources** such as natural or interesting items to count, and containers to count into (eg boxes with lids, gift bags, etc) measuring tools, sorting trays etc. This is regularly audited by staff to ensure it remains relevant and stimulating.

Different ways that children learn in EYFS

Adult-led learning

- **This happens as a whole class and in small groups.** During this time adults have planned outcomes and activities which the adult stays with and directs children towards. For small group activities children are sometimes invited, and sometimes children take part of their own accord, but the adult will then scoop up any others who haven't chosen to access it.

Child-initiated learning

- **During child-initiated learning time the adult's role is to follow the child's lead and interests.** The aim is that at least one adult is free to support children's play. Adults do not plan individual objectives for children or provision at this time but use their knowledge of children and their developmental next steps to extend their learning. This is done by being alert to what individual children are doing or saying, (observing) considering what this tells them about what the child knows, thinks, can do or is interested in (assessing) deciding how best they can impact on the child's learning or development in that moment (planning) and responding by using the appropriate strategy eg modelling, explaining, asking, suggesting, recalling, helping. (teaching) This way of extending child-initiated learning is called 'spontaneous teaching' or 'planning in the moment'
- **Example:** Adult joins children in construction area, finds out they are making rockets. ASKS if they would like to make a huge rocket. SUGGESTS they draw a plan first so they can work out what they need. Children do this and write that they need 3 boxes. Adult EXPLAINS that office have had delivery of boxes and SUGGESTS that children write to office to ask if they can have them. Children do so. Adult HELPS children to orally segment words to hear phonemes as they write.
- It is important that **adults do not hijack children's play** or ask too many questions as this can dismiss or interrupt their thinking and some children may avoid adult interaction.
- In **child-initiated learning children will be accessing the continuous provision**, some of which may have been set up and some will be self-selection.

Adult-initiated learning

- **In adult-initiated learning, the adult will have planned an experience, based on continuous assessments of children's learning, but will not stay with the experience.** There will be an expectation that children will access the experience in the intended way, however as the adult does not stay with the activity there is the possibility that children will take it in a different direction. An adult should drop by to check in on children and find out what they are doing. If what the children are doing is not considered valuable learning, then the adult will redirect and model.

Assessment

Longer term

- The **Statutory baseline assessment** is carried out for all children to be completed by October half term.
- Further **summative assessments** are completed at the end of autumn term (December), end of spring term (March) and the end of summer term, for children in Reception, this is the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.
- **Evidence** includes observations, children's comments written down, children's own recordings and photographs as well as teacher knowledge. Evidence recorded by adults or children is captured in 'Evidence Me' and class and individual portfolio books.
- The above is captured through observations and conversations with children in both their self- initiated learning and adult initiated/ led learning opportunities. The latter is used more for evidence that is less easily captured on an ad hoc basis such as literacy and maths.
- Evidence collected focuses on what the child knows, understands or can do, (significant achievements) rather than sharing an activity they were taking part in. The adult must then use the information collected to decide what might be next for that child and how they will help them achieve it.

'In the moment'

- Throughout each day, **through their interactions, adults continuously assess what children are demonstrating** that they know and can do, and spontaneously responding to this (planning and teaching) in ways that move children's learning forward.
- The majority of these 'spontaneous' teaching moments will not be recorded, but some of them will be, and as well as capturing what the child did or said will also include what the adult did that moved learning forward (teaching)
- To ensure that a clear picture is being built of each child through both longer term and 'in the moment' assessment, teachers monitor for gaps in their evidence and note priorities for assessment.

Interventions

- **Where possible, interventions and additional support for children takes place in the classroom using continuous provision.** This enables the children to develop the skills they are lagging within their familiar learning environment and provide them with the modelling and opportunities to consolidate on a daily basis. This also allows the class teachers to be kept aware of the ongoing support and progress and give the opportunity to build upon this.
- **Quality first teaching in setting.** Following settling in and the baseline assessments, teachers plan learning according to the abilities, learning styles and interests of ALL children in the cohort. Where possible, adjustments and additional provision is provided throughout the environment and during all learning opportunities to encourage a fully inclusive and stimulating experience for everyone. The needs of the children are monitored regularly following formative assessments and half termly analysis of 2Build observations as well as informal feedback and information sharing amongst staff members. Plans and provision are then be adjusted accordingly to provide increased challenge or support where needed.

Home Learning

- **Reading Record books** – staff write feedback on each child’s reading with suggestions for home learning opportunities linked to that week’s Guided Reading book. Staff then read and comment on the previous week’s home learning with suggestions for further challenge if relevant. Two levelled reading books are sent home each week for reading with parents and carers (one from the Guided Reading session).
- **Phonics and Tricky Words** – Children also have a Home Book kept in their book bags. In here phonemes and tricky words that have been taught that week are put in by staff every Friday with feedback and suggestions on how to help learn them at home. Children can also use this book to practice handwriting.
- **Curriculum Newsletters** – letters are sent home every half term with updates of the topics being covered in class and developments in maths and phonics. Suggestions for linked home learning are also included, e.g. looking for evidence of season changes and drawing pictures together or invitations for parents and carers to come into school and share languages, job related expertise or read stories.
- **A Meet the Teacher** event is held in the summer term for new parents of children starting Reception in the autumn. It is used to brief parents about the routine and structure of the day, and to talk about how literacy and maths are taught in the Early Years and how this can be supported at home.
- **In Nursery**, the children bring home a **bear and a diary**. The children write, with their parents, their exploits over the week end. This encourages their language and communication skills. They also get to choose their own book to share with their parent or carer for pleasure.

Environment

- Early Years is set up as a **workshop style environment** indoors and outdoors. Children select what they want to do in each area. The principle is that resources are accessible to the children, and that they are varied, open ended and of high quality. There is an expectation that the environment is maintained, resourced to a high standard and provides stimulation and challenge.
- **Each adult has a responsibility for constantly maintaining and extending specific areas of provision.** On a half termly basis the EYFS Leader carries out an audit of all provision with the adult responsible, to establish gaps and areas of development. Key questions are ‘What do we want children to get better at here?’, ‘What new challenge opportunity can we add here?’. ‘What resources will be provided to support that?’, ‘How will we model the use of the new resources?’.
- **Enhancements** – sometimes we enhance an area of provision in order **to encourage children to engage with it** in a particular way, to support a skill or interest that has been identified from assessment. Unless we have specified, children do not have to use these resources in this way.
- During the first term there is a **settling in plan for the continuous provision.** During the settling in time, adults base themselves in each new area as it is uncovered, modelling how to use it and care for the resources. Each time new resources are added, adults will lead an activity first, so children know how to use them appropriately.

Planning

- **Medium Term plans and an overview of the year are carried out in advance by the class teachers.** Medium term plans are usually topic based and will link to high quality stories.
- These plans can be adapted to take into account the Development Matters statements and abilities, interests and learning styles of all the children in the cohort. **Flexibility is encouraged on a weekly and daily basis to in order to seize valuable learning opportunities as they arise** that may not conform to the original plan or to add further challenge and embellishment should the opportunity present itself. These changes are annotated on the weekly plans to show how the children’s interests have been incorporated into their learning.

Timetable

- The **weekly timetable does evolve through the year** as regular weekly commitments are introduced such as merit assemblies, dance or drama session.
- Daily phonics and other carpet times are planned in at regular times as well as guided reading and literacy or maths focus groups. Free flow play is also timetabled in so the children can explore and interact with the continuous provision both inside and outside and have enough time to engage in deeper, self-chosen learning opportunities either independently or with quality interaction from adults and peers.