

Early Years Foundation Stage

Early Years Overarching Principles

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021) states that four guiding principles should shape practice in the Early Years. At St. James', these four principles underpin everything that we do in our everyday practice:

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**
- children learn and develop well in **enabling environments with teaching and support from adults** who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- children **learn and develop** at different rates, and this is continually and carefully considered and reflected upon when planning and guiding what children learn. It is ensured that practice is adjusted appropriately, to meet individual needs, and taking into account the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning



Our Learning Pledge

'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential.'

(Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, 2021)

Inspiring and Growing for Fullness of Life

Our Aim: to weave together our spiritual wheel and the Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework to enable our children to grow for 'Fullness of Life', equipping them with the skills to become life-long learners and prepare them for the next stage in their education.

WISDOM – HOPE – COMMUNITY - DIGNITY

OUR AIM

To provide opportunities that create learners with:
**HIGH ENGAGEMENT = HIGH WELL-BEING = HIGH
 PROGRESS AND ATTAINMENT**

Inspiring and Growing for Fullness of Life in the Early Years

All children deserve the best possible start in life, enabling them to live life in all its fullness.

Our spiritual wheel and school values are woven through all aspects of our EYFS provision, where quality play is recognised and used as the best vehicle for learning. Practitioners play an important role in creating a curriculum that is unique to our children and context. We provide opportunities that stimulate children's interests and respond to the emerging needs of each child by supporting and guiding them in their development through warm and positive interactions embedded in secure routines for playing and learning. During the reception year we also focus on teaching essential skills and knowledge in the specific areas of learning to ensure a smooth transition into their next phase of learning in year 1.

'Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.'

(Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, 2021)

Early Years Curriculum Design

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021) sets out the requirements for learning and development and for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The learning and development requirements cover:

- the areas of learning and development which must shape activities and experiences (educational programmes) for children in all early years settings
- the early learning goals that providers must help children work towards (the knowledge, skills and understanding children should have at the end of the academic year in which they turn five)
- assessment arrangements for measuring progress (and requirements for reporting to parents and/or carers)

At STJ, our curriculum is built around the EYFS framework, and guided by Development Matters (2021). Our children are at the heart of our curriculum, which is led by their interests and needs, and provides a top-level plan of everything we want our children to learn (see Reception Curriculum Goals), which is appropriate and unique to the children in our care.

When we think of our children as learners, we think of them in two ways; 1. as conscious cognitive learners, where they learn skills, routines and build knowledge, and 2. as subconscious cognitive learners, where we consider the emotional links that children make between who they are, who they are as a learner, who they are in a specific space or situation, and who they are in relation to an adult, as they bring their own experiences and perceptions with them. These two types of learners work hand in hand, with the conscious cognitive learner relying on the development of the subconscious cognitive learner in order to ensure high engagement, which in turn, creates high well-being and are the key to high progress and attainment.

Play is an essential part of our early years curriculum, and includes: play which is child-led, play which is sensitively supported and extended by adults, and play which is guided towards specific educational outcomes. Continuous provision both inside and outside creates enabling environments which develop as our children grow. These rich and varied environments support learning in all aspects of the EYFS curriculum.

We recognise that the development of oracy skills is fundamental, not only to improve academic outcomes, but it is also a life skill to ensure success beyond school. Oracy develops children's thinking and understanding, which in turn, promotes self-confidence, resilience and empathy which support a child's well-being. Our curriculum design and enabling environments, including warm, skilful adult interactions support the children as they begin to link learning to their play and exploration right from the start; developing vocabulary and vital language skills. Core texts are also carefully selected to support language and vocabulary development and also well-being.

We also place emphasis on depth in early, believing this is more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way. Synthetic phonics is taught from the start of Reception ensuring depth and coverage of each phase in Letters and Sounds and is also taught contextually through our Explore Reading and Literacy sessions. Mathematics is made real and relevant throughout the setting and is at the root of a lot of what the children do. Opportunities for mathematical investigation are provided through play in continuous provision, dedicated teaching time and daily routines. Mathematical concepts are also taught and explored through 'Explore Maths' sessions. These teaching strategies help to embed and reinforce the basic principles of number, shape, space and measure.

We understand that learning and development is not linear or fixed, but more like a spider's web with many strands. Our curriculum is therefore ambitious and carefully sequenced to ensure each child is supported to build their learning over time. Driven by the children's interests and curiosities, means plans are flexible, as practitioners respond to children's learning and development needs 'in the moment'. Children are also supported and challenged through both continuous provision and adult led episodes of learning. Kagan Structures and Magenta Principles also underpin aspects of teaching and learning from EYFS and continue throughout the school.

It is important to us to build a strong and respectful partnership with parents and carers, setting the scene for children to thrive in the early years and beyond. Relationships between home and school are established through transition settling sessions and home visits, prior to starting school. Opportunities are then planned throughout the year to enable parents and carers to become engaged and play an active part in their children's learning. This includes events such as our World Nursery Rhyme Week performances, Family Tree and Junk Modelling afternoons and curriculum parent workshops and information sessions.



The Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

- **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

Curriculum Progression Model

As practitioners we recognise skills development in children through active engagement in their play and by careful and timely observations and interactions. By recognising this we are able to attach what we see children doing to their personal journey through those skills and in turn are able to move their learning on by ensuring developmentally appropriate opportunities and resources are provided, alongside modelling, support and scaffolding by skilled adults.

We also acknowledge that not all children have to do every skill in chronological order to work their way from an emergent skill to the more advanced acquisition of the skill, and that children may jump or skip skills on their journey.