



St. MICHAEL'S
CE (CONTROLLED) INFANT SCHOOL

St Michael's Church of England Infant School

Early Years Policy

Reviewed April 2024

To Be Reviewed by April 2026

Early Years Policy

1. Aims

Within Early Years at St. Michael's Infant School, we aim to:

- Give each child a positive start to their school life within a safe and secure environment, where our Christian values of love, friendship, forgiveness, truthfulness, perseverance and creativity are lived out daily
- Foster a deep love of learning and of books
- Enable each child to develop socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually in order to thrive in a diverse and ever-changing world
- Offer a broad, rich and engaging curriculum, centered around quality texts and real experiences
- Support children to make rapid progress in the prime areas of development, particularly communication and language, in order to flourish in all areas of learning
- Encourage children to develop independence and to build relationships within a nurturing and supportive atmosphere
- Support parents and carers to be fully involved in their child's learning and development to ensure the best outcomes for our children
- Maintain effective procedures to support the smooth transition of children from preschool settings into school and from Reception to Key Stage One

2. Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the [2021 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#).

3. Structure of the EYFS

Our Early Years Foundation Stage accommodates children from the age of 4-5 years within three Reception classes, each with a teacher and a teaching assistant. Each class is split into two 'bird' groups:

- Owls and Flamingoes
- Ducks and Toucans
- Parrots and Penguins.

We provide daily opportunities for children to play and learn within these smaller groups to support their attention and listening skills, to build their confidence and to develop strong friendships. The class teacher and classroom assistant work closely together as a team to support children's learning throughout the day, although the class teacher has key person responsibility for every child in the class. To ensure best practice and continuity of provision, our Early Years staff share planning, preparation and assessment time.

4. Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2021 EYFS statutory framework.

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

Communication and language

Physical development

Personal, social and emotional development

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the world

Expressive arts and design

4.1 Planning

At St. Michael's, we have developed our own curriculum (see Appendix 2) to meet the needs of the children within our cohort and to ensure that they are well-prepared for the learning they will encounter in Key Stage One. It has been written in line with the educational programmes set out in the statutory EYFS framework and informed by the Development Matters document.

Language provides the foundation for thinking and learning and should be prioritised

(EEF, Preparing for Literacy: Improving Communication, Language and Literacy in the Early Years, 2022)

We are proud to be a very diverse and inclusive school. Many of our children are learning English as an additional language and a significant proportion present with delays with their communication and language development on entry to school. We therefore place the highest priority on accelerating children's progress in communication and language as we recognise how fundamental this is to accessing the whole curriculum in the EYFS and beyond.

Rich texts are at the heart of our curriculum, and these are carefully selected to stimulate a love of reading, to reflect the diversity of our school community, to broaden children's vocabularies in key semantic fields and to reflect children's changing development needs throughout the year. Staff plan for provision, both indoors and outside, which enables children to practise and reinforce in their play the new vocabulary and language structures they have learnt from these key texts and other adult-led sessions.

We can help to close the gap and support children who are at risk of disadvantage by providing them with a wide range of experiences inside and outside the classroom

(Penny Tassoni, Reducing Educational Disadvantage, 2016)

Alongside the quality texts we share, we plan a comprehensive programme of rich experiences for our children, to complement and further the experiences they have had before starting school. These include cooking, gardening, cultural celebrations, scientific investigations, artistic explorations, visits and visitors. These experiences stimulate children’s vocabulary development, broaden children’s interests and provide new contexts for imaginary play. They provide strong foundations for children to build on when they begin the national curriculum subjects in Key Stage One.

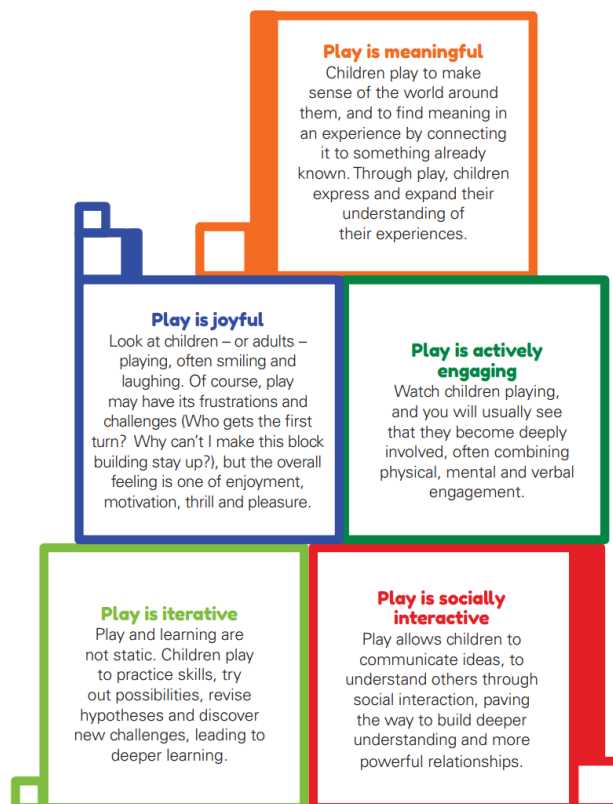
Our weekly planning always includes opportunities for children to develop their fine and gross motor skills, and, when developmentally appropriate, their letter formation. When children enter school with delayed motor skill development, we offer support through small guided groups to enable them to make rapid progress and develop the necessary control to move safely in a variety of ways, to draw and to write.

We follow the Little Wandle scheme for our planning of systematic synthetic phonics and our teaching of mathematics is guided by the White Rose Maths scheme. We use the Jigsaw scheme to support our planning for PSHE.

As staff interact with children during play and adult-led learning sessions, we observe their individual needs, interests and stage of development. We then take these into account when planning and adapting our provision to ensure that the learning opportunities we give our children are engaging, stimulating and challenging for them.

4.2 Learning through play

Play is one of the most important ways in which young children gain essential knowledge and skills (Learning Through Play, UNICEF 2018)



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Learning through play is central to our approach to teaching and learning in Early Years. We facilitate purposeful play by carefully designing our classroom environments to include continuous provision areas for reading, mark-making, imaginative play, mathematical and scientific exploration, construction, artistic expression and sensory play with natural materials. Children have access to this provision for extended periods each day, during 'Time to Explore'. Every child has the opportunity to explore indoors and outside throughout the day. This may be free-flow or timetabled, depending on the needs of the cohort. Through this play, children are able to pursue their own interests and be inspired by others. They revisit and extend prior learning, consolidating their understanding and skills. They also develop creative and critical thinking, both collaboratively and independently.

Our adults take an active role in child-initiated play through observing, modelling, commenting and questioning. Our continuous provision is regularly enhanced with 'invitations to play' to stimulate talk and consolidate new vocabulary acquisition, to facilitate new experiences, and to provide challenge in response to our observations of children's learning needs.

4.3 Teaching

Nothing matters more than stopping, listening and responding positively to the young child

(Julie Fisher, Interacting or Interfering, 2016)

We ensure that there is a balance of child-initiated learning through continuous provision and adult-led learning across the school day. Whether the children are self-selecting activities or engaging with an adult-led activity, the adult's role is always to observe and respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interactions.

As children settle into school, we establish routines and designated times where children come together for adult-led learning, including language and literacy, phonics, story time and maths each day. These times provide opportunities for children to develop their listening and attention skills, to take turns, to work as a group and to work with a partner. At the start of the year, these whole class sessions are short and children spend the majority of their time engaged in child-initiated play. As children progress through the year, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards longer adult-led activities to help children prepare for the transition to Year One.

5. Assessment

At St Michael's CE Infant School, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child **starts reception**, staff will administer the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

Throughout the year, we will use our curriculum milestones (see Appendix 3) to identify whether children are on track to achieve our curriculum goals, or if there is a concern with an aspect of a child's development. If a concern is identified, appropriate support will be planned for.

At the end of the EYFS, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

Meeting expected levels of development

Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile reflects ongoing observations, and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child.

The profile is moderated internally using the exemplification materials published by the DfE and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.

6. Working with parents

A quality home learning environment can enable children to develop the language and communication skills they need to learn and develop socially and emotionally
(Literacy Trust, 2022)

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between staff and parents and/or carers. This partnership begins the term before children start school, with songs and rhymes sessions and home visits.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development through weekly updates on Tapestry and termly meetings. At the end of the year we provide a written report, which details each child's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile and their next steps in development.

Part of the key person role held by the class teacher is to support parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home. This guidance is given through informal discussions, a home learning journal and parent workshops. The class teacher also liaises with the SENDCo and DSLs to help families to engage with more specialist support, if appropriate.

7. Safeguarding and welfare procedures

We know that children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.

We support children to understand the importance of rules and boundaries and we help them to develop self-regulation skills and to become responsible for their own behaviour by learning about good and bad choices within different situations.

We promote good physical, mental and oral health in the early years by

- Preparing and sharing healthy food together
- Ensuring every child has opportunities for physical activity outside for extended periods each day
- Learning about 'real life superheroes' including doctors, nurses, paramedics and dentists (including visits from these professionals where possible) and how they support good health
- Learning about our bodies and how to exercise, rest and eat the right foods to keep them healthy
- Talking about the effects of eating too many sweet things and the importance of brushing your teeth

- Taking time to pause and reflect through 'calm time' in PSHE, yoga and collective worship

The rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding, child protection and behaviour policies.

8. Transition

8.1 Transition from preschool settings

Our cohorts are traditionally composed of children from between 20-30 different preschool settings, therefore we take great care over our transition process so that all children feel safe and secure when they start school, even if they are not coming with any friends from their preschool setting. There are several steps:

- The Early Years Leader has a discussion via telephone or email with staff from each setting to find out about each child's characteristics of effective learning and their levels of development, needs and interests. This conversation also informs the process of placing children into classes.
- Early Years staff will visit each preschool where a group of children are attending, or where a child with significant needs is attending, to meet the children and observe them in their familiar environment
- All parents are invited to an information evening in the summer term
- Transition meetings in liaison with the SENDCo are offered to any families of children with significant needs (e.g. families of children with an EHCP)
- Songs and rhymes sessions are offered to all families in the summer term
- Home visits are offered to families in July to begin establishing a partnership with parents
- Bird group 'stay and play' sessions for children and their parents and/or carers are provided at the start of term so children can become familiar with their new classroom environment
- Part-time transition sessions are provided for children to settle into school and form relationships within their smaller bird groups, before all children are offered full-time education at the end of the second full week

8.2 Transition into Year One

Early Years and Year One teachers work closely together to ensure a smooth transition for every child. They meet to discuss each individual child and share the child's end of year report so that their next steps in learning are understood.

The Year One teachers spend time visiting the Early Years children and sharing stories with them, before the Early Years children spend some time in Year One. Parents are also given the opportunity to meet their child's new teacher and become familiar with their new classroom and routines through a 'Meet the Teacher' evening.

When children enter Year One, they continue to have daily opportunities to play and to access quality continuous provision, both indoors and outside.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Children and Learning Committee every two years. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Full Governing Body

Reviewed: April 2024

To be reviewed: April 2026

Appendix 1. List of statutory policies and procedures for the EYFS

Statutory policy or procedure for the EYFS	Where can it be found?
Safeguarding policy and procedures	See child protection and safeguarding policy
Procedure for responding to illness	See medical policy
Administering medicines policy	See medical policy
Emergency evacuation procedure	See emergency evacuation policy
Procedure for checking the identity of visitors	See security policy
Procedures for a parent failing to collect a child and for missing children	See attendance policy
Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints	See complaints policy