

St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School

Early Years Policy

Learning for life, loving God

Ourselves and others

Valuing all of his creation

Enabling us to do our best.

Intent:

At St Margaret's we believe that the Early Years Foundation stage (EYFS) is crucial in providing a solid foundation for the children to build upon. Providing an excellent start to school life has a long-term positive influence on each child's future. 'Research has never been clearer – a child's early education lasts a lifetime.' (Teaching and play in the early years – a balancing act? Ofsted 2015)

It is our intent that the children develop socially and emotionally, physically, verbally and cognitively as well as developing a positive attitude to school and learning. We believe that all children should be valued and respected and are passionate about supporting all children to reach their full potential.

We follow the EYFS curriculum as set out in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. (2025) We believe that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates through 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.

(Characteristics of effective teaching and learning)

There are seven areas of learning and development divided into:

Prime areas (Essential building blocks for Specific areas)

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

Specific areas (Dependent on Prime areas)

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

In addition, as a Catholic school RE forms an important part of our curriculum.

Implementation:

These seven areas of learning and development which are equal in importance are interlinked and depend on each other. They are delivered through well planned continuous provision, daily routines and adult led opportunities. Continuous provision is defined as clearly defined areas inside and outside containing resources that have been planned to reflect children's interests and to promote the areas of learning and development. These are continuous as they are in place every day throughout the year. We aim for a flexible mix of adult led and child-initiated activities within an environment which is designed to support both. Adult led activities encompass whole class input, small group work and intentional interactions during child-initiated activities. Both morning and afternoon sessions provide at least 1 hour of child-initiated time during which adults and children work together as co-learners and play partners.

The indoor and outdoor environment both play an important part in providing open-ended opportunities for child-initiated activities where they can learn and practise skills. We provide stimulating resources which are accessible and open-ended so they can be used, moved and combined in a variety of ways. All our resources are meticulously planned to ensure they support every area of learning and development as well as reflecting things children are naturally interested in.

The adults play an important role in developing positive relationships with the children and supporting their learning through 'communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas together, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges.' (Teaching and Play in the Early Years: A balancing act? Ofsted 2015)

We support children's learning in:

RE though

- discrete RE lessons,
- class, year group and school assemblies,
- RE resources in continuous provision,
- drama,
- prayer.

Communication and language through providing:

- a rich language environment,
- opportunities for adults and children to interact throughout the day as children engage in play,
- opportunities to learn and reinvent stories using the 'Talk for Writing' approach,
- discrete vocabulary lessons using the 'Concept Cat' programme,
- additional support where needs have been identified through our speech and language therapist.

Physical development through providing opportunities:

- to be active,
- to develop coordination, control, and movement,
- to understand the importance of physical activity,
- to spend time outside every day to build, balance and climb, play games and run,

- to develop fine motor skills using playdough, scissors and pencils, construction resources etc,
- to experience whole class PE lessons as appropriate and when children are developmentally ready.

Personal, social and emotional development through:

- monitoring children's levels of wellbeing (Leuven scales) and adjusting support for individual children where necessary,
- supporting children to develop self confidence in a caring and supportive environment,
- supporting children to form positive relationships and develop respect for others,
- modelling and talking about how to play and learn with others,
- learning about feelings using 'The Colour Monster' by Anna Llenas,
- developing an understanding of appropriate behaviour in school,
- building independence and confidence by giving free access to a wide range of carefully selected resources,
- talking about and modelling the importance of physical activity, healthy eating and keeping safe,
- modelling and encouraging responsibility for tidying up and keeping the classroom well maintained.

Literacy through:

- encouraging children to link sounds and letters (phonics) and to begin to read and write,
- providing a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials),
- daily discrete phonics lessons using Little Wandle Letters and Sounds revised.
- placing books in all areas of the classroom,
- providing reading books and the child's free choice book to take home and share every week,
- encouraging use of many different mark making materials such as pencils, crayons, felt tips, paints, chalks,
- discrete teaching of letter formation,
- providing opportunities for shared writing with an adult,
- through providing opportunities to write and mark make in all areas,
- through providing enhancements

Mathematics through:

- providing opportunities to develop and improve skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, one-to-one correspondence, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems practically
- providing opportunities to describe shapes, spaces, and measures
- providing Maths resources on a daily basis for children to access independently
- opportunities in continuous provision such as– water play, sand, wooden block play, mud kitchen, construction
- Numbers used as labels in different areas of provision to indicate how many items there should be.

- Maths rhymes, songs and games
- Daily discrete maths lessons

Understanding the World through:

- opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment
- a well-planned environment inside and outside that provides a wide range of experiences and opportunities.
- Access to the natural world is critical and so they spend time in our woodland area as well as having opportunities in the dedicated outdoor area.
- Gardening
- visits in the local area including seasonal walks along the bridleway next to the school
- visitors invited into the classroom
- access to a range of technology including the interactive screens

Expressive Arts and Design through:

- enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials
- providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings
- a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology
- well planned continuous provision which includes painting, pattern making, modelling, music making and role play.
- teaching the skills needed such as close observational drawing, colour mixing, making music and dance.
- regular music lessons
- regular art lessons

We use Tapestry to record observations and we track the children's progress using The Milestone Assessment Toolkit. We share the children's learning journals with parents through Tapestry and the parents can share their child's home learning with school through this platform too. Assessments and observations are used to plan next steps in learning and to identify and support those children who need extra support or additional challenge.

Impact:

By the end of the EYFS the children:

- have made at least typical progress and a large proportion make above typical progress in all areas of learning.
- have high well being
- are confident to try new things
- are confident to talk about their ideas and learning
- can work and play cooperatively
- can understand and follow school rules and routines
- can investigate and explore
- are active learners
- are creative and critical thinkers

