



Early Years Policy

LEADER / CO-ORDINATORS	Mrs V Gregory
GROUPS INVOLVED IN DISCUSSION	Headteacher Senior Leadership Team All Staff Governing Body Children Parents
LINK TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN	Priority 2 – To ensure Leaders of all levels continue to be exceptional, working systematically and effectively to refine our Outstanding school curriculum.

1. Introduction and Aims

This policy reflects the current philosophy and practice in relation to the teaching and learning in the Early Years at St. Aidan's Catholic Primary School.

It provides a framework for all staff which includes guidance on planning, assessment, recording and reporting in Early Years. It offers guidance on teaching styles and opportunities for meeting the needs of all pupils, as well as giving advice on equality.

Early Years aims and objectives:

- To develop positive relationships with parents and carers, to build a strong partnership in supporting their children's learning and development.
- To provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum with a solid and strong foundation in the three prime areas of learning, and the four specific areas of learning.
- To provide high quality learning experiences that correspond to each child's developmental stage through careful observation, assessment, and that guide children towards the achievement of the Early Learning Goals at the end of the EYFS.
- To provide a happy, safe and stimulating environment, one in which provides challenge, and promotes a positive attitude to learning.
- To provide a caring and inclusive learning environment which is sensitive to the requirements of the individual child, including those who have additional needs.

2. Mission Statement

Our school curriculum is underpinned by the aims of our Catholic Life and Mission. The scripture link for Early Years is

'Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.'

Matthew 19:14

As stated in our school's Mission Statement, our 3 aims are to-

- ~ Have a sense of responsibility and take an active part in serving our world;
- ~ Have a growing understanding of Gospel Values and gather together in prayer and Worship;
- ~ Have a passion for learning and an enjoyment for discovery.

**“Hand in Hand,
In the image of Jesus,
We grow together and celebrate who we are.”**

The staff of St. Aidan’s Catholic Primary School will work to give each child the entitlement of a broad, balanced, differentiated curriculum (irrespective of ability) encouraging in every individual a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. All teaching and learning is underpinned by the school mission statement.

3. Audience

This Early Years policy document is available to:

Teaching and Support Staff

Governors

Parents and other visitors to the staffroom

Supply Teachers

Inspectors

Copies of this policy are available through the school website and also through the school office on request.

4. Introduction

All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality early learning provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential. (EYFS Statutory Framework 2026)

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception Year. We believe that early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. We greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development.

At St. Aidan’s Primary School, we endeavour to provide high quality early learning experiences that uphold and demonstrate the four overarching principles outlined in the EYFS statutory framework:

- 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 build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers;
- Children develop and learn **in different ways and at different rates**

Early Years Curriculum Rationale

At St. Aidan’s we are eager to learn! We want our youngest children to love their educational experiences. We want them to succeed, to have ambitions and grow up wanting to be whatever they choose to be. The principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage guide are to develop the unique child, providing care and support in a safe environment so that every child’s full potential is reached. Positive relationships ensure that children feel secure, whilst a rich and varied learning environment allows children to discover the world around them and provides opportunities for challenge whilst remaining safe.

Children require opportunities to develop independence and self-confidence in an environment where they feel valued, respected and cared for. Clear rules help each child feel safe, whilst high but realistic expectations



encourage each child to strive to achieve their best. All children develop at different rates and learn in different ways. Therefore, well planned experiences in all areas of learning and development are essential, with purposeful play underpinning the delivery of the Early Years education.

A high-quality Early Years education lays the foundations for children, with a focus on developing the whole child and to ensure 'school readiness'. The EYFS provides children with a broad range of learning opportunities with the aim to embed firm foundations in the knowledge and skills needed for good future progress. We aim to develop children's cultural capital so that they are able to engage with society and understand the importance of being a good UK and global citizen. A key priority of the EYFS is to maintain a determined approach to ensure that children learn to read fluently at an age appropriate level.

5. Intent

At St. Aidan's Primary School, we follow the aims and objectives set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. We recognise that all areas of learning and development are important and interconnected.

We ensure that the children receive a balance of adult led and child initiated activities, giving them the best chance of obtaining a good level of development at the end of Reception. We recognise that children learn most effectively when following their own ideas and interests. We provide children with a wide range of open ended resources that allow them to explore their own ideas and interests.

We recognise that three areas of learning are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three prime areas are:

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

We also teach the four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

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

The prime areas of learning play a vital part in children's development and children who are successful in the prime areas of learning will be successful in the specific areas of learning.

As well as the seven areas of learning, we ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- **Playing and exploring**-children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- **Active learning**- children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.
- **Creative and thinking critically**- children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

We aim to create happy, confident and enthusiastic learners who have an excellent attitude to learning and are ready to enter the next stage of learning.

The Early Years curriculum promotes curiosity and a love and thirst for learning. It is ambitious and empowers our children to become independent and resilient – like all curriculum areas. We want to equip them with not only the minimum statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum but to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. For example, our reception children take part in Forest School sessions, where they learn about their local environment and how to look after it for future generation.

Close bonds are formed within school and in particular with Year 6 during the 'Seeds and Gardener' programme, through learning and playing together.

We want our children to learn from other cultures, respect diversity, co-operate with one another and appreciate what they have. We achieve this by providing a strong Religious Education curriculum, with British Values incorporated in our provision. This often feeds into the early years' curriculum.

We enrich their time in our school with memorable and unforgettable experiences. We firmly believe that it is not just about what happens in the classroom, it is about the added value we offer to really inspire our children.

6. Implementation

“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.” (EYFS Statutory Framework 2026)

At St. Aidan’s Primary School, we support all children to become independent and collaborative learners. We provide a broad and balanced curriculum that enables each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential. Children have access to a wide range of open ended resources within continuous provision and are encouraged to explore and develop their own ideas.

We plan challenging but achievable adult led activities, and experiences to extend children’s learning based on well thought out long term plans. Teachers have devised their own curriculum based around ‘Development Matters’ and our whole school curriculum to ensure progression throughout Nursery and Reception in line with the rest of school. Themes and units are carefully planned to ensure progression. We use exciting themes, as a vehicle of interest to encourage the children and then enhance activities in line with the children’s interest. Themes may change in accordance with the children’s needs.

Staff develop year group specific long-term curriculum maps, which identify when the different areas and topics will be taught across the academic year. Some areas are taught discretely but staff make meaningful links across the different aspects. They link prior knowledge to new learning to deepen children’s understanding.

Children share in phonics, reading, writing and mathematics sessions and explore a broad a balanced curriculum through exploration of key themes.

We follow ‘Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised’ and use a ‘Mastery’ approach to mathematics to ensure clear progression.

We value play and understand that this is how young children learn and apply key skills. Children have access to adult led activities and child initiated activities. At all times, the characteristics of effective learning (playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically) are considered in our planning and teaching in order to meet each child’s needs.

We ensure that children’s next steps are met in our weekly planning, and provide children with opportunities to consolidate their learning within continuous provision.

7. Impact

“Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children’s progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support” (EYFS Statutory Framework 2026).

Within the first 6 weeks of arriving at school the children will undertake the Statutory Reception Baseline Assessment. Practitioners also complete their own baseline assessments through interacting and playing with the children, this baseline takes into account information received from parents during visits, as well as other records from pre-schools and child minders.



ST. AIDAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Headteacher: Mrs. J. M. Farrimond, B.A. (Hons) N.P.Q.H

As part of our daily practice, we observe and assess children's learning in order to ensure that future planning and teaching reflects identified needs. We only observe 'Wow' moments and new learning to ensure that we can spend time in provision with our children. All our observations are recorded in the children's individual online learning journeys and include teacher, parent and child voice. These observations form part of our planning and assessment cycle, enabling us to plan for the needs of each child. Learning journeys and floor books contain a wide variety of evidence that we share with parents throughout the year. Each term we assess children and identify any children that may need additional support.

Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written summary to parents with a commentary on children's progress, attainment towards the early learning goals and characteristics of effective learning.

We encourage all parties to contribute to discussions, assessment and children's learning journeys. Parents have the opportunity to add to their child's learning journey through Seesaw, throughout the year, whereby they can record their own child's significant learning moments outside of school.

8. Teaching and Learning

At St. Aidan's children in the EYFS participate in whole class, small group and individual activities, with increasing times as the year progresses, in order to accommodate children's needs and extend their learning. Teaching and learning is constantly evaluated and adapted to meet the needs of the children. We have a flexible timetable that changes throughout the year and places children at the heart of the curriculum. It allows for extended periods of play and it ensures that teachers are meeting the needs of the children.

The Early Years education that we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do;
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the need of young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment;
- It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers

"Play is essential for children's development" (EYFS Statutory Framework 2026).

Our ultimate aim is to help and guide the children to become independent, enquiring and evaluative learners. We follow children's interests, in order to fully engage them in taking charge of their own learning. Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world.

9. The Learning Environment

At St. Aidan's Primary School, we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development. We always make sure that the learning environment inside and outside is planned effectively, to meet the requirements of all areas of learning.

We ensure that the classroom is well organised into clearly defined areas, which allows the children to explore and learn securely and safely. We encourage children to engage in purposeful, challenging activities with or without the presence of an adult.

The pupils have their own outdoor area and have many opportunities to work in the outdoors. Being outdoors offers opportunities for exploring and learning things differently to when pupils are indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. The children have access to water play, large scale construction, mud kitchen, role play and opportunities for writing. Children also attend 'Forest School' sessions in the local woods to develop confidence, perseverance and further develop the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning'.

10. Parents as Partners

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. (EYFS Statutory Framework 2026).

We pride ourselves on having outstanding relationships with parents and other parties. We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators, and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role in educating the children.

We hold stay and play sessions for children and their families in the summer term, to give them the opportunity to spend time with their teacher, before starting school. We also invite parents to an induction meeting. We offer parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress including access to the children's learning journeys.

We have an 'open door' policy whereby we have daily discussions with parents regarding their children. We encourage parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns and hold parents' meetings during the Autumn and Spring term, to discuss their child's progress. We actively encourage parents to take part in their child's learning experiences including stay and play sessions, themed weeks, Christmas productions and assemblies. We draw on our links with the community to enrich children's experiences by taking them on outings and inviting members of the community into our setting.

11. Safeguarding and Welfare

"Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, when they have positive adults caring for them" (EYFS Statutory Framework 2026).

At St. Aidan's primary School, we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2026.

- Ensure the people who have contact with children are suitable.
- Promote good health.
- Support and understand behaviour.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures.

At St. Aidan's primary School, it is important to us that all children in school are safe. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We encourage children to take risks and highlight the importance of keeping themselves safe by teaching them how to recognise and avoid hazards. We promote a healthy lifestyle by providing fresh fruit and water for the children daily, and encourage them to make healthy choices about what they eat. School dinners are also provided for free for all children in Reception, Year One and Year Two.

12. Inclusion

At St. Aidan's Primary School, we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in different ways, at varying rates. We value the diversity of individuals within the school and treat children fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. We believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We use a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs and use resources which reflect diversity. We monitor children's progress and take action to provide support as necessary. We focus on removing barriers to learning and aim to identify any learning difficulties at an early stage.



13. Transition

Starting school can be a difficult time for young children; we therefore plan this time carefully to support children to settle into their new class quickly and happily. During the summer term children are invited in to attend stay and play sessions with their parents, in order to develop familiarity within the setting and with the practitioners. Children from our own nursery visit the reception classroom in the summer term with a member of staff, they also visit for singing and Collective Worships. We also hold an induction meeting to meet parents and give out key information. When the children join us in September, the children spend the first week attending morning or afternoon sessions, and then full time sessions afterwards.

We believe that parents have a fundamental role to play in helping children to learn. Every effort is made to inform parents about what and how their children are learning by:

- Holding parents' evenings to explain pupil progress.
- Sending information to parents, at the start of each term, which outlines the topics that the children will be studying during that term at school;
- Discussing progress made and indicate how the child can improve further;
- Explaining to parents how they can support their children with homework, and suggesting, for example, regular shared reading with very young children, and support for older children with their reading homework.

We believe that parents have the responsibility to support their children and the school in implementing school policies. We would therefore like parents to:

- Ensure that their child has the best attendance record possible;
- Ensure that their child is equipped for school with the correct uniform and PE kit;
- Do their best to keep their child healthy and fit to attend school;
- Inform school if there are matters outside of school that are likely to affect a child's performance or behaviour;
- Promote a positive attitude towards school and learning in general.

14. MONITORING AND REVIEW

We are aware of the need to monitor the school's Early Years policy, and to review it regularly, so that we can take account of new initiatives and research, changes in the curriculum, developments in technology or changes to the physical environment of the school. We will therefore review this policy every three years, or earlier if necessary.

This policy was last up-dated on	March 2026
Discussed and agreed with Governors	
Formal Review of Policy	March 2029

Signed: _____
Headteacher, Mrs J. M. Farrimond

Chair of Committee