



ST MICHAEL'S
C of E PRIMARY
HIGHGATE

Early Years Policy 2023-2024

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"To nurture and inspire our children to develop a love of learning in a supportive Christian community and become the best they can be."

"We believe our children's future is created every day. Every moment counts."



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1. Policy Aim

At St Michael's C of E Primary School we strive to nurture and inspire our children to develop a love of learning in a supportive Christian community and become the best they can be.

We aim to:

- Provide children with the foundation to become confident and competent learners within a safe and stimulating environment.
- Develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting children.
- Offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences across all areas of learning, that are stimulating and challenging and offer unlimited opportunity for development.
- Provide a happy, positive and inclusive environment that is sensitive to the needs of all pupils being mindful of gender, race, language, religion or belief, disability or Special Educational Need.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual need and helping each child to be the best they can be.
- Provide a broad, balanced and creative curriculum that sets in place excellent foundations for further learning in Key stage one and beyond.



2. Teaching and Learning in the Early Years

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected but three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive, they support children's learning in all other areas, they are known as the prime areas. The EYFS framework was updated in 2021:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf

Prime Areas:

Prime areas are fundamental, work together, and move through to support development in all other areas.

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

Specific Areas:

Specific areas include essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society.

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

The ways in which the child engages with other people and their environment – playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically – underpin learning and development across all areas and are known as the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning'.

Characteristics of Effective Learning:

The Characteristics of Effective Learning inform Nursery and Reception staff of children's preferred learning styles. We use these to plan effective next step learning opportunities matched to the children's interests and abilities.

The three characteristics are:

- *Playing and exploring*: Finding out and exploring, Playing with what they know, Being willing to 'have a go'
- *Active learning*: Being involved and concentrating, keeping trying, enjoying achieving what they set out to do
- *Creating and thinking critically*: Having their own ideas, making links, choosing ways to do things.



3. Teaching Strategies

A balance between adult-led and child initiated activities is vital, taking into account children's interests and offering suitable challenge for activities and learning.

To provide high quality child-initiated learning we ensure there is:

- Provision for a stimulating learning environment both inside and outside across all areas of learning with engaging and challenging learning outcomes.
- A variety of high quality, stimulating resources for children to experience and interact with.

4. Observation

Through careful observation staff gather information on children's interests, strengths and areas for further development, which are incorporated into learning intentions and activities accordingly.

Observations throughout the year in all areas of learning are used as an assessment tool and inform the annual report to parents, the end of Nursery assessment and the Foundation Stage Profile.



5. Planning

We have a topic cycle so both Nursery and Reception classes are working together on the same theme but at different levels of challenge and expectation.

The topics are flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests, school themes and local or national events. Through planning, teachers ensure that there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. During child initiated activities the adults' role is to show an interest in the children's ideas, build conversation, facilitate and share ideas and model different skills. Such interaction with the children is essential as this helps to build the children's understanding and therefore guides new learning.

6. Monitoring and Assessment

During the first half term Nursery and Reception children are assessed using a baseline assessment through observations and this is uploaded onto Target Tracker. These assessments are carried out in the first six weeks of pupils beginning school. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children. As of 2021, all Reception children complete the Government's 'Reception Baseline Assessment'.

The Foundation Stage Profile is the nationally employed assessment tool in Reception that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the Foundation Stage, and to summarise their pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals. We record each child's level of development against the 17 early Learning goals as Emerging, Expected. We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.



7. Home/School Links

Continuity between home and school for Foundation Stage children is recognised as being important and is maintained through well maintained home school links. We recognise the important role parents play in educating the children. When parents/carers and practitioners work together in education, the result has a positive impact on the child's development. The success of this strong partnership is based on a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise. We aim to build a strong partnership between staff parents and carers through:

- Inviting all Nursery and 'new to school' Reception parents to a 1:1 induction meeting in the summer term to discuss the foundation stage and answer any questions they may have.
- Inviting all Reception parents to an induction conference during the summer term before their child starts school, outlining the Reception curriculum to enable them to understand the value of supporting their child's home learning.
- At the beginning of the Autumn Term all EYFS parents and children are invited to a picnic to get to know the staff and for families to socialise. This will end with a tour around the EYFS unit.
- Nursery and Reception teachers send a weekly memo on Tapestry each Friday. Memos keep parents up to date with what the children have been learning that week, any important notices and homework (where applicable).
- Parents upload their child's homework weekly (where applicable) and write comments on their child's progress. EYFS staff write comments on each piece of work that is uploaded and children are given the opportunity to 'show and tell' their work to the class.
- Parents are encouraged to share their child's milestones by uploading an observation to Tapestry. E.g. lost their first tooth, rode a bike, learnt to swim etc.
- Parents receive observations (photographs and videos) of their children demonstrating what they have been learning at school. These are released at the end of each half term.
- Parents are encouraged to come into school as visitors and discuss topics they feel passionate about e.g. gardening, their job etc.
- Parents are encouraged to speak to the staff about any queries.
- Offering a range of activities, throughout the year, that encourages collaboration between school and parents, for example class assemblies.



8. Partnership with Parents

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do at our school. Parents are welcome to speak to us about their child, which may be through daily conversations, teacher/parent consultations or during one of our many parent Workshops. Parents and Carers are encouraged to add their own observations to Tapestry to support their child's learning journey towards the Early Learning Goals.

9. Classroom Organisation

Play (structured and self-initiated) and talk are key ways in which young children learn and consolidate their learning. Play and independent self-initiated learning is supported by well-resourced provision. The classrooms are organised to give the children space to move about safely and with ease. Classroom provision ensure the seven areas of the EYFS framework are being provided for learning opportunities each day.

10. Outdoor Provision

The Nursery and Reception children have access to outdoor space and the learning environment outside has been designed to form specific zones and is set up to support and extend children's learning in all areas of the curriculum.

11. The Role of the Early Years Phase Leader

The role of the Early Years Phase Leader is:

- Monitoring planning, assessment and record-keeping of pupils work and feeding back to staff
- Feedback to Senior Management Team and Governing Body
- Supporting staff with all aspects of the planning, assessment and the effective delivery of the Early Years curriculum.
- Ensuring staff are up to date with current educational ideas and initiatives relating to Early Years.