



Sacred Heart
Catholic Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

This policy was reviewed:	Spring 2026
This policy will be reviewed again:	Spring 2028
Governor Committee Responsibility:	QE Committee
Statutory policy	Yes
Source:	Governing Body

Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At Sacred Heart School this entails focusing on the distinct needs of children aged between 3 and 5 years old, who attend our school and Nursery. Staff at Sacred Heart School are guided by the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage which outlines the learning and development requirements for children of this age.

The School adheres to the Richmond Borough guidelines on admissions for its Reception intake.

Aims

This policy describes the aims and objectives of Early Years' education at Sacred Heart School and how the Foundation Stage Curriculum is organised and delivered. It reflects the consensus of all the Early Years Team and the Senior Leadership Team.

At Sacred Heart School we believe that Early Years' education provides an important foundation upon which the rest of the child's future learning in school and throughout life is based, therefore our aim is to provide a setting in which the children continue to be interested, excited and motivated to learn.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based upon four guiding principles

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

This policy explains how our practice is underpinned by these guiding principles.

A Unique Child

At Sacred Heart 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 individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning. The progress of each child is continually monitored and individual age-appropriate targets set throughout their time in the Foundation Stage.

Staff work closely to make accurate assessments against the EYFSP to ensure all children reach their full potential. Staff are alert to the general diversity of children's interests, needs and inclinations and consider their unique stages of development when planning.

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

We aim for all children to have access to a high-quality early years education and to achieve their full potential as individuals irrespective of their gender, ethnic or social background or special educational needs. Boys and girls are equally encouraged to participate in all activities.

We value the diversity of individuals within the school. All children and families at Sacred Heart School are treated fairly and valued as a member of our community. We uphold the values and beliefs of the Catholic ethos of the school in our daily routines.

Some children may have a special need that has already been identified before they begin school. For others their special needs may only become apparent when they join a larger peer group for the first time or as they progress through school. The process of observation and assessment in the early years of school is especially important in determining and providing for the needs of the child and for beginning the process, where appropriate, of making a case for special provision following the Special Needs Code of Practice.

At Sacred Heart School we have a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) who works closely with staff around the identification of additional needs so that appropriate targets and work can be set. When necessary, an application for an Education Healthcare Plan (EHCP) may be drawn up in consultation with parents. Where an EHCP is in place, this is then monitored by the class teacher and SENCo. Staff will work together with the SENCo to develop a curriculum and learning environment that best suit the needs of the individual child.

In addition, after consultations between teacher/parent and the SENCo, additional support from outside agencies may also be sought.

Welfare

It is important that all children in the school are safe. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide the children with choices to help them develop this important life skill.

Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all our children.

At Sacred Heart School we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage. We understand we are required to:

- Promote the welfare of the children.
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment are safe and suitable for purpose.
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

We endeavour to meet all these requirements.

Positive Relationships

At Sacred Heart School we recognise that children learn to be strong, confident and independent through positive relationships which are warm and loving and foster a sense of belonging. Staff at Sacred Heart School are sensitive and responsive to each child's needs, feelings and interests and supportive of their own efforts and independence. Consistent clear boundaries supported by all staff help pupils to feel safe and secure within the Early Years Setting.

Home visits by staff before the children begin school in September and staggered starting dates help to establish positive relationships between pupils, parents and the adults who will be working with them once they begin school.

Staffing

The Reception class is staffed as follows:

- 1 Teacher*
- 1 TA

*The Reception class teacher may also hold the position of EYFS Lead.

The Nursery class is staffed as follows:

- 1 Teacher*
- 1 TA (the number of TA's deployed will meet or exceed current statutory adult: child ratios and qualifications)

*The Nursery class teacher may also hold the position of EYFS Lead.

The Nursery operates from 8.45am – 3.15 pm daily and has provision for 26 pupils, aged 3-4 years. If space is available we will occasionally accept rising 3-year olds (children who will be 3 years old within that term of entry).

Pupils at Sacred Heart School benefit from working with a wide variety of adults besides Early Years staff. We welcome parent helpers who may offer their support in Nursery/Reception. In addition, we receive students from local colleges training in Early Years and students from schools on work experience. Staff and tutors support students and we value the contributions they are able to make to our school community.

All adults working with the children hold up to date enhanced DBS checks.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that for a young child, parents are their first and most important educators. As children begin to attend Reception, we hope that this role will develop into a partnership with the school.

For young children to make a successful transition to school and make good progress in their learning it is essential that staff and parents build a successful working partnership, which we hope will continue throughout the child's school career. This will involve valuing the child's home experiences, sharing information and encouraging parents to be involved in their child's education and school life.

Staff at Sacred Heart School welcome information about the children's home experiences as they provide a valuable means for us to learn about activities and events the child experiences away from the setting that we would not otherwise be aware of and thus enabling us to build up an accurate profile.

Enabling Environments

Children learn best in an environment rich in stimulating resources, which is relevant to all the children's cultures and communities. At Sacred Heart School the environment is designed to invite children to explore, play, discover and take risks.

The Reception class has one classroom with direct access to its own secure outside play area. The children also have access to I.T resources within the classroom and a computer suite and library. The Reception area has its own toilet facilities and a cloakroom for the children.

Whilst the Reception class have their own designated areas the children are integrated with the whole school for a variety of activities:

- Celebrating good work
- Singing

- Sharing play areas
- Lunch-time (in the school hall supported by a TA)
- Assembly, both Infant and Whole school

The Nursery has one classroom with direct access to its own secure outside play area. The children also have access to I.T. resources within the classroom. The Nursery area has its own toilet facilities and a cloakroom area for the children.

Whilst the Nursery class have their own designated areas the children are integrated with Reception class during free-flow across the whole unit, inside and outside. Nursery use the hall and the infant playground for physical exercise.

Learning and Development

At Sacred Heart School we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and have their own learning styles. There are seven interconnected areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in Early Years settings. Three Prime areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

Prime Areas:

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

Staff also support children in four specific areas, through which these three Prime Areas are strengthened and applied:

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

Staff use these headings to plan a balanced programme of activities delivering learning for all of the areas through play and learning experiences, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The curriculum, particularly in Reception, can include aspects of the National Curriculum Key Stage 1 Programme of Study for those children whose achievements exceed the Early Learning Goals in some or all areas.

In Nursery a balanced programme of activities is planned to provide children with the necessary social, emotional and physical skills, communication and language, knowledge and attitudes to learning to enable a smooth transition to Reception class.

Pupils' skills are developed by being given time and opportunity for practising, refining and building confidence. Their understanding of concepts is consolidated over time through opportunities for first hand exploration, experimentation, observing and using all of their senses.

Attitudes to learning such as curiosity, independence, perseverance, enjoyment and a willingness to think and attempt to solve problems are valued at Sacred Heart School and encouraged by all staff. The Early Years environment is where pupils can ask for help, 'have a go' and initiate ideas, builds confidence and co-operation.

Planning

Staff in Nursery/Reception are given time weekly to plan in order to ensure continuity and progression. It is at this time that changes to the medium term plans are made in order to reflect the relevant learning and experiences required and whether additional time is needed to consolidate learning. Planning also ensures that the children are given the relevant experiences required to be able to attain the 17 Early Learning Goals at the end of Reception.

These plans may be adjusted so that teachers can respond to the needs, achievements and interests of the children. This will be indicated on the weekly planning. This fostering of the children's interests develops a high level of motivation for the children's learning. A weekly newsletter provides parents with ideas for supporting the curriculum at home. Short term planning takes place on a weekly and daily basis. Copies of all plans are kept for the Head Teacher and Assessment co-ordinator to view.

Learning and Play

The Foundation Stage Curriculum is delivered predominantly through well-planned and structured purposeful play and practical activities. Play is a key element in young children's learning. "Children do not make a distinction between 'play' and 'work' and neither should practitioners." (Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, QCA 2000). It is the way they make sense of the world around them and of their physical, intellectual, emotional, linguistic, social and spiritual experiences. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. There is an ongoing judgement made by Sacred Heart School staff about the balance between activities led by children, and activities led or guided by adults.

Good planning in the Foundation Stage enables staff to provide the environment, resources, time and stimulus for high levels of learning to take place. Learning intentions need to be clear but flexible, as children do not always use resources as we intend them to or always learn what we expect them to. Sometimes directed and structured activities are planned with the aim of introducing a new level of learning, thinking, experimentation or a new skill, idea, material or experience. The child may then go on to use this in further free play. Thus, there is a spiral of learning through play.

Planning also takes into account various types of learning opportunities. Planned learning takes place in those teacher directed activities or interventions with a specific learning intention. Potential learning situations are those activities set up with clear intentions of what children could learn but which may not necessarily have an adult input. Spontaneous learning also happens during free play and the staff allow for this in their planning.

Most activities are open ended so that all the children may have the opportunity to participate at their own level. Resources are chosen to provide for a wide range of abilities and to give opportunities for progression.

Planning needs to take into account opportunities for those children who want to find out more, experiment further, who need greater challenge, whose speaking and listening, numeracy and literacy skills are developing more quickly or whose creative abilities need appropriate resources to express.

Delivery of Curriculum in Reception

Although class based, the children work, in groups, around a carousel of activities. Over the course of a week they will all have the opportunity to participate in learning experiences centred around:

- Mathematics
- Literacy
- Discovery (Understanding of the World)
- Outside Classroom
- Creative
- Physical (MUGA, Playgrounds and Hall)
- Religion (including RSE)
- P.S.H.E

The personal, social and emotional development of the children is implicit throughout the teaching of the whole curriculum.

Children are assessed at the start of each year using the Thrive programme and receive additional support where identified. All children are taught the Zones of Regulation to develop self-regulation skills and enable them to independently identify and manage their emotions at an age-appropriate level.

Delivery of Curriculum in Nursery

Although class based, the children learn through play and a number of weekly focused group activities, supported by adults. Children are encouraged to be curious, explore, question and talk about their experiences. They are given opportunities that promote learning in all 17 areas of the EYFSP, in particular the Prime Areas:

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

and incorporating opportunities for the Specific Areas:

- Mathematics
- Literacy
- Discovery (Understanding of the World)
- Outside Classroom
- Creative
- Physical (Playgrounds and Hall)

Assessment and Record Keeping

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile describes the level of progress children should be expected to have attained in each of the 7 areas of learning by the end of the EYFS. Staff use the non-statutory *Development Matters 2021* and *Birth to Five Matters 2021* handbooks to monitor the progress of individual pupils against the expected progress of a child developing typically for their age in each of the 17 aspects of learning. This progress is tracked throughout the Early Years using the school's digital tracker.

Staff gain an initial understanding of the level of development of individual children through conversations with their nursery teachers and with parents during the home visit. The Richmond Nursery Transfer Record also helps to build a fuller picture of the child. In addition, the Reception teachers carry out the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment and some additional relevant assessments based on observations during the 1st half-term which help to provide a school baseline assessment for each child.

Staff in Nursery and Reception classes record observations on activity based tracking sheets, Post-its and, Insight, a digital based recording platform. A mixture of parental contributions, pupil voice, staff observations, pictures, work and discussions are all used to help make judgements about individual children, which are then recorded at regular intervals on the school's digital tracker. Internal moderation ensures consistency.

It is a legal requirement for the staff in the Reception classes to complete the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. This is carried out and completed in the final term of the year in which the children reach 5 and no later than the 30th June. The profile describes each child's attainment against 17 early learning goals together with a short commentary of how the child demonstrates the 3 key characteristics of effective learning:

1. Finding out and exploring
2. Playing with what they know
3. Being willing to 'have a go'

The Profile must reflect: ongoing observation; all relevant records held by the setting; discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution.

Staff attend external Foundation Stage Agreement trialling and moderation meetings. At the end of the final term in Reception a summary of these assessments is sent to the LEA for analysis.

Reporting to Parents

Reception parents are informed of their child's progress through individual consultations in the Autumn Term and the Spring Term where individual targets are set and reviewed. Parents are also consulted about any concerns or progress made towards these targets throughout their time in Reception. Children's Reading Record Books and Homework Books are also used as a tool to keep parents informed about progress.

Towards the end of the summer term, parents are given a written report containing the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.

The EYFS Profile is also shared with Year 1 staff prior to the child beginning Key Stage 1 to enable them to provide a smooth transition.

The children also spend some time with their Year 1 teacher in the new classroom prior to beginning KS1 to further assist in a smooth transition.

Once a term parents are invited into the Nursery setting to share their child's Nursery experiences and speak to Nursery staff. Parents are also consulted about any concerns about a child's progress throughout their time in Nursery.

Towards the end of the Summer Term Nursery parents receive a written report on their child's progress throughout the year and have the opportunity to write comments of their own. This is shared with the Reception class teacher to enable them to provide a smooth transition. The children who will be moving into Sacred Heart Reception class* have the opportunity to spend time with their Reception class teacher in their new classroom prior to beginning Reception to further assist in a smooth transition.

**Children attending Sacred Heart School Nursery are not guaranteed a place in Sacred Heart School Reception class. Parents need to apply using the London Borough of Richmond's Admissions Procedure and complete the Sacred Heart School Supplementary form.*

Success Criteria

The Early Years Lead in conjunction with the Senior Leadership team and governors will use the following criteria to judge whether this policy is effectively being put into practice:

- Children settling successfully and happily in Nursery
- Continuity and progression in and between Nursery and Reception
- Children settling successfully and happily in Reception
- Continuity and progression in and between Reception and Year 1
- Children involved and focused during activities
- All children achieving a Good Level of Development or working well towards the Early Learning Goals by the end of their Reception year
- Most children making a successful start to National Curriculum Key Stage 1 Programmes of Study on transition to year 1
- Special educational needs being identified and appropriate support in place
- Children who are more able in some or all areas beginning to be recognised and their particular needs met
- Parental satisfaction, measured through feedback to the Head teacher and the parent questionnaire, parent consultation meetings and positive comments
- Evidence of consistently high quality teaching, geared towards the Early Years Curriculum, this is measurable from the quality and high standard of work produced by the children and from observation of children staying on task and showing interest and motivation.

Monitoring

- Nursery/Reception staff will monitor and evaluate as part of their ongoing and regular planning.
- Teaching staff have regular professional development meetings with the Head teacher.
- Governors will be invited to visit the Nursery/Reception class from time to time and discuss their observations with the Nursery/Reception class teacher and the EYFS Leader.

Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's ongoing policy review programme, and amended as necessary. It will also have governor oversight and discussion around its application in the Early Years provision.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Admissions Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Reception Class Handbook
- Home School Agreement
- Relational Policy formerly Behaviour Policy
- SMSC Policy
- PSHCE Policy
- SEND/Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding Policy