

# **St John's Church of England Primary School Early Years Policy**



**Gather, Grow, Go**

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13 : 31-32

**Date agreed and ratified by Governing Body: May 2025**

**Date of next review: May 2026**

**This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and following any concerns and/or updates to national and local guidance or procedure**

1. The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of Reception year in school. Early Years as referred to in this policy relates to Nursery and Reception classes.

## **Supporting Guidance (to be read and followed alongside this document)**

St John's Church of England Primary School Child Protection Policy

Teaching & Learning Policy

## **2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

2.1 At St John's we firmly believe that every child has a right to experience an outstanding Early Years education which will provide them with a firm foundation for lifelong learning and development. We strive to ensure that our Early Years provision:

- Addresses the children's social, emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development
- Builds upon children's current level of development and takes what they already know and can do as a starting point
- Is fully inclusive regardless of gender, race, culture, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability or ability
- Provides a rich and stimulating learning journey through a wide range of planned activities and experiences and an enabling environment which allows children to make their own choice
- Is a safe, secure and caring environment in which children become independent active learners

## **3. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

3.1 The EYFS is based upon 4 overarching principles:

1. A Unique Child
2. Positive Relationships
3. Enabling Environments with teaching and support from adults
4. Learning and Development

These emphasise that each child is unique and learns and develops in different ways and the importance of strong relationships between Early Years professionals, children and families. Enabling environments allow children to thrive and learn through quality play-based provision which is enhanced and adapted to encourage children to develop as independent learners. There are 7 Areas of Learning and

Development in the EYFS which are all connected and cannot be delivered in isolation. These are made up of 3 prime areas and 4 specific Areas of Learning.

3.2 The Prime Areas are:

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

3.3 The Specific Areas are:

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

3.4 The Characteristics of Effective Learning in the EYFS identify how children learn through playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically.

3.5 Throughout the EYFS we plan a range of activities which give children learning experiences and opportunities to work towards the Early Learning Goals and prepare them for the National Curriculum. Broad themes are used in both Nursery and Reception, and all planned activities are appropriately adapted to meet the individual needs of children and to ensure that activities are closely matched to children's abilities and level of development. Teaching and learning will take place within the classroom and outside areas. Within these areas there will be a balanced range of activities and experiences which are adult led and child initiated.

3.6 At St John's we ensure that the learning environment is engaging and provides a wide range of opportunities for children to learn and develop. Our Reception classes have a partition wall so that during child-initiated learning "Discovery Time", children have access to the whole space, which enables us to provide quality learning opportunities in all 7 Areas of Learning and Development. Staff enhance the continuous provision in the environment according to children's interests and outcomes of informal and formal assessments. A progression of skills framework is used to ensure that resources will provide appropriate challenge for learners of all stages of development.

## **4. Planning**

4.1 When planning for the provision, Early Years staff are led by the children's interests, and ideas for themes and mini topics can develop throughout the year according to the needs and preferences of the children.

4.2 Staff in the Nursery and Reception classes plan appropriate activities based upon children's age and stage of development. They plan adult led activities as well as planning the environment to ensure that children have access to a wide range of quality resources which will enhance their play and opportunities for learning.

4.3 Staff complete medium term plans and short term plans which are uploaded onto SharePoint. Information is shared with parents on the school website and is also displayed in the classroom.

4.4 To support children's early literacy and mathematics, we use the Read, Write, Inc phonics programme and the Master the Curriculum maths progression overview. We use Tales Toolkit to develop children's independent storytelling and later, their emergent writing. The Squiggle Whilst you Wiggle and Dough Disco programmes support physical development and pre-writing skills.

## **5. Assessment, Recording and Reporting**

5.1 At St John's, assessment is on-going which is integral to teaching and learning in each classroom. Children are assessed in a range of ways which informs teacher planning for individuals as well as for small groups and the whole class. Assessment may take the form of written observations, photographs, examples of dated work and discussions with parents, children and other adults who work with the children. During the year, children in Reception are also assessed in phonics and their reading records contain a copy of the sounds they know and those they are working on next. Parents/carers are encouraged to attend phonics information sessions to ensure consistency in the way the children practise their phonics at home and in school.

5.2 On entry to Nursery and Reception, a baseline assessment will be carried out to determine the children's starting points and allow adults working with the children to carefully plan appropriate provision. Knowledge of each child is gathered using observations and interactions during everyday activities which are part of regular classroom practice in addition to discussions with parents/ carers.

5.3 Children starting in Reception will also take part in the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) within the first six weeks of starting school with us. This assessment will be done in a quiet, welcoming environment with a familiar teacher. The teachers completing the RBA will have received appropriate training. The results of these assessments are not shared with the school, but will be used to give school level progress data from Reception through to Year 6.

5.4 Each class has a Learning Journey book which builds up a picture of their progress and development over the year. Observations in the Learning Journey will capture "wow" moments in all 7 Areas of Learning. The Learning Journey will be shared with children regularly and adults will involve children in their own development by encouraging them to review their learning and communicate their thoughts and ideas. In Reception, all the children also have an individual writing book and a handwriting book.

5.5 At the end of a child's time in Reception, the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is completed, in which teachers assess a child's attainment against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG). The school will provide parents/ carers with a written report detailing how their child learns according to the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Parents are invited to discuss their child's report with the class teacher if they so wish.

## **6. Partnership with Parents**

6.1 At St John's we acknowledge the importance of strong partnerships with parents and actively encourage parental involvement in school life. In the Early Years parents bring their children to the classroom doors each day and are able to have informal discussions with the adults who teach them. If they require a more formal discussion, parents are able to make an appointment to speak to the class teacher after school.

6.2 Parents are kept informed about school activities and events through the school website, emails and text messages and our social media. Each class updates their website page termly, sharing with parents information relevant to their class, including key areas of learning for the term ahead. The website page also celebrates key moments from earlier in the school year. Parents are invited to services and other events including sports day, school productions and individual class events.

6.3 Parents and carers are invited to sign up for a Tapestry account, which enables the school and families to share photographs and observations of significant moments in a child's development.

6.4 The school follows the SEN Code of Practice and parents/ carers are involved at all stages (see SEN policy). We are also guided by the Mainstream Core Standards, a document for schools, parents/ carers and professionals working with children and young people.

6.5 If the class teacher has any concerns or is unsure about the understanding of a child with English Additional Language they are to consult with the parents regarding the child's level of understanding in their home language. This will help them to make informed judgements about a child's level of development and to plan accordingly.

## **7. Induction and Entry to School.**

7.1 The Nursery class at St John's is open five days a week, term time throughout the year. Each day consists of two sessions - 8.30am to 11.30am and 12.00pm to 3.00pm. The week is organised into two halves with children attending all day Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning or Wednesday afternoon and all day Thursday and Friday. The 15 hours free childcare entitlement can be used at the nursery and additional sessions purchased if available, as well as 30 hours for those eligible for this provision. All extra sessions must be paid for in advance. Allocation of places will be looked at on an individual basis in line with our school admission policy and taking into account staff:child ratios and availability.

7.2 New children have a home visit before starting, to allow parents to share important information about their child and for the child to meet the teacher and/ or their key worker. Children are given the opportunity to visit for settle sessions so they can meet the adults and familiarise themselves with the nursery environment before attending sessions by themselves. Within the nursery, children have a key person, allowing them to develop a strong relationship with a familiar adult. This approach is important in making children feel safe and secure and ensuring their level of well-being is high. The key person also forms a relationship with the child's parents or carers and information regarding the child is regularly shared.

7.3 Entry to Reception is in accordance with Kent Admissions Procedures with children starting in September following their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. Children and parents are invited to visit the school several times in the summer term before they start. Parents are invited in for a talk by the Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher for EYFS and other members of staff. Children visit their new classrooms where they play with a range of activities and have a story.

7.4 Home visits take place in the summer term or at the start of September, prior to the children starting in Reception. These allow teachers to meet the children and families in their own environment and to provide information and answer further questions. Staff are able to gather important information regarding who may collect a child from school and any other details that parents feel is important for the teacher to know. The teacher will ask about other settings the child has attended and their current levels of development, which will help to inform the initial assessments of children's starting points when they begin school.

7.5 At St John's we strive to ensure that each child has a smooth transition in to school and between year groups. In the Early Years, we acknowledge that there are three periods of transition: from home to school, Nursery to Reception and from Reception to Year 1. At each stage communication is crucial and we ensure the transitions are as smooth as possible by arranging for children to visit their new class and to have time with the adults who will be supporting them. Teachers also visit their children in their current class, in order to see them in a familiar environment. Meetings between teachers are held so that documentation can be passed on and detailed information gathered by new teachers to ensure they have a full picture of individual children and the class as a whole. SEND transition meetings are also held about individual children so that provision is in place immediately for all children at the beginning of the school year.

## **8. Staff**

8.1 The staff in nursery and reception have a wide range of experience and a thorough knowledge and understanding of the EYFS and child development. Our Nursery is currently staffed by a Qualified Teacher and Early Years Practitioners. Each reception class has a Qualified Teacher and other support staff. The Assistant Headteacher for Early Years and Key Stage 1 is responsible for Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2.

## **9. Child Protection**

9.1 All necessary steps are taken to keep the children in our care safe and well.

The staff in nursery and reception follow the schools Child Protection policy which has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and related guidance. This includes:

- The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (November 2024)
- Early years qualification requirements and standards (updated March 2025)
- DfE guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2024 Update)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Kent and Medway Online Safeguarding Children Procedures

9.2. Any safeguarding or welfare issues will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, and all members of staff in the EYFS are required to read this policy as part of their induction training.

9.3. The DSLs are Joanne Williamson and Emily Joslin

9.4. The deputy DSLs are Nikki Duffy, Natasha Gillett, Jo Chevalier, Louisa Tierney

9.5. The DSL is responsible for safeguarding children and liaising with local children's services as appropriate.

9.6. The deputy DSL will undertake the duties of the DSL in their absence, but overall responsibility for safeguarding will remain with the DSL.

9.7. The DSL and deputy DSL will undertake child protection training as required.

9.8. Staff will receive safeguarding training that enables them to understand the safeguarding policy and procedures, have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, and recognise signs of potential abuse and neglect.

9.9 All staff working in the EYFS will be able to attend regular supervision meetings, to provide support, coaching and training for staff and which will promote the interests of the children.

## **10. Additional Safeguarding - Mobile phones and devices**

10.1. For the purposes of this policy, the term 'mobile phone' refers to any electronic device that can be used to take images or record videos, including tablets.

### *Use of mobile phones by staff members*

10.2. Staff members must not use personal mobile phones or cameras when children are present, they are to be safely locked away in the lockers provided located in the staffroom.

10.3. Staff may use mobile phones in the staffroom during breaks and non-contact time.

10.4. Staff may take mobile phones on trips, but they must only be used in emergencies and should not be used when children are present. Mobile phones must not be used to take images or videos at any time during trips.

10.5. Staff who do not adhere to this policy will face disciplinary action.

10.6. Staff may use their professional judgement in emergency situations.

10.7. Staff must report any concerns about another staff member's use of mobile phones to the DSL, following the procedures outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

#### *Use of mobile phones by parents, visitors and contractors*

10.8. Posters are displayed in the main office of the school to indicate that it's a mobile free zone.

10.9. Parents, visitors and contractors are not permitted to take photographs or record videos without prior permission.

#### *Use of the school's mobile phones, cameras and iPads.*

10.10. Staff are provided with a school device to ensure that only school equipment is used to take photographs and videos. In the EYFS iPads are allocated to classes for recording photographic and video evidence of individual children's learning.

10.11. School devices must have passcode protection.

10.12. School devices must only be used for work related matters.

10.13. School devices must only be used to take photographs in the presence of another staff member and only with the consent of the child's parent.

10.14. Staff must not take photographs of bruising or injuries for child protection reasons. Instead, recording concerns forms and body maps are used to record observations relating to child protection concerns – these can be acquired from the DSL.

10.15. School devices must not be taken off school premises without prior written permission from the headteacher.

10.16. Where staff members have concerns over material on a school device, they must report all concerns to the DSL, following the procedures outlined in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## **11. Monitoring**

11.1. It is the responsibility of the Early Years staff to follow this policy and to raise any problems in doing so with the school's Senior Leadership Team. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Assistant Headteacher EYFS and KS1.