ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI PRIMARY SCHOOL
EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY
Reviewed November 2025
Next Review November 2026

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five 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 together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up."

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage – Department for Education 2024

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. It is not just a preparation for the next stage but is vitally important in itself. For young children there is no distinction between work and play. Learning for young children is a rewarding and enjoyable experience in which they explore, investigate, discover, create, practice, rehearse, repeat, revise and consolidate their developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes. During the foundation stage, many of these aspects of learning are brought together effectively through quality interactions and child-led play.

THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS) FRAMEWORK

At St. Francis, we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start in their school life, both intellectually and emotionally, in order to enable them to develop their full potential. During the EYFS, we aim to support each child's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Recognising that all children are unique and special.
- Understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates – physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued.
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community.
- Ensuring all children have a happy, positive and fun start to school where they establish solid foundations and develop a deep love for learning.

- Teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- Encouraging children's independence and decision-making, supporting them to learn through their mistakes.
- Developing children's understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviours required for people to work together harmoniously.
- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions which differ from their own.
- Understanding the importance of play in children's learning and development.
- Providing learning experiences through play which reflect children's personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interests, excitement and motivation to learn.
- Providing experiences which build on children's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.
- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.
- Developing positive relationships with parents and carers to build strong partnerships in supporting children's development.

At St. Francis Primary School, teaching in the EYFS is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' (September 2025). This document is a principled approach to the Early Years education, promoting teaching and learning to ensure children's readiness for the next stage of education and bringing together children's welfare, learning and developmental requirements through four main themes: 'A Unique Child,' 'Positive Relationships,' 'Enabling Environments' and 'Children Learn in Different Ways and at Different Rates.'

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape the educational provision in our early years setting. All these areas are important, given equal weighting and no one aspect stands in isolation as they are all closely interlinked. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centred, broad and balanced curriculum which allows children to make links between what they are learning.

Our curriculum is centred around the three prime areas of learning. The prime areas play a significant role in encouraging children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. They are the driving force behind helping children as they learn to form relationships, moderate emotions and thrive in their day-to-day life. The three prime areas of learning are:

- **Communication and Language**
    - Listening, Attention and Understanding
    - Speaking
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**
    - Self-regulation
    - Managing Self
    - Building Relationships
- **Physical Development**
    - Gross Motor Skills
    - Fine Motor Skills

The curriculum is further supplemented through the four specific areas which provide opportunities to develop essential skills and knowledge. The specific areas of learning cannot be developed alone, and rely on well developed prime areas of learning. The four specific areas of learning are:

- **Literacy**
    - Comprehension
    - Word Reading
    - Writing
- **Mathematics**
    - Number
    - Numerical Patterns
- **Understanding of the World**
    - Past and Present
    - People, Culture and Communities
    - The Natural World
- **Expressive Arts and Design**
    - Creating with Materials
    - Being Imaginative and Expressive

The seven areas of learning are underpinned by the 'characteristics of effective learning', which bring focus to the ways in which children learn. The three characteristics are:

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

SCHOOL CURRICULUM GOALS

We have designed our curriculum goals with the particular strengths and needs of our children in mind. The goals are ambitious. They provide an overview of many of the different things we would like the children to know and be able to do by the time they finish up in Nursery and Reception.

The goals are adaptable to the particular children in our care. We offer support and scaffolding to help every child to access the same curriculum and to ensure they make progress through it. Alternatively, where children move on quickly, our emphasis is on the depth of their learning rather than introducing new skills or concepts.

Our Curriculum Goals

	Nursery	Reception
Goal 1	**Recite** a prayer	**Organise** a collective worship session
Goal 2	**Engage** in back and forth conversation	**Present**, ask questions and make relevant comments
Goal 3	**Settle in** and become a confident learner within the class community	**Coordinate** a group game alongside classmates
Goal 4	**Explore** an obstacle course using a range of movement	**Navigate** the climbing frame effectively
Goal 5	**Make up** a story	**Embrace** a love of reading
Goal 6	**Write** some of the letters of name	**Write** a simple sentence
Goal 7	**Build** a deep understanding of numbers to 5	**Build** a deep understanding of number to 10
Goal 8	**Show curiosity** about own life story and what is seen around us	**Question** and **appreciate** the world around us
Goal 9	**Recite** nursery rhymes by heart and **perform** one to a small audience	**Perform** a story, song, poem or dance to an audience
Goal 10	**Draw** a face	**Construct** a model with a creative plan in mind

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

At St. Francis of Assisi Primary School we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve young children for sustained periods. Therefore, our early years setting has an ethos of learning through play.

We value the importance of play as an essential and a rich part of their learning process, supporting children in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Furthermore, play is flexible and provides multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

In order to prepare the children for the next stage of their learning we also gradually introduce opportunities where the children gather together on the carpet for adult led teaching. These times are particularly important in developing specific skills and knowledge to support the children's development. The further development of these new skills and knowledge are then promoted through our continuous provision and planned enhancements for the children to explore through play.

We organise the day to provide a balance between the following:

- **Child Initiated Learning** – children lead their own exploration and learning through the continuous provision on offer, using their own ideas, interests and curiosities to initiate play.
- **Adult Initiated Learning** – adults plan and initiate learning with an intention in mind, however the children lead the learning themselves and take the learning in their own direction.
- **Adult Directed Learning** – adults both plan and lead learning with a desired intention to develop skills and/or knowledge.

PLANNING

Staff plan activities and experiences that enable children to develop and learn effectively in all areas of learning, as well as offering them opportunities to develop their cultural capital. We place a strong emphasis on the development of the prime areas as the foundation for the development of skills and knowledge across a broad and balanced curriculum. Adults also take into account the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable learning experience, in which they guide children's development through warm, positive interactions. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, a plan is put in place to ensure they can access and develop through the curriculum.

In planning and guiding children's activities, adults reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice. They also show ambitious intent for all children.

Adults are expected to develop a strong continuous provision, and plan enhancement opportunities and additional adult directed activities to support this. As children progress through the early years foundation stage and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for their next stage of education.

We believe that children need to be given a starting point to learn new things through themes that engage the children's interests, curiosities and imagination. Staff meet regularly to plan ahead, ensuring consideration of possible enhancement opportunities which will support the development of the cultural capital of our children. It is at this point staff also plan for the quality texts which will be used to compliment the proposed curriculum intentions for the half term. Staff go on to plan in more detail on a weekly basis using what they have observed through their quality interactions with the children. This informs the teaching, learning and additional support required to move the children on in their learning. Daily feedback opportunities between staff ensure that timely support can be planned and provided for any children identified as not 'keeping up' with any aspect of the teaching and learning.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The EYFS classrooms are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are specific areas where the children can be active, be quiet, be creative etc. The areas are defined and resources are clearly labelled to ensure children can access them easily. The provision in each classroom provides children with experiences and activities in all seven areas of learning. As children become settled and confident in their environment, they are encouraged to access resources independently from the continuous provision on offer whilst leading their own playful learning. The children will also be encouraged to explore a variety of activities that have been planned by the adults to support a particular learning intent.

Children have access to both inside and outside areas across the day; this has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. All areas of the curriculum can be explored outside.

ASSESSMENT

At St. Francis, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. However, we value the impact of quality interactions between adults and children on learning and therefore have adapted our practice to ensure that assessments and observations are not unnecessarily time consuming. Staff observe children to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. The knowledge gained from these observations is used to shape future planning and provision. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

All staff are expected to show an understanding of the pupil's knowledge and skills and what their next steps in learning are. They are regularly expected to discuss the strengths and needs of the class as a whole, as well as individual children. This is to ensure we meet the needs of all pupils within the setting, quickly recognise when children are not keeping up with the learning of the group and so we can adapt timetables, the environment and our planning to ensure we continue to be ambitious for all pupils. Daily feedback opportunities between staff provide a timely and efficient means of sharing what has been observed and purposeful discussions around next steps, support and stretching needs.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child starts with us, staff will complete a 'baseline' assessment. This will provide us with a snapshot of each child's starting point on entry to our school. Judgments are made based on the staff's observations of each child's knowledge, skills and behaviours in child-initiated play. Children in Reception will additionally take part in the government's statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

In addition to the regular and ongoing identification and monitoring of any children not 'keeping up' with learning, attainment and progress will continue to be recorded and tracked at termly 'checkpoints'. This will then be reflected upon in pupil progress meetings with a school leader. Any child suggested to be 'not on track' or at risk of making poor progress will be identified and the relevant support provided. Particular focus will be given to the needs of the lower 20% of children. Staff also identify the more able children to ensure that we plan rich and stimulating experiences to deepen their learning.

At the end of Reception, staff will complete the statutory EYFS profile for each child. The profile assesses children assessed against the 17 early learning goals (ELGs), indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development or,
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements. It reflects ongoing staff observations and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are then shared with parents and/or carers through the end of year report. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.

At the end of Nursery, staff will complete a summary of attainment for each child across the areas of learning. The summary will indicate whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development or,
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The summary reflects ongoing staff observations and discussions with parents and/or carers. This is shared with parents and/or carers through the end of year report, in the same way as the Reception profile, however is not required to be submitted to the local authority.

We value the opportunity to engage in moderations at the relevant 'checkpoints', to ensure consistent assessment judgements. These may be internal moderations between our own staff (EYFS, Year 1 or specific subject leads) or external moderations between our partner schools.

PARENTS AS PARTNERS

At St. Francis, we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development. So, staff endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents.

We value the role of parents as children's primary educators. We encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports staff in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through the class website, reading records and informal communication at the beginning and end of the school day as encouraged by our 'open door' policy. Weekly home learning is set via Google Classroom, sharing the class learning intentions as well as providing ideas for activities which consolidate children's learning. We offer a range of information and training sessions for parents across the year in order to support parents to confidently support their child's learning at home across a range of areas of learning. Whole school newsletters are also sent home on a weekly basis.

Parents are invited to attend parent's evening meetings during the course of the academic year. The first of these takes place during the autumn term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into the setting. Another parent's evening takes place during the spring term, where practitioners will give feedback on children's learning and development progress.

Other opportunities for practitioners to share children's learning, development and well-being with parents include parent stay and play sessions and end of year reports where children's achievements are recognised.

Parents are invited to play an active part in school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as educational visits, group and individual reading, as well as offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, art, music) to support children's learning. Parents are invited into the setting on other occasions such as class assemblies where the children showcase what they have been learning about in the term. At the end of the summer term, there is a 'Nursery

Graduation', where the Nursery children share their experiences, interests and successes of the past year. This marks the beginning of their next stage of learning.

ADMISSIONS AND INDUCTION

St. Francis of Assisi Primary School provides full-time Early Years education for children in the Nursery and Reception Year. This is for children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn 3/4 years old.

Every effort is made to make children feel safe, secure and happy. There is a relaxed and open ethos in the setting. Established routines, a calm atmosphere and encouraging talk are some of the strategies practitioners use to maintain children's positive feelings about school.

Before they start in the setting, all new children are offered a stay and pla session. The purpose of this initial visit is for the children to meet the staff alongside their parents or carers and start to become familiar with the setting.

In the summer term all parents are invited into school for an induction meeting. At this meeting, information regarding the induction process, routine and expectations are shared. There is also time for informal conversations and parents' questions.

Induction packs for families to complete are also given out as a way to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of each individual child. After the settling in period, parents are once again invited into the classroom setting where further information regarding the academic year, including the EYFS ethos and curriculum, is shared through a class welcome meeting.

SAFEGUARDING AND WELFARE

"Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.'

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage – Department for Education, 2025.

At St. Francis of Assisi Primary School, we follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2025:

- To provide a setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence.
- To promote good health and keep children safe and well.
- To manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- To ensure that all adults who look after the children are suitable to do so.
- To ensure the setting, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for.

- To maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Our priority is to ensure that children are safe. We educate the children in our care on boundaries, rules and limits, and help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. We encourage children to take risks within their learning and play whilst at the same time highlighting the importance of keeping themselves safe, recognising dangers and avoiding hazards.

We promote good oral health, as well as good health in general, in the early years through our curriculum, for example by talking to children about:

- The effects of eating too many sweet things
- The importance of brushing your teeth

We also teach E-safety across our EYFS in age appropriate ways.

The rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our whole school procedure for Safeguarding and Child Protection (see separate policies).

We follow the whole school procedure for Safeguarding and Child Protection (see separate policy). Paula Murphy is the named Interim Safeguarding Lead and all concerns are referred to her until the return of Ailbhe Farrell, Safeguarding Lead.

NUTRITION

We aim to be a healthy school for our children and therefore provide them with fresh fruit and milk on a daily basis. Staff model good eating habits by dining with their classes at lunchtime. Children are given the opportunity to provide their own packed lunch, if not taking up the offer of a hot school lunch prepared onsite. Reception children are entitled to free school meals through the 'Universal Free School Meal' government programme. Nursery children are required to pay a small charge or school lunch.

HEALTH AND FIRST AID

We take all accidents seriously and always log incidents in our medical record book kept in the classroom. Parents are made aware of incidents that have occurred. In cases of a bang the head, parents and/or carers are always informed immediately via telephone call and children are checked by first aider. All staff within the setting receive basic first aid training and are aware of where first aid resources and medical supplies are stored in case of emergency. At least one member of staff within the unit is paediatric first aid trained. The certificate is displayed in the setting and renewed regularly in accordance with guidelines.

We ensure that a paediatric first aider attends all outside trips and excursions.

Parents of children who require regular medication to be administered at school are required to fill out an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) with the School Nurse, SENCO and Class Teacher, in line with the school's 'Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions' policy.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

We encourage all children to start our school fully toilet trained. We acknowledge that young children have accidents and therefore have ample spare uniform to change those who need it. We follow the main school's policy on intimate care and encourage children to clean themselves as best they can. The staff will see to the children's urgent personal hygiene needs and take immediate action.

STAFFING

The class teacher is the named key worker for each child in the setting. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years setting seek to form positive, respectful relationships with the children in their care. Healthy relationships between adults and children are essential to enabling children's well-being now and for their future successes.

We ensure that our staffing arrangements meet the needs of our children and ensure their safety. Children are adequately supervised and are within sight and hearing of staff. Where there is a person with Qualified Teaching Status or Early Years Professional Status we ensure there is one member of staff to every 13 children. When a person with Qualified Teaching Status or Early Years Professional Status is not working directly with the children we ensure there is at least one member of staff for every 8 children.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

It is the responsibility of all the EYFS staff to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Headteacher, Early Years Lead and subject leads will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.