



Early Years Policy

St Dunstan's RC
Primary School

2023-2026

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Date Endorsed by Governors:	15th March 2023
Date of Next Review:	February 2026

Mission Statement

At St. Dunstan's RC Primary School

We Journey With Jesus Beside Us

And this means-

- We have the encouragement and strength we need to achieve our goals and make good choices
- We make everyone feel appreciated and treat each other with kindness and respect
- We love God and others and know God's love for us is everlasting

Our mission statement underpins everything we do in school and, in particular, the way that we behave towards each other throughout our school and the wider community.

Our Vision

At St Dunstan's RC Primary School, we aim to provide every child with the skills to become a happy, independent and curious lifelong learner. Our priority is that our provision provides a high level of engagement and active learning through a range of skill-based activities.

Our Principles

At St Dunstan's RC Primary School, we strive to meet every child's entitlement to develop a love of learning that will enable them to have the best possible future life chances. The Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (2021) states four guiding principles which should shape practice in the early years. These are:

- 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 to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates.

Our EYFS Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2021 statutory framework of the EYFS.

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as

particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These are:

- **Communication and language development.**

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

- **Physical development.**

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

- **Personal, social and emotional development.**

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive 9 relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.

The Early Years Framework also talks about Specific Areas of learning. They develop from the prime areas and provide important context for learning. These are:

- **Literacy**

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).

- **Mathematics.**

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes.

- **Understanding the world.**

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension

- **Expressive arts and design.**

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is

crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

Achievement of these prime and specific areas of learning is through the characteristics of effective learning:

- **playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- **active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

Planning

Staff use the development statements in Development Matters (DfE 2021) to identify next steps for each child to deepen, challenge and extend their learning. Activities and experiences for children are carefully discussed and planned so they enable children to develop and learn effectively.

Staff 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 experience. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required and this is discussed with the SENCo, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice.

Teaching

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Practitioners respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year 1.

The Enabling Environment

The EYFS learning environment is carefully planned to ensure all areas are used to enable learning for every child. The children have the choice of where they choose to learn. All activities are based upon current assessment and all have a main learning intention that can be accessed with and without adult support. Our basic provision is linked to the age-related

expectations of the cohort. We encourage child-initiated activities and adapt our continuous provision accordingly. We enhance our provision through objects, prompts, conversation and questioning.

Assessment

At St Dunstan's RC Primary School ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Practitioners also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

At the end of the EYFS, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the early learning goals across the 7 areas of learning, indicating whether they are:

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

The profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are then shared with parents and/or carers.

Working with parents

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.

Every child in our early years setting has an online learning journey. These aim to serve as a joint record of each child's progress and learning in school and at home. Parents are actively encouraged to share their child's learning and special occasions through their learning journey.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development through parents meeting and their online learning journeys. The annual reports and EYFS profile help to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

SEND

Our SEND procedures are outlined in our SEND policy

Safeguarding

Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy.

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed and approved by Early Years Lead every 3 years, unless there are changes in legislation, then the policy will be reviewed sooner.

At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.