



St. Thomas' CE Primary School

Early Years Policy



PHILOSOPHY AND AIMS.

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the Early Years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is very important in its own right, and it provides the foundations for the children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up."

(Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage pg 7 2008)

The EYFS is based upon four themes:-

- A unique child
- Positive relationships
- Enabling environments
- Learning and development

A unique child

Child development

At St Thomas' we recognise that all children are individual and will learn in different ways and at different rates. We believe that all children are competent learners and it is the role of the practitioner to engage, encourage and support children through varied learning experiences. Praise, encouragement and celebration are ways in which we at St Thomas' encourage the children to develop a positive attitude towards learning.

Inclusive practice

Every child, regardless of race, class or gender, will have equal access to the curriculum. It is essential that the Early Years curriculum includes activities, resources and the correct learning environment which reflects our Equal Opportunities policy. Teachers will strive to create as bias-free an environment as possible and encourage all children to explore a variety of roles and activities in the classroom. When planning the learning provisions are made and build on from the life experiences of our children. Good provision is made for bilingual children or those who have special needs or abilities and require additional support to gain equal access to the curriculum.

In the EYFS we set realistic and challenging expectations to meet the needs of our children. Our planning aims to engage the children in the setting and takes into account gender, SEN needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from a range of ethnic backgrounds and children from all social and cultural backgrounds.

We meet the needs of our children through:

- Planning for learning opportunities that build on children's interest, experiences and knowledge,
- To plan for ways in which to develop self-esteem and confidence,

- Use a range of teaching strategies in order to cater for the individual needs of all children,
- Provide a safe and secure learning environment where all children feel valued and have the confidence to take risks,
- Key worker groups are organised and take into account the individual needs of each child,
- All staff support and work hard to ensure that strong home / school links are developed and maintained,
- Use the planning cycle of observe, assess and plan to meet the developmental needs of the children,
- Create an environment which reflects diversity and is free from stereotypes and discrimination.

Keeping safe

It is of primary focus that all children are safe and feel 'safe'. We strive to embed the 'Golden Rules' that run through the school at St Thomas' so that children become familiar with the boundaries and rules, in turn this will equip the children to make the right choices and therefore develop critical life skills.

“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.” (Practice guidance for the EYFS pg 14)

Routines are an important way that enables children to feel safe and secure. This includes self registration, snack-time, small group and whole class story or circle time.

In conjunction with the welfare requirements we at St Thomas' will endeavour to:

- Promote the welfare of the children,
- Promote good health (take appropriate action when children are ill),
- Manage behaviour effectively in ways appropriate to the developmental age and understanding of the children,
- Regularly inspect the premises, condition of furniture and equipment is safe and suitable to use,

Health and well-being

The health and well-being of the children is integral to the child's well-being. We promote healthy snacks and packed lunches and engage children in a range of food based activities linked with preparing, tasting and celebrating. We will ensure that all children have the option to rest within the day and will provide designated quiet areas both indoors and out alongside space for vigorous free movements.

Positive relationships

At St Thomas' we recognise that children learn to be strong through the formation of sound relationships. We aim to develop professional, caring and respectful relationships with both the children and their families. In the FS we strive to engage and stimulate all learners, review and track progress whilst responding to individual needs.

Key person / worker

At St Thomas's key worker groups are organised during the very early stages, such groups take into consideration the home language of the child, character of the child and interests the child may have.

We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educator and endeavour to work hard in order to establish very close partnerships with parents and carers. We recognise the role that parents play in supporting their children's development. Firm relationships are formed from the beginning in a range of ways:

- parents are invited to view the school,
- parents are invited to attend an induction evening,
- at St Thomas' home visits are arranged for all Nursery and Reception children,
- parents are expected to accompany and support their child through a structured induction programme (Nursery)
- hold regular parent's meeting / conferences
- parents are encouraged to add to the child's individual assessment Journals
- supporting parents/carers for whom English is an additional language

We intend our pupils to acquire the skills and knowledge which will enable them to develop as whole people, confident and willing, caring and concerned, committed to their own development, yet aware of their responsibilities to others. We intend that pupils gain the independence of thought and action, and at the same time a realisation of the consequences of such action for their own well being and happiness, and that of others.

In order to achieve our aims we will base our own practices on a set of principles.

Enabling Environments

Observation, assessment and planning

At St Thomas' we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's achievements and attainment. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, before planning challenging, but achievable activities and experiences to extend learning and development.

Observations are critical in order to move children on and to plan for meaningful activities. At St Thomas' we recognise that observations can take on a number of different forms. Formal observation sheets are used and can be found in assessment folders. Next steps and judgements are made that address children's achievements and track progress.

Long Term Planning

The Early Years Foundation Stage practice guidance sets out the development matters which are adhered to at St Thomas' At St Thomas' we have themes appropriate to our cohort of children and the community to which they belong.

Medium Term Planning

This can run for a few weeks, one month or for half a term and reflects the experience and interest of the children.

They detail the proposed adult led / adult initiated activities that reflect the development matters, such activities are set out under the six areas of learning headings. The plan also entails levelled enhancements through continuous provision, special arrangements for resources and a list of visitors that may come into school.

Short Term Planning

Weekly planners are used as an overview to see the range of activities that are being catered for over a week. The plan separates adult led activities, adult initiated activities and sets out Continuous

Provision opportunities. Adult led activities set out the elements for development, effective learning and detail opportunities for look, listen and note prompts as well as key language, resources and specific questioning. Our planning shows the role of the adult and clearly sets out differentiation for pupils including those with Individual Educational Plans (IEP's), for children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and set out the provision for children with physical disabilities.

At St Thomas' the format for assessing children's attainment in Nursery is the Pre-School Profile. In Reception a baseline assessment is carried out within 6 weeks of entering Reception, showing pupils entry levels. Electronic learning journals are used to show the achievement of the children and reflect each child individually. Such data is kept up to date on Sims on a termly basis and the LEA collect the summative data outlining which children achieved the ELG in all 7 areas of the EYFS curriculum.

The Learning Environment

At St Thomas' CEP school we recognise that a high quality environment is essential in order to succeed. It is the shared responsibility of adults and children to care for the environment both indoor and outdoor. The adults at St Thomas' take pride in developing areas of levelled continuous provision and displays which enhance and broaden opportunities. The environment is organised into continuous provision areas, where children are able to find and locate resources independently. All areas are clearly labelled and organised to aid self selection and the resources reflect the cultural diversity of the setting. Our outdoor provision offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant throughout the year.

Foundation Stage Curriculum

At St Thomas' we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them to make sense of the world. They practice and build up ideas, and learn how to control their behaviour and to understand why the need for rules is important. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children and on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

"Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children through sustained periods." (Principles into practice cards 4.2 from EYFS).

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. This happens best when children have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence they learn how to make decisions. Children will be given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning and development. At St Thomas' the adults support and extend children's thinking and learning and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions.

Three areas of learning and development are crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and build for their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

Three **Prime** areas:

Communication and Language

Physical Development

Personal, Social and emotional Development

In addition to the prime areas the children are also supported to learn through the four **Specific** areas, through which the Prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The **Specific** areas:

Literacy

Mathematics
Understanding of the World
Expressive Arts and Design

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are of equal importance and are closely interlinked. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult focussed and child initiated activities.

TRANSITION FROM NURSERY TO RECEPTION

Children are introduced informally to the wider school environment by joining in assemblies and entertainments, when appropriate. They are taken around school in small groups accompanied by nursery staff. The children visit their new classroom during the Summer term and Reception staff make several visits to the Nursery.

The Headteacher, Nursery and Reception staff collaborate to ensure an equal balance of children in both Reception classes. Friendship groups, Special Needs, gender and age are taken into account during this procedure.

Staff meet to discuss individual children's needs to make the transition as smooth and stress free as possible. Written records are passed on.

The wider context

At St Thomas' we recognise the social and emotional needs of all children in order to make sure that there is a smooth transition from home to school and from one setting to another. We effectively communicate with other settings and invite all the Reception children to visit prior to starting. Home visits play a vital part during the induction period, where staff are introduced to new children in their home environment and important information regarding health and development is shared.

Induction evenings are held at the beginning of the induction process where all parents are invited to a presentation given by the Foundation Stage staff. Important information is shared linking with the EYFS curriculum, information about the staff, induction arrangements are shared and parents and carers are introduced to the setting. School brochures are given out, induction arrangements, home visit appointments and information regarding the School's Website is shared.

EYFS INDUCTION

Nursery

Nursery roll out a staggered induction programme where a small number of children visit for one hour initially with their parent and on the third visit parents are encouraged to leave. From this more children are invited and follow the same structure as above. This cycle is continued for a limited time to enable staff to establish relationships with small groups and individual children. Parents are encouraged to stay with their child for the first visits and after this if there are signs of stress during this transition period. Arrangements are flexible to suit the needs of the individual child.

Reception

The Reception induction period lasts for 1 week where the children come to school for either an AM or PM session. During this time baseline assessments are carried out and positive relationships are formed with the children. The golden rules that run through school are introduced during this time and each area of continuous provision is introduced so that the children quickly become independent learners within their setting.

Leadership and accountability

Mrs D Welsby holds the post of Teaching and Learning responsibility for the Foundation Stage. Mrs S Mc Conkey is the Nursery Manager.

Self evaluation is important in order to assess current practice and provision and to inform future developments and areas of focus. This cycle is reflected in our EYFS action plan.

** Signed on hard copy

Leader

Headteacher

Nominated Governor