



# Early Years Policy 2021

“Everyone who works with children should do what is in the best interests of the child.”

Article 3 United Nations Rights of the Child

Our mission is to provide every child with memorable and rewarding experiences in a safe and secure environment. They are given opportunities to learn and grow as independent life-long learners to enable them to achieve their full potential.

## Our Early Years Vision

We aim to foster a deep love for learning through following the children’s interests and believe that positive attitudes and high expectations towards learning are fundamental for success. We aim to give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life in which they can establish solid foundations. We work in close partnership with parents and carers to ensure all children make good progress and develop independence.

Our aim is:

- To offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences and give them the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test them out along with their own, individual experiences;
- To enable each child, through encouragement and high expectations, to develop, to the full, socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- To offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited opportunity for development;
- To encourage children to develop independence within a caring, secure and friendly atmosphere;
- To support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing;
- To help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.
- To ensure that all children receive high quality phonics and reading teaching.

## The Curriculum

The Nursery and Reception follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document, which is available from the teaching staff, or to download at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/596629/EYFS\\_STA\\_TUTORIAL\\_FRAMEWORK\\_2017.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596629/EYFS_STA_TUTORIAL_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf). This clearly defines what we teach. The following policy details the specifics of our setting.

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected but three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive (DfE 2014: 1.3), they support children's learning in all other areas, they are known as the prime areas. The prime areas are;

- Communication and Language – Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking
- Physical Development – Moving and Handling and Self care
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development – Making relationships, Managing feelings and behaviour and Self-confidence and Self-awareness

The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. The specific areas are;

- Literacy – Reading and Writing
- Mathematics – Numbers and Space, Shape and Measures
- Understanding the World – People and communities, The world and Technology
- Expressive Arts and Design – Exploring and using media and materials and Being Imaginative

### Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Nursery and Reception teachers plan activities within the Nursery and Reception classrooms with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them.

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, and enjoy achievements
- Creating and Thinking Critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

### Teaching strategies

We follow an 'in the moment' planning approach. We respond to the children's interests and build upon their understanding and move them forwards in line with their next steps. However, we ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. The majority of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In some cases the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them, if they feel that it will support new learning; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible.

### Play

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Using children's interests as a starting point, we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child initiated play, which is controlled, and adult led activities is very important to us.

### Teaching

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on.

We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc.

Reading and story play an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern classics. We make sure there is always time for whole class story at the end of the day but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times. Every child will have a weekly opportunity to visit the library when they can choose a story and take it home to share.

### Planning

We believe many children's interests are the best window in to children's learning, therefore we take a child led approach in our planning. We look at children's next steps and work with them on an individual level to move them forward. We have 'Focus children' every week (3 in Reception, 2 in Nursery) who all staff have an additional focus on. Staff will continue this approach to all children, however will record more in detail throughout the child's focus week. However, we do understand that some children need to be given a starting point to learn new things and so we find topic hooks are a great way to fire the imagination.

Staff plan 'in the moment' and will have notes for additional targeted focus work and 'hooks'. Although class teachers are responsible for writing plans, the EYFS plan as a team, with Teachers, Nursery Nurses and Support Staff attending planning meetings and giving an input whenever possible.

### Visits and visitors

The part that visits and visitors play in the curriculum at Trinity School is given great emphasis, even in the Early Years. We aim to get out into the local area as much as possible, particularly where it follows children's interests. We actively seek parental support on trips.

Visitors also really enhance a topic and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children, a doctor or farmer, for example. We often ask parents if they are able (and brave enough!) to share knowledge or a skill, be it cooking, how to bath a baby, or playing an instrument.

#### Classroom organisation

Our Early Years classrooms have defined areas with clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. Each classroom is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning. Classrooms have a writing area, maths area, creative area, book corner, role play area, construction/small world area, outdoor area and carpeted teaching area. Enhancements may be made in areas which will support children's interests and to move their learning forward.

The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside for much of the day. We try to ensure that the range of activities outside reflects the different curriculum areas, for example setting up quiet spaces for a maths game, reading and for construction. As it is a shared space for Nursery and Reception, staff work closely, supporting the learning of all children, extending for those more able children to ensure challenge.

Each child has their own labelled peg and tray and in the shared area. We encourage children to take responsibility for keeping their clothes, book bag and work safely in the correct place!

#### Assessment, observations and portfolios

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies. We have 'Focus Child' planning sheets, Tapestry updates and Wow moments. These are collected together when looking at a child's profile as a whole. We then use the EExAT tracker to monitor progress and update for next steps. Staff have their own iPad which is used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning. Parents have access to the Tapestry, and they are encouraged to contribute and upload observations. A copy of the child's Tapestry Learning Journey is given to the parents when they leave Reception. Children are also assessed using Wellcom assessments for speech and language throughout the year.

On entry to Nursery and Reception, we carry out baseline assessments for each child. Throughout the Early Years the Class Teacher submits end of term assessment data to the Head Teacher showing each child's development across the seven areas of learning. At the end of Reception the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding'. This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report and can be discussed with the teacher.

## Role of staff and key worker

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 actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between adult and children is essential in enabling children's well-being now and their future successes.

There are rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class and we aim to be consistent in who covers these absences.

## Partnership with parents and carers

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. As well as the Nursery and Reception induction days we offer a Meet the Teacher/ Information session at the beginning of the school year and offer parenting workshops and other sessions for parents, such as Tapestry and phonics workshops.

In nursery, we visit the children in their home setting and for those children entering Reception, we visit them in their nursery setting. Over the first few days at the school we encourage parents and carers to stay for as long as they wish in the classroom to ensure the transition to the school goes smoothly, however recommend that sometimes it's easier for the child if the parent leaves sooner rather than hanging around. We have a staggered entry into both Nursery and Reception, with Nursery's beginning a week later than Reception. Nursery and a slightly quicker staggered entry into Reception. In Nursery. In the first term parents are also invited to a parents' meeting so the settling in can be reviewed. Teachers make themselves available to talk to parents in the mornings and at the end of sessions to discuss urgent matters and encourage parents to make an appointment with the teacher if they would like a more lengthy discussion.

## Health & safety and safeguarding

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. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2014) and we refer to our school and Education Department Safeguarding policies.

It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones or personal handset devices in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal handsets. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used on Tapestry and in class displays. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school website through the paperwork in their initial starter packs.

We are a healthy school we have a voluntary contribution from parents towards snack every day. We ask provide healthy snacks to share; these might be bread sticks, rice cakes or more exotic fruits such as grapes or a pineapple. Our staff model good eating habits by eating alongside the children. Children in Nursery and Reception will have a packed lunch provided by the parents. If there are any concerns about the content of a lunchbox, the class teacher will speak to the parent and advise on healthy lunchbox options.

We take all accidents seriously and always log cuts, scrapes and if a child bangs their head. We have cold compresses stored in the staff room freezer and in the Early Years fridge. A note will go home to parents in line with the rest of the school, and if a child bumps their head, they will be given a sticker so that other members of staff can look out for any unusual behaviour.

All children should start school having been toilet trained. We acknowledge that young children often have toileting accidents and have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. We ask parents to help keep our stocks of clothes high by returning anything their child has borrowed. Children are changed in the toilets, by the sinks. Where there is a special educational need and a child has not been toilet trained prior to starting school, then an intimate care plan will be drawn up in consultation with the parents to ensure that this child's needs can be met.

Fire alarms are held regularly in line with whole school policy. There is an annual external check of equipment. We follow whole school procedures for child protection (see separate policy). Katy McMahon, head teacher, is the named Child Protection Officer and all concerns are discussed with her.

We have separate policies for medicine in school and off-site visits.