



# The Federation of All Saints & St Margaret's CVA Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

**Approved by:** Grainne Beaumont

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## Introduction

Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. It is a holistic education that encompasses all learning and development. This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at All Saints and St Margaret's Catholic Voluntary Academy (CVA).

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all practitioners working within the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching staff.

## Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

In the EYFS setting at All Saints and St Margaret's CVA 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. We aim to support each child's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:-

- Recognising that all children are unique and created by God.
- Understanding that children develop in different 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 by the practitioners that look after them.
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community and church community.
- 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 behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously
- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions different to their own.
- Understanding the importance of play in children's learning development.
- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children's personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, 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.
- Provide effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.



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## The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

Teaching in the EYFS is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage' (2017). This document is a principled approach to early years education, bringing together children's welfare, learning and development requirements through four themes: 'A Unique Child', 'Positive Relationships', 'Enabling Environments' and 'Children Develop and Learn in Different Ways and at Different Rates.'

The curriculum is centred on three prime areas of learning:

1. Communication and language
2. Physical development
3. Personal, social and emotional development

Providers must also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding the world
4. Expressive arts and design

These areas of learning and development address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all areas of learning and development are closely interlinked. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centred curriculum which allows children to make lots of links between what they are learning. All areas of learning and development are given equal weighting and value.

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practise. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

1. Playing and exploring – children investigate and experience things and 'have a go'
2. Active Learning – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
3. Creating and thinking critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

At All Saints and St Margaret's CVA we believe that Early Years education is important in its own right and should not be viewed simply as preparation for the next stage of children's education. We believe that the EYFS framework allows a natural progression into the National Curriculum at the beginning of Year 1.

Children start the 'Come and See' scheme of work for religious education when they enter reception. This scheme works in harmony with the EYFS curriculum.



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### **Active Learning Through Play**

At All Saints and St Margaret's CVA 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 children for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our EYFS setting has an ethos of learning through play.

We recognise the importance of children's play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator, encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

In the EYFS setting at All Saints and St Margaret's CVA practitioners provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first hand experiences which will support them to discover, explore, investigate, develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity, and help to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts. Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding. In providing these active learning opportunities through play we understand the central position of play within the EYFS framework. This is essentially a play based curriculum and pedagogy as the provision of play opportunities underpins its delivery within settings.

### **Assessment and Record Keeping**

As each child enters the EYFS we use our professional judgement to assess the age band children are working within across the 17 areas of learning. Within six weeks of the child starting they will be given a 'baseline' assessment. Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the effective running of the EYFS settings at All Saints and St Margaret's CVA. Regular planned and focussed assessments are made of children's learning and individual needs. The main EYFS assessment method is through practitioners' observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts including both adult led and child initiated activities. Observations take place regularly, both formally and informally. Observations are recorded in different formats (eg narrative style, post-it notes, whole class grids, photographs). All practitioners are involved in observing children. Practitioners use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. It informs them of children's abilities, needs, interests, play schemas and learning styles. Observations are evaluated, children's learning priorities are identified and relevant learning opportunities are then planned to support children to make the next steps in their learning.



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Other methods of assessing children in the EYFS setting include engaging alongside children in their play, annotation of children's written work, talking with children about their task or play and in Learning Journeys.

Learning Journeys record children's progress over the academic year in all areas of learning and development of the EYFS framework. Samples of children's work are gathered along with photographic evidence and observations.

At the end of the academic year we assess the reception children against the EYFS Profile Early Learning Goals, stating whether they are Emerging, Expected or Exceeding.

### **Planning**

The EYFS framework provides a long term plan to follow by ensuring that all Early Learning Goals are covered throughout the academic year. Medium term planning takes the form of half termly topics which take into account the individual children's learning and development needs. All areas of learning and development are planned for and available to access within the setting. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult led and child initiated activities both indoors and outdoors. Educational visits within the local community and further afield are also planned to support and extend children's learning within the classroom.

### **Parents / Carers as Partners**

At All Saints and St Margaret's CVA we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents/carers, 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.

We value the role of parents as children's primary educators. Through questionnaires and informal chats at the beginning and end of the day, we encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (eg characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes.) This supports practitioners in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests.

Parents/carers are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular letters, reading records and informal chats at the beginning and end of the day. This also gives suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home, consolidating and building on what has been covered in class. Whole school newsletters are also sent home on a weekly basis.

Parents/carers are invited to attend parent consultations during the course of the academic year. The first of these takes place during the Advent term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into the setting. Another parent consultation takes place during the Lent term where practitioners will feed back on children's learning and development progress.

Other opportunities for practitioners to share children's learning, development and wellbeing with parents/carers include Learning Journeys, end of year reports and celebration assemblies where children's achievements are recognised.



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Parents/carers are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities to help with activities such as educational visits and reading, as well as offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, art, music) to support children's learning. Parents/carers may be invited into the setting on other occasions such as open afternoons where children show them their work and other special events. Our settings have a friendly, open-doors ethos and practitioners are available to talk to parents/carers at the beginning and end of the day. Parents/carers are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have.

### **Admissions and Inductions**

All Saints and St Margaret's CVA provides full time Early Years education for children in the Reception year.

Before they start in the setting, all children are offered a series of visits during the term before they are due to start. The purpose of these initial visits is for the children to meet their new practitioners and start to become familiar with the setting environment. In the same term, parents are invited into school to meet the setting practitioners. At this meeting information regarding the induction process is shared and school information packs will be distributed. There is also time for informal chat and parents' questions.

*See Admissions Policy for more information*

### **Equal Opportunities**

All practitioners at All Saints and St Margaret's CVA have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered in the EYFS setting.

All children, irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development within the EYFS settings at All Saints and St Margaret's CVA.

*See Equal Opportunities Policy for more information.*

### **Special Educational Needs**

*See Inclusion Policy for more information.*



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