

## **St Peter's C of E Academy**

### **Early Years Policy**

*As a church school, we believe that 'Giving children the keys to unlock their future' will enable all pupils to flourish within our care and achieve their full potential. This is underpinned by the words of Jesus:  
"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 16:19)*

#### **Rationale**

At St Peter's C of E Academy, we believe that learning in the Early Years will be primarily first hand, fun and active. We will give young children opportunities and space to explore and discover a passion for learning in a safe environment. We recognise that every child is unique, having their own skills which need to be brought out and built upon. We believe that our youngest pupils need play as an essential and rich part of the learning process. Learning should always be a pleasurable and rewarding experience; taking place in a social context. We encourage children's independence and autonomy with them taking responsibility for their learning as much as possible in an atmosphere of security and self-discipline.

#### **Aims and Objectives for the Foundation Stage (2014)**

The Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework seeks to provide:

- Quality and consistency in all Early Years settings, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind;
- A secure foundation through learning opportunities which are planned around the needs and interests of each individual child and are assessed and reviewed regularly;
- Partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers;
- Equal opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.
- Provide a caring and secure environment, indoors and out, where each child is valued
- Develop every child's confidence and self-esteem to help them become caring and social individuals.

#### **Inclusion**

All children and their families are valued and treated fairly at St Peter's C of E Academy regardless of race, gender, religion or ability. Children are treated as individuals and have equal access to all provisions available. All children are encouraged to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. Early identification of special needs is crucial to enable staff to support the development of each child. Concerns are always discussed with parents at an early stage and the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator is on hand for further information and advice.

#### **Enabling Environments**

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

The Foundation Stage classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet, creative etc. The

Foundation Stage has its own outdoor classroom area which is accessed independently by the children. 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.

### **Learning and Development**

We plan a relevant, stimulating and challenging curriculum that is based upon our observations and assessments of all the children. All seven areas of learning and development, in combination with the Characteristics of an Effective Learner, are important and inter-connected. The three Prime Areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

### **Communication and Language**

- Listening and attention
- Understanding
- Speaking

Learning to communicate effectively is vital for all young children as it is not only an important social skill but it also enables them to develop in all other areas of the curriculum. Children have opportunities each day to talk with different people for a variety of reasons. This helps them to learn and use new words and use talk for different purposes, for example to negotiate, explain or reason. It also helps to develop and extend their speaking and listening skills. Children are taught to speak clearly and provide the information a listener will need to make sense of what they are saying, answering questions asked of them in a range of learning scenarios. They will also be taught to listen to others and ask questions of them to find out more information.

### **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

- Self-confidence and self-awareness
- Managing feelings and behaviour
- Making relationships

We help children to settle in to school life by working with pre-schools and parents. We value everyone within the school and provide opportunities for each child to develop a positive self-image and self-esteem. We encourage children to become confident, enthusiastic learners who strive for the best in all situations. We work with the children to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, ensuring the children have a good understanding of their own needs and the needs of others.

### **Physical Development**

- Moving and Handling
- Health and self-care

This area gives children the opportunity to practise, develop and refine their fine motor and gross skills in balance, coordination, control, manipulation and movement. This will take place through indoor play, outdoor play and structured PE sessions. These activities will also help children to develop a positive sense of well-being.

The four Specific Areas are:

### **Literacy**

- Reading
- Writing

Children will explore, learn about and use words, text and print in a range of contexts, through adult taught ULS Phonics lessons and reinforced through play. They will experience a variety of both fiction and non-fiction texts through Drawing Club lessons and topic work. We value mark-making as an early stage of written communication and children take part in regular adult-initiated writing sessions where this skill is developed. Children are also taught to form their letters in a clear print style.

### **Mathematics**

- Numbers
- Shape, space and measures

This area of learning includes counting, sorting, matching, patterns, making connections, recognising relationships and working with numbers, shapes, space and measures. Children will develop their understanding through stories, songs, games and imaginative play, experiencing a broad range of every day contexts and practical activities. Children are taught early number and calculation skills through adult-led activities as well as through well planned play opportunities.

### **Understanding of the World**

- People and Communities
- The World
- Technology

The children will develop crucial knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable them to make sense of their world and the place and time they live in. Through class discussions, visits and visitors, children will be exploring and investigating how to solve practical problems, making decisions, experimenting, predicting, observing and questioning. Children will participate in regular 'Welly Walks' around the school grounds, using their senses and growing vocabulary to explore their immediate environment.

### **Expressive arts and design**

- Exploring and using media and materials
- Being imaginative

Being creative enables children to make connections between the different areas of learning and so extend their understanding. They will explore and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of art, music, movement, dance, drama and imaginative role-play activities.

### **Planning**

At St Peter's, we use the Development Matters Statements from the Early Years Foundation Stage framework to support our planning. Our long-term planning begins with six broad topic areas, which provide a structured overview of learning across the year. We identify and break down the key objectives to be covered each term, ensuring that all areas of the curriculum are addressed. The National Curriculum is also used to support progression and ensure a smooth transition into Key Stage One. Planning is recorded and shared

collaboratively among all Foundation Stage staff to maintain consistency and continuity. While structured, our planning remains flexible to allow practitioners to respond to children's interests and emerging needs. Foundation Stage staff are skilled in observing children to identify their achievements, interests, and next steps in learning. These observations directly inform and shape future planning, ensuring that learning is relevant and engaging. By following children's interests, we foster high levels of motivation and support effective learning and development.

### **Resources**

The provision of learning resources is reviewed at least termly to ensure that all equipment is safe, well-maintained, and appropriate for use. Resources are replaced or updated as necessary, within available budgets. If any member of staff or helper identifies a health and safety concern, they must immediately stop children from using the equipment or area and report the issue to the class teacher. The class teacher will then inform the Headteacher. All areas are routinely checked through a daily health and safety check to ensure that the environment remains clean, safe, and suitable for all children.

### **Assessment**

The children's development is tracked even before the children arrive in September. The EYFS Lead liaises with preschools and nurseries, noting any information on the individual child's development. From the start of September, school staff use an EYFS baseline assessment and SONAR tracking system to record the children's levels of development. Then through regular assessments throughout the year, both formal and informal observations, enable staff to monitor each child's progress and identify their next steps in learning, including if any additional support needs to be provided. At the end of the Foundation Stage, each child's progress is recorded in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Children are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals, which provide a summary of their development and readiness for Key Stage One. Parents are given a detailed end of year report, explaining their child's strengths and areas to help them move forward in their learning.

### **Tapestry Learning Journal**

At St Peter's, EYFS staff use Tapestry, an online learning journal to record children's progress and achievements. Photographs and comments are added for parents to see and comment on. Parents can also upload photographs of activities the children do at home. This not only forms a full record of each child's learning, it is also an important tool to support home-school communication.

### **Staffing**

Staffing ratios are maintained as high as possible within financial constraints to ensure effective support for children's learning and development. Teaching Assistants (TAs) work alongside teaching staff to support children's learning. They operate under the direction of the class teacher, following guidance provided through daily and weekly planning. TAs are expected to support children in achieving learning intentions while encouraging independence appropriate to each child's stage of development. They also play a key role in communication, reporting successes and any concerns to teaching staff either verbally or through recorded observations.

## **Admissions**

Children are admitted to school following the procedures outlined in the Wiltshire County Council admissions policy. All the children, regardless of when their birthday is within the specific academic year, will begin school at the start of September.

Some children find full days very tiring; we do have the flexibility to offer a more staggered entry into school to suit a child's individual needs if either the parent, or Headteacher, feels that is more appropriate. This is in agreement with the School Governors.

## **Transition**

When moving to 'big' school, we understand that both parents and children can feel unsure. We strive to make sure each family feels safe, listened to and ready to learn. To ensure this smooth transition, we work closely with the local preschool and nurseries. The EYFS Lead will contact the feeder nurseries to discuss the children coming to St Peter's and in most cases, will visit and observe the children in that setting.

We invite parents to join us for an induction meeting, attended by the EYFS Lead, Headteacher, School Business Officer, catering staff and FOSPA representative. The opportunity to meet the staff gives the opportunity to answer any questions in a relaxed manner. An information pack is provided for parents offering key information on daily routines, general school expectations and a photographic social story for the children to look at over the Summer about their new school.

Prior to September, we invited children and parents in for story time and play sessions to ensure the children feels happy and safe in their new environment. Families are also welcomed to the FOSPA Summer Fete. In September, the parents are offered a home visit to discuss any confidential matters in the privacy of their home.

Policy updated in April 2026, review April 2027.