

# The Early Years Foundation Stage at St Oswald's Catholic Primary School

Information for parents and carers.

## Areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

The Foundation stage is delivered through 7 areas of learning. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, the *prime* areas, are:

- communication and language;
- physical development; and
- personal, social and emotional development.

In addition, there are four *specific* areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- literacy;
- mathematics;
- understanding the world; and
- expressive arts and design.



## Age and Stage of Development

Every child is different and children do not grow and develop at the same rate. A set of overlapping age/stage bands suggest a typical range of development.

16-26 months, 22-36 months, 30-50 months, 40-60 months

A document setting out these bands against each area of learning can also be seen on the website.

## Characteristics of Effective Learning

In addition to thinking about what children learn there will be a focus on how children learn - the characteristics for effective learning:

- playing and exploring (*engagement*)
- active learning (*motivation*)
- creating and thinking critically (*thinking*)

Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations. They will have the opportunity to listen and respond to stories, songs, poems and nursery rhymes. There will be many opportunities for children to develop and use language during role play situations, recreating roles and experiences in play situations. This will also provide valuable opportunities to support their growing ability to express a wide range of feelings.



**Physical development** involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children will also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food. Children will undertake a range of activities both outdoors and indoors to develop both fine and gross motor skills, co-ordination and balance, traveling skills etc. Many of our activities during the week are designed to develop children's coordination. Threading beads, working with play dough, pouring sand and water, all help to strengthen fingers and develop control.



**Personal, social and emotional development** involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities. It promotes independence and encourages children to develop positive attitudes to their learning. We encourage the children to: try new activities, dress and undress independently, use the toilet and wash their hands independently, take turns, share and play alongside other children, listen to others and respect their point of view and to tidy away after activities.

**Literacy development** involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. They will be introduced to the letter sounds, shapes and names through "Jolly Phonics" and "Letters and Sounds" materials (A government initiative), which adopts a multi-sensory approach to learning. Children will be given access to a wide range of reading materials to promote a love of books and reading. Each class has a quiet area where children can look at books, read stories or listen to a story. There are opportunities for sharing books in larger groups during carpet sessions. We have writing areas, and also provide writing materials in role-play areas to encourage children to write or make marks to represent writing during play.



**Mathematics** involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures. Children have the opportunity to build models using bricks and junk materials to develop their awareness of space and shape. Through songs and number rhymes, children will learn to recognise numbers, count groups of objects and begin to use addition and subtraction methods in basic calculations. Their ability to problem solve and investigate is developed through practical activities, which are within children's own experiences.

**Understanding the world** involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment. Children will develop a sense of time and place, and the language associated with these concepts. They will be encouraged to ask questions about how things happen and how things work and will be given opportunities to explore and investigate objects, materials and living things. Children have access to ICT equipment, including interactive whiteboards. They access a wide range of programs to support and extend work in the other areas.



**Expressive arts and design** involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music,

movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology. Children will explore colour, shape and texture both in 3D and 2D. In Foundation Stage the focus is more on the process of how something is created, not necessarily the product. We offer a wide range of creative activities throughout the week, both indoors and out.

### Learning through play

The best outcomes for children's learning occur where most of the activity within a child's day is a mixture of:

- child-initiated play, actively supported by adults
- focused learning, with adults guiding the learning through playful, rich experiential activities.

Many of the activities the children will be carrying out will be practical and play based. Play in the Early Years classroom is essential and contributes to the development of the whole child. Below are just some of the reasons that make learning through play so important.

- Encourages children to think for themselves
- Gives children a chance to practice skills
- Can improve concentration
- Gives children confidence
- Children learn to take turns and co-operate with others
- It develops their language
- It develops mathematical and problem solving skills
- Children have a chance to explore and investigate



### Learning outdoors



Outdoor learning complements indoor learning and is equally important. Being outdoors has a positive impact on children's sense of well-being and helps all aspects of children's development. The curriculum requires the children to have daily access to the outdoor environment. This will take place in all types of weather.

Outdoor learning is important because:

- being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors;
- it gives children first-hand contact with weather, seasons and the natural world;
- outdoor environments offer children freedom to explore, use their senses, and be physically active;
- promotes a sense of confidence and well-being;
- provides opportunities for developing harmonious relationships with others, through negotiation, taking turns and co-operation;
- supports those children who learn best through activity or movement;
- supports children's developing creativity and problem-solving skills;
- provides rich opportunities for imagination, inventiveness and resourcefulness;
- children have the chance to increase their balance and agility;