

EYFS Policy

Setting: St Christophers Academy

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EYFS Policy

Our ethos

'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 important in its own right and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.'
Early Years Foundation Stage Profile - Department for Children, Schools and Families 2012

In the Early Years Foundation Stage at St Christophers Academy we believe in providing children with a safe and stimulating environment where children flourish. We pride ourselves on listening to children and those who care for them and using this information to personalise each child's learning. Learning should be fun and we strongly believe in first hand experiences, valuing the importance of the outdoor environment to develop children's thinking and problem solving skills. We believe that every child is unique and should be treated so allowing them the opportunity to develop and learn in a safe and nurturing environment where play and learning is combined. We believe in them having the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. We understand the importance of practical learning experiences and strive to equip children with a love of learning and a natural curiosity. We are committed to giving our children the best possible start to their school life, teaching them skills which ensure their well-being now and success in the future.

Teaching and learning

In order to achieve our ethos our expectations are that all practitioners will:

Provide an enjoyable and creative curriculum that is broad and balanced, which will enable each child to develop emotionally, socially, physically, creatively, and intellectually to their full potential and at their own pace.

Develop an environment where positive relationships and friendships can flourish.

Provide activities that are well planned and resourced that enthuse, engage and motivate children.

Identify children's individual next steps and plan activities that ensure appropriate challenge for all regardless of starting points.

Offer high quality interactions between adult and child to stimulate early learning and next steps.

Clear boundaries are in place to keep the children safe.

Be positive role models for teaching the school expectations and routines.

Give positive praise and reinforcement to help children to develop social skills.

Use high quality questioning to challenge the children's thinking and move the learning forward.

Encourage children to take risks through their play.

We feel that all adults who work in the Early Years have a duty to be:

- Facilitators – to support learning in all areas
- Observers – to check on children's learning and progress in order to plan next steps
- Challengers – to enable children to meet their full potential

Enabling environments

*Margaret Macmillan said "We are trying to create an environment where education will be almost inevitable".
The Reggio approach also recognises the environment as 'a third teacher'.
Julia Manning – Morton writes that "the physical environment in a setting impacts directly on the quality of practice, making environment a critically important component that practitioners need to plan for and review regularly."*

An enabling environment is one which provides a rich, varied and safe space in a setting in which children can play, explore and learn. This can contribute greatly to children's learning and development in the early years.

The environment should be **child-centered**. It is important that practitioners value and encourage independence and that they understand how individual children learn best.

Our Early Years areas are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are specific areas where the children can be active, be quiet, be creative etc. Children have access to both the inside and the outside environment at various points in the day which is known to have a positive effect on the children's development. The Early Years pupils have their own outdoor area with sand or water, climbing equipment, bikes, writing opportunities, mud kitchen, construction and role play. Spending time outdoors offers opportunities for exploring and learning things differently to when pupils are indoors and gives things a different perspective. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. All areas of the curriculum can be explored outside.

Children are able to access resources independently and use them how they choose, for their own purposes to develop their own learning and understanding of the world around them. These choices may differ from the planned intentions but will still be meaningful and support learning

Feedback

In Early Years we believe that marking and feedback is vital in ensuring children make good progress in their learning. It needs to be matched to the intended learning objectives or the child's next steps in any area of the curriculum and should involve the child.

However, we recognise that standard methods used across the rest of the school are not always the most effective ones in Early Years

Therefore in Early Years we use the following approaches:

- Verbal feedback in the moment to move the children forward in their learning,
- Oral dialogue with children about their play or work,
- Positive praise – specific verbal, stickers, stamps,
- Coloured stamps and visual prompts,
- Coloured highlighting for mark making activities purple (what the child has been given by an adult) and orange (what the child has done independently),
- Marking ladders matched to their Talk for Writing focus when completing written activities (Reception only)

Assessment

Since the introduction of the new Early Years frameworks the way the children are assessed has changed.

On entry, all children will be assessed against a baseline assessment designed to correlate with the new curriculum expectations. There has been a removal of the age bands and assessments by staff are made against some key performance indicators. This allows staff to identify the core skills and knowledge they are looking for at the end of each half term or term of their learning. This is based on a red, amber, green system. This is shared with parents each term and pupil progress meeting take place to monitor pupils progress across the year. At the end of the Reception year staff assess all children against the revised Early Learning Goals.

Assessment in the Early Years takes the form of both informal observations, practitioners' knowledge of the pupils, work produced by the children and photographic evidence. The main focus is placed on staff's professional knowledge of the children and where they need to go next in their learning journeys. This is tailored to the individual children and small groups and feeds into the classes planning.

Nursery

In Nursery we follow the below assessment sequence regardless of when a child starts:

1. Before the children start, parents/carers complete an all about me book and a home visit is arranged to establish the child's strengths and areas for development.
2. Children are baselined within two weeks of joining the setting using the school's baseline assessment and with discussions with parents. This forms part of the child's settling in meeting.
3. Summative assessments are made based on practitioners' knowledge of the child. This is then discussed at pupil progress meetings termly with SLT.

2 year old progress checks

For children in our setting who are 2 we aim to have collaborative 2 year old checks with the child's Health Visitors. However, where this is not possible we complete our 2 year old progress checks with the parents the term after they turn 2. (For more information see 2year old check policy).

Preschool

We recognise that our children that are getting ready to start school we also complete the following assessments:

- School's baseline assessment which includes basic number and letter recognition.

Reception

Before the children start, parents/carers complete an all about me book and a home visit is offered if the child has not come from our nursery. Alternatively we will meet with parents during the stay and play sessions the term before they start.

- Baseline assessment in the first 2 weeks in September. This includes progress checks, Wellcomm language assessments, informal observations in the settings and the national baseline. Practitioners also take into account any information they have received from the child's previous settings and parents.
- Summative assessments are made based on practitioners' knowledge of the child and evidence of work termly. This is then discussed at pupil progress meetings termly with SLT.

Behaviour

At St Christophers we believe that children react to the environment around them and we value the importance that a safe, secure and positive environment has on a child. We understand that children need to have set boundaries of behaviour for their own safety and that of their peers and the staff. We aim to set these boundaries in a way that helps children to understand their behaviour, good or bad and see the significance of it on themselves and others. We share these expectations with the children as our 10 trusts which are used across the school.

We aim to re-enforce good behaviour and try not to place too many restrictions on the child's natural desire to explore their surroundings and develop their own personality and ideas. We will praise good behaviour and educate the child when they are making the wrong choices. Strategies that we will use for this include:

1. Giving children positive, clear instructions
2. Use Sign for Feelings as a way of expressing feelings.
3. Praising the children and celebrating their achievements through stamps, stickers, house points, achievement tree and star of the week.
4. Getting down to a child's level and maintaining eye contact
5. Engage and involve all children within the learning environment
6. Encourage choice and decision making
7. Staff have high expectations of children in all aspects of development and behaviour
8. Plan activities such as stories or circle time sessions to support good behaviour
9. Where appropriate, we use the restorative justice strategies to help the child to understand what happened and how we can change it next time.

Adults are role models for the children & are expected to interact positively with each other, the parents & the children.

Sanctions

We understand that in Early Years we need different boundaries in place due to the emotional development of the child. Where there is persistent negative behaviour with any child then a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) would be put in place with the SENCo and parent.

In Early Years we use the following strategies and sanctions:

- Warnings,
- Distraction,
- Humour,
- Removal from an activity,
- Talk to the parents,
- Reminded of what the right choice is (our 10 Trusts)
- Sent to another classroom,
- Sent to a member of SLT.
- Monitor behaviour when it becomes persistent (an ABC chart may be used)

Parental engagement

We welcome parents as valued partners whose attitudes and beliefs influence their children's learning throughout life. We believe that children benefit most from Early Years education and care when parents and our Early Years staff work together in partnership.

When we refer to 'parents' we mean both mothers and fathers; these include both natural or birth parents as well as step-parents, adoptive parents, same sex parents, primary carers, foster parents and parents who do not live with their children, but have contact with them and play a part in their lives.

We involve our parents in the following ways

- All parents are registered on our online learning journey system and they are regularly sent information about how their child is progress. Parents are actively encouraged to share their child's learning from home as well.
- We deliver parent information sessions around key learning in the Early Years. This includes phonics, maths and the EYFS curriculum.
- When children join our settings the parents are involved in setting a settling in plan if needed and identifying where their children are in terms of strengths and areas to develop. We offer home visits for all new parents.
- Our staff are always available for informal chats about the children and formal meetings can also be arranged. All staff email addresses are also on the website so parents can also send emails if it's easier.
- We have termly parent consultations and the children will receive a report at the end of the year in both Nursery and Reception (unless they joined us in the Summer Term).
- The Nursery staff also offer advice and support parents through key changes for their children such as toilet training or taking a dummy off a child.
- We also have family fun days throughout the year where parents are welcome to come and join in with specific activities with their child.