

# St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School



**ST THOMAS**  
CE (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL

## EYFS Policy

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## St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up." (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, March 2017)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. In our school, children can join us for 15 hours per week, just after their third birthday. They begin attending school full time at the start of the year in which they turn five.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates

### A Unique Child

At St Thomas Primary School we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be independent, resilient, capable, confident and self assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration/sharing assemblies and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

### *Inclusion*

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children at St Thomas Primary School are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school.

In our school we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In EYFS, we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence.
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs.
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively.
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued.

- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

We aim to protect the physical and psychological well being of all children. (See Whole School Safeguarding Children Policy)

### *Welfare*

"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." (Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage March 2017)

At St Thomas Primary School, we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Early Years Foundation Stage. We understand that we are required to:

- Promote the welfare of children.
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

We endeavour to meet all these requirements.

### **Positive Relationships**

At St Thomas Primary School, we understand that children learn to be strong and independent individuals (and learners) from secure relationships with peers and adults. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

### *Parents as Partners*

As parents are children's first and most enduring educators, we value the contribution they make and recognise the role parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:

- talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school
- the children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school – visits in nursery and transition time into Reception
- inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term their child starts school
- offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's and allowing free access to the children's 'Learning Journey', to which they are given the opportunity to add content
- encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. There are formal meetings for parents twice a year, at which the teacher and the parent discuss the

child's progress. Parents receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of the year

- arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents: weekly in-class library, 'come and do' afternoons, Sports Day, Nativity etc;

All EYFS staff aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively and taking time to listen to them. At our school, the EYFS teachers act as a 'Key Person' to all children, supported by the Teaching Assistants and Nursery Nurses.

For children who do not attend our St Thomas Nursery, the EYFS teachers meet with staff to discuss the new intake children. Staff, parents and children are invited to visit school and get to know their new environment. In doing this the children will feel confident arriving in school and settle in quicker.

### Enabling Environments

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

#### *Observation, Assessment and Planning*

The EYFS Planning follows the school's Long Term Plan (LTP) and Medium Term Plans (MTP), which are based around half termly themes. These plans are used by the EYFS teacher as a guide for weekly planning; however the teacher may alter these MTP's in response to the needs (achievements and interests) of the children. This will be indicated on weekly planning.

We make regular assessments of children's learning and use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of observation, and this involves the teacher and other EYFS staff. Using Tapestry, these observations are recorded in each child's individual 'Learning Journey' to track the children's learning, from the beginning to the end of the Foundation Stage. They also contain information provided by parents.

At St Thomas Primary School, we use 'O-Track' to record judgements against the EYFS Profile. The children are given a baseline using teacher judgements against 'Development Matters' (Department for Education, 2012), within the first six weeks of starting school. Each child's level of development is recorded against the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning' (playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically) and against the 17 areas of Prime and Specific learning and development. Children should exit Reception with a 'Good Level of Development'; this is achieving the Early Learning Goal (ELG) in the prime and specific areas.

In Nursery, progress and achievement is assessed and observed against the 'Early Excellence' statements (age related milestones) (Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage March 2017). These are tracked closely each term and children expected to make good progress. Children should exit Nursery working within their age related milestone (entering 30-50months).

During the spring term, we provide a half termly report to parents which outline attainment and progress which is discussed at parents evening. Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their progress against the ELGs and Characteristics of Effective Learning. We give a reasonable opportunity for the parents to discuss these judgements with the EYFS teacher.

#### *The Learning Environment*

The EYFS classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, but also quiet and restful. The classroom is set up in learning

areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently, through Continuous Provision. The EYFS classes have their own enclosed outdoor area. This has a positive effect on the children's development; being outdoors offers many opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales as opposed to indoors. It offers the children chance to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and resources for the children to access outdoors to help them develop in all areas of learning. The children have continuous access to the outdoor provision in Reception and designated time in Nursery.

### **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**

At St Thomas Primary School, we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand they are inter connected.

#### *Play*

Play underpins the EYFS. It also underpins learning and all aspects of children's development. Through play, children develop language skills, their emotions and creativity, social and intellectual skills. (Early Years Matters, 2020)

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practice and build up ideas, learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

#### *Active Learning*

"Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods." (EYFS 2014)

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

#### *Creativity and Critical Thinking*

"When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions." (EYFS 2014)

Children should be given opportunities to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults can support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

#### *Areas of Learning*

The early learning goals and the ages and stages of learning are set out in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (March 2017)

The seven areas of learning are:

#### **Prime Areas**

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)
- Communication and Language (CL)
- Physical Development (PD)

#### **Specific Areas**

- Mathematics
- Literacy
- Understanding of the world (UW)
- Expressive Arts and Design (EAD)

Prime areas of the curriculum are the most important in the first few years of a child's educational life. Unless the prime areas are supported, the child will fail to thrive and learn. They form the basis for teaching and learning at the start of Nursery. However, none of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. In each area, there are Early Learning Goals that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

### **Staffing and Organisation**

At St Thomas Primary school, we have a Nursery which has a morning and afternoon intake and two Reception classes that admit up to 30 per class. Nursery is situated next door to Reception and has a closed outdoor provision which is accessed daily. Reception is based in two connecting rooms; this allows free flow Continuous Provision throughout the unit so that the children can access the curriculum at an appropriate level to match their ability.

There is also a door leading to the outside provision. Children have safe access to the outdoors throughout the day during child initiated time

### **Monitoring and review**

It is the responsibility of the EYFS teachers to follow the principles stated in this policy.

There is a named Governor responsible for the EYFS. This governor will discuss EYFS practice with the practitioners regularly and provide feedback to the whole governing body, raising any issues that require discussion.

The Head Teacher and Foundation Stage Leader will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.