

St Matthew's Bloxam C of E Primary School



Early Year's Policy 2024



Early Year's Ethos

At St. Matthew's Bloxam, we aim to develop the children's natural instinct to explore into a love of learning. Our aim is to provide a happy, safe, caring, warm, enabling and stimulating environment where children can grow in confidence, independence, competence and resilience through positive, strong relationships and high-quality adult interactions. We match the learning environment to the needs and interests of the children to provide purposeful play at all times. We work in close partnership with Parents / Carers and families and external agencies. We value all children's cultural inheritance, diversity of language and beliefs to foster and develop the whole, unique child; socially, emotionally, creatively, physically, academically and spiritually, providing firm foundations on which our children's future development can build upon. Learning in the Early Years is a balance of child-led and adult directed activities to cover the seven areas of the Foundation Stage Curriculum, where we learn in the inside and outside learning areas.

Introduction

'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

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. At St. Matthew's Bloxam C of E Primary School children are admitted to Nursery the term after their third birthday and Reception in the September following their fourth birthday.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At St. Matthew's Bloxam C of E Primary School we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

Aims

At St Matthew's Bloxam School we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident, independent and collaborative learners. We will provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually. We value the individual child and work alongside parents and carers to meet their needs and help every child to reach their full potential.

We adhere to the Statutory Framework of the EYFS and the four guiding principles that shape practice within Early Years settings.

- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**

At St. Matthew's Bloxam C of E Primary School, we will:

- Provide a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging programme of learning and development for the children to experience as they begin their journey through school.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum, across the seven areas of learning, using play as the vehicle for learning, that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond and enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult- initiated and child-initiated, supported by the adult.
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and out.

- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children.
- Provide a caring and inclusive learning environment which is sensitive to the requirements of the individual child including those who have additional needs.

The early-years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do;
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment;
- It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers.

Seven Key Features of Effective Practice:

1. The best for every child.

All children deserve to have an equal chance of success.

- High-quality early education is good for all children. It is especially important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
 - When they start school, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are, on average, 4 months behind their peers.
- Children who have lived through difficult experiences can begin to grow stronger when they experience high quality early education and care.
- High-quality early education and care is inclusive. Children's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly. All children promptly receive any extra help they need, so they can progress well in their learning.

2. High quality care.

The child's experience must always be central to the thinking of every practitioner.

- Young children thrive when they are loved and well cared for.
- High-quality care is consistent. Every practitioner needs to enjoy spending time with young children.
- Effective practitioners are responsive to children.
- Practitioners understand that children are learning to be independent, so they will sometimes get frustrated.
- Practitioners know that starting school, and all the other transitions in the early years, are big steps for small children.

3. The curriculum – what we want children to learn.

The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the early years setting wants the children to learn.

- Planning to help every child to develop their language is vital.
- The curriculum needs to be ambitious. Careful sequencing will help children to build their learning over time.
- Young children's learning is often driven by their interests. Plans need to be flexible.
- Young children do not develop in a fixed way. Their development is like a spider's web with many strands, not a straight line.

- Depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way.

4. Pedagogy – helping children to learn.

Children are powerful learners. Every child can make progress in their learning, with the right help.

- Effective pedagogy is a mix of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other, and through guided learning and direct teaching.
- Practitioners carefully organise enabling environments for high-quality play. Sometimes, they make time and space available for children to invent their own play. Sometimes, they join in to sensitively support and extend children's learning.
- Children in the early years also learn through group work, when practitioners guide their learning.
- Older children need more of this guided learning.
- A well-planned learning environment, indoors and outside, is an important aspect of pedagogy.

5. Assessment – checking what children have learnt.

Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know. It is not about lots of data and evidence.

- Effective assessment requires practitioners to understand child development. Practitioners also need to be clear about what they want children to know and be able to do.
- Accurate assessment can highlight whether a child has a special educational need and needs extra help.
- Before assessing children, it's a good idea to think about whether the assessments will be useful.
- Assessment should not take practitioners away from the children for long periods of time

6. Self-regulation and executive function.

Executive function includes the child's ability to:

- hold information in mind
- focus their attention
- regulate their behaviour
- plan what to do next.

These abilities contribute to the child's growing ability to self-regulate:

- focus their thinking
- monitor what they are doing and adapt
- regulate strong feelings
- be patient for what they want
- bounce back when things get difficult.

Language development is central to self-regulation: children use language to guide their actions and plans. Pretend play gives many opportunities for children to focus their thinking, persist and plan ahead.

7. Partnership with parents and carers.

It is important for parents/carers and early years settings to have a strong and respectful partnership. This sets the scene for children to thrive in the early years.

- This includes listening regularly to parents/carers and giving parents/carers clear information about their children's progress.
- The help that parents/carers give their children at home has a very significant impact on their learning.
- By knowing and understanding all the children and their families, settings can offer extra help to those who need it most.
- It is important to encourage all parents/carers to chat, play and read with their children.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based on four themes:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

A Unique Child

At St. Matthew's Bloxam C of E Primary School we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and 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 and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion - We value the diversity of individuals within the school and believe that every child matters. All children at St. Matthew's Bloxam C of E Primary School are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, religion or abilities. All families are valued within our school.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning.

At the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations keyed to the needs of our children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the stage. We do this 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 learn effectively;
- Offering a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Employing resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able, of children with disabilities, of children from all social and cultural backgrounds, of children from different ethnic groups, and of those from diverse linguistic backgrounds;
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary (such as referrals to speech therapy) as necessary.
- Working closely with parents, carers and other outside agencies to ensure all children's needs are met and we enable them to access the curriculum and make good progress.

Positive Relationships

At St. Matthew's Bloxam C of E Primary School we recognise that children learn to be strong, confident and independent from being in secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents / Carers as Partners - We recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education through:

- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts Nursery and Reception at our open mornings and induction meetings.
- Arranging visits by the teacher to all children in their home setting in Reception, the childcare provision as well as offering home visits prior to their starting school.
- Providing a handbook of information about commencing Nursery and Reception at St. Matthew's Bloxam C of E Primary School.
- Outlining the school's expectations in the Home-School agreement.
- Inviting parents / carers and children the opportunity to spend time in Nursery / Reception Class for induction visits before starting school.
- Providing an induction meeting for Reception parents / carers to meet with staff to discuss school routines, expectations and to answer any questions parents / carers may have.
- Holding a parent / carer consultation early in the academic year to establish how a child is settling into the school environment.
- Operating an open door policy for parents / carers with any queries or concerns. Conversely, if Foundation staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them.
- Written contact through the Home-School Communication Book and school newsletters.
- Inviting parents / carers to attend informal meetings about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics or reading.
- Sharing regularly the children's 'Learning Journey' with parents / carers and valuing the on-going contributions to this from parents / carers.
- Offering two parent / carer /teacher consultation meetings per year at which their child's progress is discussed.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in reception.
- Asking parents/carers to sign a generic permission form for visits, food tasting and photographs etc.
- Parents/Carers are invited to a range of activities throughout the school year such as assemblies, workshops, Christmas productions and sports day etc.
- Offering a range of activities, throughout the year, to encourage specific collaboration between child, school and parents/carers e.g. Christmas decoration mornings and through stay and play sessions.

Enabling Environments

At St. Matthew's Bloxam C of E Primary School, we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development, where the children feel confident, secure and challenged. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision.

Play-based learning is paramount and children have opportunities to direct their own learning with planned opportunities provided by staff.

We plan a learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning and reflects the individual's interests, passions and abilities. We use materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. We

encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning. We ensure that resources and spaces are safe to use and checked regularly.

Learning and Developing

The EYFS Curriculum – Our curriculum for the Foundation Stage reflects the areas of learning identified in the Early Learning Goals.

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests, and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve and exceed the early learning goals. All the seven areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. None of the areas of learning can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas.

They require a balance of adult led and child initiated activities in order for most children to reach the levels required at the end of EYFS. 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.

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The three Prime areas are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The Specific Areas are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Children's development levels are assessed and as the year progresses, the balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning, as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.

However, if a child's progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents / carers and agree how to support the child.

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which children explore, think creatively and are active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development. This includes the teaching of learning behaviours to ensure that all children at the end of the Early Years phase will be school ready. The 'characteristics of learning' are central to ensure that quality teaching and learning is taking place. Examples of this are; the ability to actively listen, take turns, take risks, understand failure, adopt a growth mind-set, follow direct instructions, show respect to self and others and the environment, learn appropriate behaviour for all contexts.

As a team, we write long term and medium term plans using the EYFS based on a cycle of topics each of which offers experiences in all seven areas. These plans are reviewed by the Early Years Leader. These plans then inform our short-term weekly planning, alongside our observations, which remains flexible for unplanned circumstances or children's responses.

Children have whole group and small group times, which increase as they progress through the EYFS with times for daily phonics sessions using Essential Letters and Sounds, teaching aspects of Mathematics and Literacy, including shared reading and writing.

The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined by the EYFS.

'Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities'

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are planned by the adults. During children's play, early years practitioners interact to stretch and challenge children further.

In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice. We create a stimulating enabling environment to encourage children to free-flow between inside and outside.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

Playing and exploring

Children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.

'Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development.'

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.

Active learning

Children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.

'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.'

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need 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.

Creating and thinking critically

We encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

"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."

Children should be given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children's thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning.

Outdoor Education in the Early Years

Opportunities to learn outdoors are essential for the development of all children. The outdoors offers experiences and provocations that cannot be replicated anywhere else. All strands of learning are developed through both planned and child-initiated play. Outdoor learning contributes to and promotes a positive response to personal health, safety and well-being. Our Early Years children also have the opportunity to take part in Forest School sessions held in the school grounds.

Safety

Children's safety and welfare is paramount. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We have stringent policies, procedures and documents in place to ensure children's safety.

We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways, including the provision of nutritious food, following set procedures when children become ill/have an accident.

Please see our separate policies and procedures on Health and Safety, Safeguarding, First Aid.

Inclusion

We value all our children as individuals at St Matthew's Bloxam School, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and support them at their own pace so that all children achieve to their fullest potential. We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents/carers and outside agencies.

Transition

Starting Nursery and Reception can be a difficult time for young children; we therefore plan this time carefully to support children with the transition and to ensure it is as smooth as possible for each child and that they settle in to their new class quickly and happily.

Transitions are carefully planned for and time given to ensure continuity of learning. At any transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child. This may include other settings, including nurseries and child-minders. Home visits take place before admission to Reception.

As we are a Foundation stage Nursery and Reception share the outdoor area and all staff take responsibility to manage it via a staff rota. This enables the Nursery children to become familiar with the Reception teacher. In addition to this in July the Reception teacher attends the Nursery setting to make further connections with the children to help them with their transition into the Reception class in September. During the summer term Nursery children will attend sessions in the Reception classroom with the reception staff team, helping them to familiarise themselves ready for September.

Starting Reception – Parents/Carers of all children starting in the next academic year will be invited to an Induction Meeting in the Summer term to meet their child's new teachers and other key staff and learn more about the Reception curriculum. This is an opportunity for staff to

- To go through the school handbook
- Explain about uniform, PE kit and school dinners/ free school meals
- Explain about holidays and absences
- Purchase uniform and book bag if requested
- Explain the arrangements for the gradual induction in to reception

New class sessions - The children are given opportunities to come in to school to meet their new class teacher and other children in their class. They will spend the time in their new class. Parents/Carers can leave their child during these sessions.

This means that before they join their new class the Reception environment is already a familiar place to them. Arrangements are also made for the children's new class teacher to visit them in their current nursery setting.

Nursery Intake – Parents will be given a mutually agreeable start date and parents / carers are welcome to stay to support their child for as long as required.

Reception September Intake - When children join the school in September the following procedures will apply in order that they can gradually adjust to their new surroundings:

- During the first week, children will attend for the morning and dinner in small groups and starting full days.
- During the second week, children will attend for the full school day unless Foundation staff and parents or carers agree that it is not in the best interests of an individual child.

Starting in Key Stage 1 (Year 1) - Throughout the Reception year, each child's involvement in whole school life will have been built upon; many of the teaching and support staff will already be familiar people to them. They will have taken part in Key Stage and whole school assemblies as well as sharing playtimes with the Key Stage 1 children. Children have the opportunity to meet

their new class teacher and spend a morning in their new class during the summer term.

Safeguarding & 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 EYFS 2014)

At St. Matthew's Bloxam C of E Primary School, we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2014.

- To provide a setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence;
- Promote good health;
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs
- To ensure that all adults who look after the children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so;
- Ensure that the setting, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for;

Maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Good Health

All children are provided with a healthy snack each day as well as being given the choice of milk or water. They have access to water at all times.

Intimate Care

"Intimate" care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children are able to carry out themselves. However, depending on a child's age and stage of development, they may need some support, for example dressing, wiping their bottom after using the toilet and changing underwear following an accident. In most cases, intimate care is to do with personal hygiene and it is good practice for the school to inform the school nurse of all children requiring intimate care.

Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child. (Refer to Intimate Care Policy)

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of those working in Early Year's to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Headteacher and EYFS co-ordinator will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. The Governing Body will also be part of this process.

Summary

We are very proud of our Early Years and feel that we provide the best possible start in life for our youngest children. Through the building of firm foundations, the children are ready to flourish and grow as they move through our school.

Links with other policies

This assessment policy is linked to:

- Intimate Care Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Early Year's Home Visit Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

Approval date: February 2024

Review

This policy will be reviewed in 3 years' time (Summer 2025) or before if there is a significant change in Government policy.

