



St Barnabas C of E First and Middle School

Early Years Policy

Intent

All 7 areas of learning are carefully planned for and implemented, showing progression in skills and knowledge from Preschool to the end of Reception and then preparing children for year 1.

At St Barnabas CE First & Middle School the children are at the heart of everything we do. We value play and first hand experience and design our creative curriculum around the needs and interests of our children to ensure that learning and teaching is purposeful, engaging and memorable. We choose topics that cover all areas of the framework and provide children with in-depth knowledge and skills. For example, in Reception the topic of 'Around the World' covers all areas of the framework by looking at maps, how cooking has changed over the years, craft activities, and comparing a variety of different countries. This begins to embed skills ready for foundation subjects they will do in year 1, for example in Geography they will learn about how the weather affects where they live. Children can then build on their prior knowledge in Reception class in year 1.

Our staff in Preschool and Reception provide children with a safe and nurturing environment encouraging children to build on their confidence, independence and curiosity. We do this through engaging and stimulating child led and adult led activities during continuous provision indoors and outdoors. Through quality questioning and sustained shared thinking during continuous provision staff can recognise each child's individual needs and starting point. We can then build on this to inspire, challenge and support their learning, laying firm foundations in EYFS which they can then continue during their school life here at St Barnabas.

The Early Years Framework

There are seven areas of learning and development that must provide a framework for planning and teaching as well as planning and assessing in early years settings.

The three prime areas are:

- Communication and Language – children will be given lots of opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; to speak and listen in a range of situations.
- Physical Development – children will be provided with opportunities to be active and interactive; to develop their coordination, control and movement. As well as gross motor skills, children are provided with opportunities to develop their fine motor skills. This is provided by using scissors, tweezers, pencil control and handwriting practice.
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development – help children develop a positive sense of themselves and others; forming positive relationships and develop respect for others; develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and have confidence in their own abilities.

There are then 4 specific areas which include essential skills and knowledge for children to develop through their whole life.

- Literacy – children will be taught to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children will be given access to a wide range of reading materials to ignite their interest.
- Mathematics – children will be provided 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.
- Understanding the World – Children will make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.
- Expressive Arts and Design – Children will explore and play with a 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.

Characteristics of Learning

When planning and implementing what children learn, we reflect on our practice and adjust this appropriately to suit and support all learners.

There are 3 characteristics of learning:

- playing and exploring – children investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go’
- active learning – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- creating and thinking critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

All children learn in different ways and pace so making sure that through all activities and teaching that these 3 characteristics of learning are implemented is essential for children meeting their Early Learning Goals.

Implementation

At St Barnabas in both Preschool and Reception we plan and teach the curriculum through a wide range of topics which reflect the children's interest and also make sure that all areas of the Early Years Framework are covered. Staff then make medium term plans which show how this topic meets all the needs of the children, how it will be engaging and stimulating and covers all areas of the Early Years Framework. Examples of topics that we have covered include space, dinosaurs, under the sea, nursery rhymes, people who help us.

We provide children with opportunities for both adult focus led activities and child-initiated activities. This then enables each individual child to have the support and challenge they need from adults but also gives the children confidence and independence to take the role in their own learning too.

The organisation of the learning environment is vital in making sure that the curriculum can be implemented successfully. In both Preschool and Reception, we allow the children to have continuous provision around the room so that children can independently access the curriculum.

Key areas we have:

- Role play area - this usually links to the topic we are learning, and children have lots of involvement in creating the role play environment making it fun and engaging.
- Reading/book corner - children always have access to this, to look at stories, listen and read stories with adults and other children
- Small world play - this supports children's communication and language as well as being able to express themselves using their imagination and creating narratives with their peers.
- Small and large construction - this supports all areas of the curriculum but importantly personal, social, and emotional development as it involves children having to work together, listen and share ideas successfully to create models.
- Making table - children have access to creative resources (paper, pens, pencils) as well as natural resources to create pictures.
- Maths area - each week there is a key maths focus, the maths area will then underpin this focus, and children will independently show what they have learnt about this key maths focus.
- English/writing area - an area where children can mark make and when in Reception begin to use their phonics and literacy skills to write sentences.
- Water and sand - these areas are used for a variety of areas of the curriculum including expressive art and design and mathematics.

- Snack area - this is a time where children can use their language skills and vocabulary to communicate with their peers.
- Outdoor area - both Preschool and Reception have access to their own outdoor area where extra learning opportunities and activities can take place.
- Forest school - both Preschool and Reception have a weekly forest school session which supports children's physical development.

Teaching in preschool is done through small groups during various parts of the day. Teaching is delivered by different members of the Early Years team and involves teaching of key maths skills, phonics, and modelling of different activities that children have access to around the classroom. This teaching is important as members of staff can make observations on children and can then make judgements on where children may be and how they need to be observed during that week.

Teaching in Reception is done through whole class teaching every day. Maths is taught every day following the NCETM programme Monday-Thursday with Friday being a shape, space and measure lesson following the Maths long term plan. Phonics is taught by following our Rocket Phonics scheme through whole class teaching daily and consists of whole class engagement which is then followed by individual pupil booklet work. Both maths and phonics/English activities will be out during continuous provision for the rest of the week linking to what the children have covered in their whole class teach. Staff will assess children at these activities to see whether they have understood the learning and if any children need any further support or intervention on this area of learning. This is essential in supporting and challenging each child where appropriate. Teaching of other areas of the curriculum also takes place during the week followed by continuous provision around the classroom.

Assessment

In both Preschool and Reception, the preschool staff and Reception teacher baseline each child when they arrive so that all staff know where the children fit into the Early Years Framework and where they may need support but also where children need to be challenged further. Reception children have to complete the National Baseline that is compulsory for all Reception children, this then generates a report for each child and covers Communication and language and maths. We also complete the Wellcomm assessment at the start of the academic year. Half termly assessments are carried out to monitor children's learning and progress in phonics and maths. During continuous provision, staff will question, challenge and work with children, this will help staff to see where children need extra support and which children need further challenging. This is the same for preschool.

In preschool, staff complete checklists at the end of each term, these contain statements that children need to cover during that term, staff with green/pink whether they have achieved this or not. This will help staff to see where children are at and where they may need extra support.

In Reception it is a statutory requirement to assess each child against the Early Learning Goals (from The Early Years Outcomes document) at the end of the Reception Year. Children are assessed at the end of the Reception Year as to being – Not on track (Working towards the Early Learning Goal), On track (Have achieved the Early Learning Goal). At the end of each term, children are assessed on Arbor (our school tracking system) for where children are at that time across all areas of the Early Years curriculum. They are then assessed for a final time in June where the final data is sent to the Local Authority.

When a child arrives in preschool parents are asked to complete a form providing us with some information about their child's interests and current skills. This helps to build a picture of the children straight away. Children are then tracked throughout the year - when they arrive, Christmas, Easter and at the end of the year. Children are tracked against checkpoints for each area of the Early Years Framework. If children have certain areas of the Early Years Framework that they are struggling with the child may then be tracked on Early Support instead. This provides staff with more detailed areas that they need to observe with that certain child and what support they can provide the child around the classroom. The statutory 2 year check is also completed with parents at our setting. General observations are carried out on a day to day basis and these are put on the relevant working walls around the classroom.

In preschool we also use Wellcomm Screening Tool for Speech and Language assessment to assess children's speech and language skills. This is then used to see if any children need extra intervention in this area or if they need to be referred to a speech and language therapist.

Parent involvement

Preschool parents have opportunity at drop off and pick up times to relay relevant information about their child to preschool staff and vice versa keeping that open dialogue between home and school.

In Reception and preschool class, we run 2 'Stay and Play' sessions where parents can come and play with their children in their classrooms. This is a great way for children to show their parents the environment they work in and for parents to see children in their school environment.

Parents are also invited to a Phonics & Reading evening during the year for parents to see how the teaching of phonics is taught and how parents can support their child at home.

There also parent evenings for both reception and preschool, this gives parents the opportunity to discuss any concerns and teachers can also discuss with parents how their child is getting on and what areas of learning they are doing well and if they are receiving any extra support.

Transition from Preschool to Reception

As a school we are very lucky that our Preschool is next door to our Reception classroom so the transition from Preschool to Reception is a smooth and successful process. As we get nearer the summer

term we provide the children and parents with different opportunities to begin this transition process early so that children and parents are supported during this.

- Children attending Preschool are invited to a weekly story time with the Reception teacher during the summer term. This helps the children to get used to their new learning environment as well as beginning to form a relationship with the reception teacher and other staff members.
- Children who attend our preschool will be able to have some stay and play sessions during the summer term during the week. Children will be able to visit the reception class and explore the classroom and be able to spend some time with their teachers.
- A parent evening is run by the Reception teacher at school. Here the Reception teacher discusses what the expectations are in reception and what teaching will look like. It is also a time for parents to discuss any concerns or worries they may have with the class teacher.
- Children in Preschool are able to take a story pack home every week during June, this includes a story book from our reading scheme Rising Stars and a simple activity to complete. Reading is a vital part of learning at St Barnabas so we feel starting this before children enter reception is a way of parents and children having quality time reading a book together and can also to see the importance of reading.
- We run 2 transition days where the children will spend the day in the reception classroom getting to know their new teachers and having an insight to their new classroom and routines.

Safeguarding

In St Barnabas all staff have regular and up to date safeguarding training. All staff know who the designated safeguarding officer is in school and this is who we go to if a safeguarding issue/concern arises and we then follow the correct procedures. Preschool also has their own designated safeguarding officer.

Here is a link to our whole school safeguarding policy and information provided on our website <https://www.st-barnabas.dowmat.education/page/?title=Safeguarding&pid=7>.

Role of Early Years Lead and class teacher

It is the role of the Early Years Lead under the guidance of the Head Teacher: -

- To oversee and support the delivery of Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum and to ensure progression and development.
- To monitor planning and quality of delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.
- To be aware of key developments within Early Years and carry out training days and staff meetings when required.
- To analyse assessment data to inform learning and teaching within the Early Years.
- Identify key areas for development – implement annual action plans, reviewing and evaluating progress and developments.

Written by: Sophie Wyatt

Date: October 2025

Checked/edited: October 2025