



The Bishops'
CofE Learning Academy



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Version Number	V2
Date Adopted by Governors	May 2024
Scheduled Review Date	Summer 2025
Statutory or Best Practice Policy	Best Practice
School or Trust Policy	School

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Christian Distinctiveness

At The Bishops' Church of England Learning Academy, our mantra, 'Faith to Belong, Believe, Aspire and Achieve' is based on The Parable of the Mustard Seed:

If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. Matthew 17:20

This underpins our Christian vision statement at The Bishops':

We belong to Team Bishops' where through our Christian distinctiveness and nurturing ethos we celebrate our differences. We believe that we will achieve through inspirational, exciting and challenging learning that utilises our natural environment. We aspire to create endless possibilities for our pupils and to make a positive contribution to society. We achieve by enabling everyone to flourish academically, spiritually and emotionally.

'Start children off on the way they should go...' Proverbs 22:6

"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 2021**)

Context

At The Bishops' C of E Learning Academy, our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is seen as a distinctive phase of education which integrates the care and education of our youngest children. We believe that all children are unique and bring with them a diverse range of previous experiences and learning which must be acknowledged and built upon. We value parents as children's first educators and ensure that they are active partners in their child's school education. The following policy is directly linked to our school vision and aims. It documents further strategies we use in order to address the key principles for children's learning and development in our Nursery and Reception classes.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is underpinned by four principles:

A unique child - At The Bishops', well-being is at the heart of all teaching and learning. Our school ethos places the highest importance on recognising the development of the whole child and our strong pastoral care underpins this belief, supporting our children to flourish. We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We understand that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning.

Positive relationships – We believe that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.

Enabling environments - The learning environment plays a crucial role in supporting and extending our children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable experiences and activities to extend their learning in both the indoor and outdoor environments.

Learning and development -The Early Years Unit is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and be reflective. The unit is set up in learning areas, which are split between the classrooms, where children are able to find

and locate equipment and resources independently.

Aims

At The Bishops' C of E Learning Academy, we aim to:

- Provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually.
- Provide a safe, caring, stimulating, and challenging learning environment which is sensitive to the needs of every child.
- Enable opportunities for choice and decision making to foster independence, self-confidence and critical thinking skills.
- Work closely with parent and guardians, valuing their contributions and continuously involving them in their child's learning journey.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress, flourish and achieve.

Areas of Learning

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development that are all inter-connected and equally as important. Three of these areas of learning are known as the prime areas and are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn and form positive relationships.

The prime areas are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

The prime areas are further strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

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

The prime areas are those most essential for a child's healthy development and future learning. As they grow, these skills will support the child as they extend their development in the specific areas. 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.

The fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs are already implicitly embedded in the Early Years Foundation Stage. We promote these values through our school mission statement, aims and values, our curriculum and enrichment activities.

Time and careful consideration are also given to the characteristics of effective learning that underpin each child's development, recognising that they learn in different ways and how their own motivations drive their learning experiences. These are:

- **Playing and exploring** – Children investigate and experience things first hand, 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 their own strategies for doing things.

At The Bishops' we understand the value and importance of play and how play is integral to helping the children to understand and explore the world around them. Our curriculum is based on firsthand experiences, where the children actively apply their skills and knowledge in practical situations.

We recognise that teaching can take place at all times of the day through more directed teaching sessions, through times of play, inside and outside the classroom and in planned off-site visits and encourage and facilitate all of these. Children learn through planned play activities and staff will decide when child-initiated or adult-led play activities will provide the most effective learning opportunities. There are lots of opportunities for talk and for children to work both independently and collaboratively. Children are encouraged to try new things, take risks and learn through exploration.

Planning and Assessment

Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. At The Bishops' C of E Academy, planning is divided into medium term plans and short-term plans. Medium term planning identifies the skills and objectives being taught each half-term. Short term or weekly planning shows specific activities which have been planned to support the children to achieve the objectives. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Our planning shows how the principles of the EYFS are put into practice and is always informed by observations we have made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning needs. All staff who work in the Early Years Stage are involved in this planning process and staff play an active role in ensuring that children experience a range of activities throughout the week. Planning within our EYFS is based around children's interests, fostering a high level of motivation and this is seen as a key element of planning. Weekly planning is always flexible and responds directly to the needs of the children. A mixture of directed and free choice activities are planned and children's choices are carefully monitored to ensure a balanced programme.

We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of long and short recorded observations and this involves the teacher and other adults as appropriate. These observations are made up of a combination of photographs, videos and written comments which are shared with parents, using our online learning journals. Parents and guardians are also given the opportunity to meet with the Early Years Stage Team each term and, at the end of the third term, a written summary is provided in relation to the children's development and achievements towards the early learning goals.

Learning Environments

The Early Years spaces are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be quiet, active, creative and work on processes that interest them. Each classroom has defined learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently and opportunities to apply their learning across the seven areas of learning. The Foundation Stage has enclosed outdoor areas, and children are able to free-flow between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Being outdoors offers the children opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. They are able to explore, use their senses, develop their language skills and be physically active. Outdoor play also supports children's problem-solving skills and nurtures their creativity, as well as providing rich opportunities for developing their imagination, inventiveness and resourcefulness. And, of course, the outdoor environment offers more space than indoors and therefore is particularly important to those children who learn best through active movement. We plan activities and resources both inside and outside, enabling the children to develop in all of the areas of learning in a way which is suited to them.

Home/School Partnership

At the Bishops' we place a high level of importance on the relationship between home and school. Positive relationships are an essential element of supporting a child's development. We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educators and we aim for the school and parents and carers to work closely in Early Years. This can have a very positive impact on a child's development but relies on a two-way flow of information and knowledge.

Here are some of the ways we will develop this working relationship between the school and parents.

- Parents are invited to a workshop in the summer term to provide them with essential information for the next academic year. This is an opportunity to meet Early Years staff and find out more information about daily routines and our school.
- During the term prior to starting school, we offer home visits for both Nursery and Reception starters. This gives the children the opportunity to meet their class teacher in a setting that is familiar to them and allows us to find out about your child's interests and individual needs.
- Each child will be invited to two 'Stay and Play' sessions so that they can spend some time in our setting, familiarising themselves with the environment, the staff and meet other children in their class before starting school full-time.
- There will be an initial parents meeting in the first half-term so that you can find out more about how your child has settled into school. This will be followed by an additional parents meeting in the Spring term and a written report in the summer term.
- We will conduct workshops for parents and carers to enable them to be familiar with the teaching methods used in school to make it easier to emulate these at home. These vary each year but in the past have included, phonics workshops, mathematics workshops, communication and language workshops and physical development workshops.
- At the Bishops' we use electronic learning journals to provide parents with regular updates of what their child is doing at school. These include photographs and videos and allow parents to feel part of their child's learning journey. There is also the opportunity for parents to comment and share their own observations of their children at home.
- Throughout the year, we also hold focussed 'stay and play' session where parents can come and play alongside their children in the classroom. These sessions are designed to focus on a specific area of learning and provide parents with ideas for how to support different areas of learning at home through play based activities.
- We actively encourage parents to be involved in all aspects of school life, offering support on trips, attending assemblies which celebrate the children's achievements and taking part in a variety of 'home learning challenges'.
- We operate an 'open door' policy that allows parents and carers to discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner. Conversely, if Early Years staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will approach parents and carers to discuss these.

Transition from EYFS to Key Stage 1

During the final term in Reception, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, staff and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. The Profile includes on-going observation, all relevant records held by the setting, discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution. Each child's level of development is assessed against the early learning goals. The profile indicates whether children are meeting expected levels of development or not yet reaching expected levels.

Year 1 teachers are given a copy of the Profile report together with a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning. This informs the dialogue between Reception and Year 1 teachers about each child's stage of development and learning needs and assists with the planning of activities in Year 1. We pride ourselves on our transition and we continue to develop this to ensure that children leave Reception ready for Year 1. To support this, we use time within the summer term to familiarise our pupils with their new classrooms and adults and begin to move towards an approach that closer reflects that of Key Stage 1. Parents are supported through transition through our parent information sessions and the start of each new year with our

'Meet the Teacher' sessions.

Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

Children with additional educational needs will be supported as appropriate to enable them to access the curriculum fully. This includes children that need a greater level of challenge and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. School support plans identify targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support commensurate with the school's Special Educational Needs Policy. The school's SEN Co-ordinator is responsible for providing additional information and advice to staff and parents and for arranging external intervention and support as necessary.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is taught in accordance with the present policy for Equal Opportunities. Children are encouraged to develop a positive attitude towards people of different ethnic groups, cultures, beliefs, gender and ability. We support the belief that everyone is unique in their own right and act upon it.

Our curriculum respects a child's ethnic faith and cultural heritage, and the special needs of each child, by ensuring that these areas are covered within our indoor and outdoor activities, circle time and assemblies, visitors, role play, books and positive images.

Safeguarding

It is important to us that all children 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.

The school takes its child protection responsibilities very seriously. Any concerns, which the school has, will be noted and, if deemed necessary, will be reported to the relevant agency. The safety of the child is always of paramount importance. The full Safeguarding Policy is available in school and online for parents.

Positive Behaviour Management

Our Early Years unit follows the same Positive Behaviour Management policy and systems as the rest of the school. Please refer to Positive Behaviour Management Policy for more information.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to follow this policy. The Senior Leadership Team and Early Years Lead will carry out monitoring of the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring timetable.