



Loving Learning and Looking Forward with Christ.

OUR LADY AND ST BENEDICT CATHOLIC ACADEMY EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

Mission Statement

‘Loving, Learning and Looking forward with Christ.’

Following the example of Our Lady and St. Benedict we are rooted to Christ in all that we say, do and think. Within our safe Catholic family we love, learn and ensure children are ready for their next step in society with Christ as their purpose.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

“A good early education is the foundation for later success.”

At Our Lady and St Benedict’s, in the Early Years, we believe that we can work with parents, children and all stakeholders to learn together, master our skills and broaden our experiences, remembering our shared goal: to nurture and develop aspirational and inspirational young people.

The Early Years foundation stage is based upon four principles:

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

A Unique Child

At Our Lady and St Benedict’s 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, at varying rates and it is our responsibility to offer an engaging and challenging curriculum that is accessible to all.

Inclusion

We recognise and value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against anyone. We recognise that all children have the right to an education and that education should develop each child’s personality and talents to the full. All children at Our

Lady and St. Benedict's 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 children matter. We strive to give our children every opportunity to achieve their best and do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences and interests when planning for their learning.

We set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of all of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs and interests 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 and assessing children's progress and taking action to push or provide support as necessary.

It is important to us that all children in the school are safe. We educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We use the whole school behaviour policy to promote positive behavioural choices in the EYFS and ensure that all staff take a consistent approach to behaviour management. 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 wellbeing of all children. (see Safeguarding 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." – *Bold Beginnings, Ofsted 2017*

At Our Lady and St. Benedict School we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the EYFS Statutory Framework. We actively:

- 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. This includes the use of cameras and mobile phones in the setting. *See Safeguarding and Phone Policy for further details.*
- 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.

Positive Relationships

At Our Lady and St. Benedict's we recognise that children learn to be strong, independent learners through secure relationships. We are committed to developing a strong, loyal and supportive partnership between pupils and staff and understand that these early relationships set a precedent for the child's expectations and understanding of future relationships with staff throughout their academic career. Through the development of mutually respectful and positive relationships, children are able to focus better on their education in a setting where they feel safe and secure. We do this through:

- Following the school behaviour policy.
- Clearly establishing and regularly revisiting classroom rules and expectations.
- Using positive reinforcement and descriptive praise for behaviour that is deserving of it.
- Ensuring that we celebrate positive behaviour and accomplishments with the children and their parents regularly.
- Giving clear, simple and firm instructions, remembering that in Early Years some children are better able to follow 2 or 3 part instructions than others.
- Avoiding the use of negative emotive remarks such as saying a child has been naughty.
- Maintaining a calm and measured approach in class, not raising our voices or reacting emotionally.
- Conducting home school visits and giving parents opportunities to visit with the staff in the school setting, prior to starting school.
- Having a consistent approach to behaviour management that introduces the school behaviour system gradually.
- All members of staff use the school behaviour management strategies consistently.
- Remembering that all children are individuals, with different needs and circumstances and that, while we strive to have consistent approaches to behaviour management with all pupils, we also have to be understanding and patient with every individual.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators. At Our Lady & St Benedict's we strive to ensure that parents remain a key part of their child's academic journey through to becoming an aspirational young person. We recognise and support the role that parents play in educating their children. We do this through:

- Pre-Nursery children being invited to attend 'Owlets' sessions once a week. The sessions are led by the EYFS staff, with Thrive at Five. These enable early friendships to be formed and positive relationships to be built with an EYFS practitioner.
- Conducting home visits to discuss the child with parents before they start in our school.
- Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school.
- Children join Nursery on a full time basis, individual needs of each child is discussed with parents.
- Encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. Staff are available at the start and the end of the school day.
- Offering a formal meeting for parents (Parent's Evening) twice throughout the academic year.
- Providing a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.
- Offering opportunities for parents to take part in sessions and workshops to help parents effectively read with their children and adopt positive and lasting homework routines.
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents: Family days, Productions, Sports Day, Easter Bonnet parades and Masses.
- Providing termly update letters and curriculum information.
- Providing space in the children's home/school diaries for parents to leave comments relating to the children's achievements.
- Maintaining an 'open door policy' so that all staff and all families form positive working relationships

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children and parents, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them.

We recognise that children will arrive in our setting with varied experiences and we seek to liaise thoroughly with previous settings to ensure that the child's learning journey continues at the correct level.

Enabling Environments

At Our Lady and St. Benedict's we recognise that the children learn best in an enabling environment which allows them to have experiences relevant to their individual needs.

This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning. We endeavour to make the indoor and outdoor learning environment available to the children as much as possible and to make both of these engaging and motivating. Providing opportunities for the children to explore, discover, create and challenge themselves.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

The Planning within the EYFS follows the schools' Long Term Plan and is based around termly themes. Each theme is planned through a Medium Term Plan. These plans are used by the EYFS teacher as a guide for weekly planning but are regularly modified to reflect the children's interests and development. In the EYFS we endeavour to plan for opportunities for all children to access the curriculum within the classroom setting. We use the Early Years Framework to inform this.

Phonics is planned for using the Bug Club Phonics scheme, which is used throughout the school, and is delivered daily. "Systematic synthetic phonics plays a critical role in teaching children the alphabetic code and, since this knowledge is also essential for spelling, good phonics teaching supported children's early writing."

We also use a range of other schemes of work to help us plan our learning in EYFS. These schemes are usually the same ones used by the Key Stage 1 and 2 classes and help to provide a consistency of learning from the foundation stage up. These schemes include *Ten:Ten* and *Power Maths* in Reception.

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 primarily takes the form of observations, these will be taken by the teacher and other supporting adults as appropriate.

Further assessment will include, but is not limited to:

- Whole class reading
- One to one reading opportunities
- An initial Baseline assessment in Nursery
- The EYFS Baseline Assessment in Reception
- Guided and independent written work, some of which will be recorded in Literacy and RE books.
- Guided and independent maths work, some of which will be recorded in maths books and some in Power Maths books.
- Handwriting practice
- Regular phonics assessment
- Regular maths assessment
- Stoke Speaks Out and Nuffield

We use a combination of assessment to gather a rounded view of the child's progress throughout the year.

Within the final term of each year, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their progress against the Early Learning Goal's and assessment scales. There is opportunity in the summer term for the parents to discuss these judgements with teachers. In addition, the Year 1 teacher is provided with a detailed handover which provides opportunity to discuss each child's progress and future learning needs at the end of Reception.

The Learning Environment

The Nursery and Reception classrooms are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active and focussed, areas where they can explore and play and areas to support their critical thinking. The classrooms are set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. Visual cues are provided to help children with behaviour and classroom organisation.

The Early Years has its own enclosed outdoor area which has a positive effect on the children's development. At Our Lady & St Benedict's we believe that providing an engaging outdoor learning environment enables the children to develop their social skills, their understanding of risk, their appreciation of nature and encourages an active lifestyle. We have worked hard to develop and provide a fresh and engaging outdoor environment that enables us to plan for activities that expand on what has been done in class.

Learning and Development

At Our Lady and St. Benedict's 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 that they are inter connected. For children's learning and development to be successful the principles of the unique child, positive relationships and an enabling environment are followed.

As set out in the Early Years Framework, we seek to develop the characteristics of effective learning in all children. These are:

- Playing and exploring
- Active learning
- Creating and thinking critically

We do this through considered planning for the seven areas of learning and development:

Prime areas:

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

Specific areas:

- Literacy
- Maths
- Understanding of the world
- Expressive arts and design

Transition to Year 1

“Reception and Year 1 teachers agreed that the vital, smooth transition from the foundation stage to Year 1 was difficult because the early learning goals were not aligned with the now-increased expectations of the national curriculum.” – *Bold Beginnings, Ofsted 2017*

Throughout the Reception year we aim to develop the children’s stamina and engagement with whole class directed tasks. In the Summer Term, we will make some changes to our timetable to gradually build up more time working to complete tasks as a whole class sitting at their tables together, as the children will do in Year 1, in order to help the children become better prepared for their transition. We want the children to have the learning skills necessary to begin Year 1 in a productive and aspirational manner. The Year 1 curriculum builds upon and extends the experiences children have had during the Foundation Stage.

Before the children move from Early Years into Year 1 the teaching staff meet to discuss the children’s progress. The children will also have the opportunity to spend some time working with their Year 1 teacher before the end of the Summer Term. There is a Parent’s Evening early on in the Autumn Term, this gives parents and the class teacher the opportunity to discuss how children are settling into the Year 1.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS co-ordinator and all EYFS practitioners to follow the principles stated in this policy.

The Principal and subject coordinator will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

The EYFS leader meets termly with other EYFS leaders to moderate and support each other. Regular opportunities for EYFS practitioners from across the Collegiate to observe and coach each other take place throughout the year.

Policy Co-ordinator: Rebecca McCue EYFS Leader

Reviewed: October 2025

Next Review: October 2026