



# **The Nar Valley Federation of Church Academies**

# **Early Years Foundation Stage Policy**

<b>Policy Type:</b>	<b>Academy Policy</b>
<b>Approved By:</b>	<b>Local Governing Body</b>
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<b>Person Responsible:</b>	<b>NVF EYFS Lead</b>

## Summary of Changes

The policy has been amended as follows.

Page Ref.	Section	Amendment	Date of Change

This document outlines the philosophy, aims and principles of Early Years teaching and learning in reception at our three sites: Castle Acre, Narborough and Sporle. The document underpins practice in all areas of provision.

### Rationale

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to five years old, when they reach the end of their reception year. Key Stage 1 begins when children move into Year 1. At The Nar Valley Federation of Church Academies we greatly value the important role that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe that the EYFS is important in its own right, and plays an integral role in preparing children for life and not simply the next stage in their education.

In the EYFS, children learn best through carefully planned, developmentally appropriate, play-based activities, taking into accounts their next steps. Through play, children explore and make sense of their world. They practice new skills, build and construct their understanding, and have the opportunity to think creatively. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems, discuss and negotiate plans, and learn about how to manage their behaviour. Ultimately they become independent learners and thinkers.

At The Nar Valley Federation of Church Academies, we aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which will enable each child to fulfil their potential. All children begin school with a wide range of skills, and having experienced many different learning opportunities. It is the privilege of practitioners working in our Reception classes to support children as they build upon their prior knowledge. It is essential that parents, support staff and the Reception teachers work effectively together to scaffold children's learning and development.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (Published 31.3.2021, Effective 1.9.2021) and the Annex B Statutory guidance for the Reception Baseline Assessment, alongside all other school policy documents.

### **Aims**

- To provide a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment, which meets individual needs and interests of the children, and in which creativity is valued.
- To develop warm and secure relationships between children and adults.
- To provide a high quality curriculum in line with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- To encourage all children to become self-motivated and independent learners with a positive attitude to learning and self-discipline.
- For children to become aware of moral and social values within the Christian community of our school and the wider community fostering British values.
- To foster strong home-school links and share a common sense of purpose with parents.

### **Curriculum**

Effective practice in the EYFS is built on the following four guiding principles:

- A unique child
- Positive relationships
- Enabling environments with teaching and support from adults
- Learning and development

The content of the curriculum is set out by the EYFS framework 2021. Guidance is given on effective learning across the prime areas of:

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

and the specific areas of:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the world
- Expressive Arts and Design

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are all of equal importance and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated play activities. Within each of these areas are specific statements which show the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that children need to learn during the EYFS in order to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of their reception year. We also ensure that our curriculums take into account the British Values; Democracy, Individual Liberty, The Rule of the Law and Mutual Respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

## **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Reception teachers plan activities within the Reception classrooms with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them.

The three characteristics are;

- **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.

## **Teaching strategies**

We ensure that there is a balance between child initiated and adult directed across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In some cases the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible. By the Summer term in Reception the children will experience many more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to Year 1.

## **Play**

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Using children's interests as a starting point, we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child-initiated play, which is controlled, and adult led activities is very important to us.

## **Teaching**

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on.

Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc.

Reading and story play is an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern classics. We ensure a good range of quality texts through our Federation Reading Spine. We make sure there is time for a whole class story at the end of the day but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times. Every child has one-to-one reading time with an adult, usually a parent helper and a group reading session throughout the year.

Read, Write Inc. Phonics Set 1 is followed during the first half term, followed by Set 2 then Set 3 to teach reading and writing skills. This is supplemented by Shared Reading, Guided Writing and 1:1 reading and Guided Reading.

### **Planning**

We believe many children need to be given a starting point to learn new things and find topics are a great way to fire the imagination. We have a two year topic cycle. Topics are usually based on the following areas of learning, 'Understanding the World, 'Literacy' and 'Communication and Language'; and range from a topic on Farming to All About Me or The Frozen World. The topics are flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests, school themes and local or national events. Every half term staff plan the next topic and visits/visitors that will enhance the learning.

Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis using daily notes, observations and interactions with children to inform where the learning journey should move to. Although class teachers are responsible for writing plans, support staff give an input whenever possible.

### **Classroom organisation**

Our Early Years classrooms have defined areas with clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. Each classroom is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning. Classrooms have a writing area, maths area, creative area, book corner, role play area, construction/small world area, outdoor area and carpeted teaching area. A variety of activities are planned for and set up in the different areas each day. The adults move to whichever area their focus for the session/day is.

The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside for much of the day. We try to ensure that the range of activities outside reflects the different curriculum areas, for example setting up quiet spaces for a maths game, reading and for construction.

### **Assessment, observations and portfolios**

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies all of which come together in their individual learning journey. We are very proud of our learning journeys: these are collections of children's work, photos and observations which create a detailed picture of the child. Where appropriate, we include individual next steps for children's learning. These next steps are discussed by the EYFS team in informal meetings. Each class has their own iPad which is used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning.

Parents and the children have access to the Learning Journals, we have regular parent cafes at the different sites. The learning journey is given to parents when their child enters Year 1 or leaves our setting.

On entry to Reception, we carry out the government baseline assessments (RBA) for each child. Throughout the Early Years the Class Teacher submits half termly assessment data via Pupil Asset to the Head Teacher showing each child's development across the seven areas of learning. At the end of Reception, the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either 'working towards or 'expected' . (Norfolk County Council usually requires the information by the end of June). This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report and can be discussed in the final Parents' Evening in Reception as well as the final scores being sent to the Local Authority.

### **Moderation**

Internal Federation moderation takes place weekly during PPA sessions, but formally once a term.

The class teacher attends regular external moderation meetings.

A visit from a county advisor takes place every four years. (The most recent was in 2015).

### **Role of staff and key worker**

The class teacher is the named key worker for each child in the setting. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years setting actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy

relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being now and their future successes.

There are rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class and we aim to be consistent in who covers these absences.

### **Partnership with parents and carers**

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We operate an open door policy. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. We use 'Class Dojo' where the class teacher can post 'class stories and photos, send out messages to parents and post children's work on their own individual portfolio. This is a two-way facility and parents can also post events/activities their child has completed at home as well as send messages to the class teacher. As well as the Reception visit days, we offer a Meet the Teacher in the summer term before children start school and invite them to school events such as sports day and art/DT exhibitions. We collect information from parents about their child's previous learning experiences; their interests, likes and dislikes. We encourage relevant learning activities to be continued at home, such as practising phonics, key skills and listening to their child read. We discuss children's progress with parents at parent's evenings. We provide an end of year report which includes their end of year scores and achievement against the Characteristics of Effective Learning. We run regular parent cafe's providing opportunities to share stories, crafts, phonics, maths and a chance to talk with other parents and the staff.

### **Transition from Pre-School Settings and Induction**

Schools and pre-school settings within the EYFS have a statutory duty to ensure continuity for children during periods of transition.

Smooth transitions support the personal, social and emotional development, learning and future success of every child.

At The Nar Valley Federation of Church Academies we have close links with the main pre-school providers. The staff regularly communicate over the year and are continually trying to find ways to develop closer links.

### **Summer Term**

- A visit is made by the class teacher or teaching assistant to the pre-school setting to observe and play with the children in their environment and to discuss individual needs with the staff. Often there is also an opportunity to talk to the parents.
- A home visit is made by the class teacher and the teaching assistant prior to the children attending the three sessions in school to meet the child in their home setting, play with the child and chat to parents.
- A parents meeting is held by the Head Teacher, class teacher and teaching assistants to introduce parents to the school and reception procedures. Through this meeting the school's expectations and routines are communicated. The induction process and EYFS

curriculum are also introduced. Parents have the opportunity to meet the class teachers and to visit the reception classroom and the rest of the school. They are given all the necessary documentation.

- The children are invited to come to school for three sessions prior to starting in September.
- At the last induction session, the children are given an activity to complete over the holiday and return in September.

### **Health & safety and safeguarding**

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. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2021) and our school Safeguarding Policy.

It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones or personal handset devices in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal handsets. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in children's learning journeys, in class displays and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school website through the paperwork in their initial welcome packs.

We take all accidents seriously and always log and phone home immediately if a child bangs their head. We have cold compresses at each of our sites.

We encourage all children to start school without nappies but will support any children struggling with this. We acknowledge that young children often have 'accidents' and have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. We ask parents to help keep our stocks of clothes high by returning anything their child has borrowed.