

**SACRED HEART CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL  
A VOLUNTARY ACADEMY  
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*Jesus said, "I chose you, and appointed you to go and bear much fruit." (John 15:16)*

## **Early Years Curriculum Statement**

### **Intent**

At Sacred Heart, our aim is to create an outstanding learning environment to support, enhance and invite a child's curiosity, confidence and individual competency to flourish regardless of backgrounds, circumstances or individual needs.

We prioritise the quality of education in Early Years through school self-evaluation and EYFS action plans. To ensure children make outstanding progress at Sacred Heart, it is our intent to take into consideration their starting points and needs of our pupils as they begin their learning journey. Every child has access to a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum, preparing them for now and for the future in terms of opportunities and experiences.

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led, adult-initiated and child-initiated activity. We ensure the curriculum planned meets the needs of all learners, academically, spiritually, morally, social and culturally. This is evident in our long term, medium term and weekly plans.

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We build safeguarding into our curriculum and aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. At Sacred Heart, we aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. It is our goal that all children leave the Foundation Stage with increased confidence and independence, an inquisitive mind, a good understanding of core skills and a sense of achievement.

We support children to be active and to develop physically including giving clear messages to children why it is important to eat, drink, practise good oral hygiene and exercise as well as to be kind to others.

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development and work hard to provide a stimulating setting that provides exciting opportunities, promotes challenge, exploration, adventure and a real love of learning. Following personal interests and individual needs, allows us to plan and provide opportunities throughout our EYFS curriculum to support learning and development and achieve children's next steps. We indicate this and include it on weekly planning.

At Sacred Heart, we spend time playing alongside and talking to the children. This gives us an insight to the children's learning and we can use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs and any emerging interests. We record any significant moments in their child's learning journey through

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observations. These are recorded in children's individual 'Learning Journal' on 'Tapestry'. Tapestry also contains information and observations provided by parents supporting our work with parents as partners.

At Sacred Heart, we use Tapestry to support us in highlighting areas of concern for individual children, this enables practitioners to look for opportunities to further support the child and/or provide different provision and intervention for that individual.

Progress of the children from their starting points is looked at and discussed with senior leaders three times a year during whole school data collection points. Through this discussion any significant steps are noted and if necessary changes are made to the provision offered. Each child's level of development at the end of Reception is assessed and tracked using tracking system in school. Each child's level of development at the end of Reception is assessed against the Early Learning Goals. The three characteristics of Effective Learning will be used to ascertain each child's skills and abilities.

At Sacred Heart, our learning environment is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. The classroom is carefully planned and set up into learning areas where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. It has its own enclosed outdoor area and offers the children opportunities to explore, use their senses and be physically active when learning. Where possible we offer a free flow system where for the majority of the time the children can move freely between indoor and outdoor activities. Our outdoor area is used all year round and in most weather conditions. Children learn through exploring the environment around them. They absorb skills, knowledge and understanding needed for a particular task, but social, emotional, physical and cognitive learning is taking place at the same time.

At Sacred Heart, we believe first-hand experiences are essential to learning. The physical doing leads to abstract thinking. The children are provided a stimulating environment in which to formulate and experiment with ideas. We provide challenges in a context that is relevant to the child, and which fits in with the child's understanding and experience and current topic of learning.

### **Implementation**

At Sacred Heart School, we recognise that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. We aim to ignite children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, to build their capacity to learn and to form relationships. During each week, the children will work with an adult to complete at least one 1:1 reading session, reading in a small group as well as at least two adult led English tasks, at least two adult led maths tasks and a range of child initiated tasks through both the indoor and outdoor provision. We follow the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (2021). This is made up of four overriding principles which our early year's education is based upon

- Unique Child – Every child is unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Positive Relationships – Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- Enabling Environments – 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 carers.
- Learning and Development – Children develop and learn in different ways. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early year's provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

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Our curriculum provides a play-based and experiential learning environment, combined with focussed teaching and basic skills, to ensure children make rapid progress before moving onto Year 1.

The children in Reception are provided with ample opportunities accessible in our indoor and outdoor provision. They engage in planned, focussed activities as well as self-initiated and free flow activities.

The learning experiences within our Early Years are linked to the seven areas of learning and development within the EYFS. These areas are split into three prime areas and four specific areas. The three prime areas are those which the children should develop first and are considered most essential for the healthy development and future learning of our children.

The EYFS is made up of seven areas of learning:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication, Language and Literacy
- Physical Development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Knowledge of the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELG's) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS. Each area of learning and development will be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led, adult-initiated and child-initiated activity.

We ensure activities support the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning to ensure learning takes place.

These 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. Children benefit from meaningful learning across the curriculum.

At Sacred Heart, we plan resourcefully for opportunities for communication, sustained shared thinking and physical challenge to build on existing skills taking into account the Characteristics of Effective Learning. We provide rich first hand experiences (inside, outdoors, visitors and school trips) to widen experiences, awe and wonder.

Exploratory learning and thinking creatively including problem solving across all areas of learning is planned. New vocabulary and concepts through reading excites and engages all learners and staff model Standard English and ask high quality questions. The curriculum we provide promotes and supports children's emotional security and development of their character enabling children to take risks in a safe and secure environment. A vital aspect in the development of essential knowledge and skills is the use of continuous provision. This means that children are using and developing taught skills throughout the year on a daily basis.

Continuous provision practise and principles begin in EYFS and support children to develop key life skills such as independence, innovation, creativity, enquiry, analysis and problem solving. During the school day, children will have an opportunity to work independently, work collaboratively with their friends and with members of staff. Daily guided activities are also planned to cover different areas of the EYFS curriculum and allow children to develop their next steps in learning. Through observation and discussion, areas of need and next steps are identified for all children to ensure good progress is made. There are also a range of stimulating and engaging activities which the children can access independently and a variety of opportunities for child-initiated play. In planning and guiding children's activities we reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practise. We take time to get to know where the children

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are, using 'Development Matters' and 'Birth to 5 Matters' within Tapestry. We then ensure our planning, adult interaction and learning environment; including continuous provision, support children to reach their next steps.

We will include interventions for groups or individuals if and when necessary and use Tapestry Reflections and Areas of Concern to gather information about which areas children need more support with.

### **Impact**

Children at Sacred Heart, on average, arrive in line or above expectations for their age.

During their time in Reception, children make rapid progress towards the national expectation and the ELG's for a good level of development at the end of the year. The number of children achieving a 'Good Level of Development' is above the National Average.

Pupils also make good progress toward their age-related expectations both academically and socially, developing a sense of themselves before transitioning into Year One.

Our curriculum is reviewed to ensure relevance and to ensure the voices of our pupils, parents, staff and governors are heard. The children at Sacred Heart experience a smooth transition between the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum. Our children grow to be confident and competent lifelong learners. Effective communication and collaboration ensure the children leave the EYFS with a solid foundation of learning of which to build upon.

We use learning journals across the EYFS to make a note of significant achievements, document vocabulary and learning styles. This is complemented with exercise books for formally recorded work English, Maths and RE work in Reception. This is evidence to the children and their families the successes of the children throughout their time in Early Years.

As a team, we attend Early Years training, external moderation meetings and have regular internal moderation sessions to ensure that we feel confident with what our children can do and what their planned next steps should be. We work as part of the Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust with other Early Years professionals to evaluate the quality of our provision and evidence that we collect.

Practitioners gather evidence about the children through careful observations which are then used to inform planning. Learning and teaching is therefore effective when children feel a sense of belonging, curiosity and competence showing resilience and tenacity. We believe our high standards are due to our carefully planned environment, enriched play-based curriculum, quality first teaching and the thoroughness of assessment. By monitoring assessment procedures regularly, we can effectively demonstrate what learning is taking place and how each child is progressing in all seven areas of the EYFS curriculum.

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