

Early Years Foundation Stage Pedagogy

Context

This document should be read alongside our Trust Pedagogy. It explains the approach to teaching adopted within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). However, many aspects not included here are specific to our Trust and therefore are part of our wider provision but are not repeated because they are universal for all children- for example our Learning for Life Behaviours running through all we do.

Our Trust curriculum is based within the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, ensuring coverage of at least what is expected from this document. We also use the non-statutory curriculum guidance, Development Matters and Birth to 5 Matters, Strong Foundations and Early Years Outcomes. Together, these support staff to plan a broad, ambitious and developmentally appropriate curriculum. We are also members of the EYFS Hub group, this commitment to collaboration and professional development is key to a continued learning journey for our team as well as the children.

Curriculum design and structure

Literacy and Maths are taught in the mornings, ensuring a timetable that largely remains stable as pupils move through school. This supports routine and stability for our learners. At the same time, we make full use of opportunities to work in a cross-curricular way when this is helpful, and our curriculum is designed to support staff in making these links for their pupils.

Themed plans with linked immersion texts cover Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design, for example. These have been developed with our communities in mind. We have included progressive topic themes focusing on working scientifically to ensure greater exposure to the specific knowledge and skills needed across the sciences. In this way, children are supported to build knowledge that is secure, relevant and connected.

Communication, language and oracy

As a community, we have added elements that we believe enhance the offer for our pupils. These work to offset disadvantage and to support the extension of oracy, language and communication. We use the NELI assessment on entry alongside the Baseline, and these assessments have identified a need for a curriculum that includes exposure to rich working language.

We have a higher-than-average adult to child ratio to support the development of language through greater exposure to modelling and interaction. Children in Reception are provided with many opportunities to talk, building on prior vocabulary as well as being exposed to new vocabulary through the use of learning partners, class circle times, role play, stories and high-quality play. Our challenge-based learning facilitates high-quality interactions that enable children to develop their language and ideas, think critically, problem-solve and reflect through sustained, shared thinking with modelling adults as frequently as possible.

Staff model strong language skills throughout the day and create frequent opportunities for conversation and discussion that promote critical thinking and problem solving. This includes the use of specific positive comments, for example: "I like the way you have joined these two parts together using...". Children are also asked to reflect on what they think was successful, why they chose particular materials and how they might solve a problem or develop an idea further next time. This supports the building of learning for life behaviours and promotes high expectations, helping children to become open to feedback and improvement.

Role of the adult

All staff know the importance of modelling strong language skills and include frequent daily opportunities for conversations and discussions with children. Staff observe play, sometimes from a distance and sometimes without interaction, scaffold learning, challenge, reset learning spaces and deliver planned objectives. It is our job as trained practitioners to enhance play and extend learning at every opportunity through careful planning and in the moment extension and talk.

Staff receive high quality support from our team in order to do this effectively. The emphasis is always on being present, responsive and purposeful in the moment, rather than prioritising recording over high quality interaction. Tapestry is used as an online learning journal to celebrate each child's unique learning journey in our setting and to share achievements with parents. However, this is one tool and we do not ask staff to prioritise recording over high quality presence during learning time.

Challenge-based learning: Plan, Do, Review

We follow a Plan, Do, Review approach to our challenge-based curriculum, also described as Challenge, Do, Review. Pupils can choose their own child-initiated challenges and share them with peers, inviting them to join the challenge. Practitioners facilitate and carefully support children to extend their chosen challenges, ensuring coverage and achievement of the Early Learning Goals across the areas of learning.

Challenges are enabled through a well-resourced environment and a highly skilled team that focuses on questioning and encouraging children to review their own learning. Staff encourage children to evaluate their work and consider what could make their challenge even better. This is a key element in our Early Years philosophy. Delivery is always shaped by the needs of the cohort and individuals, and staff skilfully weave the learning needs of the pupils in their care into activity that holds attention. Opportunities for additional work on the foundations for future learning are seized.

The Enabling Environment

Our enabling environment is key to supporting and enhancing our pupils' learning and development. We see the role of the environment as our fourth adult. We ensure our environment sparks awe and wonder in our children where we can, whilst also encouraging independence and frequent foundation aimed sessions. These may be whole class, group or individual, depending upon the activity and the needs of the child.

We provide ambiguous and open-ended resources to nurture creativity and imagination, as well as to foster children's relationships and communication skills wherever possible. Our classroom and outdoor space are designed to allow children to explore and lead their own challenges for themselves, peers and the adults they work with. Resources are freely accessible and children are taught to independently access what they need and to responsibly tidy away too. Independence is carefully taught, expected and reinforced.

We understand that our environment has to lend itself to movement to meet the needs of our youngest learners. Being mindful to balance movement with more sedentary activity such as fine motor-based tasks supports mastering these foundational skills as do activities designed with building core muscle strength in wrists to be ready to write.

Foundational Skills - phonics, early writing and number

Phonics teaching, using RWI Inc., starts with whole class delivery and, after the first term, is delivered in groups. Progress is monitored closely from the start so that gaps are identified quickly. Targeted support such as twice-daily Pinny Time and oral blending interventions is put in place as soon as needed. Following RWI assessments at the end of the autumn term, children for whom the gap is not closing receive more structured RWI FastTrack support.

Fine motor skills associated with writing are taught in small groups to ensure the basics, for example letter formation and pencil grip, are established correctly. These foundational skills are learnt and over learnt in an environment where adults can model, closely monitor and support. Early writing largely focuses on

transcription, dictation and then free-writing. This means children can focus their effort on grip, correct formation and elements such as finger spacing rather than thinking about content.

Number teaching is supported by the maths mastery programme undertaken by the Trust, with a heavy use of concrete apparatus to support number fluency, understanding and the development of mathematical language. This is approached through whole class learning, meeting specific needs through modelling and support as needed. As with other areas we are quick to respond to additional needs in a timely way. For digit formation, we use modelling and small group delivery to ensure the correct formation skills are taught and mastered.

Inclusion, Responsiveness and High Expectations

Across the EYFS, staff remain alert to the needs of the cohort and each individual child. Adults adapt provision, interactions and teaching in response to what children need most, while keeping the curriculum broad, coherent and ambitious. The combination of rich language, well-planned provision, active adult support and carefully structured teaching enables children to build knowledge, skills and confidence over time.

Our approach is informed by the Strong Foundations document, which supports a clear understanding of how early learning can be secure, sequenced and focused on the most important foundations for future success.

Children in the EYFS experience a curriculum that is well thought through, ambitious and implemented consistently. In practice, this means that our pedagogy balances child-initiated learning with purposeful adult support, and that children are helped to make progress across the areas of learning through thoughtful interaction, modelling and challenge.

At All Saints Academy Trust, the EYFS is a place where children are known, listened to and challenged. Staff use their professional knowledge to respond in the moment, to extend thinking, and to ensure that every child is supported to take the next step in learning through a curriculum rooted in language, relationships, independence and carefully planned teaching.