

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy
St Wilfrid's Catholic Academy

OUR MOTTO

“Love One Another As I Have Loved You”

St. Wilfrid's Catholic Academy recognises that Gospel values and the teachings of the church are central to the life of the school. The school aims to create an environment where children can develop physically, emotionally, socially and morally fostering co-operation and communication between home, school, parish and the local community. Together, we hope to lead our children towards understanding, tolerance, justice and sensitivity to the needs of others.

Introduction

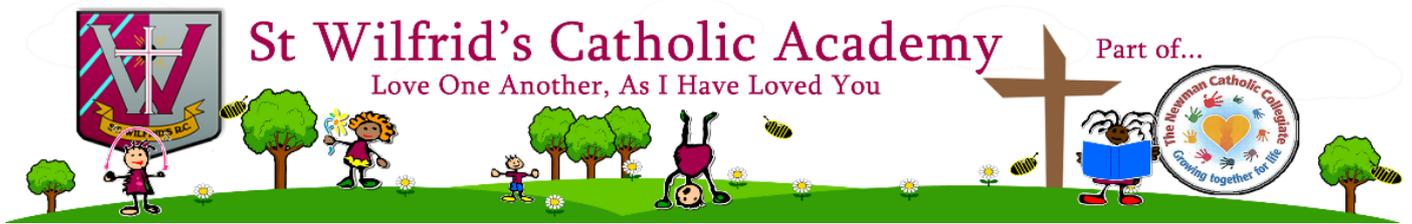
“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the Early Years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important 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.
Department for Education, 2020

Principles

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- **A unique child.** 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 and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions 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 recognise 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.** We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.



· **Learning and development.** Within the Foundation Stage, children learn through a balance of child initiated play based learning in continuous provision and adult led learning. Play is the way children make sense of the world, build friendships and group relationships, learning how to negotiate and solve conflict. Children will learn how to practise and develop their ideas, learn self-regulation and control, and begin to understand the need for rules. Children have the opportunity to think creatively as they investigate and solve problems. They learn to express fears and take risks in a controlled and safe situation. The Early Years Foundation Stage is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The unit is set up in learning areas where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

Early childhood is the foundation that children build the rest of their lives on. At St. Wilfrid's Catholic Academy we greatly value the importance that the Early Years Foundation Stage in laying the secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the Early Years Foundation Stage as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

The Early Years Foundation Stage for children is from birth to five years of age. All children begin school with a wide variety of experiences and learning and it is the privilege of the adults working in the Early Years Foundation Stage to accept the task of building upon that prior learning experience. This is done through a holistic approach to learning ensuring that parents and guardians, support staff and the Early Years Foundation Stage team work effectively together to support the learning and development of the children in their charge.

Aims of the EYFS

The Early Years Early Years Early Years Foundation Stage underpins all future learning by promoting and developing the prime areas of:-

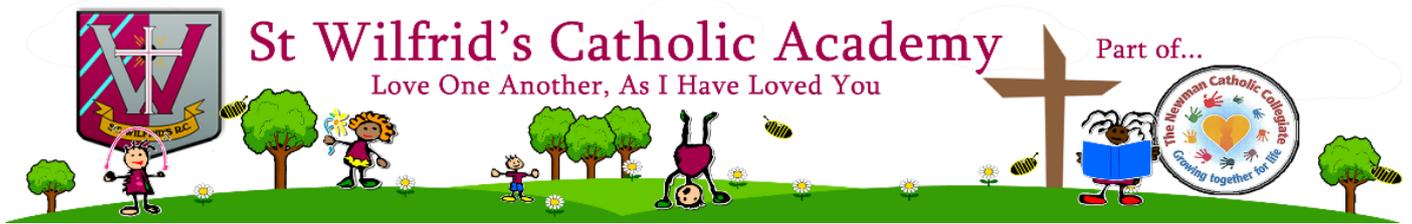
- Personal, Emotional and Social Development
- Physical Development
- Language and Communication

And the specific areas of:-

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Achievement of these prime and specific areas of learning is by:

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



In addition, as a Catholic academy, we also promote and develop children's spiritual understanding of the Catholic faith.

The Seven Areas of Learning

The seven areas of learning covered by the framework are:

PRIME AREA: Communication and Language (C and L)

The development of a child's spoken language is the root of all seven areas of learning and development in EYFS. The EYFS policy places a strong emphasis on children developing competence in speaking and listening – acknowledging that all other areas of learning making a vital contribution to the successful development of communication. Language and communication is nurtured and developed through;

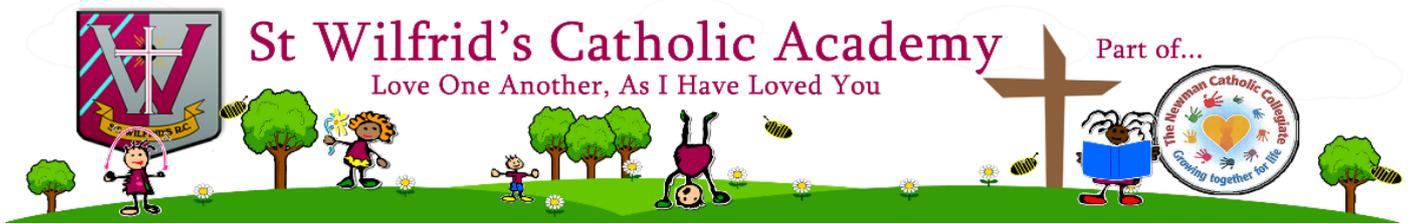
- Children are exposed daily to high quality texts, rhymes and poems which are planned and progressive across the foundation stage
- Key vocabulary (developed through quality first teaching and explicitly taught in lessons such as whole class reading)
- High quality interactions between both staff and children, and children/children are scaffolded – with staff modelling high quality vocabulary and sentence structure. Staff receive regular high-quality, research-founded CPD to develop their understanding of the importance of these interactions
- High quality imaginative play in both the indoor and outdoor area which ensures that children can use and develop language effectively
- Working partnerships with parents and carers
- Partnerships working alongside Stoke Speaks Out and Speech and Language Therapists
- Identified target support for children, including Time to Listen, Time to Talk, Early Talk Boost and Talk Boost KS1.

PRIME AREA: Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)

This area has three sub sections. These are Self-Regulation, Managing Self and Building Relationships. The outcomes focus on children learning how to work, play, co-operate with others and function in a group beyond the family. They cover important aspects of personal, social, moral and spiritual development including the development of personal values and an understanding of self and others. Children's PSED is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. PSED is fundamental to children's holistic development and future outcomes.

Alongside working with parents, a quality transition programme ensures that children settle quickly into school. Our four school rules, 'Respect God', 'Respect others', 'Respect for myself' and 'Respect for property' ensure that children are supported to work co-operatively and take care of items within a group, learning to play and function in a group beyond the family.

At St Wilfrid's, PSHE in Reception is taught through the program Think Equal. Think Equal is a curriculum-based programme that support social and emotional development in the early years. It is rooted in mental health and social justice and aims to build a strong foundation for individual and societal progress. The



programme is fully aligned with the EYFS curriculum and teaches 25 skills and competencies to help children through their Early Childhood Education.

PSED is assessed using the Stoke Local Authority PSED screen. Children are assessed against age-appropriate statements and interventions are conducted where required.

PRIME AREA: Physical Development (PD)

This covers both fine and gross motor development and keeping healthy. Physical development is implicit in all areas of the Early Years Early Years Foundation Stage framework. Teaching concentrates on children's developing physical control, mobility, awareness of space and manipulative skills in indoor and outdoor environments. Positive attitudes are encouraged towards a healthy and active way of life.

Children have access to physical development activities both indoors and outdoors and receive high quality PE each week. Physical development assessments are completed termly in Nursery and Reception to monitor progress towards the expectations for the end of year and allow staff to provide timely intervention if required.

SPECIFIC AREA: Literacy (L)

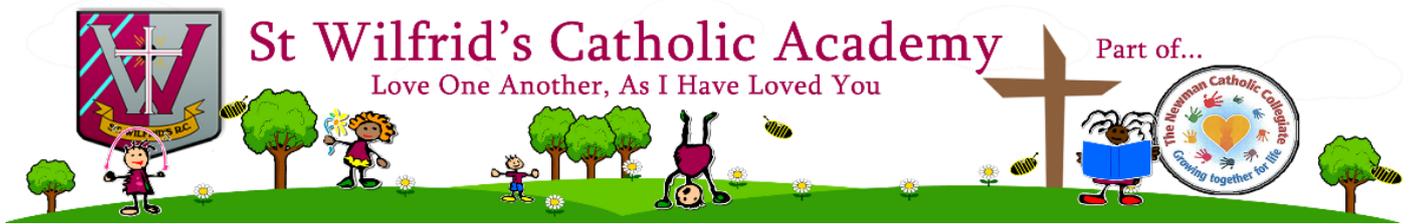
This area of learning has three sub sections of Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing. As well as developing communication and language skills, children will also be learning skills for reading and writing. These skills are not only essential for educational success but in life. Phonics plays a big part in this area and children are taught to read and spell supported by a systematic, synthetic phonics programme 'Bug Club'. The ability to blend for reading and segment for spelling and writing are skills that are promoted daily in the Early Years Foundation Stage at St. Wilfrid's Catholic Academy.

There are daily opportunities for children to listen to stories and develop a lifelong love of reading. Children also participate in daily whole class reading sessions linked to the Bug Club phonics scheme. Regular assessments are conducted in line with the whole school assessment cycle to monitor pupil progress in this area.

SPECIFIC AREA: Mathematics (M)

Within Mathematics, we cover skills involving Number and Numerical Patterns. These outcomes cover important aspects of mathematical understanding and provide the foundation for Mathematics. They focus on achievement through practical activities and are using and understanding language in the development of simple mathematical ideas. Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children are taught mathematical skills daily, such as counting, recognising numbers and using mathematical language.

Children will also develop and practise skills through planned continuous provision and child initiated play. For example, in Reception, children will 'pay' for fruit in snack time in order to develop real life mathematical skills. Children in the Nursery will become familiar with numbers and the number system during their master



the curriculum maths and ten town sessions. The teaching of Maths in Reception is supported by the Mastering Number and Power Maths schemes. Assessments are made termly to check pupil progress in this area.

SPECIFIC AREA: Understanding the World (U the W)

This covers the subjects Geography, Science, DT, History, RE and ICT. The area is split into the following sub-headings; Past and Present, People, Culture and Communities and The Natural World. This is a major area of learning and enquiry focusing on children's developing knowledge and understanding of their environment, other people and features of the natural and made world. Children will have access to outdoor provision, trips, visits, visitors and a breadth of stories to develop their knowledge and skills in Understanding the World around them.

SPECIFIC AREA: Expressive Arts and Design (EAD)

This covers art, music, and drama. It includes Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive. This area of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework focuses on the development of children's imagination and their ability to communicate and to express ideas and feelings in creative ways. Children have access to imaginative play and small worlds initiated through topics, children's interests, daily stories, daily singing and rhymes and access to art activities initiated through topics and continuous provision.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

Within the Early Years Foundation Stage we follow the Archdiocese of Birmingham Catholic Education scheme of work specifically written for Nursery and Reception- 'Living and Growing as the People of God.' We also take part in daily prayer, assemblies and Mass both at school and church. Within the Early Years Foundation Stage the main focus is that God created us as individuals and recognising differences. The children also participate weekly in pupil-prepared prayer sessions, where they become more involved in the development of the Celebration of the Word throughout the year.

Characteristics of effective learning

The characteristics of effective learning describe factors which play a central role in a child's learning and in becoming an effective learner. They are vital elements of support for the transition process from Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 1. The characteristics of learning run through and underpin all seven areas of learning and development, representing processes rather than outcomes. Information describing the child's characteristics of effective learning will provide Year 1 teachers with vital background and context when considering the child's next stage of development and future learning needs.

Playing and exploring – engagement

- Finding out and exploring
- Playing with what they know
- Being willing to 'have a go'



Active learning – motivation

- Being involved and concentrating
- Keeping trying
- Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

Creating and thinking critically – thinking

- Having their own ideas
- Making links
- Choosing ways to do things

Seven Key Features of Effective Practice

1. The best for every child

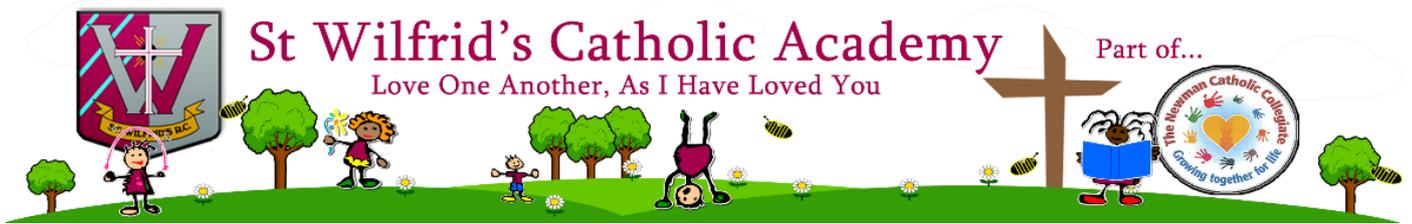
Inclusion in EYFS

We believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning.

Within the Early Years Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations keyed to the needs of our children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the stage. Some children progress beyond this point. We help them do this by planning to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able, of children with disabilities, of children from all social and cultural backgrounds, of children from different ethnic groups, and of those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build on and extend the children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- Using a variety of teaching strategies that are based on children's learning needs;
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children, and to help them to learn effectively;
- Offering a safe and secure learning environment, in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- employing resources that reflect diversity, and that avoid discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- Monitoring children's progress, and providing support (such as referrals to speech therapy) as necessary.



2. High Quality Care

Nappy Changing

No child is excluded from participating in our setting who may, for any reason, not yet be toilet trained and who may still be wearing nappies or equivalent whatever their age. We work with parents towards toilet training at the appropriate age, unless there are medical or other developmental reasons why this may not be appropriate at the time. We make necessary adjustments to our bathroom provision and hygiene practice in order to accommodate children who are not yet toilet trained.

We see toilet training as a self-care skill that children have the opportunity to learn with the full support and non-judgemental concern of adults.

All staff are responsible for changing children. Children are changed in the class toilet. Parents will be informed if children have had an 'accident'. (See Intimate Care Policy)

Safeguarding (including mobile phones)

As in line with the school's safeguarding policy; staff, parents and visitors must not use mobile phones within the EYFS setting. Personal phones must be turned to silent and stored away in the storage box located in the cupboard in the main office. Class i-pads are used to capture evidence of learning and complete relevant paper work such as First Aid notifications to parents. No other mobile device can be used in the EYFS classrooms. (See Mobile phone policy)

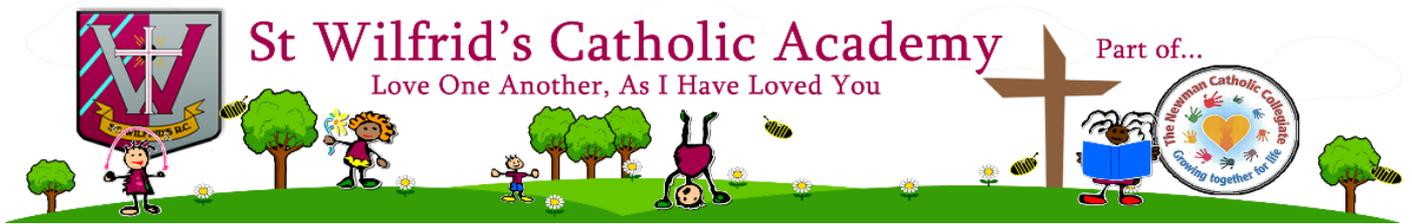
3. The Curriculum

Play in EYFS

Through play, our children explore and develop the learning experiences that help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up their ideas, learn how to control themselves, and begin to understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively both alongside other children and on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears, or re-live anxious experiences, in controlled and safe situations.

4. Helping children learn

In EYFS at St Wilfrid's, we are dedicated to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential by providing appropriate scaffolds and timely interventions that support individual learning needs. We recognise that children develop at different rates and in different ways, so our practitioners carefully observe, assess, and plan to offer personalised support that builds on each child's strengths and interests. Through differentiated activities, targeted adult interactions, and the use of visual, verbal, and physical prompts, we help children access learning experiences that might otherwise be out of reach. When additional support is needed, we implement evidence-based interventions and work in close partnership with families and external professionals to ensure continuity and consistency. Our inclusive approach



ensures that all children feel valued, capable, and empowered to achieve the best of their ability. Staff have access to continuing CPD around SEND needs. As a school, we use Widgit software to enable staff to create bespoke visuals, core boards and communication aids to support all children in the setting to have a voice and share their wants and needs.

5. Observation, Assessment and Planning

Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive.

Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Our planning shows how the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage 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 Foundation Stage are involved in this process.

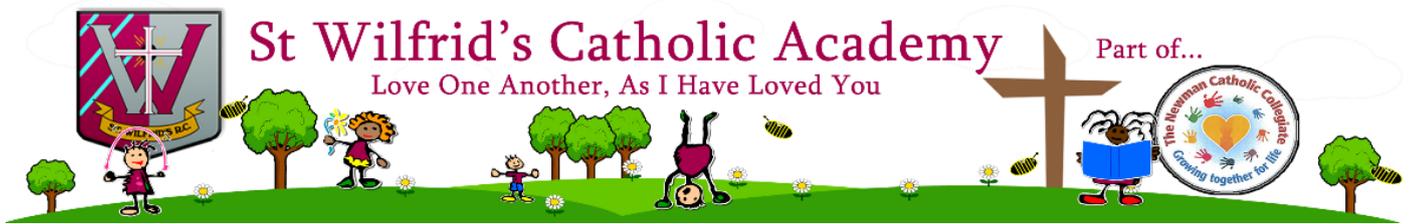
The planning within the Early Years Foundation Stage is based around the children's interests. These plans are used by the Early Years Foundation Stage team as a guide for weekly planning. However, we may need to alter these in response to the needs of the children.

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 feedback on the children's work which is recorded in their books or their independent activity journal. The parents and carers are given the opportunity to meet with the Foundation Stage Team each term and, at the end of the third term, we provide a written summary in relation to the children's early learning goals to parents and carers.

6. Self-Regulation and Executive Function

At St Wilfrid's Catholic Academy, we are committed to supporting children's executive function and self-regulation as key foundations for lifelong learning and wellbeing. We create a nurturing environment where children feel safe, respected, and emotionally secure, enabling them to develop the skills needed to manage their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Through consistent routines, age-appropriate expectations, and responsive adult interactions, we help children build the core skills of working memory, flexible thinking, and impulse control.

Our practitioners model self-regulation strategies, support turn-taking and problem-solving, and provide opportunities for focused attention and reflection through play-based experiences. We recognise that these skills develop gradually and individually, so we work closely with families to ensure that our approach is inclusive, responsive, and supportive of each child's unique development.



7. Partnership with Parents

Home and School Links

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 the Early Years Early Years Foundation Stage. This can have a very positive impact on a child's development but relies on a two-way flow of information and knowledge.

- We will develop this working relationship between the school and parents and carers as follows:
- We will hold a parent consultation during the year to discuss children's progress
- We will publish a weekly homework focus sheet which informs parents of what we are working on in school and gives them ideas of how to support their child's learning at home in these areas.
- We will operate an "open door" policy that will allow parents and carers to discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner. Conversely, if Foundation staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them.
- We will conduct workshops and 'watch me learn' sessions for parents and carers to enable them to be familiar with the teaching methods used in school to make it easier to emulate them at home.

The Induction Process – Nursery

During the Summer Term all new parents (for both nursery and reception) are invited to attend an induction meeting where induction information and early years practise is shared. During this meeting there is also the opportunity to meet Early Years Foundation Stage staff and other school staff such as the Principal, Vice Principal, Safeguarding Officer and Family Support worker.

During the Summer Term, prior to starting school the following September, foundation staff will visit preschool settings and carry out home visits from which September's intake will be taken. Each child and their parents and carers will be invited to spend some time at our settings in order to familiarise themselves with both the staff and the Early Years Foundation Stage environment.

The Induction Process – Reception

As both the nursery and reception staff and children work so closely together, the induction for those children who have attended the nursery is usually seamless. In the Summer Term of the previous academic year, all nursery children including those new to the school, spend some time in the reception class in order to familiarise themselves with the staff and the environment.

At St. Wilfrid's, nursery and reception are integrated into the same environment with the same staff so the induction process is a smooth and easy one.

In July, all nursery parents are invited to a Reception induction meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to inform parents of any changes, such as uniform and homework, and to become familiar with the new staff.



Policy Review

This policy is reviewed annually.

Last review: September 2025

Next review: September 2026