

St. Lawrence College

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy



Our school is one community, united in our respect for each other, tolerant of differences and proud of our diversity, honest and positive about our learning and behaviour every day.

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Most recent review: 2021

OBJECTIVES

At St. Lawrence College, we acknowledge that during the first five years of life, rapid learning and development takes place. During this receptive period of a child's life, attitudes are forged, relationships cultivated, and concepts developed. We recognise that children develop at varying rates and strongly believe that all children are born with the ability to learn and succeed. The foundations for later learning are progressively established so that every child can reach their full potential.

Our aim is to guide and support the child to evolve into a strong independent learner. Through a play-based curriculum complemented by a secure, stimulating, enabling environment, a dedicated team of practitioners diligently strive for the individual advancement of each child.

As staff, we endeavour to:

- maintain a safe, provocative environment which is inclusive of all children, irrelevant of race, gender, age, disability, culture, denomination and religion
- respect all children as individuals and acknowledge their singularity
- value parents/carers as primary educators of the child
- have high expectations of ourselves and the children
- ensure that all staff maintain high levels of practice
- enthuse the children through a wide range of activities to ignite creativity, imagination and freedom of expression

THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE CURRICULUM

At St. Lawrence College we adhere to the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (EYFS 2021). The EYFS sets out the legal requirements in relation to learning and development and keeping children healthy and safe. The broad range of knowledge and skills promoted through the EYFS curriculum, in conjunction with strong parenting, ensures children's 'school readiness' as they progress on their individual learning journeys.

The framework includes seven areas of learning which are divided into *prime* and *specific* areas. The reason for this being, that before children can fully access the *specific* areas, they need to be secure in the *prime* areas.

PRIME AREAS OF LEARNING

- Communication and language
- Physical Development
- Personal, social and emotional development

SPECIFIC AREAS OF LEARNING

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Expressive arts and design

There are four themes or principles that we use to inform our practice:

- ✓ **A Unique Child** 'Every child is a competent learner from birth who 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/carers'.
- ✓ **Learning and Development** 'Children develop and learn in different ways at different rates.'

To enable us to plan and guide children's activities, we must reflect on the ways in which children learn. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- playing and exploring
- active learning
- creating and thinking critically

THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE AT ST. LAWRENCE COLLEGE

The Foundation Stage at St. Lawrence College is organised into three age groups:

- *Foundation Stage One. 2 years 6 months – 3 years 11 months*
- *Foundation Stage Two. 3 years – 4 years 11 months*
- *Reception Class. 4 years – 5 years 11 months*

KEY PERSON/CLASS PRACTITIONER

The key person's role is to ensure that every child's care meets their individual needs. It is their responsibility to help the child become familiar with the setting and build a close bond with child and parents/carers. The key person regularly engages in discussion about children's feelings and behaviour. If we feel support is needed with this, we gather information via observations to share with parents/carers, and then work with them to support their child in the school setting and at home.

RATIONALE FOR OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

We regard family to be a child's first educator so promote a close, supportive partnership to ensure they are involved and informed about their child at school. We aim to make parents/carers feel comfortable, valued and welcome to visit the setting, to speak to us at any time about their child. From the very first visit, they are encouraged to come along and spend time in the setting, to experience and familiarise themselves with the environment and staff body.

FIRST DAYS AT SCHOOL

Principal parental concerns focus on whether children are happy and secure. We endeavour to ensure that the children make a smooth, quick and happy transition into the setting, but the settling-in period can take several weeks. We recommend that parents/carers are available to support the child during this period. It is also beneficial for the child if this period of transition is consistent and uninterrupted.

For us to be effectual, collaboration and trust from the home is imperative during this period of transition. It is the key person's role to advise parents/carers about the best approach and warmly encourage families to make an appointment with their child's key person if they have concerns.

TRANSITION THROUGH THE EARLY YEARS

Towards the end of each academic year, care is taken to prepare the pupils for the coming year. Introductory sessions are held where pupils meet those who they will be taught by in the following year. For example, Reception class teachers invite Foundation Stage 2 pupils to visit their classes and spend some time with them. In an informal atmosphere, teachers interact with the children, read stories, sing songs and get to know them a little better before the onset of the new school year.

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

Children learn best when they are engaged in activities that interest and inspire them. We provide stimulating, active play experiences in which they can freely explore, investigate and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. A balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities are incorporated into each day, and children are given the opportunity to practise skills, scaffold learning and revisit prior learning experiences. This helps them to consolidate and extend acquired knowledge. Simultaneously, concentration and perseverance are strengthening through play, two components that are vital when learning important reading and writing skills later.

GENDER EQUALITY

All activities are planned to create equal opportunity amongst the children in the school setting. Despite the fact that gender bias is present in all people's lives and experiences, our aim is to promote gender equity amongst our pupils and engage them in equal opportunities so that overall, they may benefit from all the experiences they encounter in the setting. Furthermore, through dialogue with parents/carers and children we hope to break down stereotypes and cultivate 'open mindedness' to address gender barriers and inequality in our society.

PLANNING THE CURRICULUM IN EARLY YEARS

The Foundation Stage Curriculum covers a broad range of themes, topics, mini topics and is inclusive of a diverse range of annual celebrations. This enables us to plan a creative and stimulating variety of activities.

'In the moment' planning allows us to build on an idea that may be instigated by the child at any given moment. These spontaneous moments of independent learning are embraced and enhanced by the practitioners. These are 'golden' moments: learning opportunities which spark intense curiosity, the opportunity for scaffolding, learning and cognitive cohesion.

Weekly planning meetings allow practitioners to build on both spontaneous and planned topics. Observation of the children's interests are taken into consideration and incorporated into the planning cycle at any given moment. All short-term planning is shared with the home on a weekly basis through means of a weekly activity sheet. This clearly outlines the planned activities which will take place during the week. This medium is also utilised as a means of informing families of ongoing events, excursions, celebrations and spur of the moment requests for home support and involvement.

Curriculum plans, otherwise known as medium-term plans, are reviewed and amended each term respectively and distributed to parents/carers. These documents outline plans for the term ahead and clarify the objectives of the curriculum. Opportunity is embraced here, to pose advice for parents on how they can support their child at home to develop and encourage particular learning skills within explicit areas of learning.

ASSESSMENT AND OBSERVATION IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Assessment is an essential part of the learning development of children in the Foundation Stage. We observe the children during play to make judgements about their abilities and continuous development against the curriculum. We notice the children doing things in their play that is of significance to their achievement of curriculum statements. We also take photos of evidence of the children displaying skills and achievements and share these moments with parents/carers through our online platform e.g., Tapestry.

Parents of children in Foundation Stage One receive two progress reports throughout the academic year, at the end of the winter term and at the completion of the summer term. As children develop at varying rates, the end of year's progress report will be more reflective of progress in both prime and specific areas of learning. If some of the learning goals have not been reached, this means that the child is still consolidating and working towards those learning outcomes.

Children in Foundation Stage 2 participate in two electronic assessments (*CEM ASPECTS Pre-School Assessment for Nursery up to age 4, Durham University*) at the beginning of the year to provide a 'starting point' and at the end of the academic year to give us a clear picture of each child's individual level of development and overall achievement throughout the year.

ASSESSMENT IN RECEPTION

Children in Reception participate in two online assessments (*CEM BASE Reception Assessment for children up to age 5, Durham University*) at the beginning of the year to provide a 'starting point' and at the end of the academic year to give us a clear picture of each child's individual level of development and overall achievement throughout the year.

The BASE Reception evaluation assesses abilities in:

- Mathematics.
- Literacy
- Communication
- PSED

These assessments complement ongoing observational assessment and teacher judgements.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION/SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS & DISABILITY (SEND)

All children are entitled to equal access to the curriculum. The Early Years Foundation Stage promotes equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported on an individual basis. This includes all children with special educational needs, short or long term, disabled children and those identified as gifted and able. Therefore, it is our duty to provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum as it is equally our obligation to provide bespoke support where achievable to enhance or accelerate each child's individual developmental requirements and enrich their learning capacity. The objective being that the child is given every opportunity and resource provided within the setting to achieve their full potential.

A delay in learning and development in the early years **may** or **may not** indicate that a child has SEN, that is, that they have a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision. Where possible, we accommodate a child's specific needs unless specific specialist support is advised. Practitioners are not eligible to diagnose specific SEN. Where necessary, expert advice must be sought from qualified specialist professionals.

For further details regarding special educational needs, please refer to the St. Lawrence College Junior School SEND policy.

SUPPORTING PARENTS/CARERS OF POSSIBLE SEND PUPILS

Accepting that your child may not be developing on a par with most children creates anguish and is difficult to come to terms with. However, it is very important to try and stay focused on what the child 'can do' rather than what they 'cannot do'.

Often parents prefer to wait rather than have the child referred to a specialist or undergo multidisciplinary assessments. This is usually because they need some time to adjust to the idea that their child may need specialist support, but it is recommended in cases where practitioners see a cause for concern.

Subtle, open, honest dialogue amongst all parties involved should be sustained at all times. Priority on relieving the frustration that the child may be experiencing should be the focal point, in conjunction with attaining a positive outcome for the child.

MANAGING BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE

Our role as adults in the setting is to foster a positive learning environment and maintain high quality provision, whereby every child is able to make a contribution and feel appreciated, valued and respected at all times. We endeavour to develop self-discipline by means of pedagogical strategies which encourage children to be responsible for their own actions and acquire a strong perception of right and wrong. We have high expectations of our staff body whom we require to be always vigilant and conscientious.

When working with pupils in Early Years we do not assume that children know what is expected of them. Classroom rules are clearly explained right from the beginning of the year and are revisited frequently to remind children of expected behaviour. If a child consistently displays undesirable behaviour and does not respond to their practitioner's guidance, staff will inform and request cooperation from the home.

SAFEGUARDING

Keeping children safe and well is our highest priority. Our objective is to sustain a high-quality setting which is welcoming, safe and stimulating; a place where all children can learn and thrive with confidence and assurance. We ensure the suitability of all adults working with our children and advocate good health amongst the children and staff. We continually maintain confidential records, policies and procedures and follow child protection protocols.

For further details please refer to the St. Lawrence College Junior School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

INTIMATE CARE/TOILET TRAINING/SLEEP

If children upon entering Foundation Stage 1 are not fully toilet-trained, then in close collaboration with the home, a time will be decided as when to move forward with toilet training. Children entering Foundation Stage 2 should be fully toilet trained. However, accidents do and can happen at any time, so we request that all children in the Foundation Stage are equipped with a set of spare clothes and slippers. It is important that we have the family's full support in encouraging children to gain independence in dressing, toileting and cleaning themselves.

Provision is made for children who need to sleep during the day and all children who sleep are closely monitored whilst doing so. Parents/carers are informed if a child has slept during the day and for how long. Linen is provided from home and regularly sent home to be laundered.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Provision indoors is complemented by a wonderful outdoor area which all practitioners and children can access from their classrooms regardless of scheduled break times. Outdoor play is scheduled twice a day, every day all year round. Only in the case of extreme weather conditions are children kept indoors during break times. The Foundation Stage classes enjoy a mid-morning session of twenty-five minutes and another mid-day outdoor session of one hour. The Reception classes have a morning break outdoors session which lasts twenty-five minutes and a mid-day break of forty minutes. Children are closely monitored outdoors, at all times.

ACCIDENTS / ILLNESS

All accidents are taken seriously and logged immediately. Superficial cuts and grazes are dealt with by members of staff who are always close at hand. Parents are notified as soon as reasonably possible. If a child suffers a more serious accident, then a school nurse is notified immediately. The school nurse will always carefully assess the injury and notify parents if further medical attention is required.

When a child is unwell, we ask that the child stays at home until they are well enough to return and no longer infectious. At the first sign of a temperature, rash, vomiting or diarrhoea, parents/carers will be notified and may be asked to come and collect the child. If a child has a temperature and we have prior permission from the home, a mild analgesic such as *Depon/Ponstan* will be administered by the school nurse. Staff members are not permitted to administer antibiotics. If a child is taking antibiotics, they must be administered at convenient times at home or during the school day after discussion with the school nurse.

Parents/carers are kindly requested to inform the school of a child's absence due to illness. The school should be notified of any special medical conditions prior to admission.

FOOD & DRINKS

All children require water, a snack and lunch to eat whilst at school. We encourage healthy eating and a balanced diet, preferably with food that is prepared at home. However, children in the Foundation Stage classes can order lunch from the canteen which provides a variety of healthy, child sized portions daily.

Nuts, sweets or sugary drinks should never be sent to school. The school must be notified of any food allergies or individual dietary requirements in advance.

Each child requires a bottle or flask of water. This can be re-filled by the child's key person throughout the day. On hot days, the children are permitted to take their water bottles outdoors and are reminded to drink frequently and stay hydrated.

COLLECTION TIME/SECURITY

At the end of the school day, children travelling by school bus are taken by members of staff and handed over to the bus monitors. Children who are collected by parents/carers gather in an allocated classroom where they should be collected promptly at the 3:15 pm bell. If a child is being collected by an adult unknown to them, it is imperative that the child's key person has been notified and introduced in advance of the child being collected. ID will be required in this instance.

If there is a change of plans and a bus child is **not** to be put on the school bus at the end of the day, the child's key person must be notified well in advance. No child will be handed over to an unknown person.

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Our aim is to provide you with the best possible service and provision that we can deliver. However, if you feel there is an area where you are dissatisfied, please tell us. In the first instance, you can approach your child's key person. If you are still unhappy, please talk to the Early Years Lead Practitioner or Junior School senior leaders.

CONTACTS

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