

**The Early Years Stage (EYFS) Curriculum at  
St George's Church of England Academy**

**“Many Hearts Make a School!”**



**“Learning Together on Life’s  
Journey!”**

# Many Hearts Make a School



Let us love one another, for love comes from God. (John 4:7-8)

## Our Curriculum Vision

Our school's Christian character is at the heart of all we do. Our distinctive Christian character is developed through every aspect of Early Years life. Our mission is to ensure that every child feels valued, unique and precious. We foster caring relationships between all members of our Early Years community characterised by Christian love, kindness, respect, and trust, with a mutual concern for each other's well-being. At St George's, we believe in "Learning Together on Life's Journey". We place the child at the heart so they can flourish academically, spiritually and socially through high quality education and interactions. We have a passionate staff who are experienced within the Early Years Curriculum and they celebrate the uniqueness of the children.

### **We believe:**

- Every child is unique.
- All children have strengths which need to be built upon.
- Young children's learning should be built on that which is familiar to them.
- Learning should be primarily active, first-hand experiences. Young children need opportunities and space to explore and discover.
- Play is an essential and rich part of the learning process.
- Talk is central to the learning process. It should be reciprocal and often initiated and led by the child.
- Learning should be a pleasurable and rewarding experience.
- Every child needs to feel emotionally secure in order to develop to their full potential.
- Young children need time to practice and consolidate their learning.

- Young children are social beings and learning should take place in a social context.
- Children's independence and self-discipline need to be promoted.

**During the Early Years Stage we aim:**

- To provide a happy secure, purposeful environment which is stimulating and challenging.
- To provide a broad and balanced range of experiences which enable each child to develop emotionally, intellectually, physically, morally, socially and culturally.
- To ensure full access to the curriculum for all children irrespective of their gender, ability, culture, and social background.
- To work in partnership with parents
- To develop community relationships
- To celebrate all children's achievements.

## **Our Curriculum Values**

We place children and families at the heart of everything we do. Our mission is to build a nurturing and stimulating learning community, rooted in Christian Values, in which every child feels loved and has the opportunity to reach their full God-given potential.

**Our Christian Values are:**

**Thankfulness** – “It is good to say thank you.”

**Peace** – “It is good to be gentle.”

**Trust** – “It is good to trust in God.”

**Forgiveness** - “Sometimes we need to say sorry to God and each other.”

**Hope** – “We are all special to God.”

**Friendship** – “Good Friends always try to help and listen.”

We have taken these Christian Values and developed shared values for learning with the Early Years Curriculums as follows:-

- Know and respect the children and their families as individuals, celebrating the richness of diversity and identity.
- Develop strong, reciprocal and mutually trusting relationships between child, family, school and the community.
- Know each child as an individual person and create trusting, loving relationships in which learning can take place.
- Value and nurture children's curiosity, creativity and desire to make sense of the world, giving time for their thoughts and ideas, and value to their work, their conversations and their feelings.
- Recognise and value children's competence and capability so that they develop confidence, independence and high self-esteem.

- Provide a well-planned, aesthetic, motivating and versatile learning environment, which supports children as active learners, provoking their interest and inquiry, and linking indoors with outdoors.
- Offer children a relevant and carefully structured curriculum, which motivates and inspires them to plan and initiate their own learning, as well as participate in activities planned by adults.
- Offer children a wide range of learning experiences which acknowledge the diversity of learning styles, so that they have the opportunity to realise and expand their personal potential.
- Encourage among the whole staff an understanding of the importance of working together as a mutually supportive, unified team, to develop reflective practice, which enables children to achieve success and happiness. Support the children in making the transition to the next phase of their education with enthusiasm and confidence following a happy and fulfilling experience within the early years.

# Our Curriculum Statement

## The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework

We follow the EYFS Statutory framework. The Framework is divided into 3 sections:

1. Characteristics of Effective Learning
2. The Prime Areas of learning
3. The Specific Areas of learning

### Characteristics of Effective Learning

How a child learns in the early years is related to the characteristics of effective learning. These are:

- **Playing and exploring**, which is about finding out and exploring, playing with what they know and being willing to 'have a go'.
- **Active learning**, which is about being involved and concentrating, persevering and enjoying achieving what they set out to do.
- **Creating and thinking critically**, which is about having their own ideas, making links and choosing ways to do things.

### The three Prime Areas of learning are:

**Communication and Language.** This is about children developing good listening and attention, understanding what is being said and developing speaking skills so they can express themselves.

**Physical Development.** This is about children working on coordination with big and small movements, developing their control and coordination and also developing their independence within self-care.

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development.** This is children developing their relationships with other children and adults and growing in self-confidence and awareness. We also develop their understanding of managing their feelings.

**The four Specific Areas of learning are:**

**Literacy.** This is developing children's knowledge of stories, rhymes and reading and developing mark making and writing.

**Mathematics.** This is developing children's concept of number, counting and shape, space and measures.

**Understanding the World.** This develops children's understanding of the world around them through both people and communities, nature and technology.

**Expressive Arts and Design.** This develops children's creative ideas through different forms. We explore music, dance, different media and materials and promote imaginary play.

### **Lower Foundation**

In Lower Foundation we offer learning experiences which recognise that young children learn best through practical, hands on experiences and interactions with their environment. The best outcomes for young children's learning is where most of the activity within the child's pre-school session is a mixture of the following two types of experiences: -

- **Child initiated play** actively supported by adults.
- **Focused learning**, with adults guiding the learning through playful, rich and experiential learning.

Play provides children with opportunities to consolidate and extend skills and concepts learned. The outdoor area is an essential to teaching, play and learning.

Play provides children with the opportunities to:

- develop their confidence, be part of a group, to take turns and share fairly,
- to become strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and Lower Foundation Stage Staff,
- imagine and recreate roles and experiences,
- communicate with others as they investigate or solve problems,
- explore, develop and represent learning experiences that help them to make sense of the world,
- take risks, make and learn from mistakes,
- practice and build ideas, concepts and skills.

### **Upper Foundation**

During the academic year the Curriculum will be a changing one in which meets the changing needs of the children. We understand that this adaptability is crucial in preparing our children for the next stage of their learning journey. Upper Foundation takes an expansive approach to learning in which they explore the world around the children.

Through a wide range of themes which are in response to the children's interests and fascinations, and the changing seasons, different cultural and religious festivals and celebrations, this curriculum response helps the children to make sense of the world around them, to construct meanings and make connections to previous learning and experiences. Upper Foundation staff help children to explore the why rather than the what.

### **Phonics Teaching and Learning**

Phonics teaching and learning are a key part of the Foundation Stage and help to develop early reading and writing skills. As a school we follow the Letters and Sounds scheme and use a range of interactive and fun resources which shares our drive to ensure that every child learns to read and write. Our comprehensive programme of study teaches phonics, reading, comprehension, writing and spoken English, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, composition and handwriting through daily sessions. Staff in Early Years have adopted Talk for Writing approach to engage and motivate children's learning.

### **Mathematics Teaching and Learning**

Mathematics teaching and learning are key part of the Foundation Stage and are taught on a daily basis but children will have opportunities to practice and use their maths throughout the school day.

- counting up to 20 everyday objects,
- saying and using the number names in order,
- finding one more or less than a number up to 20,
- starting to use the language of addition and subtraction, counting on and back,
- sorting and matching objects and shapes,
- comparing quantities and shapes,
- finding and recreating simple patterns,
- beginning to do some simple measuring, comparing lengths and quantities,
- using mathematical language to talk about things like size, weight, distance, time and money.

At the end of the EYFS (end of Upper Foundation) children will be assessed against all the areas of learning. The children will be either assessed at emerging (below national average), expected (at national average) or exceeding (above national average).

### **The EYFS practitioners at St Georges: -**

- are flexible, adaptable and spontaneous,
- listen to children's ideas and interests,
- they are positive and enthusiastic about indoor/outdoor play and are confident and knowledgeable about the benefits of learning in the outdoor area,
- can support and encourage children to take risks and explore; and help children make sense of the world around them,
- adopt a problem-solving and investigational approach where possible,
- provides opportunities for meaningful conversations between groups of children and between adults and children,

- knows that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning are equally important and inter-connected,
- observe and reflects on children's spontaneous play and monitor their development in all areas of the curriculum to inform future planning.

We all work together towards providing a happy, fun and memorable Christian environment. We see our Early Years Department as providing the foundation bricks so that children are ready to fly and flourish as they move throughout our school.

### **Parents**

Our partnership with parents is very important to us. We ensure that parents have the opportunity to work closely with our Early Years practitioners to support children's transition into the setting. We would like parents to feel secure in the knowledge that their child is well cared for and happy at school.

Our parents are welcome to be actively involved in their children's learning in school and are able to share learning experiences through theme days, learning journeys, our website class pages, volunteering and parent workshops. We recognise that parents are the first educators in children's lives and value contributions to judgements about children's development. We use this information to support our assessments and share information about what children need to do next to develop and thrive.

## **Our Curriculum Entitlement**

Curriculum is a cultural experience ....

***"It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement." (OfSTED 2018)***

However, we also acknowledge that children bring their own sense of meaning to new experiences and opportunities. We feel it is important that to use the children interests and fascinations, their previous life experiences into account when developing curriculum entitlement at St George's.

***"I come now with own strengths but bring with me gifts, talents and strengths of my family, tribe and ancestors." (Te Whariki:12).***

We plan a wide variety of enrichment experiences for our children. Sometimes these are based on their current interests (to extend learning), sometimes they are based on igniting new interests (introducing new learning), and sometimes they are based on developing the Early Years Department as being part of the wider community.

Here are a few examples:

- Links with the Library and Book Trust
- Woodland activities in school grounds through Acorn Antics

- Boogiebeat sessions – story, songs, rhymes, dancing and movement based on traditional tales
- Cooking activities; making fruit salad, porridge, pancakes – developing sense of family/group and learning about different foods
- Visits to farms – learning about animals and farming
- Links with local churches – Harvest celebration, Nativity, Christingle, Easter Service, and mini-graduation,
- Church projects
- Christmas party
- Special days – stay and play sessions, come read with me, creative Christian Days,
- Visits to places of interest e.g. Hullabaloo children’s theatre, Railway Museum, Seven Stories,
- Visitors in school e.g. dentist, Zoo lab
- Hatching butterflies

These activities provided a different dimension to children’s usual experiences whilst also providing a vehicle to strengthen links with parents, carers and families, the church and the community.

September 2019

Early Years Team