

**St Louis Catholic Academy, Newmarket**  
**Part of Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Multi Academy**  
**Trust**

*Christ at the Centre: Children at the Heart*



**St Louis Early Years Policy**

Approved by the Committee/Governing Body	10 <sup>th</sup> May 2024
Signature of Chair of Governors	<i>Bethan Byrne</i>
Signature of CEO OLOW	
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## Aims

In our Reception class here at St Louis we aim:

- To provide a happy, safe, caring and nurturing environment that is both stimulating and equally challenging.
- To develop independence, perseverance and readiness to learn, through the structure of daily routines and motivating children to challenge themselves, explore, investigate and think critically.
- To value each child as a unique individual, building on children's successes and previous experiences as a starting point for learning as well as providing targeted intervention and support where needed.
- To provide a positive, supportive environment where children feel safe and secure to learn.
- To provide a broad and balanced curriculum with first hand experiences that encompass each of the areas of learning.
- To provide a rich and stimulating environment, including challenging, exciting and imaginative indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- To provide a wide range of opportunities for independent learning, adult directed learning, adult-led learning and child-initiated learning.
- To enable children to communicate effectively with adults and peers by providing opportunities to talk, listen, review and reflect.
- To give children the opportunities to make choices, work independently and alongside others on achievable challenges.
- To develop children's physical skills by valuing structured outdoor play.
- To work in partnership with parents, encouraging strong home-school links.

## Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

## Admissions

Reception children are admitted in accordance with the Suffolk LA guidance. Parents apply for a place in Reception during their child's nursery year. This information is sent to the LA, who offer places to parents and inform the parents and school of the children who have been accepted. Most children will start Reception in the September of the year their child turns 5, however children can be admitted throughout the year if places are available.

## Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the latest version of the EYFS statutory framework that applies from January 2024.

At St Louis we are passionate about the foundations that the EYFS provides. We teach all areas of the curriculum in an interconnected way through stories and texts, to ensure children leave EYFS with a good knowledge of stories, developed vocabularies and a love of reading.

Each half term our learning is based on a different theme, where we explore concepts, questions and learning in a deep and meaningful way. Through careful planning, we revisit concepts to ensure children are able to master knowledge, commit it to their long term memory and develop understanding outside their immediate early experiences. We recognise how learning builds sequentially – by building knowledge, skills and learning behaviours from what the children already know and can do towards identified end points or outcomes we are enabling our children to reach their full potential.

The development of vocabulary and social skills are high priorities for us and the children we support. We give children regular opportunities to express themselves through their learning so they know their voice is important and that they all have the confidence to be heard.

We believe carefully planned and interconnected learning opportunities allow children at St Louis to thrive, learning in situations personalised to their interests and based on their next steps in learning. These are constantly evaluated by staff whose own subject knowledge of the EYFS as well as childhood development is a priority. We expect children to leave EYFS with confidence in all areas of the curriculum; however, where children find it difficult to achieve this, support, scaffolding and careful attention to their individualised next steps are provided and swift action is taken to support the children.

The EYFS curriculum at St Louis is planned to ensure children have opportunities to explore carefully selected learning resources in a learning-rich environment which deepens their knowledge in a range of contexts. We want all children to have the chance to learn about the world around them with awe, wonder and a developing understanding of all the areas of the curriculum they go on to study in KS1. We understand our responsibility in providing the foundations of their next learning as part of the National Curriculum and ensure they are well prepared to meet the requirements of their next stage of school, as happy, lively, capable, self-assured and well-rounded learners.

We achieve this by supporting the children in the 7 areas of learning and development stated in the EYFS framework that are equally important and interconnected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

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

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

There are also three characteristics of effective learning

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.

Communication and Language

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development.

Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children

are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures (EYFS, 2024). Within both small and large groups, children are encouraged to extend their vocabulary and fluency by talking and listening in a language rich environment. They hear, say and respond to stories, poems, songs and rhymes. They develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves in a variety of situations in an environment where speaking and listening are highly valued skills. Children are encouraged and supported to develop language for thinking.

Examples of activities we use to support every child's development:

Core books, songs and rhymes, interactions with others, reading area, circle time, small world, storytelling, role play.

### Physical Development

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence (EYFS, 2024).

Children have access to a range of equipment and opportunities, both indoors and outdoors, allow for the children to develop confidence and enjoyment in the use and development of their own bodily skills. Adult supervision and support enables children to safely create and meet physical challenges, developing increasing skills, control and co-ordination when moving, climbing and balancing. Children are also supported in the development of fine motor skills and are required to use tools, pens and pencils and to handle objects with increasing control and precision. Children will learn about the importance of staying healthy, physical exercise and making healthy food choices.

Examples of activities we use to support every child's development:

Mark making and writing tools, threading, weaving, sewing, tweezers, sand, water, construction, cutting, pegs, joining, malleable materials, dough Disco and finger gym, puzzles, climbing equipment, bikes, dance.

Children in Reception will also have weekly PE sessions with specialist PE teachers.

### Personal, Social and Emotional development

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life (EYFS, 2024).

Within a nurturing environment, children are supported to develop confidence, autonomy and self-respect. They are encouraged to work and concentrate independently and take part in the life of the

class by sharing, co-operating and supporting other children and adults. Through activities, conversations and real experiences children learn acceptable ways to express their own feelings and to respect the feelings of others. All the children are given the opportunity to take responsibility for themselves and as part of the class, as appropriate. Children will gain positive dispositions to learning by developing resilience, independence, willingness, motivation and self-confidence.

Examples of activities we use to support every child's development:

Zones of Regulation, role play, small world, circle time, turn taking games, sand, water, painting, drawing, cooking, construction, music and singing, bikes, ball games, large construction, stories, cultural belief, experiences and festivals.

### Literacy

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing) (EYFS, 2024).

Children are given access to a wide variety of reading materials to ignite their interest in reading. A well-stocked reading area gives every child the opportunity to become familiar with books, able to handle them and be aware of their uses. Children also have access to books in different areas of provision. Children are able to visit the school library and visit Newmarket Library regularly during their Reception year to help nurture a love of reading. Children listen to and talk about stories that have been read and develop their language for thinking. Children are taught that written symbols carry meaning and to develop awareness of the purpose for writing. Children will be encouraged to mark make themselves and when ready begin to read and write letters, words and sentences. Children will explore, enjoy, learn about and use words in a broad range of contexts. Children have access to mark making materials in all areas of provision.

At St Louis we follow Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised. In Nursery children learn through Little Wandle Foundations for Phonics and in Reception they are introduced to more structured phonics sessions using the Little Wandle programme of study. The children take part in daily phonics sessions. Additional support is given to those who need it.

Examples of activities we use to support every child's development:

Reading area, stories, poems, mark making materials, malleable materials, songs and rhymes, drawing (structured lesson and child-led), painting, writing, role play, small world, music, circle time, water, sand, construction toys, IT equipment, phonics activities, climbing equipment.

### Mathematics

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes (EYFS, 2024).

At St Louis we use the Mastering Number programme of study and supplement this with White Rose Maths. Children will become familiar with sorting, matching, ordering, sequencing, recognising, counting and writing numbers. They will also learn about measuring, pattern and shape activities that form the basis for early mathematics. As they develop their mathematical understanding to solve practical problems, children are assisted to use the vocabulary of mathematics, identifying

objects by shape, position, size, volume and number. Songs, games and picture books help children become aware of number sequences and when ready, to use simple mathematical operations such as addition and subtraction.

Examples of activities we use to support every child's development:

Sorting, puzzles, lotto games, sand, water, cooking, songs and rhymes, stories, construction, role play, maths equipment, IT toys, hopscotch, small skills equipment.

### Understanding the World

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension (EYFS, 2024).

A safe and stimulating environment allows children to explore and experiment with a range of natural materials. Children will have opportunities to make sense of the physical world and their community through exploring, observing and finding out about people, places, technology and the environment, both in class and the wider community. Children are encouraged to solve problems, make decisions, experiment, plan, predict and question with adult support, when necessary. This provides the foundations for history, geography, science and computing in Key Stage 1.

Children in Nursery have Forest School every week. Reception children have Forest School on alternate half terms.

Examples of activities we use to support every child's development:

Books, cooking, science resources, junk modelling, cameras, IT resources, water, gardening, malleable materials, role play, sand, music, construction, school trips.

### Expressive Arts and Design

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe (EYFS, 2024).

Children are encouraged to use a wider range of resources in order to express their own ideas and feelings and to construct their individual responses to experiences. Children have different opportunities to share their thoughts, feelings and ideas through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role play, design and technology. Art equipment including paint, glue, crayons, collage and pencils as well as natural and discarded resources, provide open ended exploration of colour, shape and texture and the development of skills on painting, drawing and collage. Children join in with and respond to music and stories. There are many opportunities for imaginative role play, both individually and as part of a group. This provides the foundations for art, music, design and technology in Key Stage 1.

Children enjoy weekly art lessons where they learn about artists that will be built on as they progress through school. During these lessons, Children learn a new technique or skill which is then available for them to explore during Explore and Learn.

Children enjoy a visit each year from The Doorstep Theatre and related workshop.

Reception children also visit the Pantomime at The Theatre Royal each year.

Examples of activities we use to support every child's development:

Painting, drawing, collage, cutting and sticking, sculpture, weaving and sewing, music instruments, role play, construction, movement.

### Whole School involvement

Children in Reception have lunch in the school hall and play with the older children regularly at break-time. They join in with special days such as non-uniform days, Science week, Pentecost celebrations and the writing festival.

The children in Reception also attend our celebration assemblies on a Tuesday. During the summer term the children attend more whole school assemblies in preparation for Year 1.

They will also attend Church with the rest of the school throughout the academic year.

### Planning

Planning is based on the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework document and practice guidance. All planning covers all 7 areas of learning. These areas overlap and many learning experiences provided may cover several areas at once. These areas are covered indoors and outdoors through a broad and balanced curriculum.

There is a balance of adult and child led activities. This is informed by continual observation and caters for the whole child allowing them to access all activities, at a level appropriate to them.

### Long Term Planning

Our curriculum mapping is carefully structured to ensure continuity and progression throughout the Foundation Stage. Each half-term's learning is based on a theme which the children spend the 5-8 weeks exploring. Each theme gives children a variety of experiences, which build on and extend the experiences and skills they already have. As the children leave EYFS they will continue to build on and revisit this learning through different themes across the curriculum. Our long term planning ensures that all the objectives and early learning goals are covered and progression is provided throughout the foundation stage.

### Medium and Short Term Planning

Our planning is organised into the 7 areas of learning. The weekly planning builds on what the children already know, their next steps in learning and includes differentiation, adult-led activities, child-initiated activities and opportunities to work both indoors and outdoors. All planning is informed by observations of the children and assessments made, throughout carpet sessions and continuous provision.

### The Role of the Adult

All children in Nursery and Reception are supported by all adults in the class. The class teacher has overall responsibility for the pupils in the class, but the support staff support the learning of the children, under direction of the class teacher. During their time in school, children are free to move around to different areas, inside and outside. Children participate in a balance of adult initiated and child initiated activities, working alone, in pairs and in groups. All adults ensure that all children experience a range of activities and groupings throughout the week.

Staff are available at the start of the session to help to settle children and at the start and end of the day to give messages and talk about the child's day. All adults are responsible for collecting observations, photographs and evidence for all children, which will feed into daily planning and the class learning journey.

### Assessment

Within the first half term, children in Nursery are assessed using Wellcomm. This continues on a rolling programme throughout the academic year and support is put in place for individuals or as a group activity.

Initial baseline assessments are carried out in Nursery during the first half term of their starting date.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child **starts reception**, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). In addition to this children are observed in the first three weeks of them entering Reception to provide an initial baseline assessment.

At the **end of the EYFS**, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile reflects ongoing observations, and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child.

The children are regularly observed and assessed to complete children's profiles and inform future planning. We are currently using an online assessment system called Evidence Me to record additional observations, assessments and photographs of children's learning. We also record learning and events in our Learning Journey floor books.

### Parent Partnership

We truly value parental involvement and aim to work in partnership with parents and carers. Strong relationships are formed before the children start the school through transition sessions at school for both Nursery and Reception children. We encourage parents to come along initially to establish close relationships and confidence.

Introductory meetings – These are normally in June/July and are for parents who have a child starting Nursery or Reception in the following September. The meeting includes what to expect and what children will need when they start in Nursery/Reception. This also provides opportunity for parents to ask us questions. Visits to pre-school settings will be arranged

Stay and Play sessions – There will be various sessions that provide an opportunity for children to come over from nursery throughout the year and familiarise themselves with the classroom and staff. Staff will also go to Nursery to support transitions, for example, to read a story or join in with Explore and Learn.

Informal conversations - Parents and teachers will talk informally at the start and end of sessions about the child's day, how they are feeling, any first aid received and any other important information.

Workshops - These will be held throughout the year and will give parents information about areas of the curriculum and how they can help at home and what is happening in school. Children will access a broad and balanced curriculum.

Reading records - Each child is given a reading record at the start of the year. This is used to record what books have been read and notes can be passed between parents and school.

Website - The school has its own website which contains information about the school and classes. Each class has a page where information about that class is displayed.

<https://www.stlouisacademy.co.uk/>

Evidence Me – Evidence Me is our online learning journey application. We use it to update children's learning. Please speak to the class teacher if you have any questions about the application.

### Inclusive Practice

We aim to work with parents to identify individual learning needs as quickly as possible to avoid later difficulties. We develop effective strategies to meet the needs of the children making use of individual education plans where necessary. We aim to help all children participate to their full potential whatever their needs.

If you have any concerns about your child, talk to your child's teacher in the first instance and then a meeting can be arranged with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Mrs Conway, to work out what their next steps will be.



**English as an Additional Language (EAL)**

We value the diversity within our school. Activities that provide children speaking and listening opportunities in both English and their home language are given priority to develop both languages. We plan learning opportunities to help children develop their English and support them to take part in all activities. If you speak a language other than English and would be happy to come and read a story, write or talk to children in this language please let your child's teacher know as we would welcome you in setting.

**Equal Opportunities**

We plan a learning environment that ensures each and every child feels included. We try to use materials and equipment that reflect the communities that children come from. We learn about different celebrations and festivals that children may participate in and support children to be tolerant and accepting of other beliefs and views. We promote confidence and positive attitudes towards learning in all children whatever their gender, ethnicity, home language, disability or ability and work hard to ensure all children can reach their full potential. We respect the individuality of each child and their families.