

# **St Alban's C of E Academy**



## **EYFS Policy**

**2022 - 2024**

*'They were filled with awe and continued to say, "We have seen unthinkable wonders today!"'*

### **Our School Core Values**

At St Alban's, we empower each child to learn enthusiastically, grow independently and explore inquisitively to fulfil their God given potential. Our school curriculum is underpinned by the Christian values that we hold dear at our school.

- ✓ Thankfulness
- ✓ Perseverance
- ✓ Friendship
- ✓ Trust
- ✓ Forgiveness
- ✓ Justice

Our Christian distinctiveness is purposely threaded and woven throughout our Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum to enable our children to flourish both within school and beyond into the wider world. Every child is valued as an individual; we aim to nurture well-rounded, respectful, ambitious, and confident children who will develop skills for life-long learning. Our curriculum, with the children in our care at the heart of every decision, allows this to happen daily. We nurture our children on their journey and encourage them to be creative, unique, open-minded, and independent individuals, respectful of themselves and of others in our school, our local community, and the wider world. Our youngest children are introduced to the teachings from the Bible and celebrate the Lord's work – expressing their views through conversation, art, reflection, and music.

### **Intent**

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Early Years Foundation Policy at St Alban's C of E Academy has been developed by all Early Years staff, Manor Multi-Academy Trust and the Senior Leadership of the school. It has been developed using the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The children in our care are at the heart of every decision and this policy is reviewed annually, alongside the curriculum, to ensure they are receiving opportunities that will give them the best possible start to their education. Our Early Years practitioners work in partnership with leadership, parents, subject leads and other adults. These may include therapists, health visitors, ESW, Educational Psychologists and school nurses.

### **Our aim**

The aim of the Early Years Curriculum at St Alban's C of E Academy is to nurture and build upon children's natural energy, enthusiasm, curiosity, and sense of humour. We are passionate about providing real-life opportunities for children that embed a love of life-long learning. Young children learn predominately through play and, therefore, structured, planned play is the medium through which the Early Years Curriculum at St Alban's C of E

Academy will be delivered. This play is evolved across the year to ensure that in preparation for their transition to Year 1, children are choosing their own ways to approach learning opportunities. We consistently strive to demonstrate a commitment to compassion and keep our children at the heart of everything we do.

### **Implementation**

Our Early Years curriculum has been designed, tailored and enhanced specifically for the children at St Albans CofE Academy, based on our children's starting points, educational theory and research. There is a strong focus on the child as a whole person and how they communicate and build relationships with those around them to support their success. Each strand of the Early Years Curriculum is designed to strengthen children's social and cultural capital through language, social opportunities and experiences. We ensure that children are exposed to future learning opportunities across our school to encourage them to ask questions and build excitement in anticipation for the future learning that awaits them. A spiral curriculum is used where prior learning opportunities are encouraged through exploration in play, once initially taught.

Our documentation is bespoke to the children at St Albans CofE Academy, this includes:

- EYFS Progression Document – a demonstration of how skills and knowledge are developed in our setting and is used to support all children, no matter what their starting point.
- EYFS Continuum – opportunities for continual learning, sharing examples and expectations of how the environment evolves across the academic year.
- Long-Term Overview – an overview of learning across the academic year
- Medium-Term Planning – A summary of each topic across the academic year, skills accessed and specific focus areas, based on the progression of individuals and the continuum.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is mandatory for all schools and early years providers in Ofsted registered settings attended by young children i.e. from birth to the end of the academic year in which a child has their fifth birthday. There are four themes in the EYFS which express important principles underpinning effective practice in the care, development and learning of young children. The four themes are; A Unique Child; Positive Relationships; Enabling Environments; Learning and Development. Each of the underlying principles are interwoven through our bespoke curriculum. These are underpinned by the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

**A UNIQUE CHILD – POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS – ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS – LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**PLAYING AND EXPLORING – ACTIVE LEARNING – CREATING AND THINKING CRITICALLY**

In line with the EYFS Statutory Framework, we include all seven areas of learning in our curriculum at St Albans. These are often interwoven through cross-curricular opportunities with a key focus on providing children with life skills for the future.

#### COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

*Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt so that you may know how to answer everyone – Colossians 4:6*

Oracy is a key focus in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are encouraged to share their opinions on experiences and the world around them, retell familiar stories and communicate with both children and adults using well-formed sentences. Effective communication is modelled to children, mostly through in-the-moment or play opportunities, to ensure children are given relevant context. New vocabulary is used on a daily basis and collected through the use of tools such as our 'star jar', a visual reminder to children of exciting vocabulary used during a topic. Children effectively use a wider range of vocabulary throughout storytelling when exposed to this vocabulary daily.

#### PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. – Colossians 3:13-14*

Children's personal, social and emotional development is crucial for them to lead happy and healthy lives, which status has been proven fundamental to their cognitive development. At St Albans, our staff encourage strong, warm and supportive relationships not only with the children, but with their parents too. A collaborative approach to managing all types of behaviour will provide children with the consistency that they need to thrive in any environment. Through supported interactions with other children, our children learn how to build positive friendships, co-operate, and resolve conflicts peacefully. Within this, we also encourage children to build empathy and understanding of how their peers may have differing opinions. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can continue to build on throughout their education and life.

#### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

*Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. – John 1:2*

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies, social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Children are provided with varied opportunities to explore these skills and, with feedback and support from adults, continue to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

#### LITERACY

*It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing – Isaiah 35:2*

At St Albans, we use significant moments to promote curiosity, excitement, and a life-long love of reading. Our stories often flow through a two-week cycle, where the first week introduces new vocabulary and develops the oracy required for children to feel inspired to complete a writing task in the second week. “If reading is breathing in; writing is breathing out.” is a phrase that we are often inspired by in our setting. For our phonics programme, children begin exploring Instrumental Sounds in Nursery, before moving onto our whole-school phonics scheme, ‘Floppy Phonics’. These lessons have been tailor-made to focus on the key areas of development for our children, particularly applying blending to sentence reading. For children working towards these targets, magnetic boards are used to build confidence in early segmenting and blending skills.

#### MATHEMATICS

*Endurance develops character and character strengthens our confidence – Romans 5:4*

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to continue their Mathematics journey in our upper school with confidence. Throughout their time in Early Years, Maths is embedded into daily life in the classroom. Examples of this include: counting the children in class as part of morning routine, representing that amount using counters, making playdough and weighing out the ingredients, sharing out snack and daily book votes. Across our Early Years Foundation Stage, we teach discrete Maths lessons but always ensure that a wide range of opportunities to explore concepts further are out during their play. Jigsaw puzzles and strategic maths games are also accessible in the environment to promote an interest in Maths skills away from our discrete teaching.

#### UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it – Psalms 24:1-2*

Our overarching theme in our Christian Distinctiveness is ‘Life in all its fulness’, and our Understanding the World strand embodies exactly that. Our curriculum in Early Years has been developed by collaborating with subject leads across school to ensure that children are exposed to real-life experiences and opportunities that will enable them to make links in their later learning across school. In the past, this has included farm visits, police case studies, a trip to the dentist, library visits and learning about our diverse community. As well as building important knowledge of the world around them, we also encourage children to dream big and remind them that the world is full of endless possibilities – our aim to provide children with a platform to succeed is never forgotten throughout our curriculum.

#### EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN

*Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. – Psalm 139:14*

The development of children’s artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. In Early Years, children are exposed to a wide range of opportunities to explore their creative flair. We use mixed media across both Nursery and Reception to model that are

can be created in any form – examples include paint, pasta, pom poms, stickers, natural materials and many more. Children are also provided with a wide range of opportunities to explore the Arts, initially through role-play and retelling stories using puppets and small world objects, before evolving into productions and musical performances.

### Assessment

Assessment and record keeping is consistent with the whole-school policy on assessment.

### BASELINE

Prior to children starting, staff spend time speaking to the child's parents, previous settings and gaining any further understanding of the child as an individual and their next steps. During the first three weeks in both Nursery and Reception, all staff use ongoing assessments, observations and conversations with the child to develop a baseline assessment. This goes alongside the Statutory Reception Baseline Assessment provided by the Government for children in Reception.

### SPEECH AND LANGUAGE

During the first term, children who are identified as those who would benefit from support in speech and language skills are targeted for small-group interventions. These include communication games, social stories, modelled language, and colourful semantics. In Spring Term, children who are identified as needing further additional support are screened using Welcomm before taking part in small-group activities, inspired by those in the scheme of work. In the final term of the year, children who need a further referral to Speech and Language services are discussed with the SENDCo and next steps are put in place.

### ONGOING OBSERVATIONS

All ongoing observations are used to both identify children's next steps and also share their progress with parents. These assessments are specifically for **significant moments** with the individual child. We define significant moments as those where children are demonstrating a skill they may not have previously done confidently or when they model a 'light-bulb' moment. These moments are uploaded to Evidence Me with a summary of what the child has achieved. Any work completed during Choosing Time in class is stuck into the back of the relevant subject book.

Phonics assessments are carried out using our phonics tracker every half term to quickly identify pupils that are not making expected progress. Our aim for children is to 'keep up, rather than catch up' wherever possible.

In Summer Term of Reception, the EYFS Profile will be completed for each child. This provides parents and carers, practitioners, and leaders with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels and their readiness for Year 1. The profile is moderated internally and in partnership with other schools within our Multi-Academy Trust, to ensure consistent assessment judgements.

### **Parents and the Wider Community**

At St Albans, we believe the starting point for developing life-long positive relationships with the home is a belief in the philosophy of partnership, where parents and staff have equal importance to impacting on a child's education. Parents/carers are invited in at least once every half-term for one of the following:

*Stay and Play – an opportunity to engage in topic-based activities with their child in the classroom setting to see what sparks their interest. In addition to this, our floor book is available for them to view alongside their child's books. The class teacher is readily available for any questions the family may have.*

*Workshops – Bespoke workshops, based on parent/carer interests are held in classrooms to support families with their child's learning and development at home. Effective practice is modelled, and families have the opportunity to have a go at implementing what they have found out in a classroom environment, before receiving a wide range of resources to use with their child at home.*

*Performances – A moment for the children to shine! They will perform songs, dances and role-play to their families, demonstrating their learning during that half-term.*

### **Supporting transition to Reception**

The Early Years Leader will work closely with the Nursery class teacher and external professionals to ensure our youngest children feel prepared for transition. This may include classroom exchanges (where the Reception teacher spends a day teaching in Nursery), visits to local nurseries to meet children in the new intake and phone calls with any professionals included in the child's journey so far. During Summer 2, a welcome workshop is held for all parents, where they are introduced to staff, the curriculum and a 'day in the life' where they will receive a parent pack to provide their child with the best possible start to the new academy year.

### **Supporting transition to Year 1**

The Early Years Team at St Albans CofE Academy work with leaders, Key Stage One staff and external SLEs to ensure that a smooth transition to Year 1 is provided for all learners. This begins during Summer 2, where the children will begin to get to know their class teacher by 'drop ins' or invitations to play in their setting. The class teacher will work closely with their Year 1 teacher to consider the Autumn Term timetable and what the curriculum will look like to ensure that every child can access it with confidence and appropriate challenge.

During the Summer Term, the children will be introduced to some of the expectations for Key Stage One, such as extended periods of discrete learning, collective worship, homework tasks and introductory workshops with their parents to allow them a chance to ask any questions.

### **Impact**

The impact of our pedagogy and our curriculum is measured by how effectively it helps our children develop into well rounded individuals who embody our school values and carry with them the knowledge, skills and attitudes which will make them lifelong learners and valuable future citizens.

Our children make progress academically, emotionally, creatively, socially, and physically. They leave Early Years as well-rounded individuals who can express their opinions and build positive relationships with both adults and peers in a safe environment. These tools ensure they are fully equipped to begin learning The National Curriculum Programme of study in Year 1.

At St Albans, we believe that each child should have a voice and that they have an opportunity to make a difference in the world – by working closely with all other caregivers in their life, we open possibilities to ensure a consistent approach to achieving success.



