



### **Why we teach it**

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 provides the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

### **INTENT - What we are teaching**

At St William of Perth, we use the Early Years Foundation Stage to recognise and build upon all children's prior learning from previous settings and home experiences. Our aim is for children to become independent in their learning, to be curious thinkers and doers to prepare them to be active members of the local and wider community.

We ensure children leave the Early Years Foundation Stage with strong foundations in the prime and specific areas of learning; Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language, Physical Development, Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Art and Design.

After carrying out our own baseline assessment of the children, we are able to identify what the children are able to do when they first join us at St William of Perth. We use this information, along with the Statutory Educational Programmes, the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage, our Early Years Curricular Goals, our knowledge of the children in our school community and the values and ethos we have at St William of Perth, to ensure all children make progress. Our curriculum is ambitious to ensure it meets the needs of all our children.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides the foundation for all future learning that takes place at St William of Perth. As such, we recognise the importance of ensure children have an integrated transition into the National Curriculum. We use the key principles and Characteristics of Effective Learning across the school and adopt a play-based approach in the initial stages of Key Stage One.

### **IMPLEMENTATION – How we teach it**

The EYFS curriculum is taught in three ways, through whole class teaching, small group work and through child-initiated learning during play and exploration.

At St William of Perth we recognize the importance of learning through play. We use the environment to ensure their needs are met through continuous provision, enhanced provision and by following their interests. This allows the children to practise, repeat and rehearse the skills and knowledge they are acquiring. By spending quality time playing with the children, we develop positive relationships which enable the children to flourish in a safe and nurturing environment. Many aspects of Early Years at St William of Perth follow the Curiosity approach, whereby the Early Years Foundation Stage framework allows the children to have the freedom to play and explore, create and think critically and actively learn; these are, of course, the characteristics of effective learning. With these elements underpinning all learning, they continue throughout a child's education at St William of Perth.

Teaching and learning will, where possible, encourage children to ask questions about what they are learning, for there to be a sense of wonder. With skilful teaching, thought out uses of open-ended resources and inviting environments, we provide our children with the confidence and passion to become thinkers and doers of the future.

The learning environment is set out to ensure the children feel safe and comfortable whilst at school, as this allows children to learn at an optimum level. A cosy and homely setting accommodates the well thought out activities that are set out during independent learning time to ensure objectives within the curriculum and developmental goals are met. A well-resourced classroom provides the children with opportunities to use materials and tools available to enhance their own learning, creating a sense of independence and autonomy. Continuous provision is built upon regularly to ensure it is meeting the needs of all children, whilst offering challenge.

It is the role of the adults working with the children to ask thought out and skilful questions to push children's learning forwards. This may be in whole class teaching, focused activities or during child-initiated learning time. Time is taken to explore the learning that the individual child is interested in, to develop ideas and offer alternative suggestions to spark the spirit of inquiry amongst the children we work alongside.

Practitioners are continually assessing the knowledge of children, reflecting on their previous understanding, using the curriculum as well as considering the additional life skills our children will require to deepen their learning. This is echoed in the Curricular Goals that we have devised, specifically for our children to achieve.

In Year One, elements of this practice continue. Having opportunities for children to access continuous provision and activities that are more play based allows the children to become familiar with their environment. The practice, repeat, rehearse cycle plays a key role in ensuring the children have a deep understanding of the concepts taught and are able to apply this in different ways.

Early identification of SEND is a priority to ensure our youngest learners get the help and support they need. Parental questionnaires are sent home regarding SEND before children start school. The SENDCO attends additional nursery visits for identified children, with home visits undertaken if required. Children identified with SEND or potential of having SEND are offered additional settling in sessions before they start school. This also helps to build relationships with parents. Regular meetings occur with parents, not only to provide updates on their child's progress and personal, social and emotional development in school, but also to offer support for parents. We seek advice from outreach services, as previously mentioned, as well as from The Medway Early Years Team who have a member who is experienced in working with SEND children in Early Years. We source resources that not only meet their sensory needs, but also their individual developmental needs to ensure learning is targeted and of an appropriate level. Communication cards and boards are used when necessary and this has been extended to a whole school approach, whereby communal areas are labelled to support the learning needs of all children.

Head teacher tours of the school are available upon request for parents to explore St William of Perth during the school day. This allows parents to meet the headteacher, see snippets of lessons and witness the outstanding behaviour of our children. Older members of the School Council also help with these tours to allow parents to gain an insight about the school from the children's perspective.

Open coffee afternoons are offered for potential new parents and nursery managers to get to know our school - making links with local nurseries is acknowledged as vital for a smooth transition into school. Information about these events are handed out whilst nursery visits are undertaken.

To ensure a smooth transition when children first start school at St William of Perth we begin the transition into school early. In June we hold a 'New Parent's Meeting' whereby key people from the school (including class teacher and teaching assistants, senior leaders, governors, SENDCO, parish priest, a PTA representative and the dining company) are present to meet with the parents. This allows key information from each member to be explained and for parents to further explore school life at St William of Perth. At the meeting, parents receive a pack of information including advice on how to prepare their child for school, useful tips for early reading as well as additional information about the school. A form is included in this pack with information regarding SEND, to allow us to gather as much information as possible about children who may require additional transition prior to starting school.

The EYFS lead undertakes nursery visits for all children that start in September during term six. This gives the opportunity for us to witness the child in a nursery or child minded setting, interacting with other children. Information is passed on from nursery practitioners about the children that can be used to help settle them or for us to inquire further into. Additional visits to the nurseries are made if children with potential SEND are highlighted for early identification and extra support can be given early. A 'Transition from nursery to primary school' booklet is given to the children to explore with their nursery key worker and take home to parents. This contains information and pictures of the classroom, uniform and teacher/teaching assistants to help familiarise the children with the school. Many nurseries have commented on how they find this particularly useful to aid the transition work they do with the children and to make partnership links. There is the opportunity for children to mark make and have speech transcribed to let us know about them, e.g. favourite food and story, who is in their family.

The head teacher and class teacher meets with new parents individually to further get to know the children. This information is used to inform planning in the first few weeks to settle the children, as well as establishing relationships between the parents and school staff. Where necessary, the SENDCO meets with parents whose children have additional needs too.

On our school website we have a 'New Starters' page where information can be found about school readiness, images of the classroom environment and a video tour and stories read by the class teacher.

In July, we also hold a 'Teddy Bears Picnic' where the new children are invited to play on the field with the current reception cohort. This allows the children to meet each other for the first time, to meet members of staff and for parents to meet each other and begin building connections. In addition, children are invited into the school for a 'Moving up morning' to spend time in their new class and with their teacher and teaching assistant. Additional sessions are offered for children with SEND or whose parents feel they are anxious about starting school in order to begin building positive relationships.

Throughout the Reception Year, steps are taken for children to become familiar with Year One. Children attend Key Stage One assemblies, sometimes located in the Year One Classroom. Children celebrate their work with members of the Key Stage One team, as well as SLT. In Term 6, children attend Key Stage One morning playtimes and the Year One teacher visits the children to join in with their learning through play and will target SEN children to begin building relationships with them. Transition meetings take place so information about each child can be passed onto their new teacher. TA'S also pass on information. . Throughout Term 6, the Year One teacher has story time with Reception children. Children attend 'Moving up Morning' where they get to know their new teacher, classroom and style of learning. In the first 2 terms of Year One, a learning through play pedagogy is adopted. This is to ensure a smoother transition from Reception to Year One. The EYFS lead and Year One teacher have met to discuss the curriculums. Each subject has been analysed to ensure we identify any gaps in learning that may occur and we have discussed what we can do to reduce these.

Parents are invited onto Class Dojo before their child starts school. Information and guidance on starting school is posted on here to support parents and children. Parents can directly message the class teacher if they have any questions, building relationships from the very beginning as we recognise the importance of supporting parents in the transition to starting school as well as the children. The class teacher posts videos of herself reading stories on Class Dojo throughout Term 6 and the summer holidays to keep the contact between home and school throughout the summer holidays.

A member of the EYFS team stand by the gate at the end of everyday, offering the opportunity for daily communications between home and school.

Work and experiences throughout the year are shared with and celebrated on Class Dojo, allowing parents an insight into their child's learning. Class Dojo is also used to share home learning ideas and parents can send photographs and videos back of their children participating which is also celebrated in school to build home-school links. Extra curricular experiences are also encouraged to be shared.

Class assemblies not only develop the children's skills in public speaking, performance and self-confidence, but are also an opportunity for parents to be welcomed into the school to share this experience. Parents are welcome into the school every Tuesday morning for twenty minutes to read with their children and older siblings for 'Family and Fairytales'. Stay and play sessions, 'Through Our Eyes' are held once a term, offering parents the opportunity to come into the Reception classroom and actively take part and witness how their children learn. This is also an opportunity for parents to ask any questions they may have, building home-school relationships. These sessions happen in a morning and afternoon session to meet the needs of working parents.

Safeguarding in the Early Years is paramount. Staff participated in the whole school safeguarding training practices. There is one class teacher and two full time teaching assistants. Support is given to parents to encourage school readiness and toileting. An intimate care policy outlines the procedure and practices for children that require a higher level of care. These have been written inline with guidance from the Medway Early Years Team. The EYFS team work very closely with each other, prioritising time to talk about the children to ensure information is gathered appropriately.

Children in Reception have good attendance and this is continually monitored. Support is offered to parents to ensure their children come to school on time, with additional measures taken such as arriving early to spend time with the EYFS Team before the school day starts, if necessary.

Staff undertake rigorous risk assessments of the classroom and outdoor area, daily, by the EYFS Team and the caretaker.

Behaviour is positive in Reception because children have clear routines and are aware of what is expected of them. Behaviour is well managed and a strength of the EYFS team, something that many people comment on including members of the Medway Early Years Team. Children are taught the risks of their actions during their play. Whilst managed risks are encouraged to develop their problem solving and critical thinking skills, staff are vigilant in assessing and monitoring these. One teaching assistant is also trained in paediatric first aid.

A prime area of the EYFS is Personal, Social and Emotional Development, underpinning all aspects of learning within the Reception year. Children have an emotions focal area within the classroom where they are encouraged to develop their sense of self, talking about their feelings and emotions and have a range of resources to support this including emotion pebbles, puzzles and stories. Regular circle times also support this. A teaching assistant within the EYFS team has also undertaken training to deliver additional support for emotional wellbeing, leading the 'WIN Team'.

The members of staff in Reception work closely with the Medway Early Years Team. The EYFS lead attends all Leaders Briefings to ensure she is up to date with the latest policies and procedures, as well as gathering the most up to date information. The EYFS lead identifies areas of development for all members of the Reception team and organises training to ensure staff deliver the highest quality of teaching and learning. This includes training on 'Effective Observations of Learning', 'Keynote speech: Professor Iram Siraj Exploring evidence based research that supports quality practice and provision' and 'Developing Mathematics and The Power of Subitising'.

Teachers and EYFS Leads from other schools in Medway and further have visited to gain an insight into the Early Year provision at St William of Perth. This has included looking at learning environments and continuous provision, the teaching and learning of Religious Education and the observations and assessment of learning.

#### **IMPACT - What is working**

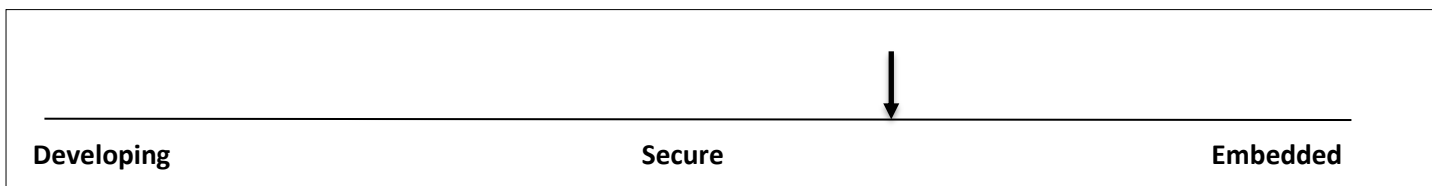
Progress is assessed against our curriculum and our knowledge of what is developmentally appropriate for children of this age. These are assessed in the moment, by the adult, who then has the knowledge of the curriculum and the individual child to be able to support learning on an increasingly deeper level. Children leave the EYFS being independent learners, in a variety of ways. Whether it's being able to access the resources they need to complete a task, knowing the types of questions to ask to enhance

their learning or being able to apply the skills in real life situations, all children are given the tools they need to start the next stage of their education, regardless of their individual academic ability. We are already seeing children inquisitive about the world around them, and using higher level, ambitious vocabulary within their talk. This was even noticed in our 2023 Denominational section 48 Inspection, stating the 'awe and wonder sparked enthusiasm in their independent work'.

At the end of the Reception year, children are assessed against the seven Early Learning Goals to complete the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Typically, the percentage of children achieving the Good Level of Development is above the national average. The school attained 76% GLD in comparison to Medway 66% and National 65% (2021 – 2022).

Although we are in the early stages of implementing a play-based approach to learning in Year One, children are transitioning onto the National Curriculum well. They are able to build upon their knowledge gained from EYFS and apply their skills and understanding at the increasing level and in a variety of ways. This has encouraged our children to be confident, curious learners who are able to take ownership over their own learning.

On the scale below rate where you believe this subject currently stands in terms of your overall curriculum offer:



**EYFS leader actions and impact**

Previous Improvement Actions and Impact	Current Improvement Actions	Future Improvement Actions
Adapting teaching and learning inline with the reforms in the EYFS and newly created Curricular Goals. . Working with Sharon Murray from Medway Early Years Ltd to ensure continual development of practice. . EYFS lead attends courses to explore the reforms in the curriculum	. To embed the EYFS Curricular Goals at St William of Perth. To train members of SLT and subject leads in the EYFS.	. To use evidence based research to inform practice.