Early Years Foundation Stage Policy
St Nicholas Catholic Primary School

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Contents

1. Aims
2. Legislation
3. Structure of the EYFS
4. Curriculum
5. Assessment
6. Working with parents and carers
7. Staff
8. Safeguarding and welfare procedures
9. Monitoring arrangements
Appendix 1. Related policies and procedures

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1. Aims

This policy aims to ensure that:

- All children access a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum that provides a secure foundation for future learning
- Teaching is consistently high quality, enabling all children to make strong progress from their starting points
- Children are supported to become confident, independent learners through high-quality interactions and well-planned provision
- Strong, respectful partnerships are built with parents and carers, recognising them as children's first educators
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and inclusive practice
- Children develop spiritually, morally and socially in line with the Catholic ethos of the school

2. Legislation

This policy follows the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage framework for group and school-based providers, effective from 1 September 2026. It is read alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, the SEND Code of Practice and the school's safeguarding and related policies. Development Matters supports curriculum design and professional judgement; it is non-statutory guidance and is not used as a tick-list.

3. Structure of the EYFS

At St Nicholas Catholic Primary School, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision consists of Reception aged pupils only. We are a one-and-a-half form entry school with a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 45 pupils within the EYFS.

Children join our Reception classes in the September following their fourth birthday. The school does not operate a nursery provision.

The Reception cohort is organised into two classes, each led by a qualified class teacher. While each class has an allocated carpet and registration area to support small-group teaching, pastoral care and class identity, all children share one large, open-plan learning environment and access the same continuous provision areas. This shared model enables flexible grouping, collaborative teaching, and consistent experiences for all children across the cohort.

The indoor and outdoor environments are organised into well-planned areas of provision that support all seven areas of learning within the EYFS framework. Children move freely between these areas throughout the day, promoting independence, choice, and sustained engagement in learning.

Reception places are offered from the September following a child's fourth birthday. Full-time attendance is available from the start of the school year. Before compulsory school age, parents may request part-time attendance or defer entry within the limits of the School Admissions Code. Any individual arrangements are agreed with families and recorded in line with the school's admissions and attendance procedures. The school has no nursery provision or nursery charging arrangements.

4. Curriculum

At St Nicholas Catholic Primary School, our Early Years curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that all children develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to succeed in school and beyond.

We teach the seven interconnected areas of learning: Communication and Language; Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development; Literacy; Mathematics; Understanding the World; and Expressive Arts and Design. The three prime areas underpin learning across the curriculum. Adult-led teaching, high-quality interactions and continuous provision work together to help children practise and apply their learning.

Our curriculum is:

- Ambitious for all learners
- Sequenced to build knowledge over time
- Responsive to children's interests and starting points
- Focused on developing strong communication and language skills

A particular emphasis is placed on:

- Communication and Language, which is developed continuously through high-quality interactions, structured talk, storytelling and vocabulary-rich environments
- Early reading through Read Write Inc., delivered with fidelity across the setting
- Developing independence, resilience and sustained engagement through well-planned provision

Children learn through a combination of:

- Carefully structured adult-led sessions
- Purposeful, well-resourced continuous provision
- Opportunities for exploration, investigation and play

Our curriculum in practice

Communication and language develop through stories, songs, conversation, explicit vocabulary teaching and sustained shared thinking. Whole-class NELI sessions strengthen language and narrative skills, with targeted support where needed.

Read Write Inc. provides daily systematic synthetic phonics, reading and letter formation. Assessment informs grouping and timely keep-up support. Fine motor development, oral composition and purposeful mark-making support early writing. Literacy Tree is introduced from Spring 2027, building on the autumn literacy curriculum.

Mastering Number is our mathematics scheme, including its spatial reasoning programme. Teaching and provision develop number understanding, mathematical language and spatial reasoning through practical exploration and repeated practice.

White Rose Science supports the teaching of Understanding the World. Learning about people, communities, the past and the wider world also draws on stories, first-hand experiences and our local context. Children attend a one-hour Forest School session each week, linked where appropriate to science, seasonal change and cultural or religious events.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development is embedded in relationships, routines, play, stories and planned experiences. There is no separate Reception PSHE subject. Children develop the language, independence, emotional regulation and relationship skills that prepare them for You, Me, PSHE in Year 1. Ten Ten Life to the Full supports relationships education.

Physical Development includes explicit teaching and daily opportunities for movement, outdoor play, fine motor practice and growing independence in personal care. Expressive Arts and Design is explicitly planned through art and making, music and movement, imaginative play and storytelling, then revisited across topics and provision.

Lighting the Path supports Religious Education. Prayer, worship, Catholic Social Teaching and our mission, "Love one another, as I have loved you", shape daily life and children's care for others.

4.1 Planning

Planning in the EYFS is flexible and responsive. Staff use ongoing assessment to inform planning, ensuring learning builds on what children already know and can do.

Learning is carefully sequenced across the year to ensure progression, with a clear focus on:

- Building vocabulary
- Developing communication and language

- Securing early reading and number skills

Staff consider:

- Children's interests and motivations
- Assessment information
- Contributions from parents and carers
- The need for repetition, revisit and consolidation

Children with SEND are supported through carefully adapted provision and, where appropriate, input from external professionals.

The long-term plan identifies what children will learn and how knowledge and skills build across the year. Medium-term and weekly planning select purposeful experiences, vocabulary and opportunities to revisit learning. Staff adapt access and support while retaining ambitious goals. The Early Learning Goals inform end-of-Reception assessment; they do not limit the curriculum.

4.2 Teaching

Teaching in the EYFS at St Nicholas is underpinned by:

- High-quality adult interaction
- Explicit modelling of language and thinking
- Carefully structured routines and expectations

Staff:

- Engage in sustained shared thinking
- Model vocabulary and sentence structures
- Respond to children's interests to extend learning
- Provide timely intervention where needed
- Explicitly teach routines, expectations and self-regulation strategies so that children learn how to keep themselves safe, manage transitions and develop positive relationships with others

As children progress through the year, teaching becomes increasingly focused on securing the knowledge and skills needed for Key Stage 1, while maintaining opportunities for exploration and play.

5. Assessment

Assessment in the EYFS is ongoing and integral to teaching and learning.

Staff:

- Observe children regularly to understand their development, interests and next steps
- Use this information to adapt provision and teaching
- Engage in regular professional dialogue to ensure accurate judgements

We place strong emphasis on knowing each child well, including through:

- Information gathered from parents during transition
- Ongoing communication with families
- Contributions from home (e.g. 'wow moments')

Parents are kept informed through:

- Informal daily communication
- Formal meetings
- Written reports, including the EYFS Profile

This ensures that assessment is holistic and reflective of the whole child.

Curriculum checkpoints on entry and at the end of each half-term help staff review progress from individual starting points across all seven areas. These small steps reflect our taught curriculum and inform the next teaching, support and provision. Fortnightly key-worker records capture engagement in focused and provision-based maths and writing, alongside selected significant observations. Recording remains proportionate and does not interrupt interaction with children or require evidence for every judgement.

Within the first six weeks of a child starting Reception, staff administer the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment in accordance with the current assessment guidance, including any applicable access arrangements or exemptions. This is separate from the school's curriculum checkpoints.

In the final term of Reception, staff complete the EYFS Profile for each child against the 17 statutory Early Learning Goals, using the exact ELG descriptors and judging each as expected or emerging. Judgements draw on staff knowledge of the child and what the child demonstrates over time. Results are shared with parents and carers, the local authority as required and Year 1 staff, alongside a short account of the child's characteristics of effective learning, to support continuity and transition.

5.1 Inclusion and SEND

At St Nicholas Catholic Primary School, we are committed to ensuring that all children are fully included and supported to achieve their potential.

Our first approach is high-quality teaching, where learning is carefully adapted to meet the needs of all children. Expectations remain high for all learners, and support is provided through:

- Carefully planned scaffolding

- Explicit modelling and use of visuals
- Pre-teaching and reinforcement of key vocabulary
- Structured opportunities for talk and interaction
- Use of practical and multi-sensory approaches

Children's needs are identified early through ongoing assessment, observation and close partnership with parents and carers. Where additional needs are identified, staff work closely with the school SENDCo and, where appropriate, external professionals to ensure appropriate support is in place.

Provision is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is effective and responsive to children's needs, enabling all children to access the curriculum and make strong progress from their starting points.

6. Working with parents and carers

At St Nicholas Catholic Primary School, we recognise that parents and carers are children's first and most important educators. We place a strong emphasis on building positive, respectful and collaborative relationships with families.

We begin working in partnership with parents from the outset through:

- Transition meetings and information sharing
- Home visits
- Parent information sessions on the daily routines and curriculum within EYFS
- Opportunities to share important information about each child's development and starting points

We maintain strong partnerships throughout the year through:

- Regular informal communication between staff and parents
- Opportunities for parents to engage in their child's learning within school

We actively involve parents in the life of the setting through:

- Stay and Play sessions during transition, followed by weekly Monday Stay and Learn sessions from 8:40 to 9:05 after the autumn half-term, responding to parent feedback and helping families join in their child's learning
- Workshops and curriculum information sessions, including phonics, early reading, and maths
- Events such as Christmas and Easter craft mornings
- Secret Reader sessions, encouraging a love of reading
- Class assemblies and weekly Praise Assembly, celebrating children's achievements
- Inviting parents into school to enhance the curriculum, for example:
    - Sharing toys from the past
    - Supporting learning around cultural and religious celebrations, including Eid

We also encourage parents to contribute to their child's learning by sharing achievements from home, which helps staff to build a full picture of each child.

Tapestry supports two-way communication and the sharing of learning and achievements. Staff seek parent feedback, follow up individual concerns and explain how families can support learning at home. Parent workshops include language, physical development, phonics, reading and mathematics.

These strong partnerships ensure that:

- Children feel secure and valued
- Learning is supported both at home and at school
- Staff are able to plan effectively based on a deep understanding of each child

7. Staff

At St Nicholas Catholic Primary School, we recognise that high-quality provision in the Early Years is dependent on skilled, knowledgeable and well-supported staff. Practitioners work collaboratively across the shared EYFS environment to ensure consistency in expectations, teaching approaches and provision for all children. Staff engage in regular professional dialogue and coaching to continually develop practice within the EYFS.

We are committed to ensuring that all staff are appropriately trained, supported and deployed to meet the needs of all learners, while maintaining the highest standards of safeguarding and professional conduct.

Each child has a named Key Person, usually one of the class teachers, and a Significant Other adult who provides continuity and support. Parents are told who these adults are and how to contact them. The team shares relevant information so that children's learning, care and emotional needs are understood across the shared setting. Staff receive appropriate supervision and support to discuss children's needs, safeguarding and their own professional development.

7.1 Staff training

At St Nicholas, we:

- Train all staff in safeguarding procedures in line with Annex C of the most recent EYFS Statutory Framework and Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance
- Support staff to feel confident in recognising and responding to safeguarding concerns
- Provide ongoing professional development to ensure high-quality teaching and effective practice across the EYFS
- Staff receive safeguarding training at induction and regular updates throughout the year. Formal safeguarding training is refreshed in line with local safeguarding partnership expectations and statutory guidance.

- Clearly outline training expectations and support in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Our designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL:

- Provide ongoing support, advice and guidance to all staff
- Attend appropriate safeguarding training in line with statutory requirements
- Liaise with local authority children's services and safeguarding partners where necessary

7.2 Safer recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow statutory guidance to ensure all adults working with children are suitable and safe to do so. This includes:

- Obtaining references prior to employment (including for students and volunteers)
- Completing identity, qualification, right-to-work, references, enhanced DBS and barred-list checks, and any further checks required for the role, including for students and volunteers in accordance with current statutory guidance
- Maintaining accurate records of recruitment checks

Required suitability checks are completed before adults begin the relevant work. Staff must disclose information that may affect their suitability to work with children, including relevant cautions, convictions, investigations or disqualification. Leaders assess and act on this information through the school's safer recruitment and safeguarding procedures.

Further detail can be found in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy on the school website.

7.3 Whistleblowing

We ensure all staff:

- Are aware of whistleblowing procedures
- Feel confident to raise concerns about unsafe or poor practice
- Understand that concerns will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately

Concerns about unsafe practice should be raised promptly with Jane Burns (Headteacher). Concerns about the headteacher should be raised with Jenny Stuart-Collins (Chair of Governors). Staff may use the external routes in the Whistleblowing Policy where appropriate. Safeguarding allegations follow section 8.1 and must not wait for a general complaints or whistleblowing investigation.

Further information is available in our Whistleblowing Policy on the school website.

7.3.1 Malicious or vexatious allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith, but investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, we will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

8. Safeguarding and welfare procedures

At St Nicholas, we recognise that children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure; when their individual needs are met; and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We follow safeguarding and welfare requirements to provide a welcoming, safe and stimulating environment where children can enjoy learning and grow in confidence.

All safeguarding procedures are underpinned by strong relationships with families, ensuring that any concerns can be identified early and acted upon appropriately.

All practitioners are alert to any issues of concern in children's lives at home or elsewhere.

You can find our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy on our school website for more information.

8.1 Responding to allegations or concerns

Staff record and report concerns about a child immediately to the DSL or deputy and follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Concerns requiring children's social care involvement are referred without delay in line with local procedures. Anyone may make a referral; staff must act if the DSL is unavailable. In an emergency or where a child is in immediate danger, staff contact the police on 999.

The headteacher ensures that required notifications and referrals are made to the appropriate authorities. The EYFS requirement for registered providers to notify Ofsted of allegations of harm or abuse and action taken, as soon as reasonably practicable and within 14 days, is applied where registration requirements cover the provision. This does not replace the school's immediate safeguarding, LADO, police or children's social care responsibilities.

8.1.1 Allegations about adults

Any concern or allegation about an adult working with children, including supply staff, volunteers or contractors, is reported immediately to the headteacher. Where it concerns the headteacher, it is reported to the Chair of Governors, Jenny Stuart-Collins. Staff do not investigate allegations themselves.

- Where an adult may have harmed a child, committed an offence against or related to a child, posed a risk of harm or behaved in a way suggesting they may be unsuitable to work with children, the case manager contacts the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) without delay and within one working day. If unsure whether the threshold is met, the case manager seeks LADO advice.

- The case manager follows LADO advice and the procedures in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, coordinates any police or children's social care involvement, protects children and preserves relevant records. Internal enquiries must not compromise an external investigation.

8.1.2 Low-level concerns and learning from concerns

Concerns about adult conduct that do not meet the harm threshold are still reported promptly, recorded and reviewed under the school's low-level concerns procedure. Patterns, escalation and any new information are considered; LADO advice is sought where appropriate.

Records are held securely, shared only where appropriate and reviewed to identify action needed in practice, supervision, training or policy. Required DBS and professional regulator referrals are made when the relevant criteria are met.

8.2 Staffing and supervision

We comply with Reception staffing requirements and infant class size legislation. Qualified teachers lead both classes, supported by the full-time HLTA. Leaders deploy staff across shared indoor and outdoor provision according to children's needs, activities, SEND support, breaks and absences. Children are usually within sight and hearing of staff and always within sight or hearing; eating and sleeping require sight and hearing. Staffing is reviewed for visits and Forest School so that supervision and first aid remain effective.

8.3 Paediatric first aid (PFA)

We have at least 1 person with a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate on the premises and available at all times when children are present, including on outings. This PFA certificate is renewed every 3 years as required.

8.4 The designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

We also have a DSL who has lead responsibility for safeguarding children. They are also responsible for:

- Liaising with local statutory children's services agencies, and with the LSPs (local safeguarding partners)
- Providing support, advice and guidance to all other staff on an ongoing basis, and on any specific safeguarding issue as required
- Attending a safeguarding training course that complies with the criteria set out in annex C of the latest EYFS framework

8.5 Absence

We're required to promptly follow up on absences.

If a child is absent for a prolonged time or if their parents/carers haven't told us about the absence, we will attempt to contact the parents/carers and alternative emergency contacts.

See our Attendance Policy on our school website for more on this, including our expectations of parents/carers to report child absences.

8.6 Oral health and tooth brushing

We promote good oral health, as well as good health more widely, through our curriculum, daily routines and discussions with children. This includes teaching children about healthy food choices, the importance of brushing teeth, hygiene routines and looking after their bodies.

8.7 Safer eating

During all meals and snacks, including classroom milk and fruit, cooking activities and food at Forest School, children are seated safely and remain within sight and hearing of staff. A member of staff with a valid paediatric first aid certificate is in the room while children eat. Staff actively observe eating and respond promptly to choking or allergic reactions.

Before a child joins our setting, we will get information on their:

- Dietary requirements and preferences
- Food allergies and intolerances
- Health requirements

The school obtains and keeps dietary, allergy and medical information up to date and shares it with relevant staff and the Leeds City Council catering team. At each eating occasion, a named member of staff checks that each child receives appropriate food and that individual plans are followed.

We will make sure that all staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis; the differences between allergies and intolerances; and that children can develop allergies at any time.

We will consult with parents/carers to:

- Create allergy action plans for their child – with the help of health professionals, where appropriate. We will also keep this information up to date and share it with all staff
- ensure children's dietary, allergy and medical needs are understood and safely managed

For food prepared or served as part of classroom activities or Forest School, staff use safe hygiene and preparation practices, adapt food to developmental needs and reduce choking risks. School lunch preparation, menus and catering arrangements are managed by Leeds City Council catering staff, including special-diet meetings. School staff communicate children's needs, check agreed arrangements and supervise eating. Reception attends the dining hall earlier so EYFS staff can observe children eating. See the EYFS Food Safety and Eating Supervision Policy.

In the event of a choking incident that requires intervention, we will record details of the incident and make the child's parents/carers aware. We will periodically review the records to identify whether we can change anything in our practice to make eating safer, and then take action as appropriate.

8.8 Accident or injury

We keep a first aid box (which contains appropriate items for children) always accessible.

We keep a written record of accident or injuries and any first aid treatment.

We will inform parents or carers the same day as, or as soon as reasonably practicable after, of any:

- Accident or injury sustained by the child
- First aid treatment given

We will notify the relevant authority of any serious accident, illness, or injury to, or death of any child while in our care and inform them of the action taken, as soon as reasonably practicable.

8.9 Safety of premises

We make sure that our premises, including overall floor space and outdoor space, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children we care for and the activities provided on the premises.

We comply with requirements of health and safety legislation, including fire safety and hygiene requirements.

Written risk assessments cover indoor and outdoor provision, equipment, visits, Forest School and relevant activities. Staff carry out routine checks, report hazards and adapt provision as needs change. Leaders ensure visitors and collections are managed safely and that access to the site is controlled.

8.10 Toileting and privacy

We make sure that there are:

- Enough toilets and hand basins available for the children
- Suitable and hygienic changing facilities
- An adequate supply of necessary items such as spare clothes
- Separate toilet facilities for adults

During nappy changes and toileting, we will balance children's privacy with their safeguarding and support needs.

8.11 Rest and safe sleep

Children who need rest or sleep are supported in a suitable, safe space in line with the Safe Sleeping Policy. Sleeping children remain within sight and hearing of staff and are checked frequently, with checks recorded. Staff consider the child's individual needs, breathing, position, temperature and the sleep environment, and share relevant information with parents. Reception children are never left to sleep unobserved.

8.12 Online safety and screen use

Staff have regard to current DfE screen-use guidance for early years settings. Any screen use has a clear learning purpose, is age appropriate and is supported by an adult. It is balanced with talk, physical activity, first-hand exploration and play. Filtering and monitoring, safeguarding reporting, image permissions and the use of phones, cameras and smart watches follow the school's Online Safety and Mobile Phones and Cameras policies.

8.13 Health medicines and behaviour

Staff follow individual healthcare plans and the school's medical procedures for administering, storing and recording medicines, obtaining required consent and reporting treatment. Infection control, personal hygiene and appropriate responses to illness support children's health. Positive relationships, explicit teaching and consistent routines support behaviour and regulation; physical punishment is never used. Any necessary physical intervention follows school policy and is recorded and reported to parents.

8.14 Records and complaints

Child and staff information is stored securely and shared in accordance with data protection and safeguarding requirements. Contact details, emergency contacts and collection arrangements are kept current. Parents can access the school's Complaints Policy and raise concerns with staff or leaders. Complaints and actions are recorded, with any statutory notification or timescale applied where relevant.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Early Years Leader and Senior Leadership Team, and approved by the governing body.

Monitoring of EYFS provision includes:

- Regular observations of teaching and learning
- Review of assessment information
- Pupil voice and parent feedback
- Monitoring of the learning environment and provision

Appendix 1 Related policies and procedures

This policy is read alongside the current versions of the following school policies and records. Staff must know and follow the procedures relevant to their role.

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, including allegations and low-level concerns; Whistleblowing Policy; Staff Code of Conduct; safer recruitment procedures

SEND Policy and Information Report; Behaviour Policy; procedures for physical intervention and intimate care

Attendance and Admissions policies; missing child and uncollected child procedures; emergency contacts and authorised collection records

Medical Conditions and medicines procedures; first aid and accident records; EYFS Food Safety and Eating Supervision Policy; individual allergy and healthcare plans

Safe Sleeping Policy and sleep-check records; EYFS risk assessments and regular checking records; Forest School and educational visits procedures; health and safety and fire procedures

Online Safety Policy; Mobile Phones and Cameras Policy, including smart watches; data protection, image permissions and secure record keeping

Complaints Policy; Reception long-term plan, assessment checkpoints, transition and Key Person procedures