



## Early Years Policy

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### **VISION & VALUES OF ST JOHN AND ST JAMES**

Our vision is to create an inclusive community of aspirational learners, children, families and colleagues, working collaboratively and respectfully within a happy, nurturing environment where all flourish and achieve. Pupils are given extensive opportunities through an exciting and engaging curriculum, through which our Christian values are woven.

**‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full’.**  
**1 John 10 verse 10**

## Development Matters in the Early Years

*Children are born ready, able and eager to learn. They actively reach out to interact with other people, and in the world around them. Development is not an automatic process, however. It depends on each unique child having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments.*

This quote is taken from the Early Years curriculum document 'Development Matters in the Early Years'. It clearly states that children's individual development is at the heart of Early Years practice and that practitioners need to provide children with experiences and opportunities to ensure that each individual child makes progress. Accurate and effective use of assessment is central to this.

### Our Early Years Aim: 'A Good Level of Development'

The term '**good level of development**' refers to children reaching expected levels across all areas of the curriculum when leaving the Early Years.

The Development Matters Document recognises that children in the Early Years are individuals and that they develop at different rates across the curriculum. A key message from the document, and one that we hold at the heart of our practice at St John and St James, is that children need to achieve a '**good level of development**' across the 17 areas of the curriculum. Accurate assessment and using assessments to inform future teaching and learning is crucial to this.

St John and St James has adopted the '**Good Level of Development**' ethos by planning for and teaching all objectives across the 17 areas of learning. This ensures that children achieve across the whole curriculum and enables practitioners to make accurate assessments of children's learning, ensuring that gaps in learning are highlighted. Assessments are then used effectively to inform medium term and weekly planning so that all gaps in learning are covered and children make progress across the curriculum.

### Baseline Assessments: Collecting on entry data

Baseline data is collected within the first few weeks of the Autumn term. Baseline assessments are carried out after the settling in period when staff have developed relationships with children to ensure assessments are full and accurate. Baseline assessment data is collected through child initiated evidence rather than adult focus learning so that practitioners can see what children are able to carry out independently.

Baseline data provides practitioners with an 'on entry' level of attainment using the age band descriptors in the Development Matters document.

When starting Nursery, children are expected to be entering or working within the age expected 30 – 50 months band and Reception children in the age expected 40-60 month band. Many children joining St John and St James Nursery show 'on entry' data which is below the age expected band (in the lower age band of 22 – 36 months).

It is crucial that baseline assessment data is used effectively to inform the first term's planning. The Nursery team use the baseline assessment data to highlight any gaps in learning within the 22-36 month band before moving children on to the age expected 30-50 month objectives. The Reception team consolidate learning from the Nursery objectives in addition to using baseline data from new children to St John and St James to inform their first terms planning. This effective use of assessment to inform planning is adopted throughout the school year, ensuring that if and when children have gaps in learning, they are acknowledged and planned for appropriately.

As the baselines are an important measure of progress, they are thoroughly moderated both internally and externally. As a result, key children are identified and case studies are created to track and monitor children's progress from baseline assessments

### Assessment used in the Early Years

The Early Years team carry out a variety of assessments throughout the school year.

The assessments carried out in the Early Years are:

- Focus children 'learning story' observations
- On the spot observations (sticky labels and photographs)
- Adult focus work (assess how children carried out task)
- Child initiated work – Reception team date next to objectives when evidence has been seen to inform assessment in Literacy and Maths.
- Characteristics of learning end of term reports
- Termly assessments

### Accurate Assessment : The Importance of Child Initiated Evidence

Accurate assessment can only be carried out when there is sufficient evidence to assess children's knowledge and learning. It is very important that evidence reflects a balance of adult led and child initiated learning so that children are secure in a concept before being awarded an objective or level.

At St John and St James, Nursery and Reception operate a weekly timetable which promotes children using their adult taught skills through

their child initiated learning. This model of teaching and learning was devised to ensure that we support both adult focus and child initiated evidence collection and assessment. Children are taught a concept through adult led learning and are then provided with a wealth of opportunities to use skills taught in free choice activities. Through this, staff will accumulate a clear picture of what children can do in literacy, maths and other curriculum areas independently. Objectives will only be highlighted as 'achieved' when children have shown that they can independently carry out a skill 2 or more times in addition to any adult focus learning they have carried out. This ensures that assessment is accurate and based on children's secure knowledge of a concept.

### Characteristics of Learning

The 'characteristics of learning' which focus on how a child learns through playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically are at the heart of the Development Matters Document. Our end of term reports are based on **HOW** children learn using these crucial life skills. We have incorporated the 'characteristics of learning' into our observation sheets used during a child's focus week (three times a year) and use marking codes **PE** (playing and exploring), **AL** (active learning) and **CTC** (creating and thinking critically) to assess children's child initiated learning using the 'characteristics of learning' throughout the year.

### ELG Links: Accurate Assessment

It has been stated by the Development Matters document that there are many links across the curriculum which impact on children's development and when assessing children's attainment. For example, 'speaking' runs through many of the areas of learning. It is clear that a child cannot be exceeding in Understanding the World; 'The World' if they are emerging in Communication and Language; 'Speaking' as to exceed in 'The World' children need to be able to speak about their knowledge.

At St John and St James, we use an ELG links sheet to support our termly assessments to ensure accuracy and consistency in levelling. All practitioners use this sheet to support their planning, teaching and assessment to ensure our journey towards the end of Reception / End of Foundation Stage Government assessment is accurate.

### Termly Assessments

The Development Matters Document explicitly states that **Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development and Communication and Language** are the Prime areas of learning - the three curriculum areas which need to be developed in order for children to make progress across the other areas of learning successfully. At St John and St James, Autumn term teaching and planning focuses primarily on the three prime areas of

learning and rigorous assessment of progress made in the three prime areas is carried out.

The Development Matters Document is used to plan from and then assess the children's progress each term so that gaps in learning can be clearly seen. End of Autumn and Spring term levelling is used effectively to inform next terms planning to ensure that those gaps in learning are covered and children achieve their '**good level of development**' across the curriculum by the Summer term assessment point.

End of Reception summer term data is then converted into the Government numerical system of 1 for emerging, 2 for expected and 3 for exceeding. This assessment data is then sent to the Borough to be analysed.

### Moderation

The Early Years team carries out regular monitoring of children's attainment and progress throughout the school year to ensure there is consistency across the Early Years classes.

The team attend:

- Weekly book looks during PPA time
- Half termly Internal Phase moderation
- Local schools moderation
- Inter-school moderation (during Borough moderation in May).

In addition to this, SLT carry out moderation with other members of the EYFS team ½ termly.

### The Assessment Roles and Responsibilities of the Early Years Phase Leader

The Early Years Phase leader is responsible for ensuring that all practitioners in the phase are assessing in an accurate and consistent way. Termly analysis of Nursery and Reception data is intrinsic to this.

After each assessment point in the school year (Baseline, Autumn, Spring and Summer) the phase leader carries out extensive data analysis which is then shared with the Early Years team. Assessment analysis is carried out on a year group and class level for the specific areas Literacy; reading and writing and Mathematics: number and shape, space and measures. Percentages of children working at expected, above expected and below expected levels are shared with the team.

The phase leader also looks at dominant key groups in detail throughout the year to keep track of their attainment and progress. *(Key groups are subject to change each school year, depending on the cohort of children).*

Assessment data for the key groups listed is analysed after each assessment point, during moderations and in Phase leader time.

Further assessment analysis in the Early Years at St John and St James is carried out on the following key groups.

- Boys
- Girls
- Summer born boys
- Summer born girls
- Children from St John and St James Nursery
- FSM
- SEN
- EAL

Children in the key groups who are not achieving at expected levels of attainment are listed on a separate sheet for practitioners. This information collected from termly assessments is used to support future planning, teaching and interventions.

### Assessment: Transition from Early Years to Year 1

Our aim is to provide children with a smooth transition from the Early Years 'Development Matters' curriculum to the National Curriculum in Year 1. In the summer term, the Reception team plan and deliver a transition curriculum which is designed to smoothly bridge the gap between the child initiated ethos of the Early Years to the structured learning of Key Stage 1.

The transition curriculum incorporates objectives from the Early Years Development Matters document and Level 1 APP and encourages children to carry out activities related to the carpet session independently. Once children have achieved the Early Learning Goal's (ELGS) in the Development Matters Curriculum, accurate assessment of children's attainment and progress is then carried out using the Level 1 APP levelling sheets.