



St Michael's
C.E. Primary School

Early Years
Foundation Stage
Curriculum Rationale

Our Vision

Courage to Flourish in the Love of God

'I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full' (John 10:10)

[Therefore],

'Be strong and courageous... the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.' (Joshua 1:9)

These biblical texts underpin our vision summary, 'Courage to flourish in the love of God'. Jesus' words from the New Testament describe his desire for everyone to be a full and flourishing version of their created selves, experiencing life in all its vibrant fullness, individually and in community. Our ambition is for everyone to encounter this fullness through the life and work of the school, whatever their background, beliefs or circumstances. God's words to Joshua from the Old Testament illustrate how life, and learning, can be challenging, bringing setbacks and discouragement. These words inspire us to keep on going in those circumstances, confident that God watches over us and walks beside us.

The joining of these biblical texts is meaningful for the particular circumstances of our school community. It gives coherence to our aspirational vision that will grow courage and resilience as enablers of 'life in all its fullness' for everyone.

To support our vision, we have the overarching Christian Values:

<u>Value</u>	<u>Biblical texts that underpin our values</u>
Courage	Philippians 4:13 'I can do all things through him who strengthens me.'
Hope	John 1:5 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.'
Love and Forgiveness	1 Corinthians 13:4-8 'Love is patient and kind... it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.' 1 John 1:9 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us'

Trust	Proverbs 3:5-6 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.'
Community	Hebrews 10:24 'Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good.'
Thankfulness	1 Thessalonians 5:18 'Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you'

Intent

At St Michael's, we are passionate about ensuring that our pupils develop a solid foundation for learning that provides them with the best possible start to life. We aim to give each child a happy, positive and enjoyable start to their school life within a safe, secure and stimulating environment.

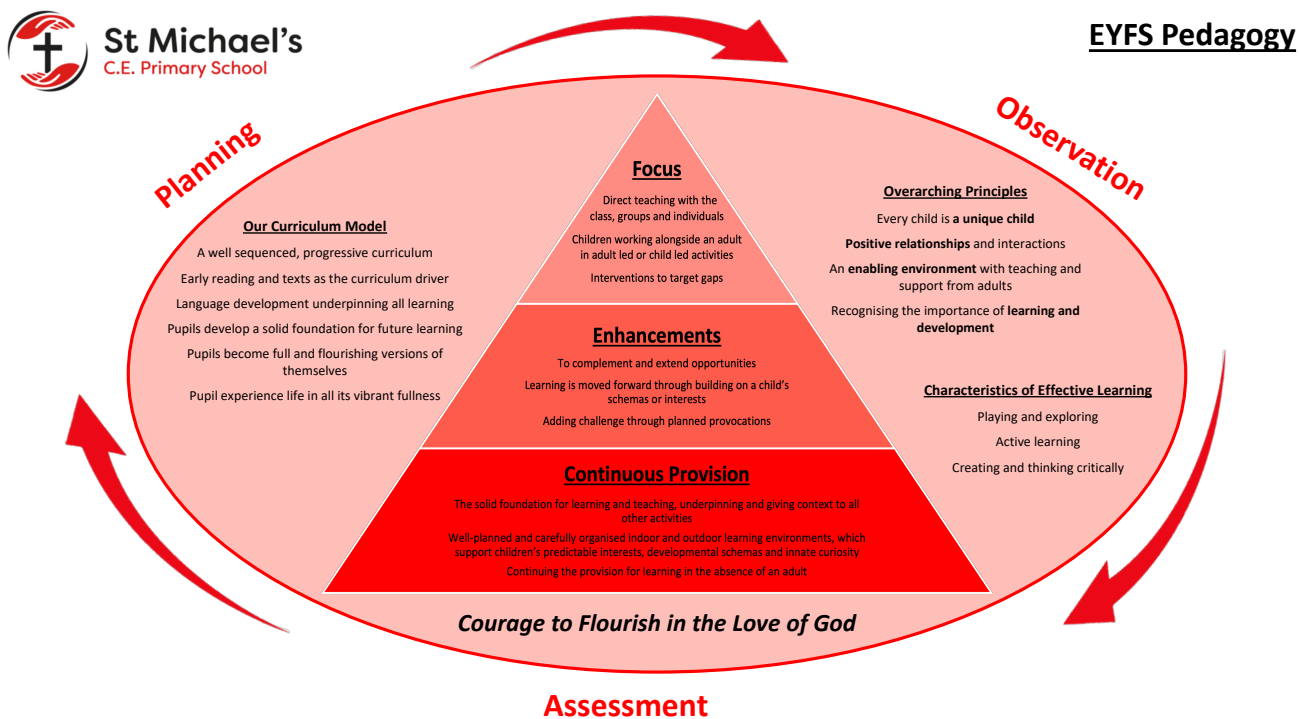
We recognise that features of high-quality early education include:

- The best experience for every child, no matter their background or previous experiences.
- High quality care, with relationships at the centre of our practice enabling strong attachments to be formed, so that each child feels safe, loved and cared for.
- A carefully sequenced curriculum that is flexible and driven by children's needs and interests, with communication and language development at the core.
- An effective pedagogy based on learning through high quality play.
- A well-planned and organised enabling environment (indoors and outdoors), with skilled practitioners who interact with children sensitively and proactively in their play counterbalanced with planned, guided learning.
- Accurate assessment which identifies a child's progress and quickly supports practitioners to notice if a child needs additional support in order to minimise and narrow gaps through adapting provision and additional teaching as appropriate.
- An ethos which supports a child to self-regulate and fosters the characteristics of effective learning.
- Parental involvement as a crucial support with a quality home learning environment making a significant difference to children's progress.

Implementation

Pedagogy

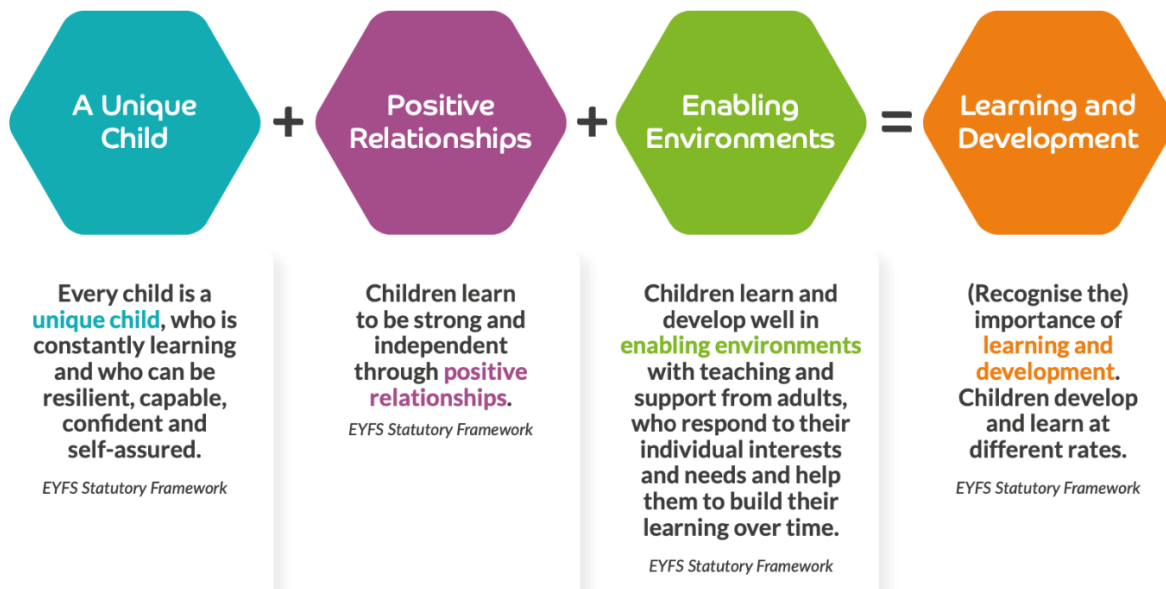
Our early years pedagogy is based upon the Early Excellence Curriculum Development Model. The curriculum and learning environment is carefully planned to support learning through play. This model comprises of the three layers: continuous provision, enhanced provision and focus tasks. This sits within our own school curriculum model which ensures that our pupils know more, remember more and can do more. Pupils are supported to build upon prior knowledge, retrieve taught knowledge and then apply their knowledge and skills in provision and focus tasks.



Overarching Principles

The four overarching principles of the EYFS underpin our practice. We understand that all children develop in different ways and development is not a linear or automatic process. It depends on each unique child having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments that encourage their engagement and recognise their strengths. All children have agency and curiosity to learn, and will interact with other people and the world around them in different ways. Understanding

these different ways of knowing about the world is central to understanding who children are and how best to support their development.



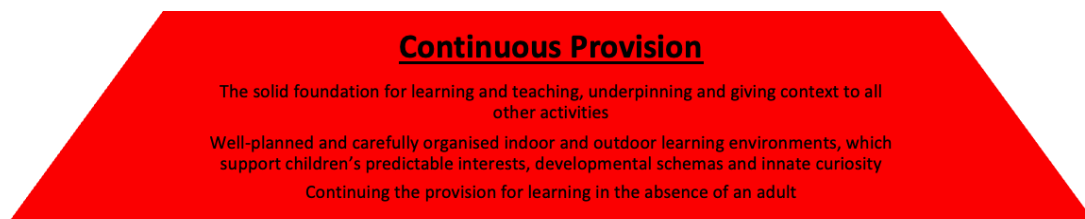
- The Unique Child:** At the heart of our school vision is enabling all our pupils to be full and flourishing versions of themselves. We aim for all our pupils to experience life in all its vibrant fullness. We believe that children learn best when they are happy, secure and actively involved in their own learning. We acknowledge that children learn at different rates and each is at an individual stage of development. Effective teaching and learning in the EYFS meets children’s identified needs and interests and helps children to learn and develop in all seven areas of learning and development, preparing them with the dispositions, skills and knowledge for future learning.
- Positive Relationships:** Our Christian ethos and values support children in developing positive relationships, providing a safe, secure foundation from which to learn. Personal, social and emotional development is a prime need and priority, and our behaviour policy puts nurturing relationships and restorative practice at the centre of our interactions. Staff are highly trained to interact with pupils in the most effective way in order to improve their language, learning and development.
- Enabling Environments:** Through planning a stimulating indoor and outdoor environment, we seek to embrace children’s natural inclinations to play and embed the right habits for learning through the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning – Play and Exploration, Active Learning and Creative and Critical Thinking. We encourage children to play, explore, use their

imagination, be active, take risks and become problem solvers. We encourage children to persevere at activities and remind them of the strength and courage provided by St Michael himself. We support them to become confident learners, preparing them well for the next stage of education. Skilful interactions with our early years staff mean that teaching and learning is supported. Adults respond to children's individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time.

- **Learning and Development:** Our approach involves an appropriate balance of both adult-led and child-led learning. Our curriculum supports our pupils to gain the knowledge, skills and understanding they require for future success. Our curriculum stems from our local context and aims to stimulate new interests by guiding our pupils to skilfully deepen their knowledge and skills. We follow the expectations in the EYFS Statutory Framework and use both Birth to 5 Matters and Development Matters guidance as starting points for progression in our curriculum.

Our Curriculum Model

Layer 1: Continuous Provision

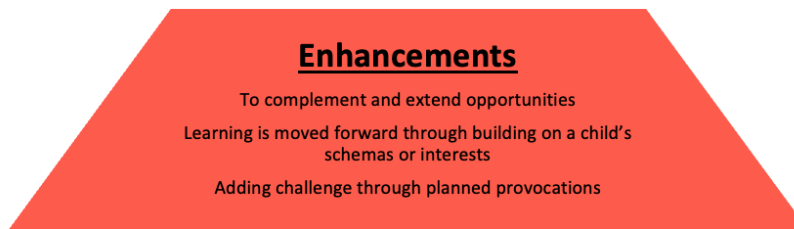


The basis of our curriculum is taught through high-quality play experiences. Play is developmentally fundamental for children. Our pupils have access to a broad range of equipment, resources and materials to help prompt and enable their play through continuous provision. Continuous provision provides a solid foundation for all learning and teaching, underpinning and giving context to all other activities. Continuous provision provides the basis for our rich and meaningful curriculum. It consists of a well-planned and carefully organised indoor and outdoor learning environment, which supports children's predictable interests, developmental schemas and innate curiosity. Pupils are initially taught how to use the continuous provision which has been designed to meet the specific needs of the cohort. We then aim to ensure that the learning can still be moved forward through continuing the provision for learning in the absence of an adult.

Continuous provision includes the provision areas available to children every day in the classroom and outdoor area. In each of these areas is a core range of resources that children can access all the time. The resources and the way they are organised remains constant throughout the year, offering children

a familiar environment in which they can develop sustained play, practise new skills and extend their ideas over time. Resources are progressive from Nursery to Reception to ensure that pupils build on previous skills. Continuous provision creates a well-structured permanent framework for children's play and provides a rich context for children's experiences. Provision is planned well for the age and stage of the children, and with effective adult interactions, it ensures that learning is both enjoyable and challenging.

Layer 2: Enhanced Provision



Layered on top of continuous provision is enhanced provision, which is used to complement and extend opportunities. These two aspects work in tandem to provide a clear structure for active learning. Together, they support children's self-initiated play and provide the basis for more focused investigations. We use enhancements as a way of extending and further enriching children's learning. Enhanced provision extends learning by enabling children to further develop their ideas and interests. New resources, books, equipment, artefacts or activities are made available for a fixed period of time in response to what teachers have observed children need next. These new additions do not replace continuous provision but add a new dimension alongside.

Enhancements are planned based on observation and assessment. The build upon:

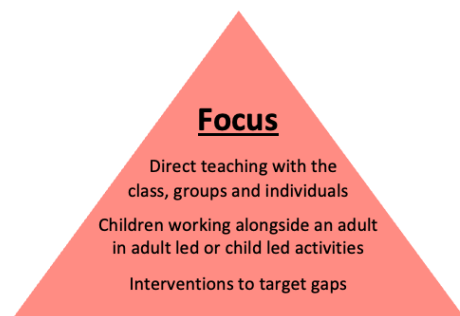
- Children's predictable or emerging interests
- Story ideas and themes
- Themes linked to the big question
- Seasonal changes
- Local events or news that the children can relate to

In this way, enhancements offer either an extension to existing learning or provide a starting point for new learning; acting as a catalyst for exploring, talking and thinking about new ideas. Enhancements add breadth and increase opportunities for the children to develop knowledge and skills across the curriculum. Enhancements and provocations are not permanent additions. Enhancements need adult support and so we ensure that adults:

- Introduce the new ideas, resources and experiences

- Support and guide children’s initial explorations
- Model how to use new resources and equipment
- Facilitate group discussion and provide feedback
- Observe and interact with children as they further explore
- Offer appropriate challenge to deepen their learning

Layer 3: Focus Tasks



These are mostly adult planned and led but may also be initiated by the child if they have shown a particular interest in an activity. These involve direct teaching in either small groups, whole class or 1:1. In both Nursery and Reception, literacy and maths focus activities are planned and taught each week alongside an adult. Children may also complete focus activities in the other areas of learning if there is a particular need to target. This focused time means the teacher can support children to progress in key sequential building blocks, systematically checking for understanding, identifying and responding to misconceptions quickly and provide real-time verbal feedback which results in a strong impact on the acquisition of new learning. Focus activities target specific knowledge, skills or gaps in learning and may be designed to offer challenge to the cohort. Specific gaps for individuals are targeted through interventions.

Learning Environment

Our learning environment is planned to facilitate the development of the characteristics of effective learning and is pivotal to the learning and assessment we provide. We view the classroom environment (indoors and outdoors) as the child’s third teacher, and it is therefore carefully designed to support the individual’s development of skills and will be continually evaluated regularly throughout the year. We use Birth to 5 Matters, Development Matters and the Early Excellence planning guides to support us in ensuring our environment is high-quality.

We have organised continuous provision by dividing the classrooms and outdoor area into smaller distinct areas. In each of these areas, a carefully selected and linked range of resources is presented in

a way which is appealing and accessible to the children and which maximises opportunities for learning across the curriculum. We have decided on key areas within the classrooms through observation and assessment of cohort needs.

We do however continually improve the quality of the learning environment over the year to reflect the developmental stage of our pupils. We ensure that in doing so we reflect on:

- Opportunity – organising the space to offer a broad range of provision areas
- Familiarity – ensuring that provision areas and their resources are available everyday
- Real experiences – providing opportunities for children to have ‘hands on’ learning with physical resources and experiences
- Time – building sufficient periods of time into each day for children to use provision
- Choice – supporting children to make choices and decisions about what to do and for how long
- Intellectual contexts – using resources and books to enrich language, ignite curiosity, stimulate ideas and motivate children to explore and raise questions
- Engagement – ensuring that every area is well used and fully engages children to investigate deeply, return to, repeat and build new meanings
- Sufficiency – remembering that sometimes less definitely is more
- Consolidation – offering opportunities for children to truly embed their learning
- Challenge – enabling the children to develop expertise and to set their own challenges

In the outdoor area, the space is organised in a similar way to the indoor classroom so that children have a range of opportunities organised into different zones. Resources are bigger and more physically challenging, capitalising on the space and freedom the outdoor has to order for large scale, very messy or noisy activities, activities linked to the natural world and the weather, as well as activities requiring open space. The environment supports an active approach to learning, helping our children to experience many things for the first time, as well as repeat, practice and refine what they already know and can do. Real, sensory and experiential activities are key and in our rich environment, our children are able to explore and experiment to make sense of their world.

Teaching and Learning

Our curriculum is based on developing the key knowledge and skills in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. We ensure that the learning opportunities and experiences we provide are clearly linked to both the Prime (Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language and Physical Development) and Specific (Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design) Areas of Learning. We always consider the individual needs of our children and with this information in mind, we are then able to plan a range of broad and balanced learning experiences.

Underpinning our whole curriculum is language development. It is important for us provide experiences that help pupils to develop their communication skills, oracy skills and increase their

vocabulary. We ensure that staff are skilled in assessing language development and are able to support children in being able to communicate their thoughts and ideas and explore the meaning of new words. We use repetitive stories, rhymes and songs as a starting point to help them to develop their language skills.

We also ensure that our Christian school values are weaved through our curriculum so that our pupils flourish as well-rounded individuals. These are explicitly taught through the curriculum itself and through collective worship. We aim for our pupils to experience life in all its vibrant fullness, individually and in community. Our curriculum offers opportunities for pupils to learn about these values through big questions, stories and child/adult interactions.

Big Questions

Each half term pupils are introduced to a 'big question'. These questions form the basis of learning for the half term. Enhancements and activities are planned around supporting the pupils to answer the big question at the end of the half term. In the classrooms, there is a display board with the big question as the title. The children are responsible for adding information to the board over the half term in order to answer the question over time. Teachers refer back to this board weekly to reflect on progress made in answering the question. From this, next steps for improving knowledge and skills can be identified and adults can plan future activities accordingly. Questions are progressive from Nursery to Reception and the questions have been designed so that the information learnt provides the pupils with the prior learning necessary for success in Key Stage 1 and beyond.

Reading as the Curriculum Driver

Linked with the big question is a vehicle text and enhancement texts for each half term. Reading is at the heart of our curriculum. Key texts become a springboard for inspiring cross-curricular learning, embedding imagination and a love of reading at the core of our curriculum. Each half term there is a vehicle text that stimulates learning. There are also enhancement texts to enhance learning and improve children's knowledge in order to answer the big question. Teaching is based around the texts and is carefully sequenced and progressive.

From each text, a number of themes have been identified. These will be further explored over the half term and form the basis of learning. These themes are progressive from Nursery to Reception and weave into Key Stage 1. We ensure that pupils in Nursery develop the prior learning necessary for Reception, and the pupils in Reception develop the prior learning necessary for Year 1.

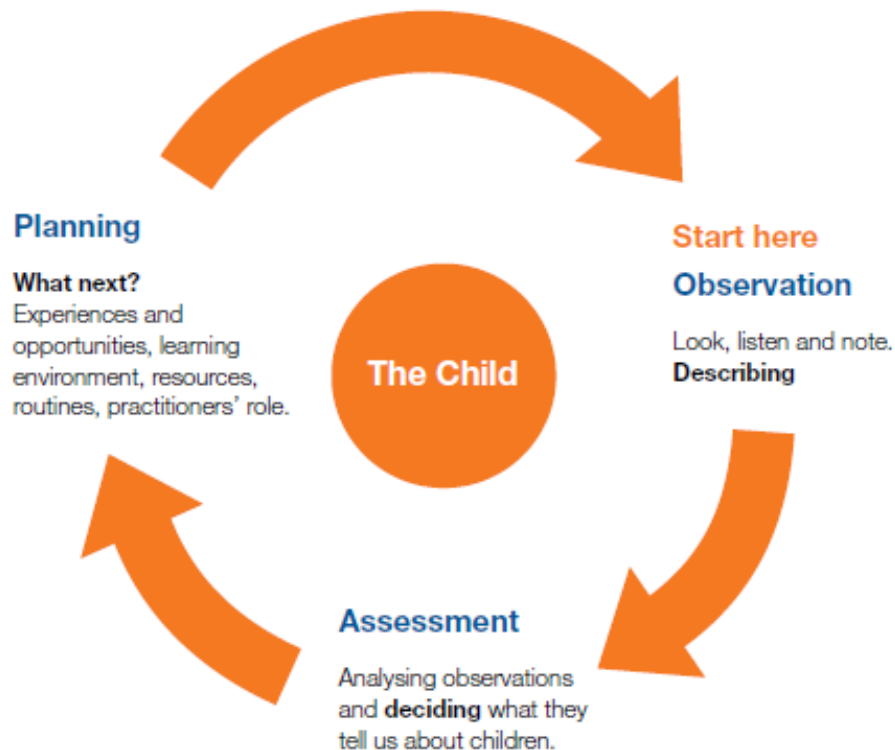
Phonics also has a high priority in our school. We teach phonics in both Nursery and Reception and follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised scheme, which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school. We also model the application of phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of the phonics lesson and across the curriculum.

Rainbow Challenges

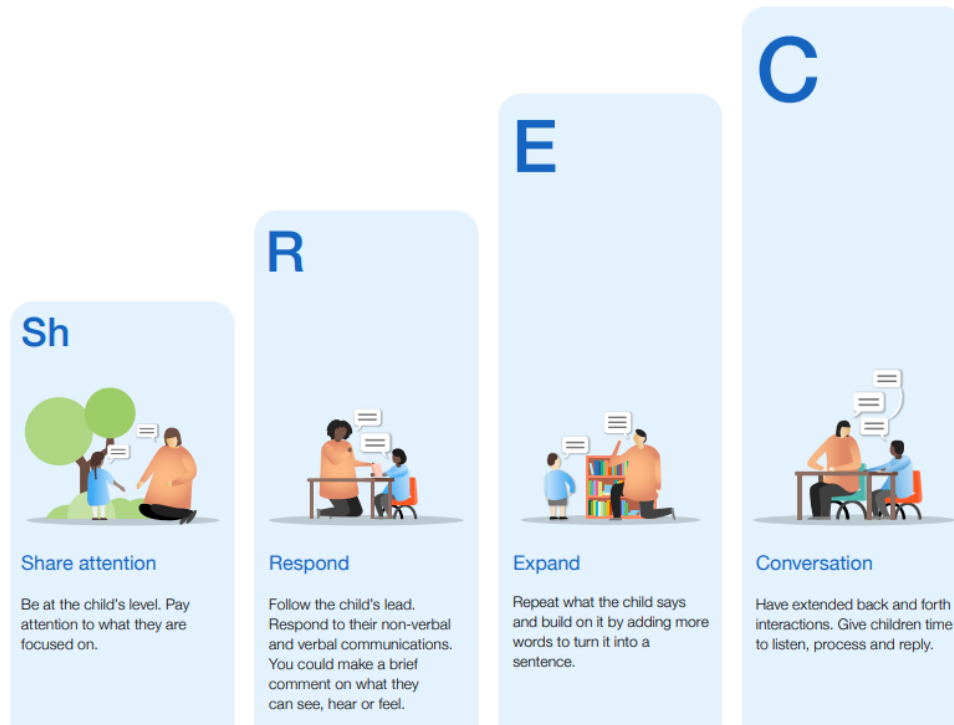
As part of our enhanced provision, pupils are expected to engage in weekly 'Rainbow Challenges'. These enable the children to develop key skills in specific areas of learning and is a purposefully planned activity to enable pupils' learning to continue in the absence of an adult. Challenges are based on previous assessment and aim to address gaps in learning/next steps. Pupils are set their rainbow challenges at the start of the week, and it is an aim for them to ensure that they complete all activities by the end of the week. Each child has to collect a different coloured lollypop stick upon completing each challenge. These are then counted at the end of the week and work is celebrated. This helps staff to monitor progress across the provision areas and target key children who may need additional support in developing certain skills.

Adult Interactions

The learning environment is set up so that the children can learn by initiating their own play. The staff observe and interact with the children in their pursuits, looking out for 'teachable moments' in which they can make a difference. Every interaction between a practitioner and a child is a teaching opportunity. The adult's role is to **observe** the play, **assess** what they see, **plan** how to respond and then teach next steps in a way that is uniquely suited to the particular child in that particular moment.



To ensure that our interactions are high-quality, we use the ShREC approach (Education Endowment Foundation) which is a set of specific evidence informed strategies that can be embedded into everyday practice.



Interactions in our school involve the adults:

- Scanning the areas and deciding where they think they are most needed or could be of most benefit
- Following the child's lead and responding to their communication
- Being at the child's level
- Being interested, open, relaxed and smiling
- Listening, watching and waiting (while waiting, they are assessing and planning how or if to respond)
- Spotting 'teachable moments' and tailoring responses to the particular child, particular situation and particular moment
- Responding in a way that will help the child to make progress (communicating, modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating, setting challenges)
- Pondering if they want to find out something (I wonder...)
- Reflecting on the impact they have made
- Constantly observing, waiting and responding (writing up observations afterwards if necessary)
- Repeating back what the child has said and improving the language
- Scaffolding and modelling language

- Commentating as the child plays
- Having extended back and forth interactions

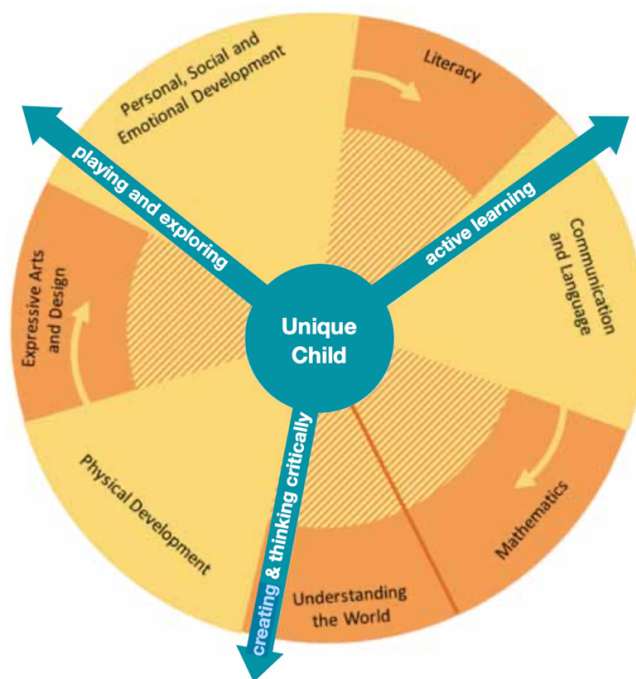
Characteristics of Effective Learning

In planning and guiding children's activities, our early years staff reflect on the different ways that children learn, and then promote these in their practice. The Characteristics of Effective Learning describe how children learn. These learning dispositions, behaviours and habits of mind are particularly important because they build the foundations needed to support children to become strong lifelong learners and independent thinkers.

Three Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning identified by the EYFS are:

- Playing and exploring - Children are finding out and exploring, playing with what they know and are willing to have a go at new things.
- Active learning - Children are involved in what they are doing and concentrating, they keep trying and enjoy achieving what they set out to do.
- Creating and thinking critically - Children have their own ideas, make links and choose ways to do things.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning and the Prime and Specific Areas of Learning and Development are all inter-connected. Different elements of learning are identified in the EYFS, to make the complex picture of learning clearer. But children's learning is not compartmentalised and many or all of these elements are in action at the same time as children interact with people and things.



Impact

We aim for outcomes in early years to evidence a broad and balanced curriculum that demonstrates children's acquisition of age-related key knowledge and skills. The impact of 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 foundational knowledge, skills and attitudes which will make them lifelong learners and valuable future citizens. We endeavour for pupils to be Key Stage 1 ready and have our school values embedded by the time they leave Reception, preparing them for their future. Many of our children have varied and diverse starting points. Therefore, we have high expectations to ensure that all our children make strong progress across all the areas of the EYFS curriculum. Through delivering our curriculum, we strive for all children to reach the Early Learning Goals at the end of Reception and to be at least in line with national expectations.

Despite the exceeding descriptor being removed from the Early Learning Goals, we continue to have high expectations and support our more able children to gain depth and breadth of knowledge and skills for application across the curriculum. We understand that when assessing children against the early learning goals, there will be many children who are awarded the same level but may be working at differing levels within that range. Effective communication between EYFS and KS1 staff is therefore crucial to achieve an effective transition for children and to plan accordingly for the next stage of their learning journey.

Our curriculum ensures that children remember what they have learnt in Reception and can absorb new knowledge into larger ideas. Each subject in KS1 is valued as its own discipline and has a knowledge and skills map, which is delivered through various exciting ways. We aim to ensure that the knowledge and skills learned in EYFS are then applied and built upon later in KS1. Therefore, learning is progressive from EYFS into KS1.

In EYFS we constantly monitor the number of pupils who are making expected progress throughout the academic year and put supportive interventions in place when needed. Class teachers use observations to make formative assessments which inform future planning and ensure that all children build on their current knowledge and skills. Summative assessment compares children's attainment to age related expectations using the bands in the *Birth to 5 Matters* guidance. We complete a data drop termly and teachers record the progress children have made onto a tracker. This allows us to assess and evaluate the impact of teaching on pupil progress through discussion with the class teacher. Evidence of children's learning includes teacher knowledge of the child, completed work in books and observational evidence which includes pupil voice. Our assessment judgements are moderated and validated both in school by senior leaders and externally with local schools and BDMAT schools.