**Principles of planning, teaching and learning in Early Years at St Michael's School**

Acorn and Willow Class is where our Foundation Stage (Reception and Nursery) children are educated and nurtured.

The school follows the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. We have high academic expectations within a play-based curriculum, and there is a strong focus on practical learning.

**How do the teachers plan?**

Our planning is based around children’s interests so we are able to maintain high levels of engagement. We also investigate broad topics to ensure a balanced curriculum is delivered.

Planning is based on seizing the moment for children to progress. It relies on skilled practitioners using quality interactions to draw out the children’s knowledge and build on it there and then. This means that the practitioner has the skill to see the ‘teachable moment’ from the child’s perspective and to know when to intervene and when to stand back and observe.

This sort of planning is capturing the moment of engagement and running with it to make sure the children progress. We work this way because research has shown that high-level involvement and learning occurs through child-initiated activity.

The teachers in Early Years meet regularly to ensure consistency across the Early Years so transitions are seamless and children progress and develop at their own unique rates and from their own starting points.

**How do we teach the children?**

The document Learning, Playing and Interacting, Good practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage states, “It is in the moment of curiosity, puzzlement, effort or interest – the ‘teachable moment’ – that the skilful adult makes a difference.” (DCSF, 2009).

A teachable moment should make the child feel valued, important, interesting, capable, and able to learn as well as gaining knowledge, skills, attitude and understanding therefore making progress in one or several areas of the Early Years Framework.

The Early Years Framework (2014) states that “Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development.”

The way we plan fully allows this to happen and encourages the children to pursue their own interests. This means that the learning environment, both the indoor environment and outdoor environment, are constantly reviewed and adapted to ensure there remains challenge and variety. In this way, children’s levels of involvement remain deep. Involvement refers to be being intensely engaged in activities and is believed to be a necessary condition for deep level learning and development.

**How is learning recorded?**

This way of working means written planning is often retrospective. Teachers do ensure curriculum is covered as planned via termly topics. Each practitioner records what they have done to help the children progress each day in either the ‘opportunities for learning’ record sheet or on the iPad application, Tapestry. Phonics is still taught daily using weekly plans. When planning this way time is used at the end of each session to give the children an opportunity to talk about what they have learnt and in most cases the teacher can use this as a whole class teaching opportunity or to consolidate knowledge.

All observations made of the children are based on quality interactions between children or children and practitioners. They must include any teaching that has taken place or progress that a child or group of children have made. All practitioners are responsible for highlighting progress in observations.

**How are parents involved in learning?**

Observations made on Tapestry are available for parents to view. Parents are encouraged to comment on observations made in school and add observations of their own from home. Parents are always welcome to come in and see what their children are doing at school. Each parent will be invited to a termly meeting to discuss children's development and wellbeing and we also are available before school if you have any concerns that you would like to discuss.