

CURRICULUM POLICY

The Pre-School Curriculum is not statutory, however our curriculum is based on guidance issued by the Education Authority and DHSS, which enables and promotes all aspects of the child's development through a rich variety of informal, topic based learning experiences.

We maintain Long, Medium and Short term plans, which cover the six areas of learning – The Arts, Language development, Numeracy development, Personal, Social and Emotional development, Physical development and Movement, and The World Around Us. Planning is regularly assessed to ensure that we are providing a balanced curriculum and children are being given opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills, concepts and attitudes at a developmentally appropriate level.

- The planned curriculum is based on the 'stepping stones' but allows flexibility to include the children's own interests
- Children's gender, race, ability and spirituality is considered when planning the curriculum
- Plans incorporate provision for Special Educational Needs and Multicultural experiences
- There are written plans for the areas of learning
- Our plans offer, and support, continuity of learning and are developmentally appropriate, differentiating between children's abilities and understanding to cater for the needs of every child
- Planning recognises the importance of child initiated learning, together with adult initiated learning
- Short-term plans allow room for change based on staff observations
- Outdoor play is planned to extend the children's learning experiences
- The planned programme is regularly evaluated and assessed

We recognise that parents are the child's first educators and aim to work in partnership with them to include the children's learning at home. Parents are given information about the Foundation Stage, topics we are covering and invited to share the child's experiences at home with the pre-school.

COVID-19 UPDATE 31st August 2021

Due to constraints of COVID-19, there may be amendments on the existing curriculum for the year 2021-2022. Activities may be amended and suitably risk assessed in response to guidelines, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone in the Pre School setting. With a lifting of guidance and previous cleaning constraints, we are able to bring back our sand area and dressing up. We intend that indoor provision will continue pre-pandemic unless guidance is updated that directly impacts the indoor play environment and how we deliver the Pre School curriculum. Implications on the use of the Parish Hall for the physical development aspects of the curriculum may still be in place if the Parish does not implement the use of shared spaces or safety is unmanageable. We foresee that the school playground may not be available to the Pre School either as this will be increasingly used by the children directly from the school. We will hopefully be able to provide update on this at a later stage.

The Pre School setting will operate as intended the hours of 8:30am – 11:00am for all children – with no staggered arrival/departure times. Again, this may change if guidance reverts back to stringent staggered times but we are able to make a judgement call on this in relation to risk-benefit (varied times can have more of an impact on families).

Items such as mouth instruments will not be used and shared resources will be appropriately cleaned after use or certain items discouraged from being used at all – this all depends on the nature of the resources and the safety implications in relation to COVID-19.

Refer to *Remote/Home Learning* Policy for details on how Remote/Home Learning may be introduced and managed should a child not be able to attend Pre School for a prolonged period of time (beyond the 10 days) or if government guidance instructed reduced attendance of children or 'lockdown' implemented.

Use of Outdoor Provision

As mentioned above, outdoor provision maybe be restricted due to COVID-19. The Pre School will actively make use of the direct outdoor space, play in the garden/daily mile walk to encourage physical movement and get some much-needed fresh air.

Policy Revised 22/07/2020
Policy Reviewed 05/05/2020
Policy Reviewed 11/08/2020
Policy Reviewed 26/01/2021
Policy updated 31/08/2021

St. Bernard's Pre School Education Centre

From November 2020, we have been able use our direct outdoor space! The children will use this daily (unless extreme weather or planned activities/routine for the day prevents this) and this will be done in 'friendship groups' and drawn at random each day. A total of 8/9 children will go outside and they are supervised by 1-2 adults. The groups are then rotated throughout snack/free play session. Having this additional space provides us with more opportunities for physical movement, getting out into the fresh air and also to have a range of play experiences in the outdoor environment.

Children's Health & Wellbeing

Due to COVID19 and effects on children's wellbeing, we will be implementing increased music sessions as part of weekly planning should timing allow; increased physical activity when and where we can (including use of our direct outdoor space), and creativity sessions in the setting, promoting positive mental, physical health and overall wellbeing.

As children have experienced long periods of staying at home, less opportunities for social interactions during lockdown periods and possible regression in development due to restricted social and play experiences during lockdown periods, staff will be actively more vigilant for signs that children require additional support (including emotional support) at the beginning of the Pre School year. Staff will be taking increased observations of children and weekly planning will be amended to reflect this. Staff will work in partnership with parents/carers regarding settling in/transitioning concerns, and parents/carers will be regularly informed.

Other Adjustments to the Curriculum and Play Provision in light of COVID-19

Current delivery of the Pre School curriculum and related activities may need to be adapted or changed subject to changing guidance and safety concerns/risks. Staff will effectively respond and plan amendments to ensure children receive quality learning experiences as much as is in our control.

If any soft toys are used in play this is kept to a minimum and cleaned appropriately. The carpet areas are steamed at the end of every session.

Children will be unable to bring in their own toys, instead children can bring in a photograph which can be placed on our 'family tree' wall display, as a familiar/comfort link.

Sand play indoors has been brought back for the start of this year and the safety of this will be reviewed in line with changing guidance.

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Policy Reviewed 05/05/2020
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Dough *will* be used but it will be controlled by using small quantities and disposed of at the end of each session.

Water play will be in use and soap is put into the water every day.

Changes to numbers of children allowed to play at any one time within play areas have been reduced to maintain and promote social distancing where and when possible (if appropriate).

Some tables and chairs have been removed (depending on play area) to assist with social distancing and more space for movement.

Due to increased cleaning measures, there may temporarily be slightly less resources within set up areas to ensure staff can effectively manage the cleaning of resources. Resources will be changed as and when needed to line with our usual practice to ensure children receive a variety of play resources and play experiences.