Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) policy

Freemantle Church of England Community Academy Trust

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Next review due by:	October 2025		

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1. Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to the learning and development of all children from birth to the end of the Reception Year. Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. It is not just a preparation for the next stage but is vitally important in itself.

> 'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances.' *EYFS Statutory Framework, 2023.*

At Freemantle Church of England Community Academy Trust the EYFS starts in our maintained Nursery for children from the age of three.

Maintained Nursery

The maintained Nursery operates term time only. We offer a range of sessions across the week to suit the needs of our families and ensure that all children in our care access 15 or 30 hours per week of funded Nursery care and education. Sessions are offered flexibly with children attending for full days or half day sessions, depending on individual preferences.

Top up childcare is available, for which fees are changed. Please note more information regarding payments is available in our childcare contract which is available on our website.

Reception

We have two Reception classes of up to 30 children in the Reception cohort. The school day begins at 8.45 am and finishes at 3.15 pm.

2. Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad, balanced and progressive curriculum that gives children solid foundations for the range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life.
- That EYFS staff are supported with high quality CPD to ensure our team consists of knowledgeable and enthusiastic adults who maximise learning opportunities
- We promote quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.
- The provision of safe, secure and enabling environments both indoors and outdoors, to support learning and development and ensure children have the right to experience and explore the joy, awe and wonder of our natural world (UNICEF's Rights of the Child).

- We promote a close partnership working between practitioners and with parents/carers.
- That every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

3. Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the Statutory Framework for the EYFS effective from 4th September 2023:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1170108/EYFS_framework_from_September_2023.pdf

4. Principles and structure of the EYFS at Freemantle

All children are entitled to high quality teaching and learning. This will equip them with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need today, and prepare them well for tomorrow.

At Freemantle we use both Development Matters 2021 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1007446/6.7534_DfE_Development_Matters_Report_and_illustrations_web__2_.pdf and Birth to 5 Matters 2021 https://www.birthto5matters.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Birthto5Matters-download.pdf non-statutory guidance to shape our practice. Within the frameworks are four guiding principles.

These are:

1. **Every child is a unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured.
2. Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships** – children learn best when they are happy, secure and actively involved in their own learning.
3. Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments** with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
4. Children **develop and learn at different rates** and each child's development is unique. Every child can progress well in their learning, with the right support. Every child can thrive.

We keep the Seven Features of Effective Practice as outlined in Development Matters in mind at all times to give our youngest children the best start (See Appendix A for poster outlining these features).

5. Curriculum and Characteristics of Effective Learning

Our curriculum encompasses seven areas of learning and development. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. However, three areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Throughout their time in the EYFS, our children partake in an ambitious curriculum which is designed in a sequential way to build on previous learning, take children's interests and needs into account, and ensure progress towards the end of Reception goals. These goals are defined as Early Learning Goals (ELGs) The descriptors for these can be found in Appendix B.

Our curriculum supports learning through play including; adult modelling, observation, guided learning and direct teaching. It is also important to highlight that our plans are flexible to allow us to respond quickly to children's new interests and/or needs.

Weaving throughout the EYFS curriculum are three **Characteristics of Effective Learning**. These are:

- **playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- **active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

These elements underpin how we reflect on each child's development and adjust our practice accordingly. Supporting children in their individual learning behaviour and observing the context of children's play is essential.

> 'What children learn is important, but how children learn is even more important if they are to become learners in today's society'. *Helen Moylett and Nancy Stewart (2019)*

Planning

Our Freemantle curriculum goals **(see Appendix C)** for both Nursery and Reception outline our Intentions of what we want our children to be able to do by the end of Nursery and Reception. Our long- and medium-term planning (available on our website) outlines the broad themes which are used as starting points to build awe and wonder through the exploration of a range of topics linking with core books, rhymes and songs, trips and core experiences.

Planning considers how to invest in our children's 'cultural capital'; that is ensuring our curriculum and practitioners enhance the experiences and opportunities available to our children, particularly the most disadvantaged, to ensure they have the best possible chances to become successful learners.

> 'Some children arrive at early years settings with poorer experiences than others in their learning and play. What a setting does, through its curriculum and interactions with practitioners, potentially makes all the difference for children. It is the role of the setting to ensure that children experience the awe and wonder of the world in which they live, through the seven areas of learning.' *Ofsted 2019.*

Practitioners plan activities and experiences for children that enable children to develop and learn effectively. In order to do this, staff working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime areas.

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. At Freemantle we plan for a language rich environment which builds, develops and extends language effectively through play, conversation, reading and storytelling and role play.

Where children have English as an additional language (EAL or NTE – new to English), staff encourage families to build strong foundations in their home languages, with staff aiming to learn key words and celebrate multilingualism through topics, events and celebrations. Children are encouraged to use their home language in their play and interactions, as well as being encouraged to learn English alongside the development of their home language.

Underpinning all planning, staff consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies where appropriate.

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice.

We have a high mobility rate in our Nursery, with three intakes per year, so the curriculum is modified to meet younger children's needs where appropriate e.g. focusing on simpler rhymes and books in the first few weeks.

Teaching

Each child across EYFS is assigned a key person who ensures that every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs. Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-initiated (guided learning) and child-initiated experiences. Parent/carer involvement is crucial as parental support and a high-quality home learning environment makes a huge difference to children.

Learning takes place both indoors and outdoors, where skilled practitioners respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interactions. Bilingual staff use other languages to support interactions and the multicultural make up of our setting is celebrated through carefully chosen books, resources, topics and events.

Outdoor learning

At Freemantle we believe the outside area is not just for children to develop physically, but also to nurture approaches for children's all-round development within the EYFS framework. We believe the outdoor environment should be a dynamic, flexible and versatile place where children can choose, create, change and be in charge of their play environment.

At Freemantle learning outdoors supports the development of the following learning behaviours, skills and experiences:

- Gross motor and fine motor skills development, as well as supporting children to negotiate space and develop balance and coordination
- Sensory experiences which stimulate all 5 senses
- Creativity
- Problem solving and think critically
- Team work/collaborating
- Following own lines of enquiry
- Developing and managing risk
- Enriching children's cultural capital
- Making links to prior learning

By providing children with a wide range of experiences and through high quality interactions with EYFS practitioners, we develop children's language, social interactions and their characteristics of effective learning.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

We value all our children as individuals, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meet the needs of the individual child and support them at their own pace.

We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents/carers and outside agencies. We have a designated Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) in school and Haven Team who support us with SEND and SEMH. Precise assessment needs to focus on what the child can do, and what the barriers to their learning are. We work closely with parents/carers to ensure that children's individual needs are met.

6. Assessment

At Freemantle Church of England Community Academy Trust we are not driven by assessment and tracking. Formative assessment which serves children's learning and our curriculum has the best impact as it focuses on what individual children need and can be used quickly to make a difference to children's learning. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Practitioners also consider observations shared by parents/carers.

Much assessment takes places in the here-and-now, not through learning journeys or on screen. If we notice something about a child's learning and development we respond to it in the moment to help build their learning. We may be watching and encouraging, be involved in extending their learning through modelling or scaffolding to develop skills, knowledge and understanding. We also reflect on learning to consider how planning or provision can be adapted in response to our observations. This assessment is not written down, but acted on throughout the day and discussed with the Early Years team as part of reflective discussions at the start or end of the school day to support understanding in relation to child development. All staff must have a secure understanding of child development as well as the features of effective pedagogy to support them in their interactions and in scaffolding learning.

Practitioners record significant observations on Tapestry, which help bring children's learning to life. Parents/carers sign to have access to their child's journal and they are also able to add observations from home to share the learning journey.

Each term, senior and middle leaders work with class teachers or the whole team to discuss children's progress and agree on identification of children who are on-track or requiring additional support. We agree further action for individual children or groups of children where necessary.

If we notice a child is not on track with their learning or development, we act quickly. It is important we get to know these 'vulnerable starters' through close observation and communication with parents/carers. We then focus on the support and scaffolds we can provide to help children overcome barriers to learning.

When assessing communication, language and literacy skills, we assess children's skills in English as per the statutory guidance. If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, practitioners explore the child's skills in their home language with their parents/carers.

Specific Assessment within the Reception Year

At the start of the Reception year, practitioners undertake the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). The RBA is a short computer-based assessment which is taken in the first six weeks in which a child starts Reception. In addition to this staff complete short Baseline profiles to indicate whether a child is entering Reception on track or is a vulnerable starter as outlined above.

At the end of the EYFS in the final term of Reception, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels (emerging)

The profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are then shared with parents/carers.

7. Working with Parents/Carers

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and carers. Engagement with our induction programme is requested before a child starts attending, which includes visits and face to face meetings. These meetings enable practitioners to talk to parents about routines, interests, current learning, involvement with external agencies and outcomes of progress checks to date. It also gives parents the opportunity to raise questions and give additional information about their child. Parents are also given time to complete the 'My Unique Child' booklet, which provides us with information about their children's learning and development from birth. Additional home visits or preschool visits are requested by staff where necessary.

Parents/carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. Keeping on track meetings, parents' evenings, reports and the Tapestry learning journal provide parents/carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

Each child is assigned a key person who helps to ensure that their learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. The key person supports parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home. The key person also helps families to engage with more specialist support, if appropriate.

Parents are invited into school to attend workshops, assemblies, stay and play sessions, and celebrate their children's achievements. We invite parents/carers to share concerns or feedback relating to their children with their child's teacher or key person as soon as is practical to do so.

8. Transitions

Transitions are carefully planned for and significant time is given to ensure continuity of learning and care. At times of transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings. Children have introductory sessions with their parents/carers and in smaller groups to develop familiarity with the setting and practitioners. Our EYFS team contacts all feeder preschools/parents/carers to gain useful information about each child's learning journey so far and to consider whether additional visits or a more individualised transition is necessary.

For children starting in Nursery or Reception, parents/carers are encouraged to take up the offer of a family meeting prior to the settling in sessions. This is a valuable time to talk 1:1 with them, find out about each child's likes and preferences, and answer any queries they may have.

At the end of the EYFS, our EYFS team meets with the Year 1 team to discuss the individual children, learning and development at the end of EYFS and any specific needs before they visit their new teacher.

Visual transition cards and holiday activities are also sent home with the children to support children in preparing for this change.

9. Safety including Safeguarding and Welfare requirements

The safety and welfare of our children is paramount at Freemantle Church of England Community Academy Trust. We have robust policies and procedures in place to ensure their safety and all are available to read on our school website https://www.freemantleacademy.com/policies/ or on request from the school office.

Across the EYFS we provide a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to take risks, follow rules and stay safe. We comply with the welfare requirements set out in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage and understand that we must:

- Promote the welfare of all children;
- Promote good health (including promoting good oral hygiene);
- Manage behaviour effectively and appropriately;
- Ensure all adults working with children are suitable to do so;
- Ensure that the environment is safe and all equipment and furniture is fit for purpose;
- Ensure all children have a challenging and enjoyable learning experience.

We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways, including the provision of nutritious fruit snacks, access to water throughout the day, allocating significant time for physical development and following set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.

Staff and visitors must follow our child protection and safeguarding policies, including those outlining mobile phone and internet use.

We have a training programme in place to ensure EYFS staff hold a full Paediatric First Aid qualification, which is a statutory requirement of the EYFS.

The Safeguarding Policy is in place to ensure the safety of all stakeholders at Freemantle CE Community Academy. We have a dedicated safeguarding team working across the Academy, comprising of a designated safeguarding leader (DSL) and six deputy designated safeguarding leaders (DDSL's). Staff have access to the CPOMS safeguarding record to log any concerns regarding any aspects of safeguarding and behaviour. All staff have read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and are vigilant in reporting concerns.

10. Monitoring arrangements

We are committed to providing the best possible experiences for our children. The senior accountability Team (SAT) are responsible for monitoring provision, teaching and learning and children's progress. Information is shared with the Early Years team, middle leaders and wider staff team as appropriate, and any necessary actions are taken.

All adults in the EYFS team have a key role in children's learning and development. Therefore, they are required to be knowledgeable and skilled in the EYFS curriculum. Any training needs for existing or new members of staff are identified and addressed as part of performance management targets and in partnership with the academy's professional development leader.

This policy will be reviewed by the EYFS Leader every 2 years, or sooner if there are changes is legislation. At every review, the policy will be shared and ratified by SAT and the Board of Directors.

11. Appendices

Appendix A – Seven Features of Effective Practice

Appendix B – Early Learning Goals

The level of development children should be expected to have attained by the end of the EYFS is defined by the early learning goals (ELGs) as set out below.

The ELGs are used at the end of Year R to support teachers to make a holistic, best-fit judgement about each child's development, and their readiness for year 1 by drawing on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement.

The Early Learning Goal Descriptors

Communication and Language

ELG: Listening, Attention and Understanding

Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions.

Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding.

Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.

ELG: Speaking

Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary.

Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes, and poems when appropriate.

Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

ELG: Self-Regulation

Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly.

Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate.

Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.

ELG: Managing Self

Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience, and perseverance in the face of challenge.

Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly.

Manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet, and understanding the importance of healthy food choices.

ELG: Building Relationships

Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others.

Form positive attachments to adults and friendships with peers.

Show sensitivity to their own and to others' needs.

Physical Development

ELG: Gross Motor Skills

Negotiate space and obstacles safely, with consideration for themselves and others.

Demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing;

Move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping, and climbing.

ELG: Fine Motor Skills

Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases.

Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery.

Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

Literacy

ELG: Comprehension

Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary.

Anticipate – where appropriate – key events in stories.

Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes, and poems and during role-play.

ELG: Word Reading

Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs.

Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending.

Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.

ELG: Writing

Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters.

Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

Mathematics

ELG: Number

Have a deep understanding of number to 10, including the composition of each number.

Subitise (recognise quantities without counting) up to 5.

Automatically recall (without reference to rhymes, counting or other aids) number bonds up to 5 (including subtraction facts) and some number bonds to 10, including double facts.

ELG: Numerical Patterns

Verbally count beyond 20, recognising the pattern of the counting system.

Compare quantities up to 10 in different contexts, recognising when one quantity is greater than, less than or the same as the other quantity.

Explore and represent patterns within numbers up to 10, including evens and odds, double facts and how quantities can be distributed equally.

Understanding the World

ELG: Past and Present

Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society.

Know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class.

Understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling.

ELG: People, Culture and Communities

Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps.

Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class.

Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, non-fiction texts and –when appropriate – maps.

ELG: The Natural World

Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants.

Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class.

Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter.

Expressive Arts and Design

ELG: Creating with Materials

Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools, and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function.

Share their creations, explaining the process they have used.

Make use of props and materials when role playing characters in narratives and stories.

ELG: Being Imaginative and Expressive

Invent, adapt, and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher.

Sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs; Perform songs, rhymes, poems, and stories with others, and – when appropriate – try to move in time with music.

Appendix C – Curriculum Goals for Nursery and Reception

Outlined below are our broad curriculum goals for Nursery and Reception. These can also be found on our website.

Nursery Curriculum Goals:

Communication and Language	To become a *lively listener* and *chirpy chatterbox* in everyday play and focussed sessions, showing the ability to listen carefully, follow instructions, and think through and extend their ideas, using a developing range of vocabulary.
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	To settle in and become a *star student* who interacts with others, shares thoughts and resources patiently, and shows perseverance, persistence and confidence in their play and interactions, understanding their feelings and those of others. To develop confidence and independence in managing their personal care.
Physical Development	To become an *eager athlete*, who is a creative and adaptive mover, and can confidently use the balance bikes and scooters. To develop *fabulous fingers*, showing control when manipulating equipment and mark making tools safely and with increasing skill.
Literacy	To become a *superhero sound spy*, who can tune into, listen and remember sounds. To become a *bold book lover*, who enjoys sharing a range of books and is excited to learn and use new vocabulary related to stories, poems and songs. To become a *marvellous mark maker*, who adds detail to their pictures and can write the first two letters of their name.
Mathematics	To become a *curious counter*, using mathematical knowledge and language naturally in everyday play, subitising, counting and representing marks to at least 5, as well as exploring comparison and measure. To be a *capable constructor*, using blocks and shapes to make increasingly complex constructions.
Understanding the World	To become an *adventurous explorer*, who shows curiosity about the world around them through hands on exploration, and talks about what they can see, noticing differences and making connections.
Expressive Arts and Design	To become an *emerging artist*, who explores materials freely and with purpose and develops their skills and techniques to make simple representations and creations. To become a *sassy singer*, singing songs and exploring pitch, tone and melody.

Reception Curriculum Goals:

Communication and Language	To become a ***confident communicator*** who can listen carefully in different situations, hold a conversation with friends and adults, ask relevant questions, and use new vocabulary to explain ideas and feelings.
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	To become an ***independent individual*** who can follow the behavioural expectations of the setting, show perseverance in challenging situations, and manage their own basic needs. To also become a ***fantastic friend***, showing empathy, kindness and the ability to play cooperatively with their peers.
Physical Development	To develop their fine and gross motor skills so that they become ***amazing athletes*** and ***talented tool users***. To show strength, balance and coordination whilst moving safely and confidently in a range of ways. To use and hold pencils effectively and use a range of tools (e.g. scissors) confidently and safely.
Literacy (comprehension and reading)	To become a ***brilliant bookworm*** who shows a love for reading, uses new vocabulary to talk about what they have read or listened to, and competently reads words and simple sentences (using single sounds and digraphs they have learnt).
Literacy (writing)	To become a ***wow writer*** who can write letters that are formed correctly, and write words and simple sentences (using single sounds and digraphs they have learnt) that can be read by themselves and others.
Mathematics	To become a ***master of maths*** who can show a deep understanding of numbers to 10, recognise patterns within the number system, subitise, compare quantities and recall number bonds to 5.
Understanding the World	To become an ***exceptional explorer*** who investigates challenges with an inquiring mind, drawing on knowledge from books and their experiences, to observe, remember, explain and predict. To understand and talk about differences between times and places.
Expressive Arts and Design	To become a ***dynamic designer*** who can choose and safely use the resources they need to make their creations, and talk about what they have made and how they have made it. To also become a ***proud performer*** who can perform a song, poem or dance to an audience and retell stories with expression and confidence.