



St Francis School

Bespoke Reception 'Nature- Based Pedagogy'

St Francis school is a place where children can feel safe, secure, happy, and excited to learn- developing a natural curiosity, respect and love for the world around them. From the beginning of their learning journey, they recognise the importance of the 5 Golden School Rules, that we 'Work Hard and are Kind' and we Recognise Christ in Everyone.'

Using our wonderful school grounds and the various mini environments within it alongside my personal passion in this area we have developed a unique curriculum through a bespoke Nature- Based Pedagogy including our 'Forest Fridays'. We have a Forest Base Camp and woodland area, a field and pond where we go pond dipping and class garden area including a sensory space. The pond area continues to be further developed as highlighted on SDP. This is even more important with our now reduced field space due to RAAC. We are surrounded by several types of trees, flowers and shrubs and wildlife that we actively encourage eg: birds, owls, bats, newts. I am passionate about teaching the next generation about the natural world and simple ways that we can look after it. Natural England recently published a report recognising the need for nature to enhance our mental well-being and states that 'exposure to nature increases activity levels among children '.

One aim is to recognise that our own actions however small can make a difference, to develop the concept of a 'Global Citizen' and the children's cultural capital- to be able to 'see' further than their own 'safe space'. We have weekly Forest Fridays to develop a love and respect for the outdoor world and God's Creation through activities that celebrate awe & wonder around us, focused learning using our school grounds and neighbouring St Mary's school in the Summer term. We visit Windsor Forest Site in Spring & Summer visit Rushall Farm. In recent years an owl group have brought live owls to fly across the school hall to link with our nocturnal topic. Learning is focused on the seasonal changes in our grounds including monitoring full moons and links to environmental issues eg: animals in need such as hedgehogs and bees and what we can all do to help. We aim to develop an understanding that we can all make a difference by little changes and acts. eg: leaving a messy place in our gardens for hedgehogs.

This links with our Catholic Social Teaching – 'Stewardship' which is a big driver in Reception. Forest Ranger Rules include aspects for safety but also to 'leave no trace' with regards to rubbish. We have made posters highlighting the importance of putting rubbish in the bin and displayed around the school.

We grow our own vegetables including potatoes, beans, herbs and flowers developing a sensory place in our garden. This helps us to recognise how such places can have a positive impact on our wellbeing and is a place to go when we recognise we feel a bit 'yellow' and in need of calm. Lavender posies have been collected with individuals who need help to calm. I teach simple mindfulness through the environment and simply teaching children to stop and notice using our senses and the world around us. As a class we discuss emotions and the Zones of Regulation and agree on what we can do when we feel a particular way and where we can go in our environment inside and out to help ourselves regulate.

Links are made to other cultures such as through celebrating the Japanese Hanami sitting under our own blossom trees for a picnic in Spring and creating Mandalas using leaves in Autumn. We learn about real artists using nature to create such as Andy Goldsworthy and Archimboldo.

Our Nature Table is a focal point in our room. Children are encouraged to add to this display. We link our work to the Nature Table through non-fiction texts, vocabulary, songs and stories eg; Were going on a bear hunt and Owl babies. Vocabulary is noted on Forest Task Design weekly planning and Word Window. A Festive Forest Fun is a yearly event where parents are invited to a brief information meeting on the rationale behind Forest Fridays and join their children for Festive fun and hot chocolate in the Base Camp.

We plan taking into account the needs of our community. Many of our young people are fortunate enough to have gardens, however, we are mindful of the minority without and the importance of incorporating that vital connection with nature each day for all. *'In a recent cohort one boy living in a flat used to love the Forest Fridays and he would find me on lunch duty for a 'Nature Walk' where we would name plants and trees around the grounds- instead of football with his friends.'* Some children attend a variety of after school clubs across the week and have less time to be outside in nature- again a reason behind the Nature -Based Pedagogy to offer opportunities for this group to develop this vital connection with nature. We observe how the quiet, shy individuals' voices are heard when working on Forest Friday- they have confidence to try and speak out and how the more boisterous and physical individuals are observant and curious. They feel safe and secure outside of the four walls of the indoor classroom with the sky being the ceiling.

In a recent local photograph competition one of our quieter Reception children won first prize and this was her entry and her reasoning behind it:

'I started school in September, my favourite thing is Forest Friday with my teacher. I get to go outside and explore with my friends. It's made me want to explore more so I went on a walk with my mummy, daddy

and sister to spot different things. I had to look up really high at these funny plants and I thought they looked like they were from Sleeping Beauty so I took a picture to show you'.



In a recent Year 6 video where a pupil was applying for Head Boy he quoted the importance of 'leave no trace' relating back to his Forest Friday work in Reception where he learnt the Forest Ranger Rules and looking after the environment- something he still feels strongly about today.

This is an enabling environment for all learners- visual, auditory and kinaesthetic and over the years of teaching in this way we have observed how it has a positive impact on:

- Behaviour
- Confidence & independence
- Language & vocabulary
- Well-being especially following Covid pandemic
- Physical needs- gross & fine
- Risk taking
- A great sense of belonging and companionship





Following Ofsted guidance below is a document identifying the Intent, Implementation and Impact of our Reception curriculum.

Intent <i>What our children should know by the time they leave Reception</i>	To know how to be respectful, confident, independent, happy and articulate young people who are curious and observant of the world around them and proud of their unique gifts. To know how to use their gifts, skills and words to manage emotions, situations and interactions with others. To apply skills and knowledge enabling them to progress further with their development and learning. To know how to be mindful of the awe and wonder of the natural world. To know that their actions are important and that they have an impact.
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Implementation

*How we teach in Reception
at St Francis*

Teaching is through a '**Nature- Based Pedagogy**' including a weekly Forest Friday. Teaching uses our school grounds, the local environment and St Mary's base camp. We visit places of interest alongside inviting members of the community into us such as parents celebrating Diwali and Chinese New Year alongside parents sharing their varied occupations from pilots to TV costume designers to enable children to understand what they are learning and why.

To link experiences through learning of 'familiar' topics and to spark interest and curiosity of the wider world and a respect for differences through the learning of 'unfamiliar' topics. Daily teaching is through structured lessons plus time for freedom, exploration and play enabled through the environment with continuous provision and weekly challenges with a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. Assessments inform next steps in children's learning which may feed into challenges.

Key interactions with children follow the SHrec approach as recognised by Education Endowment Foundation.

We recognise the characteristics of effective teaching and learning and use 'animal links' and provide children with the opportunity to consolidate learning experiences, practise skills and develop the ability to **reason and solve problems** *eg by being a solving snake.*

All children are valued and reasonable adjustments are made to enable pupils with SEND to access the learning and we have high expectations for all.

Daily structured systematic synthetic phonics through Read Write Inc.
Daily mental calendar maths and structured maths through White Rose.
Daily time to 'Talk Through Stories' through Read Write Inc.
Enabling a language rich environment through the planned broad and balanced curriculum, books and songs -introducing and using vocabulary and phrases in context.
Embedding of new knowledge, skills and vocabulary using Principles of Instruction.

Impact <i>How we know how well our children have learnt our curriculum</i>	We monitor progress and children's learning across the year through formative and summative assessments which are based on the teacher's knowledge of the children, recorded work, key interactions, observations and photographs. We link with parents and carers. We aim high with predicted GLD attainment at 83%. We aim to at least match the National and Local Authority data for children achieving a Good Level of Development. Our children are confident, independent and happy and able to be link experiences, make connections and articulate knowledge using learnt vocabulary and apply skills as they move into Year 1 with a continued love of learning. Children are able to take risks and persevere with a growth mindset in their learning recognising the power of 'yet'– reciting the rule 'we never give up'. Children are able to recognise the importance and impact of their own actions and recognise their role as a Steward in looking after God's World and through Human Dignity respect everyone as special and unique. The British Values are embedded through our learning.
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