Dear Parents and Children of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Welcome to your first year at St. Joseph’s (Early Years Foundation Stage). The following information included in this brochure is intended to give you a better understanding of the structure and work carried out in the Foundation Stage Class. As parents, your support and co-operation play a vital part in your child’s education. We have an ‘open door’ policy which means that you are always welcome to come into the classroom, to share your child’s achievements. We are happy to discuss any aspect of your child’s education, please arrange an appointment with your child’s class teacher.

Adults involved with Early Years Foundation Stage
In Early Years, as in every class, the efforts of a number of people, apart from the class teacher, are essential in developing each child’s full potential. Our EYFS class has the support of a full time nursery nurse, working in partnership with the teacher by assisting her taking and supervising small groups. Parents or volunteers from the school community also help by hearing readers or working with a small group. You are more than welcome to come into class to help and support (CRB check would be essential due to legal requirements.)

The Year’s Main Focus
Our main focus in EYFS is to provide a stimulating and enjoyable teaching and learning environment. This class is part of EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage). This stage includes children from 0-5. Children begin St. Joseph’s the September before their 5th birthday.
One of our main aims is for children to settle in quickly and happily, to develop their personal and social skills encouraging independence and responsibility.
Topics and Educational Visits
Throughout the school year we will cover a broad spectrum of topics which will incorporate all areas of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage. These topics are dictated by your child’s interests and we aim to provide a personalised curriculum with activities at the level appropriate to your child. All topics involve discovering about themselves and the environment in which they live. There will be a balance between science, history and geography based topics.

EYFS promotes educational visits. Parents who have been CRB checked (Criminal Record Bureau) are welcome on these visits. If you are interested in becoming a parent volunteer please see the EYFS teacher who can discuss the process with you. Parents who have been CRB checked (Criminal Record Bureau) are welcome on these visits.

Handwriting
In EYFS, the children are introduced to different letters of the alphabet daily and they are encouraged to learn the letter sound and name.

Children are introduced to handwriting when appropriate for that particular child. During the first term at school we plan for many activities which will strengthen the muscles needed for writing throughout. These include; visits to the local park where children can climb, construction building, using play dough and scissor skills etc.
Once children have a good understanding of letters and their use, we then provide opportunities to practice the formation and orientation of specific letters. At St Joseph’s we learn to write in many fun ways:

- We finger paint
- We chalk on the floor outside
- We write in sand
- We make letters out of play dough
- We draw letters in the air.

Finally once we have acquired the appropriate fine motor control and are able to hold a pencil correctly we learn how to write on whiteboards and paper.

**Religious Education**

Our themes in Religious Education lay the foundations for Catholic beliefs and introduce an understanding of how Christianity can fit into their daily lives. The themes change each year and are identified in the half termly topic web.

The children are encouraged to learn to make the sign of the cross, morning and end of the day prayer, as well as dinner time prayers.

All the children take a part in the liturgy by listening to stories, prayers or singing hymns.

**Our Mentoring Scheme**

Each child in Year 6 is paired up with a new entrant to the EYFS Class. This partnership, which we hope will evolve into a strong and lasting friendship, is developed throughout the year.

Their role is to support and help partners when first come into school. They also spend quality time with each other every week where they play together, practise phonics, crafts etc.
**Reading Books**

Once the children have learnt all their initial sounds and can blend and segment words confidently, they progress onto reading scheme books.

In EYFS we use a variety of phonetic reading books to give us confidence when learning how to blend letters together to read words. We begin using the Dandelion Launchers and Songbirds scheme then once confident with blending and recognising some tricky words on sight we progress onto the Oxford Reading Tree scheme of reading. We do however also use various reading schemes to give children a broad variety and exposure to books to captivate their interest. Once the children have reached a certain standard of phonetic knowledge, they can take books home to reinforce letter sounds, vocabulary and an understanding of books. This is a great opportunity for you to listen to their reading and see their progression in school.

Their progress is recorded in their reading diary, where parents will find brief comments detailing their child's reading achievements. This diary reinforces home/school relationships, as parents are encouraged to write their personal comments in this book, regarding the child's reading.

When your child has reached this level in their reading they will be listened to read generally twice a week in school by either the class teacher or teaching assistant and a reading scheme book will be sent home. It is expected that you will also hear your child read and return the book to school everyday.
**Homework**

The most important support you can give your child at home is by spending time with them looking at their “homework”. We introduce homework initially through flash cards. These are Jolly Phonics cards which reinforce what we are learning in class. Please encourage your child to recognise the capital letter (Name) and the lower case letter (sound). Your child will progress through the sets of these flashcards as they gain confidence and are able to give the sound and name for each letter.

Once they are confident with all letter sounds and are able to use these to blend for reading they will be given a reading book. Each child learns at a different rate so will receive a reading book when it is suitable for them.

Your child will also bring home “tricky words” for them to learn. Please encourage your child to learn to read these through sight recognition as these are the words which are most frequently found in books.

Please practise the Jolly Phonics/ tricky word flashcards or reading book with your child daily.

**The Book Bag**

Parents are encouraged to use “The Book Bag” which is stamped with the school emblem which is provided free by the school on entry. This enables children to safely carry their books home and, back to school again hopefully, preventing any getting lost. The Book Bag is also the place to find school letters. Please check the bags on a daily basis for new books and any communication from school.

You will also find a home school diary in your child’s book bag. This can be used to write in any messages to the class teacher or nursery nurse and they may also write messages to you. Whilst in school, children are responsible for emptying their bags i.e. the books and especially any letters or money to hand in to the teacher, but they are heavily supported in doing so in the first term.

**Independence**

We spend a great deal of time encouraging your child to be independent in all they do. Your child will find this easier in school if you have spent time preparing them before they begin.

Try to encourage them to:

- Recognise their name by sight
- Dress and undress
- Use a knife and fork correctly and independently
- To use a toilet independently
- To put on a coat
- To complete some simple tasks independently
Leaving your child: When to leave your child in the morning

A big journey begins with a little step! We aim to help children become learners for life. It is our belief that an independent child becomes an independent learner, a vital stage in their development.

Our aim is for every child to enter school, on their own. To support this goal we have a number of procedures in place with regard to leaving your child each morning, in place. These are outlined below.

- Children wait in the playground each morning. A member of staff will be on duty from 8:45am.
- At 8:55am a whistle will be blown, the older children will line up and walk into school. EYFS children can go straight into the classroom (they do not need to line up).
- Up to the first half term, parents may enter the building with their child. Our intention is to make transition into school as smooth and easy as possible. We recognise that you may like to see the location of your child’s peg and help them with their belongings in these early stages.
- As soon as your child is ready please encourage them to enter school independently.
- After the October half term, we ask parents to say their ‘goodbyes’ in the playground. When the whistle blows, please ensure your child is holding all their belongings to enable them to enter the building without you.
- Should your child rush in school without their belongings, please pass them to the member of staff on duty, who will ensure they reach the correct peg. In the case of lost items of uniform or kit, please enter the school via the main entrance in order to sign in or ask for help to check lost property.
- In fairness to all children, we ask families to adhere to our ethos of independence. We try to protect the child who has been brave and said ‘goodbye’ to their parents in the playground, by ensuring they don’t see other children in school, accompanied by their Mummy and Daddy. From experience this can cause the child who had previously felt brave to then feel upset.
- We recognise that each child is different with individual needs, but we feel that sufficient time will have elapsed by Christmas for every child to achieve the ultimate goal.
- This final step of independence will help to prepare your child for Year 1, where they will join the rest of the school in the same routines.
**Induction procedures**

We aim to provide a smooth and successful induction for your child into school. This aim is met in many different ways. Often the most frequent area of concern is the first few weeks at school.

**Week 1**
Your child is to begin school at 9.15. This allows for the other children to be settled into classes when your child arrives. You are welcome to stay for a while to help settle your child into school. Please bring your child straight into the classroom at 9.15.

For the first week at school we allow the option of your child being collected at either 11.15 before lunch or at 12.30 after lunch (If your child is staying for lunch we would like all children to try school dinners for the first few weeks if at all possible).

**Week 2**
This week is flexible depending on the needs of the individual child. If your child is confident and would like to stay for the full day the times are 8.55-3.30.

If you feel your child could do with shorter days then this can be accommodated, please discuss this with your child’s teacher.

**Week 3**
Ideally we would like all children to be in school full time from this week however we will continue to be flexible up until the half term if the need arises. We aim to ensure all children are fully settled into school and happy during this half term.

**Early Years Foundation Stage Profile**

This is a statutory EYFS document that all schools must follow. Reception staff will continually assess your child against the criteria set with the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. This profile consists of 3 prime areas of learning and 4 specific areas of learning.

3 Prime areas:
- personal, social and emotional development
- communication and language
- physical development

4 specific areas:
- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

You are welcome to see these documents at any time please make an appointment with the class teacher.
Outdoor play

A major aspect of EYFS curriculum is the emphasis on outdoor play. We do this in ALL weathers! We all go outside on a daily basis even if it is raining, snowing, windy, sunny etc. Please always ensure your child brings appropriate clothing into school.

We have a class set of waterproof suits which we will put on your child if it is very wet or snowy.

Please ensure you send into school a pair of wellies for your child to wear! These will be kept on the welly rack your child to access whenever it is wet or muddy.

We strive to keep all children as clean as possible but there will be circumstances where your child will get dirty (this is the fun part of being a child!) You are welcome to send into school a spare outfit which your child can change into if needed. This will be kept on their peg in the classroom.

Please also send in sun cream at the beginning of the year for your child so we always have this to hand for when the sun appears! You will also need to fill in a form allowing us permission to apply this to your child.
Celebrating Successes
Teachers at St. Joseph's adopt a positive teaching style and are well aware that it is important to give positive reinforcement and praise whenever the opportunity arises. A child will be continually praised and awarded a sticker for varied achievements. In class we also use a variety of points systems to reinforce good behaviour. Outstanding behaviour and achievement is also shared with the other classes during our weekly Celebration Assembly on Friday afternoons. EYFS begin attending this special assembly in the spring term. Several children from all classes are awarded a certificate by their class teacher for good work or achievements. During this assembly, they could be awarded a “Star of the Week” trophy for a good attitude or the “Wise Owl” award for good work. The Head Teacher never misses an opportunity to offer praise and give an award. The Head Teacher’s award is given for exceptional progress or attitude and the badge is worn with pride.

Yearly Events
Whole school newsletters issued twice monthly, should provide you with further information regarding events which are relevant to the EYFS class. This will be sent home in your child’s book bag. Please check book bags every night. EYFS also sends home a class newsletter at various times in the year to keep you up to date with what is happening in EYFS. The “beginning of year talks” is an important date not to be missed. At this event, your child’s class teacher will outline the expectations for the year ahead, giving you a greater insight into life in the reception class. The talk will also give valuable information about how you can support your child at home, to be a partner in learning. Throughout the year their will be other opportunities for you to spend time in your child’s class and in school, if possible please try to attend, we would love to see you at these events to share your child’s experiences and achievements.
Special Request from the Class Teacher

- Please send in a £1.00 every Monday to cover the costs of your child’s toast and classroom essentials (such as baking ingredients/role play costumes/creative materials etc).
- Reading morning is every Monday 9.00-9.30 a.m. This is an opportunity for you to come and choose a library book to take home for the week. Everyone welcome!
- Please make sure that names are on all clothes, bags and shoes. Things do get mixed up sometimes! Make sure that your child can manage their clothes and shoes - i.e. zips and Velcro-fasteners are easier than buttons and laces.
- PE kits should be kept on your child’s peg clearly labelled. We will send them home at the end of each half term or more often if they are dirty.
- Any questions or queries please speak to Mrs Stevenson!

Thank you...Mrs K. Stevenson