OUR LADY IMMACULATE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

At Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School, we strive to thrive by being ready, respectful and kind every day. We do our very best in all that we do, for the glory of Christ, knowing that:

"With God all things are possible"

OLI Early Years Policy

Date	Review Date	Coordinator
Summer 2026	**Summer 2028**	**Diane Kelly**

Headteacher:	Sophie Gibbs
Chair of Governing Body:	Catherine Squires

Values

In our Early Years classroom, we aim for each child to strive to thrive and do their very best for the glory of Christ. We aim for the children to understand that with God anything is possible.

Our Catholic Social Teaching principles provide staff and children with a sure guide for living, underpin our personal development programme and ensure that all aspects of the Early Years classroom are rooted in love.



All children access an ambitious and meaningful curriculum, developing a broad range of skills and knowledge that help them to master the prime areas and succeed in the core areas. This gives them the skills to thrive in the next stage of education and build up a core memory bank of cultural experiences.

We strive for excellent quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.

Children, including disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to learning and/or well-being are seen as unique and on an individual pathway to becoming a lifelong learner.

Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.



Our Policy is based on requirements set out in the Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that applies 1st September 2025. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2

We work in partnership with parents and/or carers, utilise the latest research in child development and place an emphasis on enhancing the children's sense of self to ensure the early years experience contributes positively to brain development and readiness for Key Stage 1.

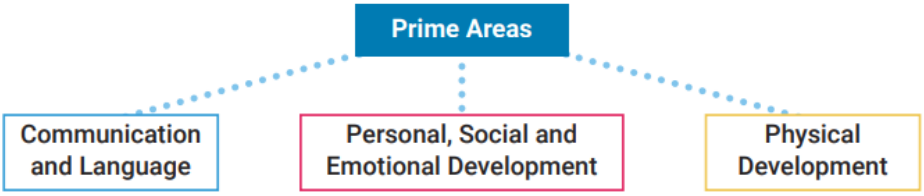
Structure Of The EYFS

Principles of the EYFS

At Our Lady Immaculate, we use the principles of the EYFS to underpin and support decision made around our curriculum, classroom environment, partnership with parents and the development of the children.

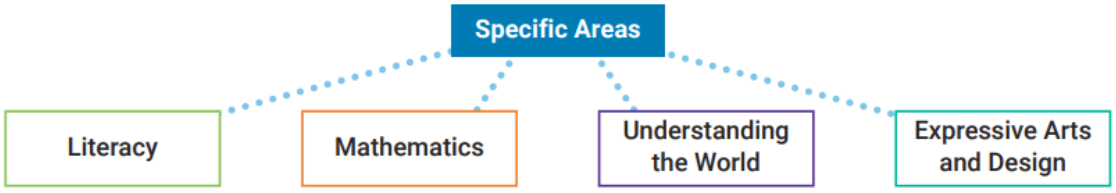


The Areas for Learning and Development



These Prime Areas of Learning make up a **crucial part in early child development**, play a significant role in **encouraging children's curiosity and enthusiasm** for learning and **form the foundations upon which all further learning is built**. They're a **driving force** behind helping children as they learn to form relationships, moderate emotions and thrive in their day-to-day life.

The Prime Areas of Learning are then followed by more specified areas of development that are more **structured in their approach** and **cannot be developed alone, relying on the skills gained in the Prime Areas of Learning**. These Specific Areas of Learning give young children opportunities to strengthen the Prime Areas of Learning and widen their knowledge of different curriculum areas.



Inclusion

We believe that inclusion is ***'the process of identifying, understanding and breaking down the barriers to participation and belonging' (Birth to 5 Matters).***

Listening to children's voices and those of their families and recognising these are expressed in a range of ways, including non-verbally; is central to our inclusive practice. We believe that all children are made in the image of God and through our Catholic Social Teaching principles understand that priority must be given to the most vulnerable members of our society.

We also follow the SEN Code of Practice and our SEND Policy https://www.ourladyimmaculateprimary.uk/policies/ and meet the Equality Act 2010 Requirements https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

We aim to do this in the following ways:

- Use observation, assessment and communication with families and other agencies, such as social care or nurseries, to understand the starting point for every child regardless of their chronological age.
- Identifying what each individual child knows and 'can do' is the foundation for future development.
- Placing an emphasis on changes that can be made to our classroom environment to include all children and encourage active play and learning on their terms.
- Using Birth to Five Matters and the EYFS framework, as well as other guidance, to ensure all staff understand typical development and have the confidence to understand why some children may develop differently.
- Supporting families and children to have a sense of self as well as a sense of belonging to the wider school community, for example through cultural days, religious events or visits to the classroom.
- Through a range of learning experiences, children's home life, localities and communities are weaved into practice. We value the diversity in our community and understand that this is something to be respected and celebrated.
- Using resources that reflect diversity, the children's backgrounds and that are free from stereotyping and discrimination. Staff will challenge stereotypes, discrimination and prejudice as they arise in play, conservation, books or other contexts.
- Recognising that some children will need more support than others and that equality and inclusion require more than simply treating everyone the same. Equity achieves fairness through treating people differently depending on need.



- Seeking and incorporating the views and expertise of other professionals as needed, within and beyond the setting; and working respectfully with each other to appreciate a range of views.
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued.
- Supporting children who have English as an Additional language through additional support in play and in group activities and through initiatives such as NELI.
- Using a range of high-quality teaching strategies based on the latest educational research from the Education Endowment Foundation Early Years Evidence Store, such as promoting talk about learning, a metacognitive approach or SHREC https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store

- Through ever-reaching branches of support, children with additional needs are monitored through formal and informal assessment, discussion with all staff and regular communication with families. EYFS staff work closely with the school SENDCo to implement a range of research-based strategies to support learning, such as Boxhall profile or Sensory Classroom.
- Assessment data is analysed carefully and is used to plan personalised intervention strategies. These are led by trained staff and supported by volunteers from our local community.

Approaches to Teaching and Learning

Curriculum

At Our Lady Immaculate, we have an ambitious, meaningful and well-planned curriculum. This is achieved through the following:

- Using schemes of work that continue to update based on the latest educational research such as Pathways to Write and Curriculum Maestro.
- Adapting schemes into three planning documents; weekly planning, Enhanced provision planning and a Long-Term plan for all EYFS areas of learning. These are adapted to meet the needs, interests and stages of development of the current cohort of children.
- Using Little Wandle to teach systematic synthetic phonics and spelling. This scheme is ambitious and suits the needs of our learner. Typically, the vast majority of children will be blending and reading books with CVC words by the end of the Autumn term. For those who need additional support, Little Wandle provides highly effective intervention programmes that are used to help all children keep up.
- Teaching maths through NCTEM scheme of work that is designed to develop children's confidence about numbers. We also use Learning Trajectories to plan tasks that are specific to children's mathematical level. https://www.learningtrajectories.org/
- Ensuring that creativity and enquiry skills are developed in EAD and UW.
- Ensuring **the Prime Areas** of learning are mastered.

-We use an effective handwriting scheme and ensure handwriting and correct pencil grip is practised daily. **Fine motor development** is woven into everyday learning opportunities. Children have access to a range of tools to support their fine motor skills, such as pencil grips and adapted scissors. Children who need additional support take part in an intervention programme.

-Excellent personal and social skills are key to becoming successful in later life and this is taught explicitly through our **PSED** scheme of work, Life to the Full and our RE scheme of work, 'To know you more clearly'. The Catholic life of the school provides a sure guide for living and encompasses our whole school community. In addition, everyday routines and interactions are also utilised to support learning. At the start of the academic year, we also adapt Attention Autism so all children can quickly acquire the skills needed to learn in a large or small group.

- **Communication and Language** skills development is given priority in all areas of learning and in the choice of education enhancement activities. Staff utilise the SHRECH approach in the setting and parents are seen as important partners in this area of development. Opportunities for back-and-forth exchanges in conversation are prioritised. We ensure that thinking is extended through talk and know that conversation can spark curiosity.

- Ensuring that children succeed in the **Core Areas of learning**. Our curriculum provides meaningful experiences through play, adult lead activities and through focusing on learning about our local area and what is relevant to the children in our setting.

-We are passionate about picture books and these form the backbone of all our learning.

Books are used across the curriculum, for example, through drama workshops, story walks, story time, literacy lessons, inspiration for art work, during online story workshop, in Start-the-Day with a story parent reading time, during shared reading with our Year 6 Buddy, finding out facts about mini-beasts or trees in Forest School, taking home library books or in mathematics lessons.

A passion for reading is celebrated by taking part in national events such World Book Day, National Story Telling Week, Go All In (National Year of Reading) and World Nursery Rhyme Week.

- We continue to improve writing provision ensuring children have the fundamental skills and are passionate about providing meaningful opportunities to write, such as investigating natural treasures and writing up labels and captions to match.

-Mathematical development is a strength of the setting and we are committed to ensuring each child has a strong foundation in number before leaving Reception. All or nearly all children will leave Reception having mastered the early learning goal in this area.

Enabling Environment

At Our Lady Immaculate, we use the Early Excellence approach (https://earlyexcellence.com/practice-and-pedagogy/using-continuous-provision/) to create an enabling environment that offers children engagement, security, comfort and opportunities to learn through play and through playful adult led activities. High quality continuous provision provides the foundation for enhanced provision and adult directed activities.



Children have access to indoor and outdoor environments on a daily basis. We also access environments beyond the classroom through outdoor learning opportunities in our Forest School area and in the school grounds. We make regular visits to our church and plan meaningful trips, such as a trip to Chelmsford Market. Our learning environment is something that we continue to improve and we take time as a team to reflect regularly on our provision.



The Early Year Excellence approach is used in our setting to create an effective learning environment for all children. We also use the characteristic of effect learning to understand how our children approach activities.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Playing and Exploring

ENGAGEMENT
Finding out and exploring
Playing with what they know
Being willing to 'have a go'

Active Learning

MOTIVATION
Being involved and concentrating
Keep trying
Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

Creative and Critical Thinking

THINKING
Having their own ideas
Making links
Working with ideas

Assessment

At Our Lady Immaculate, we use a range of assessment tools to ensure good levels of development for all children.

The academic year starts with the Base Line Assessment, 1:1 meeting with parents and meetings with other professionals.

We use summative assessment as an integral part of our teaching. This starts with the child and then grows in partnership with the child, parents and other professionals. We use observation-in-action to observe children as they act and interact. This is followed by reflection and how this information helps us to understand the child. During weekly planning, it is decided how best to support, extend and teach the children.

We also use formative assessment to step back and gain an overview of a children's development. This could be through 1:1 phonics assessment or key skills maths checks. Data is uploaded onto Insight to ensure it is shared with all staff and Pupil Progress Meetings provide an opportunity to discuss progress with Leaders.

Progress is shared with parents through twice yearly Parents' Evenings, monthly Tapestry updates and an end of year written report. Parents are also invited to class assemblies, Christmas Nativity, World Book Day and other events throughout the year.

Data

Legend
- Above national (statistically significant)
- At or above national
- Below national
- Below national (statistically significant)
- Missing data
- ~ Estimated national

Early Years Foundation Stage

	2022-2023		2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026		
Statistic	School	National	School	National	School	National	Cohort	School	National
% achieving a Good Level of Development	83%	67%	87%	68%	86%	68%	29	83%	~ 72%
% at the expected level across all early learning goals	76%	66%	87%	66%	82%	67%	29	83%	~ 71%
Average number of early learning goals at the expected level per pupil	15.4	14.1	16.7	14.1	15.1	14.1	29	16.5	~ 14.5

Welfare

At Our Lady Immaculate, we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2025. We comply with our Safeguarding policy and receive regular training on the Keeping Children Safe In Education Updates.

This includes but is not limited to the following:

- Promote the welfare of children.
- Promote good health, including oral health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- Provide the children with a healthy and balanced diet to support their development and learning
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose.
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children, including Risk Assessments.
- Absences are followed up in a timely manner and all staff work closely with families to address low attendance.
- Ensure that at least one person who has a current paediatric first aid (PFA) on the premises and is available at all times.
- Before a child is admitted to the setting we obtain information about dietary requirements, preferences, food and allergies and intolerances, and any special health requirements.
- Children are always within sight and hearing of staff.
- We have easy access to a first aid box and keep a written record of accidents or injury and first aid treatment and parents are informed.
- Toilets and intimate hygiene: there are an adequate number of toilets/hand basins, children's privacy is considered and balanced with safeguarding. A Care Plan will be created, in partnership, if additional support in this area is needed.

Transition

Pre-School to Reception

We have a comprehensive transition programme that supports children and their families and our local nurseries. This makes the children feel welcome, ready for school and supported in their transition to Our Lady Immaculate.



Reception into Year 1

We want our children to experience a smooth educational and emotional transition from one phase to the next. This will ensure that children make the best all round progress. A good transition into Key Stage One is supported through;

- Ongoing informal dialogue between Reception and Year 1 staff.
- A teacher handover meeting in the Summer Term.
- Visits to the EYFS classroom by the Year 1 staff.
- Key Stage One and EYFS staff attend training together and work as a team on their professional development.
- Move Up morning in the Summer Term where Reception pupils can visit the Year 1 classroom.
- Year 1 teachers are given a copy of the Profile Report.
- End of Year data is shared with Year 1 teachers and support is put in place quickly for children who may need additional help.
- The Reception children create a transition book
- The Year 1 classroom environment is adapted to suit the needs of all learner and continues to use the Early Excellence Approach.
- Reception and Year 1 curriculum are aligned and build on prior learning.