

Academic Policy

The School's Mission

'Learning is more effective when it's fun'

Peter Kline

Our goals at Port Regis Pre-Prep and Nursery are to:

- make the child's first experience of school exciting, challenging, satisfying and fun
- encourage children to develop a love of learning and an enquiring mind
- provide through a broad and balanced curriculum, at least the information and skills incorporated in the Early Years Foundation Stage and National Curriculum Key Stage 1
- give each child a curriculum that is broad and deep, where information, skills and experience will provide a firm basis for future educational opportunities and choices
- enable children to communicate effectively with courtesy and confidence
- initiate of a lifelong love of books and reading
- give children a firm grasp of mathematics and its application to real life
- equip each child with the sound foundations to benefit from the wisdom of the past and the technology of the future
- inspire in all a respect for and understanding of the natural environment, and an appreciation of the Arts
- show by example, high standards of courtesy, honesty, integrity, loyalty and fairness and help develop the personal, social and moral knowledge and skills that are necessary for happiness and caring citizenship

Good Teaching Practice

'To learn anything fast and effectively, you have to see it, hear it, and feel it.'

Tony Stockwell

The school encourages and expects high standards of teaching and educational practice. There are regular INSET days and opportunities to attend various courses and lectures. When

staff go to a course or a conference they report back during a staff meeting. New research, ideas and successful practices are shared and discussed in staff meetings.

The Early Years

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to all children from birth right through to the end of the Reception Year. In our school, children may join us part time or full time in the Nursery. They begin attending school full time at the start of the autumn term in the year which they will be turning five, where they will enter Reception Class.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

The Early Years Foundation Stage teachers plan together, ensuring understanding and continuity, and they share facilities and resources. Children are given the opportunity to experiment and learn through play both in Nursery and Reception classes. Activities are either child initiated or teacher instigated and directed, but all encourage independent learning.

We use the eProfile to record judgements against the EYFS Profile. Each child's level of development is recorded against 13 assessment scales derived from the Early Learning Goal's.

(Please also refer to our EYFS Policy)

Teaching and Learning

We consider good teaching to be good learning. We provide a wide range of learning opportunities that allow all children to access our curriculum no matter which is their preferred style of learning.

Teachers create an atmosphere in the classroom where children are actively involved in, and begin to take responsibility for their own learning. They create an encouraging, safe environment where one is allowed to try, and mistakes are seen as part of the learning process. Effort and achievement are celebrated equally and high self-esteem is very important. Children who feel good about themselves are much more likely to succeed.

Classroom Management

Classes are mixed ability and class teaching is the norm. French, Music and P.E. are taught by specialist staff, and offered to every class from Nursery to Year 2.

Children are taught in a variety of groupings depending upon the task, lesson and the expectation.

Each lesson will start and probably finish as a whole class. Some activities remain as whole class lessons, but in others the children may work individually, in pairs or in groups. Groups may vary in size and constitution depending upon the task. They may be made according to ability or personality. Great care is taken that the grouped and paired work are not always with the same person or people, and that every member of the class is allowed to contribute. Sometimes the children will select their own working partners; sometimes they will be organised by the teacher.

Group work promotes co-operation and discussion. Occasionally there is an element of competition either within or between the groups but more often the groups work together then report back to the class.

Curriculum Planning

For effective learning children's brains need to make and repeat connections many times before they become a permanent memory or can be said to be learned. Understanding this has led us to operate a spiralling curriculum in all subjects. Although topics are different for each year group, skills and knowledge are revisited in many different ways and extended throughout the Nursery and Pre-Prep. Thus allowing children to build further knowledge on what they already know.

We take the National Curriculum as a guideline but adapt it to our needs. Children in the Foundation stage follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.

In the Early Years children experience activities encompassing the six areas of learning:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication, Language and Literacy
- Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELG's) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

In Key Stage 1 we follow the Literacy and Numeracy Guidelines and emphasis is placed upon the development of English and Mathematics, which we consider a priority. P.E, Music, French are taught as separate subjects.

Our curriculum for Science, History, Geography, Art, DT and ICT is topic based. Topics give the children the opportunities to link areas of the curriculum and to transfer skills and knowledge learned in one area to others, always extending knowledge, understanding, experience and vocabulary in many ways.

Opportunities for English and Numeracy are included throughout the curriculum but these subjects are generally not included in the topic planning.

Planning

Three elements are vital to effective planning.

Long term planning

Indicating which elements are to be covered throughout the year in each subject. These ensure progression and continuity. The Literacy Strategy and Numeracy Framework for Key Stage 1 are used as long term planning for Literacy and Maths.

Medium term planning

Details activities and assessment in each area of study. These are termly topic plans for subjects other than Maths and Literacy.

Short term planning

Addresses the delivery of the curriculum weekly on a daily basis, covering, groupings, resources, differentiation.

At every step consideration will include:

What are the aims, what do we want the children to learn?

What experiences have the children already had?

What experiences will the children be offered?

What classroom management techniques will be used, how will the class be grouped?

What resources will be needed?

How will learning be assessed?

The Planning within the EYFS follows the schools' Long Term Plan and Medium Term Plans (MTP's), which are based around termly 'topics'. These plans are used by the Nursery and Reception teachers as a guide for short term planning however teachers may alter these MTP's in response to the needs (achievements and interests) of the children. This will be indicated on weekly planning.

Resources

A wide range of resources are used as aids to learning not as a substitute for teaching.

All resources are of good quality, well presented and safely handled. All resources are available to all classes whether stored centrally or within a classroom.

Resources stored centrally are in cupboards in the Hall and are in marked boxes.

If resources are used they should be returned.

Worksheets

Often a worksheet will follow up a piece of work that has been done orally or practically to reinforce learning or assess understanding.

We should always be aware of other possibilities of recording information and be aware of the ‘death by worksheet’ syndrome. Other possibilities are, orally, on a tape recorder, using a camera, in a chart or graph, pictorially, as a mind map.

Videos/CDs

The school has a collection of videos, DVDs and CDs that can be used as part of the learning programme to support and extend topics. There is a booklet that lists videos, DVDs and CDs in the resource/staff room.

Artefacts

The school is building a collection of artefacts that can be used in connection with each topic. These are stored either in classrooms or in cupboards in the Hall and should be handled with care and replaced after use.

Library

The library has a range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry books. Fiction is arranged alphabetically by author’s surname, with younger reading material, including picture books stored separately. Non-fiction is arranged by topic to support the Pre-Prep curriculum. The topics include: clothes; homes; things that move; toys; school; ourselves; food; and seaside. Classes may be brought to the Library with their teacher to support classroom work. Liaison with the Prep School Librarian may also take place enabling books to be borrowed from the Prep School library in the form of a ‘topic box’.

Year 2 pupils utilise the library by themselves and choose their books independently, but may also seek the support of staff, including the Librarian to inform and/or guide their choice of book.

Library books are catalogued on the computer using the Junior Librarian database software. The Prep School Library will have access to the Pre-prep catalogue and vice versa to save duplication and raise awareness of what each department has. Borrowing across the divide is encouraged.

It is largely, but not exclusively, Year 2 who borrow books from the Library. Children have personalized borrowing numbers which are kept in a file and books are borrowed via this system.

The Library skills pupils will have covered are:

- the difference between fiction; non-fiction and poetry
- alphabetical order of authors’ surnames
- the concept of non-fiction books being grouped according to subject matter
- how to take out a book
- how to return a book; how to look after books

Teachers choose books for their classroom libraries per term.

ICT

Each classroom has a computer and we are building a collection of CD Roms and an address book of useful websites. Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes have interactive whiteboards. Computers are networked to share programmes. The use of the digital camera is encouraged. Tape recorders, some with earphones, are available for children and teachers to use. ICT is a useful aid to learning throughout the curriculum. Years 1 and 2 regularly visit the Prep School ICT room to learn and develop their ICT skills through designated ICT weekly lessons.

Human Resources

The Pre-Prep is fortunate to share many of the facilities of the Prep School. There are regular meetings between the staff of both schools and expertise and experience is shared. All children use the swimming pool, gym and sports hall and are taught by specialist teachers. We use the art, pottery, sport, music, ICT and Forest School facilities and can call on the expertise of the specialist staff in these departments. French, Dance and individual instrumental music are taught by teachers who also teach in the Prep School.

Grounds and Buildings

The grounds and buildings provide opportunities for Science, Geography, History and PSE related work. Staff employed in all of these areas (i.e maintenance, domestic and grounds staff) are happy to talk or help the children if invited.

We have developed the Forest School to provide greater learning opportunities outside the classroom.

Setting high standards, respecting diverse talents and encouraging effort

The standards we expect are high but realistic for the age and ability of the children.

Praise and reward for effort, as well as achievement, encourages children to set their own standards high and respect each other's efforts. Whilst able pupils must be given opportunities for extending their own learning, peer group pressure and competition that deters other pupils is not allowed.

Children have an individual progress book and one piece of unaided work from the middle of each term is entered. This moves through the school with the child and enables them to recognise their own progress. It acts as an exemplar of standards.

An atmosphere of mutual respect permeates the Pre-Prep and Nursery. Teachers are role models of behaviour, courtesy and manners. Concern and understanding of others is reinforced regularly in class, playground, assembly and in lunch. High standards of behaviour are expected and mostly achieved. Digressions are quickly and appropriately dealt with, always remembering that the children are very young and still developing their social skills.

The teaching and learning environment

The classroom environment is almost like another teacher. We aim to have lively, inviting classrooms where children feel secure but stimulated, where their work is valued and featured

amidst displays that are informative and exciting. Areas, charts, lists and resources that help the children to learn independently are also part of the teaching environment.

Classrooms should be kept tidy and orderly. Care should be taken of apparatus and equipment, which should be stored so that the children can access it and put it away easily, thus encouraging independence.

Areas outside the classroom, such as the Library, Hall, the entrance halls, resource/staff room after school club room and lobbies should be kept tidy and welcoming. Children's and teacher's belongings should be put away after use and rooms left as they were found.

Display policy

The displays in the classrooms and around the school have much to say about the life and work that goes on within it. An interesting and exciting environment can be created by effective displays. Displays can be stimulating, informative, interactive, or a record of work covered. Great care is taken to display work attractively and accessibly. Children and teachers take a pride in the environment they have helped to create, and parents and visitors enjoy seeing work the children have done.

Displays are changed frequently to reflect the work covered. Nothing is to be gained from displays that are past their best, and they should be taken down before they become tatty.

Boards and displays should always be attractive and owned by the children, they may have opinions about what and how work is displayed and these are listened to and acted on if appropriate or feasible. Discussion of a display as or after it has been put up is a good way of ensuring the children benefit from the language incorporated within the display. Work displayed individually is named.

Presentation of work

Much of the presentation of work in the Pre-Prep will be oral. In a class situation children should raise their hand if they want to contribute. Quieter less confident children may find this difficult and the teacher should be aware of this and encourage these children. In group situations children are taught to listen to each other and value other's contributions.

Children should be encouraged to take a pride in their work and to present it as neatly and carefully as possible. They should be taught that being the first finished is not always the criterion for success.

The majority of children's work is done in pencil, excessive use of the eraser is discouraged as it can be time wasting but children should aim to produce neat legible work. Older children may be asked to write work again in their best handwriting for display.

Marking policy

Why do we mark?

- To encourage
- To reinforce good working habits
- To correct mistakes and therefore further knowledge
- To help create and maintain standards
- To create pride and satisfaction in work well done

Young children need instant feed back for their work and most initial marking is either with the children while they work, as they finish or as soon after as possible. Sometimes the children may 'be teachers' and mark each others work on the direction of the class teacher. In the busy working day teachers will not have time to mark thoroughly and add comments and record. This is more productively done during a quiet period of review.

With young children a spoken comment, praise or suggestion is far more valuable than a written one he/she cannot read. Comments may be added that are later read to the child to help them in the next piece of work.

Comments added should always be relevant to the piece of work and/or link to the 'WILF' (What I'm Looking For) statement presented to the children at the outset. They should be encouraging and informative. They should further the pupil's performance or give indications of areas that he/she may need to target in future. Noting performance against an individual's target is a good idea. e.g. 'You have tried to leave spaces between the words in this piece of work, well done.' especially if that target has been discussed before the work or written at the top of the page.

All work should be dated and given some indication that it has been looked at. In any written work there should be a balance between correcting spelling mistakes and encouraging effort. There is nothing more de-motivating than a piece of work returned covered in red pen marks. Maths work is slightly different. Incorrect maths may indicate a misunderstanding that needs to be addressed immediately or it may be carelessness. Incorrect number bonds etc. should not be re-enforced so maths work is either corrected or discussed with the child who then corrects their own work.

Stars

In the Nursery stars are awarded for acts of kindness, thoughtfulness and being helpful. Stars are large, usually glittery and stuck onto jumpers or t-shirts so that everyone can see them. Smiley faces indicate great effort.

In Reception, Years 1 and 2 the giving of stars is a more formal reward. Stars can be awarded for:

- trying your best
- good work
- being kind

- working by yourself
- listening carefully
- good behaviour
- finishing work on time
- being helpful

The way to earn stars is displayed in each classroom. Ten stars on a card or chart earn a large star that can be worn within Reception and Year 1, with multiples of ten being rewarded in Year 2.

‘Praise and celebrate’ assemblies are held every other Friday when a selection of children from each class in the Pre-Prep are selected for special mention for good work, great effort or acts of kindness, all of which should be above and beyond the high standards we usually expect. Children mentioned are awarded a ‘Headteacher’s’ award sticker’. Great care is taken that all children are praised during the term.

Children may be sent to the Headmistress to show work or read when the class teacher thinks this is appropriate. Children will then receive a special sticker.

Concerns about pupils

Academic

Any pupil that staff are concerned about academically should be discussed with the SENCO and Headteacher and should be raised at a staff meeting. The class teacher highlights areas of difficulty by referring to the school’s pre-basic entitlement flow-chart. This is used to complete a school Basic Entitlement Form for the pupil including support offered and targets that can be reviewed. An individual education plan (IEP) is the next stage in the process should concerns continue. The IEP and strategies are discussed at staff meetings so that there is a consistent approach. Concerns will be discussed with parents who may be asked to support the child with activities at home.

Please also see the Special Needs Policy.

Behaviour

Concerns about children’s behaviour are discussed at staff meetings and a consistent approach developed to help the child. Circle time can often be used to address issues of behaviour. Children are made aware of the sanctions for unsocial behaviour in the classroom and in the playground. If concerns persist then the pre-basic entitlement flow chart should be looked at with a view to completing a Basic Entitlement Form, and if necessary and IEP should follow.

Please see our Special Needs Policy and Behaviour Policy

Staff Absences

Absences fall into two categories, those that can be planned when courses, or meetings necessitate an absence, and as much notice as possible should be given on these occasions. If

a teacher is away then work should be set and lessons will be covered, either by the Headmistress or another member of the staff. If a teaching assistant is absent then the workload is shared between existing teaching assistants.

In the case of unavoidable absence through illness or personal matters, then the Headmistress should be informed as early as possible. Attempts should be made to contact her at home but if this is not possible messages should be left on the office answer-phone. Internal cover will be arranged if possible but in the case of long term illness there is a list of supply teachers in the Pre-Prep office. If the absence is likely to be of some length the Headmistress must be informed as early as possible. On returning an absence form must be obtained from the Bursary, completed and sent back to the Bursary.

Links with the Prep School

We work closely with colleagues in the Prep school and share the same philosophy on education. As most children from the Nursery and Pre-Prep enter the Prep School, assessment details and reports are available on the network so that all staff can access them. Hard copies of reports are sent to the Prep school at the end of the Summer Term for those children moving into F Form (Year 3) in the school.

- F form teachers visit the Pre-Prep, spending time throughout the year with Year 2, getting to know the children they will have in their classes the following academic year.
- Meetings between the Headmistress, the Year 2 teacher and the F form teachers are held to discuss the children entering the Prep from the Pre-Prep
- Representatives from all subjects visit the Pre-Prep to ensure continuity and develop understanding of the first stages of education in their subject.
- The Headmistress and Head of the Prep School have weekly meetings. The Heads of English and Maths visit the Pre-Prep regularly to discuss practice and ensure continuity.
- The Pre-Prep has access to all the facilities and the expertise in the Prep School. The grounds are used for Science, History and Geography and there are weekly French lessons for all year groups (Nursery to Year 2) with a teacher from the Prep school. Swimming, gym and games lessons are taken by staff from the P.E. department. The Gym staff organise a gym display for the parents once a year. There are close links with the religious education, design and technology, art and pottery departments and a sharing of ideas and resources.
- The children visit the library as part of a topic about books, the kitchens and dining hall when studying food, and the laundry when studying clothes. They are always welcomed with enthusiasm.
- There is mutual watching of plays and concerts wherever possible. Assemblies are shared with F forms when possible.

The Admissions Policy

The Pre-Prep is a small, non-selective school for children from age 3 to 7 years. There is one class per age group, that is, a Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2.

Nursery and Reception classes have an optimum number of between 14 and 16, which rises to 18 in Years 1 and 2.

The Pre-Prep will attempt to create a place for any child providing we can meet their needs, offer a suitable environment and provide a positive learning experience. We will work with pupils, parents and professionals to ensure each child is offered a broad and balanced curriculum which they can access effectively.

Entry in to the school can be made at any stage during the year, although our primary intake takes place at the beginning of the academic year (September). Children may join at any stage of the year and into any of the four year groups, as long as spaces are available.

A Parent/Headmistress meeting gives both parties the opportunity to discuss the school and their child. At this meeting there is an opportunity for parents to discuss, in confidence, details of the nature and effect of any special needs or disability the child may have, and to consider any adjustments the school would need to take in order to offer the child the best access to the curriculum and the facilities.

The Pre-Prep is on one level and all rooms can be accessed from the ground floor with slight modifications such as small ramps and making some doorways wider for wheelchair access or people with mobility difficulties.

There is an ‘Experience Day’ in the Summer term which all new children are invited to attend.

It is hoped children entering the Nursery and Pre-Prep will continue through into the Prep School.

Admission to the Nursery

Children may join The Nursery in the term in which they turn 3 years of age, with term ending dates linked to OFSTED dates and being: 31st March, 31st August and 31st December. Attendance in the Nursery is on a sessional basis, with morning, afternoon and all day sessions on offer. It is suggested a minimum of three sessions is preferable to ensure children integrate into the Nursery, understand routines and have some form of stability.

There is only one criteria for entry:

1. Children must be ready to happily leave Mummy or the carer. We recognise that the initial moment of leaving is traumatic for some, and we advise a definite ‘Good bye I will be back for you later’. Children usually settle after a few minutes. Parents are welcome to stay as long as they wish to ensure for themselves that their child is happy. However care must be taken that their presence is not influencing or altering the situation. We will always try to telephone and reassure an anxious parent, when

the child has settled. If after several attempts a child is truly unhappy about being left and cannot be distracted or consoled then they are probably not ready and we will advise and consult with, and parents as to the best way forward with the best interests of the child at the fore front of all discussions and decisions.

We recommend, if possible, that children start with half day sessions building to full days when they are older or ready. Nursery children may stay for lunch on any day that they are attending a morning session. Lunch is included within an afternoon session.

The Nursery follows the guidance and statutory guidelines of the Early Years Foundation Stage and plans their activities encompassing the six areas of learning.

Admission to the Pre-Prep

Children enter the Reception Class in the September after they are 4 years old.

Children enter Year One Class in the September after they are 5 years old.

Children enter Year Two Class in the September after they are 6 years old.

Each class has a classroom assistant so the ratio of adults to children is high, 1:8. If a child needs assistance beyond that which we can offer, there would obviously be a cost implication.