

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Early Years' Hub: Maple, Elm & Holly



"Together we love, live and learn"


Ofsted
Good
Provider

2024-25



Our Headteacher's Welcome



Thank you for considering St Joseph's for your child.

This guide to our Early Years' Hub has been designed to give you a flavour of Early Years' life here at St Joseph's, and we hope it helps you gain an understanding of some of the exciting learning opportunities available for the children in our care.

We are a small, friendly and nurturing school which strives to ensure that by the time the children leave us they have reached their full potential academically, spiritually and emotionally. We welcome children from all faiths or none and pride ourselves on respecting every child's unique talents and abilities.

As the headteacher, I am extremely proud to lead a team that is so committed to achieving high standards whilst providing a caring and nurturing environment. In partnership with you as parents and carers, we ensure all pupils develop the skills to become independent, life-long learners within a happy, safe environment.

We warmly welcome all visitors to find out about what makes our school special. Please call or email the school office to arrange this. My staff and I look forward to welcoming you!



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What is the Early Years Hub?

"Early Years provision ensures each child has a personalised curriculum that values their own uniqueness"
Ofsted Report 2019

Our Early Years' Hub has 3 key groups: Maple for 2 and 3 year olds, Elm for 3 and 4 year old preschoolers and Holly for 4 and 5 year old Reception children. Elm and Holly share a large indoor and outdoor area, working together as a Foundation Stage Unit. We play together, learn alongside one another and help one another. We value and celebrate the uniqueness of every child, and nurture the foundations for lifelong learning by providing exceptional early years education experiences.

Children can move through the Foundation Stage curriculum at their own pace, with Reception children getting support at an earlier level if needed, and pre-school children progressing through to later stages if they're ready.

Continuity and progression are assured. Groupings are more flexible to benefit the children, and staff can provide opportunities that are challenging and meet individual need.



In order to develop well-rounded children, we offer:

- Stimulating and creative play, with a focus on the Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development and Communication & Language areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, as set out by the Department for Education.
- Opportunities to develop these skills in the outdoors as well as the indoors.
- Experienced Early Years practitioners.
- Opportunities to develop a healthy lifestyle with exercise, outdoor play and home-cooked meals.
- Wrap around care in Breakfast and After school clubs.

Funding



2 year olds

Some 2 year old children are entitled to free childcare from the term after their second birthday. Information about eligibility criteria and how to apply can be found at www.worcestershire.gov.uk/freechildcare. Funding for eligible 2 year olds is based on 15 free hours per week over 38 weeks of the year.

3 & 4 year olds

Universal 15 hours

Your child is entitled to 15 free hours per week over 38 weeks of the year from the term after your child's third birthday. We are fully flexible with funded hours and do not restrict them to certain sessions.

Additional 15 hours (30 hours)

If your child is 3 or 4 years of age and you (and your partner, if applicable) meet the criteria your child could be entitled to a total of 30 hours of childcare per week. Please visit www.childcarechoices.gov.uk to find out more information and apply for your 30 hours free childcare code. You will need to apply for your funding a term in advance.



Pupil Premium Funding

The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is an additional sum of money used to enhance the quality of your child's early years' experience by improving the teaching and learning, facilities and resources of a setting, with the aim of impacting positively on your child's progress and development. It is paid to settings for 3 and 4 year old children of families in receipt of certain benefits. Please let us know on the parent declaration form that you are happy for an eligibility check to be made - this will not affect your access to any other benefits..

Do we charge top up fees?

We feel it is important that the children have the fullest experience possible during their time with us, and for this reason we do not charge top up fees for any activity they take part in during sessions. However, there is an optional contribution of 50p per session. If we are planning a trip off the premises that would incur an additional cost, this would be communicated to you in advance. Children eligible for Pupil Premium would have these costs covered by the funding.

Our Staff

The staff in our Early Years' Hub are highly experienced with high expectations who work collaboratively to plan and enhance all areas of the classroom to provide exciting learning opportunities for all of our pupils.



Becky Wilford
Reception Teacher
Early Years' Hub Lead



Mandy Redfern
SENCo



Becci Walters



Lauren Park



Jo Lake



Kayleigh Dawe



Rachel Smith

Our Environment



Our environment is warm, welcoming and an exciting place for children, parents and educators. In every area, interesting objects and activities invite closer observation and deeper thinking, allowing the children to test what they know and make sense of what is new.

Children are encouraged to make use of our outdoor play area to extend their play and learning in a natural environment - we believe this is the best way for children to learn. Play allows children to explore, investigate and recreate. Each key group has their own 'home' area, but can access all parts of the learning curriculum every session.

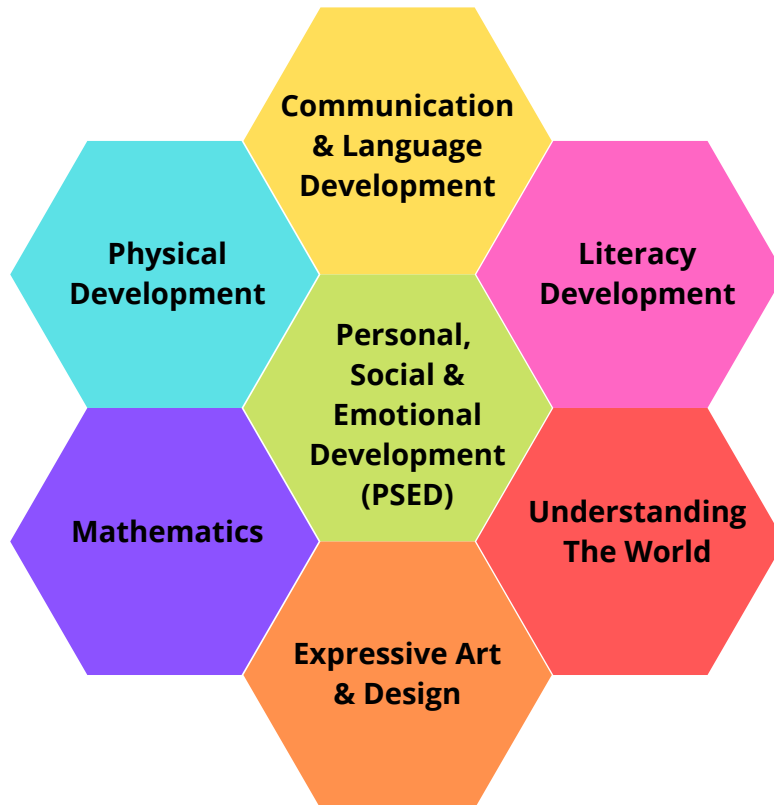


The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum is organised into seven areas of learning: children should mostly develop the three Prime Areas first. These are:

- Personal, Social & Emotional Development
- Communication & Language
- Physical Development

These Prime Areas are the most essential for your child's healthy development and future learning.



As children grow, the Prime Areas will help them to develop skills in four Specific Areas. These are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts & Design

When children first join us, we focus on the social skills each child needs to develop (Personal, Social & Emotional Development), their ability to communicate (Communication & Language) and their Physical Development. We work to develop 'Learning to Learn' skills which will be built on as the children move up through the school, and we refer to particular characters to embody the approach.

Once the children are settled, we gradually introduce the skills and attitudes needed to learn to read, write, solve simple number problems, name and describe 2D and 3D shapes and use the correct vocabulary when measuring time, capacity, size and weight of things. We also introduce the children to history, geography, RE, science and technology (Understanding the World) and develop their creativity (Expressive Arts & Design).

Maple & Elm: Developing skills needed for later reading, writing & maths

Early Years' children are taught to write their name using the same letter formation taught across the school. This starts with the children finding their own name on their name card when they come in at the beginning of each session. To start with, we encourage children to make any marks that represent their name and, over time, we will help them to learn how to write each letter correctly, starting in the right place and going in the right direction.



Parents' help is invaluable in supporting the development of this skill when they help children to write their names. We send home a name card and a guide to forming letters correctly so that parents can continue to support children's name writing at home. We also provide a list of suggested fun ways to do this to keep children motivated and engaged, such as writing letters in ketchup or shaving foam! During the spring and summer, children will be encouraged to become increasingly skilled and independent in name writing so that they are competent when moving to their next stage. Staff will encourage name writing skills in various ways, such as celebrating good pencil grips on the Wow Wall, moving children's photos onto a chart and framing great name writing. At all times, children's motivation and confidence will be supported in the way which is most appropriate for them. Children's ability to understand and communicate is vital for their learning in all areas of the curriculum. Daily language sessions help children develop and express themselves.



Holly: Progressing with reading, writing & maths

Reception age children have guided opportunities to read, write and count on a daily basis, and in addition to this have regular teaching in class or smaller groups to develop these essential skills. We use a 'Talk for Writing' approach which uses books to inspire the children's creativity. The children learn to recite rhymes and stories to support their developing reading and writing skills. This approach is used throughout our school to promote writing skills.

We follow the Read Write Inc phonics strategy to support reading and writing skills and to ensure children have daily opportunities to use and apply their phonics - the basics of being able to read and write confidently.

Everything we do is reinforced through continuous provision where children learn about maths, reading and writing through play and their daily experiences. This makes it more meaningful to them and supports them to be creative, critical thinkers, problem-solvers and always willing to have a go!

Other areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum

Religious Education

As a Catholic school, we follow the Diocesan scheme of work for RE. This teaches the children about the Catholic faith, but also about the other major world religions and is a subject where the children are invited to share their own ideas. Topics covered include learning about events across the year such as Christmas and Easter. At Christmas the children usually enjoy performing a Nativity play, which brings a tear to many eyes!



Physical Development

Maple: Each week we plan daily 'Squiggle & Wiggle' sessions (physical development and mark making). Children take part in tasks which help them to develop their fine motor skills, such as holding and using a mark-making tool or using one-handed tools such as scissors or hole punches.

Elm & Holly: Regular 'Squiggle while you Wiggle', 'Dough Disco' and 'Funky Fingers' activities develop hand strength and letter formation during lively sessions set to music with no books in sight! Children also join in PE sessions in the hall once a week.

Saying Goodbye Positively

We work to support children who are finding it challenging to let their parents leave, and use a system called the '1, 2, 3'. This involves saying goodbye (1), having a kiss and cuddle (2) then waving goodbye at the door (3) - we find the children respond really well to a structured transition between home and school.

Book Borrowing

We have a wide range of books in our hub. Elm children are encouraged to take books home to read with their families and return them within a week. Holly children are encouraged to change their book every day, either from the class book corner or (once they are confident with their early phonics and the teacher starts them on the school reading books) from the reading scheme book shelf from the correct colour code.

Welly Time

Welly Time is our weekly outdoor learning lesson when we put on our boots, raincoats if necessary, and go out into the school grounds to explore and experience the environment. A typical session might include looking for seasonal changes such as flowers, leaves falling, picking apples or smelling herbs.

The children develop their understanding of the natural world and immediate environment through games and activities, for example making paint from mud or harvesting food to prepare and eat in class.



Daily Routine

A typical day

8.30 - 8.40 Arrival & Registration - free play

9:00 Carpet/circle time - phonics hello song

9:15 Fit 15 / Activate

Snack - toast/milk etc.

9:30 Free play / continuous provision

11:00 Tidy-up time

Carpet time - Maths / group time

Playground Play

11.30 END OF MORNING SESSION

Lunchtime (11.30-12.30 for additional session in Maple & Elm)

12.30 START OF AFTERNOON SESSION

1:00 Registration / circle time and worship

1:15 Continuous provision / opportunity for outside play

Tidy-up time

Snack time for younger children

3:00 singing / story time /

3:20 Holly home time

3:30 Maple and Elm home time



Younger children in Maple may still be having nap-time - this can be accommodated as required, please speak to staff about your child's routine.

Independence & Development

Children gain important social skills and self-confidence when they are able to manage tasks by themselves. We encourage and teach children to be able to do certain things on their own or with some support, depending on their age and development.

Whilst in Maple, children will start to learn to use the toilet by themselves. Our staff are very experienced in providing help and advice through potty training and will be able to support you and your child to reach this milestone of independence. As they move to Elm, the children will learn to put on their coats using our 'special method' and to zip them up. They will also put on their winter hats or sunhats on themselves. They will learn to remove and put on their shoes or wellington boots, to wear aprons for messy play and to help themselves if they need to remove a top or put something else on.

At snack time, children pour and drink water from a cup by themselves and they select and eat a piece of fruit, after which they put their rubbish in the correct bin and their used cups in a bowl. They always sit at the snack table while they are eating and drinking.

Children are encouraged to self-select from a range of planned, purposeful play activities at different times during the day. Sometimes they will be working with an adult who will be guiding their learning (Adult Led Activities) and sometimes they will be selecting toys and activities from those on offer through Continuous Provision. At all times, children will be expected to look after the toys and equipment and to help tidy up at the end of a session.



Every day we have a special helper in class who has particular jobs to do; for example, preparing the name labels for snack time. Children also independently register with their name label when they arrive in school. Everyone tidies up together, as we find this encourages greater care of the equipment.

Support with toileting

Although there is an expectation that three year olds will be able to use the toilet when they move up to Elm, we appreciate that there are sometimes exceptions to this - please do talk to us if you feel that this is the case with your child. Encouraging independence in this area is good for children's growing confidence and self-esteem. We encourage your child to manage their clothes and to wipe their bottom, as well as flushing the toilet and washing and drying their hands. We find that when children reach this milestone they grow up in other ways too. We are able to offer advice and support in advance of your child joining us.



School Uniform & Clothing

Maple children wear their own clothes. Elm children do not need to wear the full school uniform, but we do encourage them to wear the school jumper. They need to come to school in clothing suitable for active indoor and outdoor play which may sometimes be wet or messy! Sturdy shoes are particularly important to protect children's feet from scrapes or bumps. Young children also need to be able to undo their clothing quickly when they need to use the toilet so elasticated waists are great for trousers or skirts.

Holly children wear our full Key Stage 1 school uniform. Details of our school uniform and our suppliers are on the school website.

- Please help children to learn how to do up their own zips and buttons as we will be encouraging them to have a go at this at school as well.
- Please do not buy shoes with laces. Young children find these very difficult to do and therefore cannot be independent. Velcro or buckles are much easier for them to cope with.
- Please remember to name everything as we cannot guarantee to return unnamed items.
- Children cannot wear any jewellery to school for health and safety reasons. If your child has pierced ears, please remove their earrings before they come to school.



Snacks, Milk & Lunches

We offer a supervised, self-service snack system. In Maple and Elm we provide a snack for the children and in Holly the children are provided with a piece of fruit or vegetable funded by the government.

All children need to bring a filled water bottle to school. Milk can be ordered for children in Maple and Elm from our milk supplier, Cool Milk. Under 5s in Holly are entitled to free milk which can continue after their 5th birthday, again by signing up through Cool Milk. Please ask the school office for more information.



Maple and Elm children can be ordered a hot lunch from the school caterer or can bring a packed lunch from home. Holly children are entitled to a hot meal funded by the government, which continues until the end of Year 2. There is a wealth of evidence about the effect of food on children's behaviour and concentration. We therefore ask you to consider carefully what you provide for your child each day if they bring a packed lunch. Fizzy drinks, chocolate and sweets are not allowed. Please also **avoid all kinds of nuts** as we have a number of children with allergies. Sandwiches and fresh fruit are ideal, being easy for children to manage independently, as well as providing the right kind of energy for your child to make the most of their afternoon in school.

Working with Parents

Working in partnership with parents is key to our approach; we encourage parental involvement throughout your child's time at St Joseph's beginning with our home visits and settling-in sessions in Early Years. Once your child attends our setting, we update parents regularly using Tapestry, our secure online Learning Journal. This is updated with photos, observations and comments, in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum to build up a record of your child's experiences during their time with us. It also allows staff to track progress towards achieving individual objectives and goals. You can find out more or log in, if you have an existing account, by following the link: [Tapestry](#).



How can you help your child learn?

There are numerous ways you can support your child's learning at home from playing simple board games, alphabet snap or memory games to asking them to help you with simple tasks such as the shopping. Children often enjoy pointing out the numbers and labels in the shops, or counting items in and out of the bag. Going out as a family and teaching your children the names for the different things you may see is very important in helping them gain a wide vocabulary.

Tapestry is a great tool which allows parents to see what their children have been doing in school, as well as themselves being able to add comments and photos of achievements and activities out of school. Staff also share ideas linked to the curriculum for supporting your child's learning and development at home.

Join our PTFA

St Joseph's has an active Parents Teachers and Friends Association (PTFA) that supports the Governing Body and school life as a whole. Throughout the year, the PTFA organise a range of events for children and adults with both social and fundraising elements. These events support and enhance the education of the children at St Joseph's and provide opportunities for our community to socialise and have fun together!

All monies raised during events are used to purchase equipment and resources for the school. The PTFA is an inclusive group and always welcome new members – we are glad of any help that you wish to offer. New ideas for events and activities are also always welcome.

