



**Blessed Robert Widmerpool
Catholic Voluntary Academy**

Early Years Foundation Stage Unit Policy

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

Blessed Robert Widmerpool Foundation Stage Unit:

- **values a broad, rich, play-based curriculum in which children can develop their communication skills, confidence, curiosity and resourcefulness within an experiential setting that builds on and extends what they know already.**
- **is a place where nature and the outdoors is valued highly and is integral to children's everyday experience as a way of nurturing their well-being and giving them the space in which to explore, develop physically and learn.**
- **is a place where children are expected to be kind, respectful and loving towards all others and know that this is how they and their families will be treated too.**
- **supports children to know Jesus, to reflect on His teaching and to make it part of their own lives.**
- **gives children a strong foundation on which to build their future academic learning.**

The Foundation Stage Unit provides education for children from three years of age to the end of the reception year. This encompasses nursery aged (F1) and Reception aged (F2) children. It offers children the best possible start and opportunity for success. The Unit follows the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (EYFS) in line with statutory requirements.

In the Unit the ratio of practitioners to children always remains within government statutory guidance. All children have a named key worker. The welfare of every child is of paramount importance and children are cared for, nurtured and valued. The environment is a safe and secure place to be physically and emotionally and the welfare requirements in the EYFS are adhered to.

Admission Arrangements

Admission to F1

Children are admitted to the Unit in the term following their third birthday (starting in September, January or April). Parents/carers must apply for a place in the Unit. Parents wishing to register their child to commence F1 Education can do so by contacting the School Office during the school day. Attendance in F1 is either part-time (either for morning or afternoon sessions), or full-time for up to 15 children whose parents are eligible to claim the 30-hour Government-funding being offered this year. These places are offered in accordance with agreed criteria set by the SLT and agreed by Governors. F1 places total 30 in the morning and 30 in the afternoon.

An admissions form (Purple form) is completed by parents wishing their child to be admitted to FS (before 31st March). Parents are contacted by letter to inform them if they have been

offered a place during the Summer Term. Parents are asked to return the slip, accepting a place for their child by the date given on the letter. Five half day sessions per term-time week will be offered (unless parents are claiming a full-time place). Sessions are three hours in duration, 8.50 am – 11.50 am and 12:25 pm – 3:25pm.

Admission to F2

Children are admitted to F2 (Reception year) through the Nottingham City Council online admissions to school application process. They must also complete an orange admissions form for the school. Children are admitted in September of the academic year in which the child becomes five years old. (ie they will have their fifth birthday between 1st September and 31st August that year). The standard number for admissions to F2 at Blessed Robert Widmerpool CVA is thirty. If the number of pupils seeking admission to the school exceeds the number of places available then the priority given will follow the Admission Policy for Catholic Primary Voluntary Academies in Nottingham City (see attached document). Being offered a place in Foundation Stage 1 does not affect applications for Foundation Stage 2. FS2 children attend 8.50 am – 3:25 pm every week day in term time.

Transition

Children who have a place in FS1, will be invited to visit school, three times. These visits will take place the term before the child is due to start. Children will initially be settled by their parent/carer and, when ready, will be allowed to stay and play in the Unit for part of a session (between 1 and 2 hours) in order to get to know the staff, other children, environment and expectations. Parents will also be offered the opportunity to meet as a group and learn more about learning and teaching within an Early Years setting and about how to support their child to be ready for F1.

To aid transition to full-time school (FS2), FS1 children who have accepted places in FS2 for the September, will be invited to a lunch club during the summer term. They will stay later (if they have a morning place) or arrive earlier (if they have an afternoon place) and eat lunch in the hall, supervised by up to two members of staff from the Foundation Unit.

Inclusion

All children are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential. Realistic and challenging expectations ensure progress for all children across all aspects of curricular. The needs of all children are met through resources, relationships, environment, teaching choices, planning and assessment. Interventions take place for children not on track as necessary. Children working at greater depth are encouraged to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding independently in the provision.

Resources are selected for their educational potential, to reflect diversity and be free from discrimination and stereotyping. There are planned opportunities that build and develop engagement, self-esteem and confidence. A wide range of teaching strategies and contexts are used. This takes place within a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued. Children's English language and communication skills are not a barrier to learning.

Quality of Education

INTENT

(Curriculum design, coverage and appropriateness)

Our Foundation Unit offers a broad, rich, play-based curriculum in which children can develop their communication skills, confidence and characteristics of effective learning within an experiential setting that builds on and extends what they know already.

Nature and the outdoors is valued highly and is integral to children's everyday experience as a way of nurturing their well-being and giving them the space in which to explore and learn.

Play is at the heart of learning and teaching in the unit. Through indoor and outdoor play children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

Parents, families and carers are welcomed and valued. Daily informal discussion between staff and parents/carers forms the basis of the partnership which supports children's learning, well-being and development. Planning, homework, letters and annual reports (F2 only) are communicated in writing and there are termly 'stay and play' open days for parents/carers (with parents' meetings for F1 children). F2 children have two parents' evenings per year. When three-year olds are getting ready to start attending the unit, there is a welcome meeting for these children and their families.

In the Unit, enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning are fostered. Children are provided with a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities, some of which are continuously available and some which are specific to the current focus. Provision is made for learning across all aspects of curricular. Activities are planned to provide first-hand experiences following children's interests, develop children's communication, relationships, independence, emotional well-being and confidence. Books are carefully linked to all activity areas to stimulate their interests, knowledge and vocabulary. All children make progress through staff knowing them well and carefully planning and supporting them at their own developmental stage, interacting with them and encouraging the extension of their vocabulary through focused comments and questions.

EYFS Development Matters 2020 provides the basis for planning throughout Foundation Stage Unit. Medium term planning is completed termly and identifies the intended learning linked to the school's Catholic RE syllabus. Short term plans identify specific learning intentions, activities, questions, resources and vocabulary. There are typically three group times per session where children gather with practitioners in groups to develop phonics skills, early mathematical skills and other aspects of curricular. Focused activities are planned for the week which are directed by and assessed by practitioners.

Once a child has settled into the Unit (typically after one term), they will start to take part in Forest School sessions. The Forest Schools approach is a philosophy for effective teaching and learning. In brief, skills and experiences gained through using the outdoor environment create more effective learners in the classroom. The children will not just learn about nature, but also about working together, making choices for themselves, taking care of themselves and others, being respectful to others and having their own opinions and needs valued. The sessions take

place in Glapton Wood or, sometimes, in the Blessed Robert Widmerpool (BRW) Forest School Area.

The curriculum design is underpinned by Development Matters (Revised 2023) and the Catholic ethos of our school to ensure that all seven areas of learning are planned systematically and progressively for all children. All themes have the Catholic Religious Education Directory (RED) and Catholic Social Teachings (CST) at their heart so that the core values of the school are woven through everyday life. Children are allowed time and supported to settle in to enable their levels of well-being and involvement to be developed, providing a strong foundation for learning. Throughout their time in the Unit, key experiences are revisited regularly allowing children the opportunity to build on and extend prior knowledge and deepen their learning. There is a carefully-thought through balance of adult and child-led learning opportunities ensuring knowledge and skills are developed sequentially and rigorously. The planned focus activities and continuous provision, together with the structure of the Unit enable children the space and time to play, learn and deepen their knowledge, whilst supported by skilled staff. FS2 children act as role-models for the younger children, enabling new children to learn, whilst they themselves have the opportunity to explain and apply their own learning and develop their metacognitive strategies.

Early reading is of paramount importance. High quality texts are used to inspire and support the acquisition of children's language and vocabulary, whilst nurturing the children's love of reading. Phonics knowledge and skills are developed through daily teaching which is systematic, rigorous and planned based on formative and summative assessments of children.

IMPLEMENTATION

(Curriculum delivery; teaching – pedagogy; assessment – formative and summative)

The BRW Foundation Stage Curriculum Overview gives a clear direction and ensures coverage for the whole year. The indoor and outdoor environment provision and visits are shared and then all curriculum areas of learning show progression and coverage discreetly over FS1 and FS2. Each term is planned collaboratively ensuring a shared and consistent vision and content for all support staff and children. A themed curriculum map is created based on the children's interests and needs and in line with the rest of the school. All seven areas of learning, the characteristics of effective learning, all RED branches, including learning about other faiths, outdoor opportunities, home/school links, role play experiences, visits, visitors and Forest School sessions are incorporated ensuring children receive a broad and balanced curriculum which focuses on the key skills and knowledge required as previous assessments have informed.

This curriculum map shows more details of the teaching and learning each term. A focus activity planner shows the teaching and learning that will take place each week. These are designed to incorporate enough time for focus activities to take place, be re-visited and extended further to support and challenge all children. Each focus activity normally lasts two weeks. These take place during group times whenever possible to allow adults more time to support play in the continuous provision. The focus activities are cross-curricular and have a balance of indoor and outdoor learning opportunities ensuring that all children receive a breadth of experiences, including all seven areas of learning, with a particular emphasis on the prime areas for all children until competence is gained. All focus activities have the characteristics of effective learning and opportunities to develop metacognitive strategies interwoven. The RED curriculum document forms the basis of all RE teaching and learning. This enables us to ensure that this learning is progressive, sequential and previous knowledge is continually revisited and deepened. 10% of the curriculum is dedicated to the teaching and learning of RE through a balance of adult and child-led experiences. In addition, adults plan

and support children to take part in Celebrations of the Word weekly. These are sometimes celebrated in the classroom or, sometimes in the hall, with Key Stage One children. Home/School links are capitalised upon by including parents in all topics and themes. This could be done in a range of ways from inviting them in to share their experiences, talents and skills to enhance our topics or simply by asking them to talk with their child about key themes and sharing their conversations back in school. Role-play areas are integral to children's learning and development. The opportunity to act out their home experiences is crucial and available all year round. In addition, role-play areas are planned to enhance our curriculum themes. These areas are developed with a clear focus on providing real-life, meaningful places to play that authentically develop children's knowledge and skills in all areas of the curriculum.

Each child is entitled to take part in Forest-school sessions per term. These are planned and developed by experienced Forest-School leaders and link with the current themes in the Foundation Stage Unit. These sessions develop the children's resilience, resourcefulness, independence, confidence to have-a-go, their relationships with each other and their ability to reflect.

Every day children access adult-planned and led teaching sessions focused on phonics and maths. These systematic and progressive sessions are based on the Little Wandle scheme. FS2 children are given a reading book linked to their current phonics phase.

Story time is a valued part of every day; Quality texts are chosen, shared and enjoyed together with a focus on developing vocabulary and imagination. Key texts, including poetry, non-fiction and nursery rhymes are chosen for each topic and unpicked and developed in FS2 through a Talk for Writing approach (Imitation>Innovation>Invention). Story Steps is used in FS1 and this develops understanding of stories through movement and imagination.

Maths planning is based on acquiring the knowledge and skills in the areas of counting, comparison, composition, change and pattern. The focus is on developing depth of understanding of numbers to five (FS1) and twelve (FS2). Shape and measure learning is predominantly supported through continuous provision. Pattern exploration includes numerical patterns and depth is achieved through the understanding of patterns in many contexts. This is a mastery approach where children are given the opportunity to develop and deepen their understanding of key mathematical concepts in a range of ways.

From the moment children enter the Foundation Stage at the beginning of the session, they can explore the broad, rich learning opportunities within the continuous provision inside and outside. This provision is carefully planned, open-ended and always of high quality. All members of staff are responsible for particular areas of the environment and dedicated time is given regularly to evaluate and improve these. In addition, these areas are enhanced to match the curriculum themes, ensuring that the children can apply their learning wherever they are playing. Children are also encouraged to take responsibility by using a 'Choose it, Use it, Put it away' mantra.

Children are assessed in a variety of ways throughout their time in the Unit. The evidence gathering for these assessments, as detailed below, is only what is necessary and noteworthy to support the professional judgement of the teacher. By the end of the first three weeks at school baseline information will be gathered on all FS1 children in all Prime areas of learning and in Literacy, Maths and RE. A long learning story observation is carried out on every child and then further learning stories planned for children 'not on track'. This is shared at the Unit Meeting and a summary of learning and the child's next steps are decided upon. The next steps are completed in the following days. This enables personalised and authentic learning for every child. Every member of staff in the Unit observes the children following a rigorous

system, incidental notes of significant learning are made to build a broad picture of every child's strengths. This deep knowledge of every child in the Unit enables all staff to make purposeful interventions when supporting children's learning in the continuous provision. FS2 children will be assessed according to the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment within the first six weeks of the Autumn term.

Significant incidental observations are recorded on sticky labels or in the form of annotated photographs. These assessments are on-going and formative. In addition, other evidence such as significant children's work or scribed speech is collected. This evidence, together with parents' comments about their children's achievements is collected together to form a Learning Journey for each child. All children are assessed whilst taking part in focus and group time activities and these assessments are held together in a class file. Detailed summative assessments in all areas of learning including additional writing, phonics and RE are completed every term. These are checked against the BRW Foundation Stage Checkpoints and Progression Document 2025-26 to determine which children are 'On Track' or 'Not On Track', in order for provision to be adapted and interventions planned to ensure that the needs of all children are met. If children are assessed as needing early support with their communication, physical or social development, discussions will take place with parents. With the parents' consent, OLOL or outside agency help will be sought as early as possible.

This evidence, together with practitioner knowledge, is used to complete the tracker statements on the Arbor system. This uses Development Matters (Revised 2023) to track and record the development of children in the Foundation Stage. This is updated in October to create a baseline, December, April and June for children who start in September (FS1 and FS2). For children starting in January, it will be updated in February for a baseline, April and June. For children starting in April, it will be updated in May for a baseline and in June.

The FS2 teacher will make a best-fit judgement on Early Learning Goals at the end of the year. The final data to be submitted centrally is completed in June.

IMPACT

(Attainment – qualifications and assessments; Progress; Knowledge and skill development; Destinations)

Due to the strong vision and rigorous implementation of a broad, balanced and rich curriculum all children make excellent progress from their start to end points. All children including those with EAL or SEND are able to know more, remember more and do more because of the numerous opportunities to revisit and build on knowledge and skills in a meaningful, play-based setting.

Disadvantaged, EAL and SEND children are able to develop their cultural capital alongside all other children because of the emphasis put on developing vocabulary, social skills and confidence from the moment they begin at Blessed Robert Widmerpool School.

High expectations within a nurturing environment where all staff are clear of the end points and children have developed the foundations of life-long learning skills, including how to build effective relationships, develop responsibility, resilience, reflectiveness and resourcefulness enable children to be ready for the next stage in learning.

This policy will be reviewed in October 2026.