St. Francis’ Nursery Unit

Our Aims for the Pre-School Year

We at St. Francis’ Nursery Unit, in developing the Nursery Curriculum, recognise that the needs of each individual child are paramount. We value the children as individuals and recognise that each child comes to our setting with a unique personality, set of experiences, background and level of development.

We realise that young children need to feel happy and secure in a homely atmosphere and as such we aim to provide a loving, caring and safe environment which is both stimulating and challenging.

The Pre-School Child needs opportunities to develop personally, socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively. We in St Francis’ Nursery Unit, therefore aim to provide a broad and balanced range of activities and experiences in the six areas of the Northern Ireland Pre-School Curriculum and Areas of Play that are exciting, purposeful and relevant to each child’s age and stage of development and lives. These activities and experiences allow the child to develop concentration and a broad range of skills and competences as well as, to learn new concepts with the guidance and support of sensitive, understanding and interested adults. We in St Francis’ Nursery Unit see the need to participate sensitively in the children’s play/work and so help each child to develop a positive attitude to learning and make progress in all the areas of learning according to his/her ability. The young child learns best through “hands on experience” and as such we aim to provide lots of opportunities for investigating, exploring and creating without the fear of making mistakes which builds the child’s confidence and self-esteem and builds on his/her sense of wonder and amazement.

Pre-school children need to learn to interact with others and to become part of a group. Taking into account and valuing each child as an individual with a unique personality and background, we aim to provide opportunities and situations which enable the young child to play/work in solitary, parallel and co-operative fashions, with the hope that the young child will move through these stages and ultimately feel comfortable and confident at interacting in small and large groups, continually developing self-confidence, self-esteem and self-control. The young child needs time to talk and share with other children and interested adults and to listen to others speaking. Therefore, throughout the day in our setting we aim to ensure that all children are listened to and spoken to appropriately by adults and peers. All activities provided are aimed at enabling the young child to develop confidence in speaking to others and taking part in conversations as well as helping him/her to listen to others and begin to value other people’s contributions and opinions.
Young children need opportunities to explore the environment, both indoors and outside. Consequently, we in St Francis’ Nursery value the learning experiences and opportunities provided both indoors and outdoors equally. Learning experiences are planned by the staff for both environments and weather permitting we operate an “Indoor/Outdoor” policy for a period each day, where the children have a choice of whether to work indoors or outside.

Indeed we recognise that all children have different modes of learning and we feel that our “Indoor/Outdoor” policy caters for each child’s needs.

Finally the young child needs to feel secure in the knowledge that home and school work in harmony. Consequently we value parents and families of the children and aim to provide a welcoming atmosphere where they feel comfortable and valued and as such we can work together for the benefit of each individual child.

**In summary we aim to:**
- Create a relaxed, stimulating learning environment which encourages spontaneous discovery and enables children to develop skills and concepts.
- Provide opportunities for children to experiment without risk of failure, to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, and a positive attitude to learning.
- Encourage self confidence, self-control and co-operation with others.
- Develop a range of social skills- sharing, taking turns, co-operation, working as part of a group.
- Develop successful learners eg. attitudes, motivation, perseverance, concentration, co-operation, reflection, autonomy, enjoyment of being a learner.
- Stimulate curiosity and encourage exploration and investigation.
- Encourage problem solving.
- Encourage creativity and imaginative thought.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop physical skills and co-ordination.
- Encourage the development of literacy, numeracy and scientific skills and concepts.
- Help children develop an awareness of the feelings, opinions and needs of others.
- Increase attention span and the ability to concentrate.
- Encourage respect and care for classroom resources and to help children to recognise the importance of class rules and routines.
- Provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to take responsibility and make choices and decisions.
- Ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all the children.