PREP SCHOOL · RECEPTION

Early Years Foundation Stage *Policy*

This policy applies to the Reception year. It should be read in conjunction with the English as an Additional Language (EAL), Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety, Medical and First Aid, Risk Assessment, Safeguarding, Safer Recruitment, Staff Code of Safe Conduct, SEND, Teaching, Learning and Assessment and Trips policies.

St Columba's College is conducted in the educational tradition of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. As such it nurtures a holistic environment which includes a commitment to academic excellence, religious values, friendly discipline, and personal attention.

Policy owner	**Head of Prep**	Date reviewed	**Sept 2026**
Date of next review	**Sept 2027**	Ratify by governors	**ESP**

SECTION 1

Background

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their true potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. When parents choose St Columba's Prep, they want to know that the provision will keep their children safe and help them to thrive. This document is the framework that provides that assurance.

The basis of this policy is the Department for Education (DfE) 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage', dated 13th June 2026 and effective from 1st September 2026. The full publication is available as the EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers.

The initial document stated that this framework is mandatory for all early years' providers: maintained schools, non-maintained schools, Independent Schools, and all providers on the Early Years Register. However, on 13th August 2021 the DfE confirmed that they had received our notification and that we meet all the necessary conditions to take up an exemption from the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children aged 3 and over. This is not an exemption from the EYFS safeguarding and welfare requirements and these still apply. The learning and development requirements are given legal force by an Order made under Section 39(1)(a) of the Childcare Act 2006. The safeguarding and welfare requirements are given legal force by Regulations made under Section 39(1)(b) of the Childcare Act 2006.

At the time of publication permission was granted to re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. Thus, St Columba's College Prep School has used this as part of our overarching policy for Reception classes.

This document covers the education and care of all children in Early Years (Reception), including children with special educational needs and disabilities. It does not apply to wrap around and holiday care (i.e. care offered before and after a school day and activity holidays). In line with the original document, wrap around and holiday providers should be guided by, but do not necessarily need to meet, all the learning and development requirements. However, we do discuss with parents and/or carers the support we intend to offer, always seeking to complement learning in the Reception Class in which the children spend more time. Staff caring for children in Early Morning Care and After School Club are included in the process of Supervision Meetings to ensure the wellbeing of all children, and they understand and follow procedures to ensure feedback, continuity of care and appropriate staff:child ratios for the youngest children.

SECTION 2

Introduction

2.1 Children join St Columba's at the beginning of the school year in which they are five. We believe that every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and five have a major impact on future life chances. Good parenting and high-quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.

2.2 The principles set out in the DfE Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) frameworks form the basis of the standards that our Reception Class meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. They promote teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and give children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

2.3 By selecting the aspects of the EYFS that we believe offer the best experiences for our children in St Columba's, we seek to provide:

- quality and consistency in our Early Years provision, so that everyone makes good progress and nobody gets left behind.
- a secure foundation through learning and development opportunities planned around the needs and interests of each individual child and assessed and reviewed regularly.
- partnership working between staff members and with parents and/or carers.
- equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

2.4 Through careful individual assessment of our children's needs (including growth mindset and PSB skills – Prep Schools Baccalaureate) excellent outcomes in learning and development are achieved and the highest standards of safeguarding and child welfare are obtained. The learning and development requirements cover:

- the areas of learning and development which shape our activities and experiences (educational programmes) for pupils in Reception.
- the Early Years Goals, which include and exceed the knowledge, skills and understanding children should have at the end of Reception within the National Curriculum.
- our own detailed baseline and year end assessment arrangements for measuring progress and reporting to parents and/or carers, including formative and summative assessment and careful analysis of assessment data. We use the Cambridge CEM-BASE testing system.

2.5 The safeguarding and welfare requirements cover the steps that the College must take to keep the children safe and promote their welfare.

Overarching principles

Five guiding principles shape practice in our Early Years classes. These are:

- every child is given opportunities to be morally and spiritually aware.
- every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between staff members and parents and/or carers.
- children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

SECTION 3

Learning and development requirements

3.1 This section defines what we do at St Columba's, working in partnership with parents and/or carers, to promote the learning and development of all children in Early Years (Reception). The learning and development requirements are informed by the best available evidence on how children learn and reflect the broad range of skills, knowledge and attitudes children need as foundations for good future progress. We aim to guide the development of children's capabilities with a view to ensuring that all the children complete this phase of their schooling ready to benefit fully from the opportunities ahead of them.

3.2 The Early Years Learning and Development requirements comprise:

- educational programmes described below covering seven areas of learning and development.
- St Columba's College Early Years Goals, which encompass established age-related expectations and summarise the knowledge, skills and understanding with which we aspire to have equipped all children by the end of the Reception academic year.
- the Assessment Requirements (when and how staff members will assess children's achievements and should discuss children's progress with parents and/or carers).

Areas of learning and development

3.3 Our education programme builds on each child's previous experience through the seven areas of learning and development. We believe all areas of learning and development to be important and inter-connected and to be based on the loving, caring foundation of Personal, Social, Emotional and Spiritual Development that underpins all our work. We aim to ignite our children's curiosity and enthusiasm and to build their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive through these seven areas of learning:

- Personal, Social, Emotional and Spiritual Development
- Communication and Language
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Physical Development
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

3.4 Staff members consider the individual needs, interests and stage of development of all children in their class and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development. Whilst staff members working with Nursery age

children focus strongly on the prime areas of Communication and Language, Physical Development and Personal, Social, Emotional and Spiritual Development, by the time the children arrive at St Columba's they are generally ready for the balance to shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning.

However, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, the class teacher would discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child. The class teacher considers whether a child may have a special educational need or disability requiring specialist support, in conjunction with PLT and the Learning Support Coordinator (SENDCO). They link with and help families to access relevant services from other agencies as appropriate.

3.5 We have developed our own programmes of study involving a range of activities and experiences for the children characterised as a curriculum of Enrichment and Engagement. We aim to offer every child a chance to be inspired and to shine in a wide range of challenges including languages, creative enrichment and life skills. We also seek to enrich their experience by actively involving parents, College staff and children from the Upper Prep and Senior School in the Early Years learning community.

- Personal, Social, Emotional and Spiritual Development involves helping the children to develop a positive sense of themselves and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities. Some of these objectives are met through our commitment to personal and unstinting engagement with our pupils. Our distinctive Catholic ethos underpins all we do and helps to develop a respect for all faiths.
- Communication and Language Development involves giving the children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations. Tapestry (the Online Learning Journal) allows our children to share and speak about personal experiences. Storytelling and talk for writing form part of these activities too. Likewise, 'Drawing Club' enhances language and communication skills, fine motor skills and imagination through a focus on tales and stories. Phonic development involves encouraging the children from their personal baseline stage to link sounds and letters, to form letters correctly and to develop and motivate reading and writing skills. The children are given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.
- Literacy Development involves providing the children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in reading and writing. The children are given access to a wide range of books to inspire writing skills and to apply skills learnt in phonics and storytelling. The children have a daily phonics lesson where they are grouped according to their development in this area. We use the Super Sonic Phonics scheme.
- Mathematics Development involves providing the children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures. Although mathematical skills and understanding are largely taught through practical and play

activities, the children are also given opportunities to begin to record their mathematical work. The curriculum in Reception is guided by school-wide use of Maths Mastery including the White Rose Maths programme and is enriched by simple statistics and ICT.

- Physical Development involves providing indoor and outdoor opportunities, some of which are taught by specialist PE teachers, for the children to be active and interactive; to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement and to understand the importance of teamwork. The children are helped to understand the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food. They are also encouraged to develop excellent control of fine and gross muscle control in detailed life skills such as cookery, forest skills and sewing.
- Understanding the World involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment. We promote the Catholic Social teaching 'care for Creation' and instil a sense of joy and wonder for the children via activity in our Forest Area. Our aim is that through World Cultures lessons and during their time in the Lower Prep, children will gain an exposure to a wide range of languages and cultures that is truly reflective of our world.
- Expressive Arts and Design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through activities in Art, Music, Movement, Dance, Role-Play, and Design and Technology, some of which is taught by specialist teachers.

3.6 For children whose home language is not English, we take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for them to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home. We give the children opportunities to reach a good standard in English language during the Early Years, ensuring they are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin Prep One. Activities designed to enrich the language and vocabulary for all children in Reception often have value for children with English as an Additional Language so that addressing their needs effectively can be achieved in a thoroughly inclusive and mutually beneficial manner. When assessing communication, language and literacy skills, teachers assess the children's skills in English. If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, the class teacher would explore their skills in the home language with parents and/or carers, to establish whether there is cause for concern about language delay.

3.7 Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. We provide many opportunities for interactions to develop social skills. As well as assessing academic progress, we assess children for their emotional wellbeing and levels of involvement by half-termly review. We have a pupil review meeting to discuss where the children are at developmentally and discuss any next steps and any extra support that may be needed for them. It is known that play is essential for children's development, building their confidence and their powers of concentration as they learn to explore, think about problems, and relate to others. It is up to the class teachers to decide about the balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities, knowing that children learn both by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults,

understanding that as children move through their Reception year the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults, to help the children prepare for more formal learning in Prep One.

3.8 In planning and guiding children's activities, class teachers reflect on the different ways that children learn. We have developed a strong learning ethos stretching from Early Years to Prep Six and beyond in which characteristics of effective teaching and learning are fostered and celebrated. In Early Years and the Lower Prep, the children are introduced to good learning habits through the characteristics of growth mindset and the implementation of the PSB skills set of: Compassion, Communication and Collaboration, Independence, Leadership, Reviewing and Improving, and Thinking and Learning. Beginning in the Reception Year, these characteristics are based on the following:

- playing and exploring — children investigate and experience things, and are confident to 'have a go'; they demonstrate deep and sustained levels of involvement and engagement.
- active learning — children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties; they enjoy their own achievements and demonstrate resilience in the face of setbacks.
- creating and thinking critically — children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things; they begin to evaluate and adapt their own work.
- ethical thinking — children understand right from wrong and begin to explore the consequences of their actions through guided role-play, discussion and peer and adult reinforcement during work and play.

3.9 Each child is assigned a key person, known as the class teacher (a safeguarding and welfare requirement — see paragraph 5.22). The College informs parents and/or carers of the name of the class teacher and teaching assistant and explains their role at a meeting before their child starts Reception. The class teacher (key person) will help to ensure that every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs. The teacher will seek to engage and support parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home both informally and through written communications and meetings.

3.10 The Prep School recognises that a quality learning experience for children requires a quality workforce. We are fortunate to have outstanding staff, all of whom are well qualified and highly skilled, enabling us to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children. Information about staff qualifications is outlined in Section 5. As a school we regularly consider the training and development needs of all staff members with a comprehensive programme of Continual Professional Development (CPD), thus ensuring the Reception Staff offer a consistent and constantly improving learning experience for the children.

3.11 The level of progress children should be expected to have attained by the end of the Reception Class is defined by the goals set out below.

St Columba's Early Years Goals

Personal, Social, Emotional and Spiritual Development

Self-confidence and self-awareness

Children are confident to try new activities and say why they like some activities more than others. They are able to show independence, resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge. They are confident to speak in a familiar group, will talk about their ideas, and will choose the resources they need for their chosen activities. They say when they do or don't need help. Children can explain the rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly. Children are able to manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet and understanding the importance of healthy food choices. Children will be taught the importance of good oral hygiene — brushing teeth regularly and not eating too many sweet things.

Managing feelings and behaviour

Children show an understanding and talk about how they and others show feelings. Children talk about their own and others' behaviour, its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable. They work as part of a group or class and understand and follow the rules. They adjust their behaviour to different situations and try to take changes of routine in their stride. Children set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate. Children give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. These aspects of a child's development are assessed through observations and are rewarded through different awards including the Coindre Award and Super Student Award at assemblies. House points are linked to the PSB buttons; praise, postcards home and phone calls or emails home are all supportive of recognising how our children are progressing.

Building relationships

Children work and play co-operatively, taking turns with others. They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity. They show sensitivity to their own and others' needs and feelings and form positive attachments to adults and friendships with peers and other children. Children have opportunities to interact with older pupils from the whole range of the student body.

Spiritual

Children learn about the Christian faith through Bible stories, class prayers, liturgies, Masses and celebrations. Children are also encouraged to draw on their experience to live out the Gospel message in their everyday life. Children are surrounded by examples of the qualities that support being a good and kind person. They are taught about world religions as various religious events arise throughout the year and through the help of parents.

Communication and Language

Listening and attention

Children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions, or actions. They give their attention to what others say in whole class discussions and small group interactions and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity. Children hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.

Understanding

Children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events. Children make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding.

Speaking

Children effectively express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including the use of past, present, and future tenses. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events. They show awareness of listeners' needs, responding to questions where necessary. Children receive modelling and support from their teachers. Opportunities are given to participate in small group, class, partner and one-to-one discussions, where children confidently offer their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary. Children are able to offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate.

Literacy

Reading

Children read and understand simple sentences that are consistent with their phonic knowledge. They use phonic knowledge to decode regular words by sound-blending and read them aloud accurately, beginning to take note of basic punctuation. They also read some common exception words. They demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read. The children read with an adult daily and are assessed each half term on their phonic knowledge. Children are encouraged to say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs.

Writing

Children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds. They are able to write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed. They also write some common exception words. They write simple phrases and sentences which can be read by themselves and others, and they begin to make sense of full stops and uppercase letters. Some words are spelt correctly, and others are phonetically plausible, by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters. Children form their letters correctly in preparation for joining.

Comprehension

Children demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary. They are able to anticipate (where appropriate) key events in stories. Children use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes, and poems and during role play.

Mathematics

Through the school-wide application of the principles of Maths Mastery and White Rose Maths children are taught to know and use numbers, to calculate and to use and apply their mathematical understanding and vocabulary.

Numbers

Children count reliably, place numbers in order and say which number is one more or one less than a given number. Children have a deep understanding of number to ten, including the composition of each number. Children are able to subitise (recognise quantities without counting) up to ten. Children use quantities and objects, they add and subtract two single-digit numbers and count on or back to find the answer. They solve problems, including doubling, halving, and sharing. Children can automatically recall number bonds up to five (including subtraction facts) and some number bonds to ten, including double facts. They begin to record their mathematical understanding using mathematical graphics and to use larger numbers when ready. They learn to use and apply their mathematical understanding.

Shape, space and measures

Children use everyday language to talk about size, weight, capacity, position, distance, time, and money to compare quantities (up to 10 in different contexts) and objects and to solve problems. They recognise, create, and describe patterns. They explore characteristics of everyday objects and shapes and use mathematical language to describe them. Children can recognise when one quantity is greater than, less than or the same as the other quantity.

Numerical patterns

Children can verbally count beyond twenty, recognising the pattern of the counting system. They can explore and represent patterns within numbers up to ten, including evens and odds, double facts and how quantities can be distributed equally.

Physical Development

Gross motor skills

Children show good control and co-ordination in large and small movements in dance, gymnastics, and games with and without a ball. They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space and obstacles with consideration for themselves and others. They move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping and climbing. Children

demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing. They have a basic understanding of the importance of teamwork. They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing. They begin to evaluate their own performance.

Fine motor skills

Children hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing — using the tripod grip in almost all cases. Children can use a range of small tools including scissors, paintbrushes and cutlery.

Health and self-care

Children know the importance for good health of physical exercise and a healthy diet and talk about ways to keep healthy and safe. They manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing, undressing and going to the toilet independently.

Understanding the World

People, culture and communities

Children talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members. They know that other children don't always enjoy the same things and are sensitive to their needs. They know about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities, traditions and different religions through drawing on their own experiences and what they have been learning in class. They understand the value of treating others with respect and they are confident of being treated with respect themselves. Children can describe their immediate environment and are able to describe similarities and differences between life in this country and other countries using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps.

The natural world

Children know about similarities and differences in relation to places, objects, materials and living things drawing on their experiences and what they have been learning in class (reading/ICT). They talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another. Children explore the natural world, and they make observations and drawings of animals and plants, ask spontaneous questions and explain why some things occur and talk about changes in the natural world and in the world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter.

Past and present

Children can talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society. Children know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read and taught in class. Children understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling.

Technology

Children recognise that a range of technology is used in places such as homes and schools, forming part of the everyday learning experience. They select and use technology for educational purposes, knowing that some equipment can be programmed to perform various functions.

Expressive Arts and Design

Exploring and creating using materials and media

Children safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools, and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function. They experiment with ways of changing the different materials. Children share their creations, explaining the process they have used. Children make use of props and materials when role playing characters in narratives and stories.

Being imaginative and expressive

Children sing songs, dance and make music. They perform songs, rhymes (including a range of well-known nursery rhymes), poems and stories with others and, when appropriate, try to move in time with music. Children use what they have learnt about media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes. They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role-play and stories. Children recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher.

Being evaluative

Children learn to describe their work and their plans, developing the ability to evaluate what is good and what could be improved; they begin to use this information to adapt their work.

SECTION 4

Assessment

4.1 Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and staff members recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment at the College (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves teachers and teaching assistants observing the children both in play and work to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles and to use these observations to shape learning experiences for each child. In their interactions with children, staff members respond to their own day-to-day observations about the child's progress and observations that parents and carers share. Children are aware of the PSB skill of reviewing and improving to further support their learning.

4.2 Assessment will not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with the children, nor require excessive paperwork. Paperwork is limited to that which is necessary to promote the child's successful learning and development. Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development via Tapestry, an Online Learning Journal. Staff members address any learning and development needs in partnership with staff, PLT, parents and/or carers and any relevant professionals.

4.3 Termly maintenance of records against the Early Years Goals, completed by the child's key person (class teacher), forms the basis for the SCC Reception Profile (see para 4.4 and appendix). Individual Next Steps are used as an integral part of planning, enabling challenges to be set. These are recorded and communicated to parents via two written reports or via two parent evenings throughout the year. Additional Next Steps may be recorded and identified on individual pieces of work; these are always discussed with the child as verbal feedback.

Assessment at the end of Reception

4.4 In the Trinity term of Reception, an assessment profile is finalised for each child. The profile provides parents and carers, staff members and teachers with a well-rounded picture of each child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected goals and stages of development, and their readiness for Prep One. PSB skills are assessed each term. The profile reflects: on-going observation; all relevant records held by the school; discussions with parents and carers and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer allows can offer a useful contribution.

4.5 A portfolio of each child's work is part of this profile, along with a record of teacher-assessed attainment against our Early Years Goals (see para 3.11). Throughout the year, teachers maintain an on-going indication of each child's level of attainment across the curriculum.

4.6 Each child is also assessed using BASE (Cambridge-CEM), a Reception Baseline Assessment, both on entry (to give a baseline score, SOY — Start of Year) and at the end of Reception (EOY — End of Year). Additional assessments such as Phonic and Number assessments are carried out to help create a full picture of a child's strengths and identify areas that need support.

4.7 Prep One teachers are given a copy of the profile, together with the school report and any results. These inform a dialogue between Reception and Prep One teachers about each child's development and learning needs and assist with planning activities in Prep One.

4.8 We share information from the profile with parents and/or carers and invite them to discuss it with the class teacher who completed it. If any child leaves St Columba's during the academic year, we send our current assessment of their level of development to the relevant school within fifteen days of receiving a request.

4.9 The profile is completed for all children, including those with special educational needs or disabilities. Reasonable adjustments to the assessment process for children with learning difficulties and disabilities are made as appropriate. As a school we would consider whether we need to seek specialist assistance to help with this. All our children will have differing levels of skills and abilities across the profile, and we realise it is important that there is a full assessment of all areas of their development, to inform plans for future activities and to identify any additional support needs.

SECTION 5

Safeguarding and welfare requirements

Introduction

5.1 We aspire to make every classroom a safe incubator of talent. We recognise that children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. The safeguarding and welfare requirements specified in this section are designed to ensure that we have created a high-quality setting which is welcoming, safe and stimulating and where all the children are able to enjoy their learning and to grow in confidence.

5.2 We take all necessary steps to keep the children safe and well. The requirements in this section explain what we do to: safeguard children; ensure the suitability of adults who have contact with children; promote good health; manage behaviour; and maintain records, policies and procedures.

5.3 We are not required to have a separate policy for Early Years requirements, but we do ensure that the requirements are met either through existing policies or through separate policies where necessary. Our policies and procedures are all recorded in writing and available to staff on the College network. Key policies are available on the College website.

5.4 We will, as a school and staff, promote the good oral health of all children in our care. We will talk to the children about the effects of eating too many sweet things and the importance of brushing their teeth.

Child safeguarding

5.5 We are alert to any issues for concern in our children's lives at home or elsewhere. We have and implement clear policy and procedures to safeguard all children. It has been written in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSP). The safeguarding policy and procedures (contained within the College Safeguarding Policy) include an explanation of the action to be taken in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff and cover the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting, as detailed in the Prep Staff Handbook.

5.6 The Prep Deputy Head is designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children (DSL). The DSL is responsible for liaison with the local statutory children's services agencies, and with the LSP. He or she provides support, advice and guidance to staff on an on-going basis and on any specific safeguarding issue as required. The DSL has regular training in child safeguarding which at a minimum meets statutory requirements to ensure that he or she can identify, understand and respond appropriately to signs of possible abuse and neglect.

5.7 The College ensures that all staff are trained and regularly retrained to understand the safeguarding policy and procedures and have up to date knowledge of safeguarding issues. This training enables staff to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity and to respond in a timely and appropriate way. These may include:

- significant changes in a child's behaviour
- deterioration in a child's general well-being
- unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect
- comments made by a child which give cause for concern
- any reasons to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting, for example in the child's home
- inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of staff, or any other person working with the children (for example, inappropriate sexual comments; excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities; or inappropriate sharing of images).

5.8 The school will safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school, in compliance with all statutory guidelines. If we have concerns about any child's safety or welfare, all staff are aware of their responsibility to inform the DSL who will notify agencies without delay. In addition, staff are fully aware of their potential to contact these agencies directly, including the police in an emergency.

Suitable people

5.9 The College ensures that everyone looking after the children is suitable to fulfil the requirements of their roles. We have robust and effective systems in place to ensure that staff members, and any other person who is likely to have regular contact with the children, are suitable (as detailed in the College Safer Recruitment Policy). This is also the case for those living or working on the premises although none of these individuals have regular or unsupervised contact with Early Years children.

5.10 Anyone wishing to apply for any work at the College is informed that they are expected to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings which may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment at the setting). We do not allow people whose suitability has not been checked, including through a criminal records check, to have unsupervised contact with children being cared for. If for any reason a full DBS Enhanced Disclosure is not received before any person begins work, then a Children's Barred List check is carried out, and a managed system created whereby a full risk assessment is undertaken. This would specify that no unsupervised contact with any Early Years child would be permitted.

5.11 We keep detailed records (Single Central Register) of staff qualifications and the identity checks and vetting processes completed. This includes the criminal records disclosure, reference number, the date a disclosure was obtained and details of who obtained it.

5.12 We ensure that we meet our responsibilities under KCSIE 2026.

Staff taking medication or other substances

5.13 The College Drugs and Alcohol Policy clearly states that staff members must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substance which may affect their ability to care for children. If staff members are taking medication which may affect their ability to care for children, those staff members should talk to the PLT and seek medical advice from the nurse manager. The PLT is responsible for ensuring that those staff members only work directly with children if medical advice confirms that the medication is unlikely to impair that staff member's ability to look after children properly. Staff are aware that medication on the premises must be securely stored and out of reach of children at all times.

Staff qualifications, training, support and skills

5.14 As stated earlier, the Prep School is fully aware that the daily experience of our children and the overall quality of Early Years provision depend on all staff members having appropriate qualifications, training, skills and knowledge and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. We have a comprehensive induction programme that all new staff undertake. This helps them understand their roles and responsibilities. In addition to information about the academic and pastoral expectations we have for all staff, the induction training includes information about emergency evacuation procedures, safeguarding, child protection, the provider's equality policy and health and safety issues.

5.15 The Prep School ensures that appropriate arrangements are in place for supervising staff who have contact with the children and their families. Effective supervision provides support, coaching and training for the staff members and promotes the interests of children. We spend time developing a system to ensure that supervision fosters a culture of mutual support, teamwork and continuous improvement which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues.

5.16 Supervision provides opportunities for staff to:

- discuss any issues, particularly concerning children's development or well-being
- identify solutions to address issues as they arise
- receive coaching to improve their personal effectiveness
- make informed contributions to discussion in weekly meetings, during which there is a standing agenda item regarding concerns for individual children
- share information or concerns about Reception children through meetings and communication books, particularly relating to specialist lessons, Early Morning Care and After School Care.

5.17 The Head of Prep has overall responsibility for all children and staff from Reception to Prep Six. The Early Years setting is managed by the Early Years and Lower Prep Leads. These positions are only available to individuals with a full and relevant Level 6 qualification as defined by the Teaching Agency; at least half of all other staff hold at least a full and relevant Level 2 qualification. The Deputy Heads of Prep are capable and qualified to take charge in the Head's absence.

5.18 Regular staff appraisals are carried out to identify any training needs and secure opportunities for continued professional development for staff. This supports the staff in improving their qualification levels wherever possible. For any member of staff without a relevant qualification, we have facilitated appropriate training for Level 2 qualification in the past and continue to be open to this course of training now and in the future.

5.19 The Early Years Lead and class teacher must hold a current Paediatric First Aid (full course) certificate, at least one of whom will be on the premises at all times when children are present and will accompany children on outings. Paediatric First Aid training is renewed every three years, is local authority approved and relevant for workers caring for young children. See the Medical and First Aid Policy for the current list of all First Aiders, including paediatric.

5.20 Relevant EYFS staff (class teacher, classroom teaching assistant, breakfast and after school care staff and most staff in contact with EYFS children) hold a recognised Full Paediatric First Aid certificate, as noted in Annex A of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (September 2026).

5.21 The College ensures that staff have sufficient understanding and use of English to ensure the well-being of children in their care. A person would not be employed who was not in a position to keep records in English, to liaise with other agencies in English, to summon emergency help and to understand instructions such as those for the safety of medicines or food hygiene.

Key person

5.22 Each child must be assigned a key person, known as the class teacher. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. There is also a named teaching assistant who helps with this.

Staff:child ratios

5.23 Staffing arrangements meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. The PLT is responsible for ensuring that the children are adequately supervised, and they decide how to deploy staff to ensure children's needs are met. We inform parents and/or carers about staff deployment and, when relevant and practical, aim to involve them in these decisions. Children must usually be within 'sight and hearing' of staff and always within sight or hearing when children are eating.

5.24 Only those aged 17 or over are included in ratios. There are no staff under 17 but if there were, they would always be supervised. We do not include in our ratio any students on long term placements or volunteers aged 17 or over. If they were to be included, however, we would first satisfy ourselves that they were competent and responsible.

5.25 The ratio and qualification requirements set out below apply to the total number of staff available to work directly with children. Exceptionally, and where the quality of care and safety and security of children is maintained, exceptions to the ratios may be made. Play and lunchtime supervision is organised considering the needs and vulnerabilities of the children in EYFS.

5.26 St Columba's is an Independent School, where a person with Qualified Teacher Status or an Instructor works directly with the children. An Instructor is a specialist teacher providing education by instruction in Art, French, Music or PE where (a) special qualifications or experience or both are required, and (b) the PLT is satisfied with the qualifications or experience or both of the instructor.

5.27 Some children in the Reception Class attend school for longer than the school day (never more than 2 hours) or in the school holidays. The provision is run directly by the school with no teacher present; however a ratio of one member of staff to every eight children is applied for a young child, with at least one member of staff holding a full and relevant Level 3 qualification, and at least half of all other staff holding a full and relevant Level 2 qualification. We are also aware that a child is a young child up until 1st September following his or her fifth birthday, and The Childcare (Exemptions from Registration) Order 2008 specifies that where provision is made for a particular child for two hours or less a day, the carer is exempt from registration as a childminder. Individuals who supervise Early Years children within the extended day or in holiday clubs are only those deemed by the PLT and Governing Body to be fit and qualified to do so.

Attendance

5.28 For children to benefit fully from the educational opportunities provided by the College, they must maintain high levels of attendance and punctuality. Excellent attendance at school is key to good pupil progress and enjoyment of learning. The College recognises the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. This is an integral part of the College's ethos and culture. The College has a designated Senior Attendance Champion for EYFS. For further information regarding our attendance policy please see our Student Attendance and Punctuality Policy.

Health and medicines

See the Medical and First Aid Policy.

5.29 We promote the good health of children attending the College. We have two nurses on site and clear procedures, discussed with parents and/or carers, for responding to children who are ill or infectious. The Nurse Manager has clear guidelines to prevent the spread of infection and takes appropriate action if a child is ill. This is made clear to staff and detailed in the parent handbook.

5.30 The Medical and First Aid Policy includes procedures for administering medicines, including obtaining information about a child's needs for medicines and keeping this information up to date. Training is provided for staff if the administration of medicine requires medical or technical knowledge. Medicines are not usually administered unless they have been prescribed for the child by a doctor, dentist, nurse or pharmacist (medicines containing aspirin are only given if prescribed by a doctor). They are normally administered by the Nurse Manager.

5.31 Medicine (both prescription and non-prescription) is only administered to a child where written permission for that medicine has been obtained from the child's parent and/or carer. The Nurse Manager keeps a written record each time a medicine is administered to a child and informs their parents and/or carers on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

Food and drink

5.32 Children at the College are provided with healthy, balanced and nutritious meals; drinks and snacks are brought in from home. We adhere to the recommendations and advice offered by the EYFS Nutritional Guidance guide published in May. It is to ensure our catering offer meets the needs of all children. Before a child is admitted to the school, information is obtained about any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that the child has, and any special health requirements. Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible to children from water fountains or from the children's own bottles. We record on SIMS and act on any information from parents and carers about a child's dietary needs.

5.33 A fully equipped kitchen provides healthy meals, snacks and drinks for the children as necessary. The College is confident that those responsible for preparing and handling food are competent to do so. Teaching Assistants and Teachers who on occasions are involved in preparing and handling food receive training in food hygiene.

5.34 A member of staff holding a full Paediatric First Aid qualification is always present while EYFS pupils are eating. A designated member of staff ensures that meals and snacks meet the specific dietary needs of each child. Wherever possible, Early Years staff sit facing the children during mealtimes to monitor safe eating, minimise the risk of choking or food sharing, and remain alert to any potential allergic reactions.

Allergies — Benedict's Law

5.35 Our setting is committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment for children with allergies, following the principles of Benedict's Law and guidance from the Benedict Blythe Foundation. Parents and carers must provide up-to-date information about any allergies,

medication and emergency procedures. Staff will be trained to recognise and respond to allergic reactions, with prescribed emergency medication readily accessible. The setting will take appropriate measures to minimise exposure to known allergens and ensure children with allergies can participate fully in all activities. Allergy information will be regularly reviewed, and any allergic reaction or suspected exposure will be recorded and managed in accordance with the setting's procedures. The College has a Designated Allergy Lead.

Accident or injury

5.36 A First Aid box is always accessible with appropriate content for use with children. First Aid equipment is also carried as a matter of course on trips including weekly Swimming and Forest Friday sessions. The Nurse Manager keeps a written record of accidents or injuries and of First Aid treatment. Parents and/or carers are always informed of any accident or injury sustained by the child on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable, and of any First Aid treatment given. Any serious accident, illness or injury is reported to RIDDOR (see Medical and First Aid Policy).

Managing behaviour

5.37 A positive approach to behaviour management means that children are valued and regularly rewarded both in class and during whole school assemblies through the Columban Awards. Good behaviour is always encouraged, and all children generally meet our high expectations. We implement a behaviour management policy and procedures. We advocate a 'friendly discipline' approach. The Deputy Head is responsible for behaviour management and has the necessary skills to advise other staff on behaviour issues and to access expert advice if necessary. Various strategies are used and discussed by all staff, with careful consideration given to the individual needs of each child.

Safety and suitability of premises, environment and equipment

5.38 We ensure that our premises, including outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose. Spaces, furniture, equipment and toys are regularly checked to ensure they are safe for the children to use; the premises are secure with keypad entrances and CCTV, and a checklist is maintained. Daily cleaning keeps premises and equipment clean, and we are aware of, and comply with, requirements of health and safety legislation (including hygiene requirements). We have and implement a Health and Safety policy and procedures, which cover identifying, reporting and dealing with accidents, hazards and faulty equipment, including EYFS. Regular health and safety inspections of equipment take place.

5.39 We take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the children, staff and others on the premises in the case of fire or any other emergency; we have an emergency evacuation procedure. There is appropriate fire detection and control equipment (for example, fire alarms, smoke detectors,

and fire extinguishers) which is in working order and checked regularly. Fire exits are clearly identifiable, and fire doors are kept free of obstruction and easily opened from the inside.

Screen time and digital usage

5.40 The setting follows current EYFS guidance on screen use and promotes healthy, balanced use of digital technology. Screen use will be avoided for children under 2 and limited to up to one hour per day for children aged 2–5, taking account of individual needs. Digital devices will only be used purposefully to support learning and development and will not replace active play, physical activity, social interaction, outdoor learning or hands-on experiences. Children will be appropriately supervised when using screens, and staff will ensure that content is age-appropriate and supports children's wellbeing and development. This wording is aligned with the 2026 DfE early years screen-use guidance and the revised EYFS requirements.

help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/screen-use

Smoking

5.41 There is a 'no smoking' policy throughout the College site. This includes any room or outside play area where children are present or about to be present.

Premises

5.42 The premises and equipment are organised in a way that meets the needs of the children, and we continuously seek to update, renew and improve our provision of play and learning resources.

5.43 We ensure that, so far as is reasonable, the facilities, equipment and access to the premises are suitable for all children in line with our legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Reception children have access to an outdoor play area, ensuring that outdoor activities are planned and taken daily (unless circumstances make this inappropriate, for example unsafe weather conditions).

5.44 There is an adequate number (above recommendations) of toilets and hand basins available. Spare clothes and any other necessary items are always available.

5.45 There are various rooms where staff may talk to parents and/or carers confidentially, as well as a staff room for staff to take breaks away from areas being used by the children.

5.46 We only release the children into the care of individuals who have been notified to us by the parent and ensure that children do not leave the premises unsupervised. We take reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised persons entering the premises and, through a sign-in inventory system in the Prep office, there is an agreed procedure for checking the identity of visitors.

5.47 We carry public liability insurance, number 02/CSS/0113192.

Risk assessment

5.48 We have a clear and well-understood policy and procedures for assessing any risks to the children's safety, and review risk assessments regularly. The Head and Deputy Head determine where it is helpful to make written risk assessments in relation to specific issues, to inform staff practice, and to demonstrate how they are managing risks if asked by parents and/or carers or inspectors. Risk assessments identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked regularly, when and by whom, and how the risk will be removed or minimised.

Volunteers

5.49 Following changes introduced by the Crime and Policing Act 2026 and in accordance with the September 2026 EYFS Framework, the previous exemption for certain supervised unpaid volunteers undertaking regulated activity with children has been removed. The setting will ensure that all volunteers who undertake regulated activity with children are subject to the appropriate safer recruitment checks, including a barred list check where required. Regulated activity includes teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children where this is undertaken frequently, on more than three days within a 30-day period, or overnight. The setting will assess each volunteer's role and frequency of involvement to determine the level of checks required and will not allow individuals to undertake regulated activity until the necessary safeguarding checks have been completed.

Outings

5.50 The children are kept safe while on outings. Written parental permission for the children to take part in outings is always obtained. The teachers, in consultation with PLT, assess the risks or hazards which may arise for the children, and identify the steps to be taken to remove, minimise or manage those risks and hazards. The assessment includes consideration of adult to child ratios. We are aware that the risk assessment does not necessarily need to be in writing; this is for PLT to judge.

5.51 Vehicles in which children are transported, and the drivers of those vehicles, are adequately insured.

Equal opportunities

5.52 We have and implement a policy and procedures to promote equality of opportunity for all children at the College, including support for children with special educational needs or disabilities (see the College Equal Opportunities policy and additional guidance for the Early Years). This policy and guidance details:

- how the individual needs of all children are met, including how SEND children are included, valued and supported, and how reasonable adjustments are made for them
- the name of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator

- arrangements for reviewing, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of inclusive practices that promote and value diversity and difference
- how inappropriate attitudes and practices are challenged
- how the provision encourages the children to value and respect others.

Information and records

5.53 We maintain records and obtain and share information (with parents and carers, other professionals working with the children, and the police, social services and Ofsted as appropriate) to ensure the safe and efficient management of the setting, and to seek to ensure that the needs of all children are met. We have a daily message book (diary) and twice-yearly parent consultation evenings to enable a regular two-way flow of information with parents and/or carers, whose comments are incorporated into the children's records. The parents and carers of Early Years children see teachers and teaching assistants daily and can also see clearly displayed, detailed information about plans and learning objectives for each day. There is also a monthly newsletter home, and a 'Week Ahead' schedule sent weekly, as a general commitment to keeping parents and carers informed. A very warm and welcoming ethos ensures that informal communication between family and school is constant and open.

5.54 Confidential information and records about staff and pupils are held securely and are only accessible and available to those who have a right or professional need to see them. We are aware of our responsibilities under the Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998 and, where relevant, the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

5.55 All staff understand the need to protect the privacy of the children in their care as well as the legal requirements that exist to ensure that information relating to each child is handled in a way that ensures confidentiality. Parents and/or carers must be given access to all records about their child, provided no relevant exemptions apply to their disclosure under the Data Protection Act 1998. The DPA gives parents and carers the right to access information about their child that a provider holds. However, the DPA also sets out specific exemptions under which certain personal information may, under specific circumstances, be withheld from release. For example, a relevant professional will need to consider carefully whether the disclosure of certain information about a child could cause harm either to the child or to any other individual. All staff at the College, including those in Early Years, understand how data protection laws operate.

5.56 Records relating to individual children who leave school are retained as guided by our LEA.

Information about the child

5.57 We record a great deal of information for each child at the College, including the following: full name; date of birth; name and address of every parent and/or carer who is known to the school (and information about any other person who has parental responsibility for the child); which

parent(s) and/or carer(s) the child normally lives with; and emergency contact details for parents and/or carers.

Information for parents and carers

5.58 The parent handbook and parent guide to the Reception Class contain a great deal of information, including:

- how the EYFS is adapted and used at the College, and how parents and/or carers can access more information (for example, via the DfE website)
- the range and type of activities and experiences provided for the children, their daily routines, and how parents and carers can share learning at home
- how the school supports pupils with special educational needs and disabilities
- food and drinks provided for the children
- College policies and procedures (available on the website), including for if a parent and/or carer fails to collect a child at the appointed time, or if a child goes missing at or away from the setting
- staffing in the school; the name of their child's teacher and teaching assistant (key person) and his or her role; and a telephone number for parents and/or carers to contact in an emergency.

Complaints

5.59 The College has a written procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints from parents and carers and keeps a written record of any complaint and its outcome. We investigate written complaints relating to our fulfilment of the EYFS safeguarding requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint. The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted on request (see the Complaints policy for further information).

5.60 We make available to parents and/or carers details about how to contact Ofsted, if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. When we are aware that we are to be inspected by Ofsted, DfE or ISI, we notify parents and/or carers. After an inspection, we supply a copy of the report to parents and/or carers of all pupils including Reception.

Information about the provider

5.61 The School office, through SIMS and Edulink, maintains the following information:

- name, home address and telephone number of the Headmaster and any other person living or employed on the premises
- name, home address and telephone number of all staff who are regularly in contact with the children attending Reception

- a daily record of the names of the children being cared for on the premises, their hours of attendance and the names of each child's teacher.