Saint John's Key Features of Effective Practice

SAINT JOHN'S

1. The Best for Every Child

- All children deserve to have an equal chance of success.
- High-quality early education is good for all children. It is especially important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- We need to narrow the gap that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have compared to their peers.
- Children who have lived through difficult experiences can begin to grow stronger when they experience high-quality education and care.
- High-quality education and care is inclusive. Children's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly. All children promptly receive any extra help they need, so they can progress well in their learning.

2. High-Quality Care

- The child's experience must always be central to the thinking of every practitioner.
- Children thrive when they are loved and well cared for.
- High-quality care is consistent. Every practitioner needs to enjoy spending time with children.
- Effective practitioners are responsive to children.
- Practitioners understand that children are learning to be independent, so they will sometimes get frustrated.
- Practitioners know that school, and all transitions, involve big steps for children.

3. Curriculum: What We Want Children to Learn

- The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the school wants the children to learn.
- Planning to help every child to develop their language is vital.
- The curriculum needs to be ambitious. Careful sequencing will help children to build their learning over time.
- Children's learning is often driven by their interests. Plans need to be flexible.
- Children do not develop in a fixed way. Their development is like a spider's web with many strands, not a straight line.
- Depth in learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way.

4. Pedagogy: Helping Children to Learn

- Children are powerful learners. Every child can make progress in their learning, with the right help.
- Effective pedagogy is a mix of different approaches. Children learn through being active, by adults modelling, by observing each other andthrough guided learning and direct teaching.
- Practitioners carefully organise enabling environments for high-quality activities. Sometimes, they make time and space available for children to be independent and inventive. Sometimes, they join in to support and extend children's learning.
- Children also learn through group work, when practitioners guide their learning.
- A well-planned learning environment, indoors and outside, is an important aspect of pedagogy.

5. Assessment: Checking What Children Have Learnt

- Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know. It is not about lots of data and evidence.
- Effective assessment requires practitioners to understand child development. Practitioners also need to be clear about what they want children to know and be able to do.
- Accurate assessment can highlight whether a child has a special educational need and needs extra help.
- Before assessing children, it is a good idea to think about whether the assessments will be useful.
- Assessment should not take practitioners away from the children for long periods of time.

6. Self-Regulation and Executive Function

- Executive function includes the child's ability to:
  - hold information in mind,
  - focus their attention,
  - regulate their behaviour,
  - plan what to do next.
- These contribute to the child's ability to self-regulate:
  - focus their thinking,
  - monitor what they are doing and adapt,
  - regulate strong feelings,
  - be patient for what they want,
  - bounce back when things get difficult.
- Language development is central to self-regulation: children use language to guide their actions and plans. Independent activity gives many opportunities for children to focus their thinking, persist and plan ahead.

7. Partnership with Parents

- It is important for parents and schools to have a strong and respectful partnership. This sets the scene for children to thrive.
- This includes listening regularly to parents and giving parents clear information about their children's progress.
- The help that parents give their children at home has a very significantimpact on their learning.
- Some children get much less support for their learning at home than others. By knowing and understanding all the children and their families, schools can offer extra help to those who need it most.
- It is important to encourage all parents to chat, play and read with their children.