

St Mary's Catholic Primary School



EYFS Policy



EYFS POLICY 2023-2025



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1. School Mission

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School our Mission is:

**TO LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS
BY
LEARNING TOGETHER
LOVING OURSELVES
LOVING EACH OTHER
LOVING ALL PEOPLE
LOVING LIFE ITSELF
AND
CONSTANTLY STRIVING FOR
EXCELLENCE
WORTHY OF OUR GOD GIVEN GIFTS.**

2. Introduction

At Saint Mary's our mission is at the heart of everything we do...

'To love God above all things by learning together, loving ourselves, loving each other, loving all people, loving life itself and constantly striving for excellence worthy of our God given gifts.'

The Governors and staff at St Mary's Catholic Primary School recognise the importance of Early Years Education as the foundation upon which children build the rest of their lives.

Early Years Education is concerned with the physical, social, emotional, aesthetic and cognitive development of the individual, with no one area standing in isolation from the others. The Foundation Stage is like a jigsaw; each piece is equally important to complete the picture.

With this in mind, we aim to provide an environment which nurtures, stimulates and challenges pupils. We want our pupils to be happy, confident and competent learners, who are able to communicate their needs and ideas.

3. Intent

In the Early Years at Saint Mary's, our intent is to deliver an exciting, engaging and inclusive curriculum, rooted in our Catholic values, that is tailored to suit the individual needs of the children in our school. We work in partnership with parents to provide the best possible start at Saint Mary's, ensuring that each child reaches their full potential from their various starting points.

Our curriculum has been designed to build on the children's skills, knowledge and understanding on entry to Reception. Our learning environment enables children to be independent, to be curious, to make decisions about their learning, to take risks, to work collaboratively, to build resilience and to ask questions. We provide an engaging curriculum that maximises opportunities for meaningful cross-curricular links and learning experiences.

Our skillful adult interactions support the children to link their learning and experiences through their play from the start of Reception. With this in mind, we aim to provide an environment which nurtures, stimulates and challenges pupils. We want our pupils to be happy, confident and competent learners, who are able to communicate their needs and ideas.

Play is an essential part of children's early development. Our curriculum ensures that children have the opportunity to engage in meaningful play with their peers and EYFS staff across all areas of the EYFS framework, both indoors and outdoors. as well as promoting the unique child by offering periods of free play and child-initiated learning.

By the end of the Reception year, our intent is to ensure that all children make at least good progress from their starting points are equipped with the skills and knowledge to have a smooth transition into Year 1.

4. EYFS Team

At Saint Marys, we offer 60 Reception places each year. The pupils are divided into two classes – Reception St Bernadette (YRB) and Reception St Mother Teresa (YRT). The EYFS staff who work in Reception are:

- **EYFS Lead:** Mrs Richards
- **YRT Class Teacher:** Mrs Richards (job share)
- **YRT Class Teacher:** Mrs Russell (job share)
- **YRB Class Teacher:** Miss Detheridge
- **YRT Teaching Assistant:** Mrs Campbell
- **YRB Teaching Assistant:** Mrs Pitt
- **YRT SEND Teaching Assistant:** Mrs Ward

5. Transition from Nursery to Reception

It is important to note that children at St Mary's come from over 15 different nurseries. Our transition procedures are therefore rigorous and highly supportive to ensure every child settles into school well and enjoys learning.

In June before children start school, the children attend school for an induction morning or afternoon (15 at a time). This ensures that they spend quality time with their new teacher and teaching assistant as well as getting to know some of the other children in the class.

Following this, each nursery is contacted to send transition nursery records to school. We also have the opportunity to speak to nursery key workers to discuss any other matters, such as additional needs.

If there are any children with special needs, nursery visits are made by the Reception Class teacher, Foundation Stage Co-ordinator and SENCO, in order for provisions to be made to facilitate each child's learning prior to their arrival at school in September.

There is also an open evening held during this time, where information is shared with parents about the setting and parents have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss any concerns with teachers.

During the first week of school, the class teacher meets 1:1 with each parent to discuss each child in detail. It is also an opportunity for the parents and child to see the Reception classrooms once again.

The children come to school part time for the first two weeks, either every morning or afternoon. This enables children to settle into school gradually and so builds up their confidence. During this time detailed baseline observations and assessments, including the Statutory Baseline Assessment, are made of the children, using the Development Matters and Birth to Five Guidance. This enables teachers to assess where each child's starting point is and to plan for each child's next steps in learning in each area of the curriculum from the very start.

These observations and assessments are then shared with parents at the first parents evening in October.

6. Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

In Reception, the children will be taught with the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, which helps to support children's learning, development and welfare from birth to the age of five. Effective practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage is built upon four guiding principles. They provide a context for the requirements and describe how practitioners should support the development, learning and care of young children.

These principles are:

- 1. A Unique Child-** every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- 2. Positive Relationships-** children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or key person.
- 3. Enabling Environments-** the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.
- 4. Learning and Development-** children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all the children in early years provision, including children with special educational need and disabilities.

7. Characteristics of Effective Learning

The characteristics of effective learning underpin all seven areas of learning in the foundation stage. These are the processes that children undertake in order to become confident, resilient and independent learners. The development of these characteristics is a crucial part of early learning and Saint Mary's staff understand the importance of creating opportunities for children to develop these skills.

The characteristics of effective learning are:

Playing and exploring: children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.

‘Children’s play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children’s development.’

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practice 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. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations. Staff spend time playing alongside and with the children. This provides opportunities to model appropriate behaviour, turn taking, reinforce prior learning, and extend learning and assessment opportunities to inform future planning.

Active Learning: children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.

‘Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.’

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfactions as they take ownership of their learning.

Creativity and Critical Thinking: we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

‘When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.’

Children are given opportunities to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children’s thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

8. EYFS Curriculum – Areas of learning and development

All areas of Learning and Development are connected to one another and are equally important and depend on each other to support a rounded approach to child development. All the areas are delivered through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led, adult-directed and child-initiated activities. These areas of learning and development are underpinned by the four principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage i.e. A Unique Child, Positive Relationships, Enabling Environments and Learning and Development.

There are seven areas of Learning and Development and each is divided into aspects. The aspects for each area are:

Area of Learning and Development	Aspects (Early Learning Goals)
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-Regulation• Managing Self

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Relationships
Communication and Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening, Attention and Understanding • Speaking
Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gross Motor Skills • Fine Motor Skills
Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension • Word Reading • Writing
Maths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number • Numerical Patterns
Understanding the World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past and Present • People, Culture and Communities • The Natural World
Expressive Arts and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating with Materials • Being Imaginative and Expressive

The areas of learning and development are also grouped into two areas: Prime and Specific Areas.

The Prime Areas underpin all learning in EYFS and are made up of Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language and Physical Development.

The Specific Areas are Literacy, Maths, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

At Saint Mary's our Reception curriculum has been carefully designed to enable children to develop and make progress in all areas of learning through engaging topics. Our lessons aim to develop not just one, but several areas of learning and development simultaneously. Most importantly, Christ is at the centre of all that we do at Saint Mary's.

Our weekly timetable is made up of daily registration, prayers, collective worship and story time. Weekly literacy and maths lessons include a teacher input followed by planned activities for children to access either independently or with adult support both indoor and outdoor. The children also have time to access to our carefully considered continuous provision indoor and outdoor, to follow their interests and develop and practise the skills taught in guided sessions. Daily phonics lessons are in keeping with our whole school systematic and synthetic phonics programme, Little Wandle Letters and Sounds.

Children will also read in small guided reading groups and are read with at least three times per week. These guided reading books are also sent home on Thursday with an accompanying phonics activity to support reading at home.

Weekly RE lessons are in line with our RE curriculum 'Learning and Growing as People of God' and often include visits to St Mary's Church, role play, prayer services, artwork, writing and visits from Father John, our parish priest.

Fortnightly RSE lessons are taught in line with the whole school approach 'Life to the Full'.

Weekly 'topic' lessons develop the children's understanding of the world, expressive arts and design as well as their language and communication, physical development. Children are also able to apply and develop their maths and literacy skills through topic lessons.

The children have one PE lesson per week, where they wear their PE kit to school. This is taught inside in our school hall or outside on the AstroTurf or playground. It is important to note that the children also have ample opportunities to develop their fine and gross motor development

throughout the week, outside of their formal PE lesson, through outdoor play, bikes, using the activity trail, dance, gardening and the daily mile.

9. Observations and Assessment

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

Observations take the form of photographs, videos, adult written comments on children's work, and records of 'child's voice' on speech bubble post it notes. These are then displayed in each child's Learning Journal, RE book, Maths book or Writing book.

Teachers record the date, whether the learning was independent (I) or supported (S), which area of learning the observation links to and the range (Birth to Five) the child is working within on their observation or piece of work. This supports teachers to make accurate assessments, to plan for next steps, to feedback to parents and to assess against the Early Learning Goals at the end of Reception.

Children's progress is formally tracked and recorded on our school tracker at the end of each half term.

At the end of Reception, the children are assessed against all 17 Early Learning Goals. Children will be assessed as 'Expected' if they are consistently and independently achieving the goal, or 'Emerging' if they are still working towards achieving the goal.

Children who are 'Emerging' will also be assessed against the Development Matters Guidance and Birth to Five Guidance. This will be shared with Year One staff to ensure that each child's next step in learning can be planned for.

10. Play

In the Foundation stage at Saint Mary's, we are committed to meeting the individual needs of all the children. The welfare of the children is central to our work. All children are respected and valued. We aim to provide a safe, secure environment in which children feel able to take risks and learn from their mistakes. We help to foster the development of the whole child and enable all children to fulfil their individual potential. We believe children develop and learn best through a play-based curriculum.

Play is motivating for young children and at the core of how they learn. When children enjoy what they are doing and are self-motivated and they will learn to their full potential. Through play we aim to develop the whole child in terms of emotional, social, and physical areas of growth. At St Mary's, we aim to enable all children to have equal access to good quality play opportunities both indoors and outdoors. We realise that the curriculum needs to be carefully planned and structured ensuring a strong routine. To be effective the curriculum will provide:

- Planned provision for children's different starting points
- Opportunities for child-initiated play
- Adult-led activities to match the children's needs and abilities
- Opportunities to gain new skills and experience new things
- An expectation that children will 'have a go' and 'try their best'
- Opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas

What do children gain from play?

Through play children:

- Develop independence
- Experience success and failure without fear and therefore develop their confidence and self-esteem
- Explore and investigate
- Develop social skills
- Practise, consolidate and revisit skills
- Imitate and replay real life experiences
- Develop social inclusion. It helps children understand the people and places in their lives, learn about the environment and develop their sense of community
- Acquire skills of problem solving and organisation
- Develop language
- Develop imaginative skills
- Develop creativity
- Keep healthy and active

EYFS practitioners work hard to plan learning opportunities across all areas of the curriculum that enable the children to learn through play, whether this is independent or with an adult. Learning is active, exciting, engaging and fun!

11. Parents as Partners

Parents are children's first and most significant educators. Therefore, we see parents as important partners in children's learning. Hence, we value parents' opinions and the information they give us and involve them wherever possible. When parents and practitioners work together the results have a positive impact on their child's development and learning. Some examples of partnership in Reception at St Mary's include;

- Parents attend welcome transition meetings in the Summer Term before their child starts school to discuss their child with their class teacher.
- Sending weekly activities home for parents and children to work together to consolidate learning in class, such as writing, number or topic work.
- Children are given 3 reading books each week, which parents are encouraged to read with their children at home. Teachers and assistants record in the child's Reading Record each week and parents are expected to do the same.

- Newsletters are circulated to parents on a regular basis and can be accessed on the school website.
- Parents are invited to class Masses, Assemblies and celebrations such as the Nativity production and Easter Bonnet Parade.
- Parental Consultation meetings (Parent's Evening) in Autumn and Spring Term.
- Parents are invited to workshops that take place throughout the year. In Reception these include: Shared Story Time, Phonics Workshop, Maths Workshop and Writing Workshop.

12. **Risk Assessment**

Daily risk assessments are carried out by EYFS staff in the reception classroom each morning before school, with special attention given to the outdoor areas, to ensure that there is a safe and secure learning environment for all children.