



Early Years Policy

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Policy approved by the Governing Body

Date:

Signature: Chair of Governor

Reviewed: January 2018

Next Review: January 2021

Written by Denise Morgan (Early Years Leader) January 2018

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Early Years Policy

At St Mary's we believe that each child is entitled to a positive and meaningful start to their school life, in which they can establish solid foundations on which to develop into independent and fearless lifelong learners.

Our aim is to:

- Encourage children to develop independence within a secure and friendly atmosphere
- Support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing
- Help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and by developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

Our high expectations will enable each child to develop socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally and to achieve their full potential. We offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited availability for development through a wide range of new and exciting first-hand experiences that will give children the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test their skills, knowledge and understanding alongside existing experiences. We will ensure that children are kept healthy and safe and that they achieve the knowledge and skills they need to start school.

Curriculum

The Reception class follow the curriculum as outlined in the 2014 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document, which is available to download at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

This document clearly defines what we teach. The following policy details the specifics of how we teach in our setting.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

A Unique Child

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration/ sharing assemblies and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning. We ensure the St. Marys Primary School reward policy is followed in the Reception class.

Positive relationships

We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.

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Enabling environments

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests and stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.

Learning and development

Our Reception class is based in the main school building and is organised to meet the needs of the Early Years Curriculum. The learning environment is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. The areas of learning are defined so that children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

Areas of Learning

The EYFS is made up of three prime area of learning:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development

There are four specific areas of learning:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

At St. Mary's primary School all areas of learning are delivered through a well-planned topic based approach, with a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. Throughout Reception our long, medium and short-term plans ensure that each child has the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in every area at the appropriate developmental level. Our long term planning ensures coverage so that all children have opportunities to work towards and achieve the Early Learning Goals (ELG's) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS. Our half termly topic based approach allows flexibility to ensure that both children's needs and interests are taken into account.

Play based activities

Learning through play underpins our approach to teaching and learning in the foundation stage and the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. We embrace the fact that young children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them to learn. In doing so we provide children with stimulating, active experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning and to help them make sense of the world. Children have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experiences at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests, inspire those around them and consolidate their understanding and skills. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. Our adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating, teaching and extending play, skills and language.

Play based activities are based on the long term topics for our school and are catered for through a variety of learning areas within the classroom:

- Role play area
- Craft area
- Building area
- Reading area
- Computing area

Our outdoor classroom also caters for a variety of learning areas:

- Role play area
- Building area
- Craft area
- Reading area
- Sensory area (Sand tray/ music area)
- Nature area
- Physical area (bikes/ balls/ weaving)

These areas of the classroom space allow the children to access adult led learning and child initiated play. The areas of learning provide stimulus based on our topic themed approach.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning and the reception teacher plans activities with these in mind. The characteristics highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them. The three characteristics are;

- Playing and Exploring – children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- Active Learning – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- Creating and Thinking Critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Assessment

We believe that assessment is key to enable our practitioners to plan for each child's next step in learning. Assessment also plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs and to plan activities and support.

Throughout Reception children's knowledge, understanding, skills and achievements are assessed and tracked using the developmental stages set out in the document 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)'.

At St. Mary's Primary School we gather information from a range of sources; observations of the children in play, in adult led activities, through discussions with parents and carers and through talking to the children.

We keep written and photographic evidence to help us build up a picture of children's strengths and achievements and to help us to plan for children's next steps in learning. Every child in Reception has

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a 'Learning Journal' in which we record our observations and keep samples of the children's work. We also collect evidence through an electronic tool (Tapestry) which enables all staff who work in the setting to take photos, write notes and link learning to areas of the curriculum and the steps towards the early learning goals.

During the first few weeks of starting school the class teacher will carry out a baseline assessment with each Reception child to establish their individual knowledge, understanding and skills and then enable staff to plan appropriately for their next steps in learning. At St. Mary's Primary School we have our own baseline records which enable us to gather evidence for Literacy, Numeracy, physical, creative and computing skills. These baseline assessments show each child's starting point when joining our school and their learning journey folders provide evidence of how their learning has progressed during their time in the Reception year. The reception children also have work books for Maths, English and RE which shows a collection of work produced during adult led activities.

Summative assessment

Each term the class teacher tracks each child's progress against the seven areas of learning for the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum using the St. Mary's School tracking grid. Progress is then discussed with the head teacher and class teacher during half termly pupil progress meetings.

The end of year assessment is carried out to meet the requirements of the statutory reporting of the Foundation Stage Profile, the end of year assessment of children's achievements in all areas of learning. Observational evidence and samples of children's work throughout the school year will be used to assess children as '**emerging**', '**expected**' or '**exceeding**' based on their understanding and achievements of the Early Learning Goals set out in the EYFS curriculum. The end of year assessment is based on all 17 areas of learning as outlined in the EYFS curriculum.

Transition

Transition for the start of the school year is carefully planned for. We have established a strong procedure for transitions to ensure that our children and parents are as confident and secure as they can be when facing the challenges of their child starting school.

Before the beginning of the school year the Reception staff will visit Nursery and Pre-School Settings to meet the children, talk to staff and discuss each child's learning needs. The children and their families are welcomed into school for settling in days to ensure that children have the time to become secure and familiar with new routines, staff, classroom and school setting before starting school full time. During this time the child's parents have an introduction meeting with the head teacher whilst their child can explore the classroom setting and spend time with teaching staff.

For the first few weeks of school the children explore play based activities to enable them to become confident and familiar with the environment. It is during this time that the class teacher carries out baseline assessments for each child.

At the end of reception children have the opportunity to meet with their new teacher in their classroom prior to starting Year one. At the end of each school year teachers share each child's knowledge, understanding and achievements, including end of year assessment data, with their next class teacher to ensure that all teachers have a well-rounded picture of the children prior to the new school year. Class teachers use the St. Mary's transition document to guide this meeting and provide information regarding specific needs for the children.

Parents as Partners

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We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what their child does at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child and to feel comfortable in our setting. We offer parents the opportunity to share their child's learning environment, have time to talk informally with the practitioners and to meet other parents during school 'book look' sessions and during termly parent consultation meetings.

We also offer parents learning workshops to provide advice and information on how they can support their child's learning through a 'meet the teacher' session and a 'Phonic' workshop during Autumn term one. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to share information about their child, to ask questions and to discuss their child's learning with the teachers. Parents are provided with 'wow' forms which they can fill in to share their child's learning achievements at home.

At the beginning of the year parents are encouraged to take time to settle their child happily into class during the first few weeks of school. We then encourage the children's independence by asking them to say good bye to their parents on the playground and then lining up by the class to be greeted by the class teacher. The children will then come into class to put their own things away and sign in using the self-registration post box.

Health & safety and safeguarding

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. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2014) and we adhere to the school's safeguarding policy.

We are a healthy school and our children under 5 receive free milk and all children have access to fresh water and free fruit from a Government scheme. Reception children who stay for lunch are eligible for free school meals or can choose to bring in a healthy packed lunch.

The reception class have access to their own toileting facilities and we teach the children the importance of hygiene, hand washing techniques and throughout the year we plan cooking activities to give children experiences of a range of healthy food.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Head Teacher and the Early Years Leader. Any alterations that come from this review will be discussed and ratified by the full Governing Body.