

# St Mary's Church of England Primary School



*Learn. Grow. Achieve. Flourish.*

## Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

POLICY: Early Years Foundation Stage Policy  
APPROVED BY: Headteacher  
APPROVED DATE: February 2025  
REVIEW DATE: February 2026  
This policy is reviewed annually, or as new legislation determines.

### Our School Vision

**As a Church of England primary school, we value and are ambitious for all children and are committed to providing a positive, happy, safe and stimulating environment for them to enjoy and excel in their learning; grow in confidence, resilience and independence; achieve their full potential and flourish as individuals.**

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## **Rationale**

At St Mary's we believe that a consistent approach to high quality teaching and learning in the EYFS will inspire all children and enable them to be confident, capable and engaged learners. The children are at the heart of everything we do and every decision we make. We believe that every child deserves the best possible start in life. It is their right to be safe, healthy and happy and the welfare of the children is central to our provision of care, learning and play. We aim to provide the essential knowledge and skills that children need to prepare them for their future success.

## **Intent**

- That children access a broad and balanced and well sequenced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life.
- Develop knowledge and understanding of the community and wider world.
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress, and no child gets left behind.
- A close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.
- Create supportive, inclusive, and language-enriched learning environment that addresses the unique needs of each child, including those with additional support needs.
- Generate and promote a positive attitude towards school and learning.
- Provide a learning framework with multiple entry points and endless opportunities for growth, allowing children to engage in a range of first-hand experience. This approach will enable them to deepen and refine their skills, knowledge and understanding, building on what they already know.
- To give children the foundational knowledge and understanding they will need for key stage 1 and for the rest of their schooling.

## **Implementation**

### **Curriculum:**

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2021 EYFS statutory framework. The EYFS framework outlines the **Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning and the 7 areas of Development** (CoETL). The CoETL are organised into three primary strands and are essential components towards children becoming self-regulated learners.

These 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.

There are 17 aspect areas (early learning goals) within 7 curriculum areas of development. These are divided into Prime and Specific areas of learning.

The three primary areas play a crucial role in laying the foundation for sparking children's curiosity and excitement for learning, building relationships, and supporting their overall development.

The 'prime' areas of learning and development are:

<b>Communication and language</b> (C&L)	<b>Physical development</b> (PD)	<b>Personal, social and emotional development</b> (PSED)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening, Attention &amp; Understanding</li> <li>• Speaking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gross Motor Skills</li> <li>• Fine Motor Skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Regulation</li> <li>• Managing Self</li> <li>• Building Relationships</li> </ul>

The four specific areas help children to strengthen and apply the prime areas.

The 'specific' areas of learning and development are:

<b>Literacy (L)</b>	<b>Mathematics (M)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehension</li> <li>• Word Reading</li> <li>• Writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers</li> <li>• Numerical Patterns</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding the World (UW)</b>	<b>Expressive arts and design (EAD)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past and Present</li> <li>• People, Culture and Communities</li> <li>• The Natural World</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating with Materials</li> <li>• Being Imaginative and Expressive</li> </ul>

### Planning:

At St Mary's, we believe that an evidence-based approach to learning and teaching results in excellent outcomes for children. As such, the principles of EYFS Policy are evidence based. This policy enables teachers to use research-informed pedagogies as part of their everyday practices, so that they can build a broad and deep toolkit of pedagogical practice that enables excellent teaching to take place.

EYFS department follow the EYFS statutory framework, using it alongside data analysis and ongoing assessments to shape areas of learning through a series of learning contexts. Each learning context is designed to provide experiences across all the areas of learning. These broader plans then guide short term and weekly planning which remains flexible to adapt to children's responses.

Weekly planning includes both adult led and independent learning task, allowing children access to various learning areas indoors and outdoors through Continuous Provision. Children learn through small group, whole class and one to one session to build skills across the curriculum. During Continuous provision early years practitioners engage with children asking questions and providing challenges. In planning and supporting children's learning, we regularly reflect on the different ways children learn and integrate these insights in to practice.

## Teaching:

### Prime areas:

**Communication and language:** In EYFS, children have opportunities to develop strong spoken and written literacy skills. Our aim is for each child to be well-prepared to take advantage of the language opportunities that they encounter in Year 1 so that children are ready to learn when they start Year 1. Children are taught to improve communication and language skills through :

- Daily rhymes
- Songs
- Stories
- High quality interactions during both adults led and child-initiated activities
- Colourful Semantics (appendix 1)
- NELI interventions (appendix2)
- Core book talk (appendix3)

### Physical development :

At St Mary's, we believe that it is crucial for young children to engage in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop their fine motor and gross motor skills. Children develop their fine motor and gross motor skills as part of directed teaching at Continuous Provision. Gross motor skills are further developed through 1 hour PE every week.

### Personal, Social and Emotional Development:

Children practise their physical skills alongside developing social skills, which supports greater independence and higher levels of confidence. In EYFS children learn how to manage their feelings in different situations through pretend play, scaffolding, positive relationships with adults and clear boundaries.

### Specific areas:

#### Literacy:

#### Early Reading:

Children learn the early reading skills through **Read Write Inc phonics scheme**. They are grouped by ability and taught in daily phonics lessons. Where children find phonics challenging, our practitioners support through daily 1:1 fast track session and pinny time to give children the personalised support they need.

In addition, reception children are given 'book bag books' that match their phonics knowledge. This provides an opportunity to rehearse their reading skills further.

## **Love of Reading**

Alongside the acquisition of reading skills through phonics, children's understanding of plot, character development and setting are nurtured through 'book talk' lessons. Moreover, to foster a love of reading children take a book from their class library to enjoy with their parents.

## **Handwriting**

Children are given plenty of mark making opportunities to develop early writing skills. In reception, children are taught discreet handwriting lessons in small groups, where they are taught how to hold a pencil with tripod grip along with correct seating poster. To support fine motor skills and correct letter formation development we use the Nelson Handwriting scheme.

## **Hold a sentence**

As the year progresses, reception children are taught to write sentences using Colourful Semantics and Reading Write Inc programme. Reception children are organised into ability-based groups and taught to write a sentence using their phonics knowledge as part of small, targeted groups.

## **Maths**

Maths is taught using White Rose Scheme. Reception children are organised into ability-based groups and taught number and number pattern knowledge as part of small, targeted groups. Children also learn maths through continuous provision.

## **Understanding of the World and Expressive arts and design**

Continuous Provision at St Mary's has emphasis on supporting children's understanding of the world along with enabling them to express themselves imaginatively and creatively, using art and design. New learning is adapted to reflect the needs of the children and their interests.

## **Continuous Provision**

Environments in the EYFS department have defined, accessible areas/zones that offer a range of play opportunities, experiences. Continuous Provision offers children an environment that is safe for them to explore whilst challenging their learning. It allows children the freedom to explore and become independent when making choices. Enhancements are made to the provision on a weekly basis according to the focus core text.

## **Forest School**

Playing and learning outside improves children's physical and emotional wellbeing and the forest school experience has been shown to be hugely beneficial for children with a range of emotional and developmental needs. Children use natural materials found in our sensory garden, orchard and school ground to develop their fine and gross motor skills by collecting sticks and leaves, tying knots, making dens, handling tools, using twigs to write in the mud etc.

Our Nursery Lead is Forest School trained and holds a Level 3 in Forest School Leader. Parents and carers are regularly invited to join forest school sessions which reinforces the positive experience for children.

## Assessment

**Formative assessments:** Formative assessments are on-going and is carried out through daily observations, interactions, group and whole class teaching. Practitioners continually observe, listen, talk to and engage with children. These observations inform planning, next steps and assessment. Each child's developments and achievements are recorded in 'Tapestry'. In Nursery and YR these judgements are made against the age specific criteria from Development Matters.

**Summative assessments:** Within the first 6 weeks that a child starts reception, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

At the end of the EYFS, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child profile providing a summary of every child's development.

Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Expected ELG – meeting the expected level
- Emerging ELG – not yet meeting the expected level

Children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals (ELG) by the class teachers - who use the exemplification documents, and their knowledge of the children to make a 'best fit' judgement, and report whether they have reached a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD) by achieving expected levels in all prime areas, plus literacy and maths. This profile data is the statutory data that is sent to the Local Authority and used to help school benchmark and identify improvements. This information is shared with the Year 1 teacher to aid transition.

At St Mary's Primary School, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. We complete phonics (RWI) assessments every 6 weeks and maths assessments half termly.

In autumn term every child in reception is screened using language screen for the NELI programme (a speech and language assessment) in reception. Those who need it are then selected for an intense twenty-week intervention to help develop early speech and language skills. Children undergo half termly maths assessments.

## Monitoring

We are committed to providing the best possible experiences for our children. Reception Year Lead and Nursery Year Lead are responsible for monitoring provision, teaching and learning and children's progress. Information is shared with the Headship team, SLT and Reception team as appropriate, and any necessary actions are taken. All adults in the reception team have a key role in children's learning and development. Training and professional development for teaching and support staff team is on-going.

## Parental partnership

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.

We value the involvement of parents in school, this begins even before children start nursery or reception with an invitation to visit the school and meet their child's teacher and class environment. They are also

invited to attend an informative welcome meeting. Home visits are made by staff at the start of nursery. In Nursery, each child is assigned a key person who helps to ensure that their learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. The key person supports parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home. The key person also helps families to engage with more specialist support, if appropriate.

Parents meeting is held regularly, the first being in the autumn term to discuss how the child has settled and then again in the spring term to discuss progress, targets and achievements.

Parents are invited to attend weekly 'Stay and Play' sessions in the nursery which provides them with information about the nursery curriculum as well as with practical activities to support their child's development at home.

There are interactive and practical workshops for reception parents throughout the academic year ranging from: phonics demonstrations, science and maths practical workshops, writing and fine motor workshops and story time. Each provides parents with practical activities, skills and strategies to encourage learning at home.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. The EYFS profile helps to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities. In the summer term, parents receive a report to summarise the child's achievements against the ELGs.

### **Staffing**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises of a nursery class (1 morning and 1 afternoon session) and three reception classes.

The nursery and three reception classes have full-time qualified teachers. Other staff include early years practitioners, teaching assistants (TA) and learning support assistants (LSA). All staff have appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service clearance (DBS).

Children can start nursery the term after their third birthday. We offer 3-hour sessions, 5 days a week for children aged 3 and 4 years old in our nursery. This equates to 15 hours. Our reception children start full-time school during the academic year in which they are 5 years old.

### **Staff training and development**

All staff at the Foundation Stage have access to training through the professional development and training offered via the school. This occurs through whole school training sessions, phase meetings and individual observations and written feedback.

Staff are committed to continuing professional development and attend training courses and have excellent knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and stages of child development. Early Years training is delivered through a bespoke training schedule delivered alongside the school development plan.

External training programs will be offered when appropriate to an individual's training needs and in line with the school development plan. EYFS staff are trained in delivering Phonics - Read, Write Inc. (RWI). NELI - speech and language assessment and language program. Read, Write Inc. (RWI) Talk Through Stories – developing communication and language. Nelson Handwriting Scheme

### **Transitions**

At St Mary's School we recognise that starting school and moving up classes has the potential to be a stressful time for both parents and children. We have therefore established a strong set of procedures for transitions to be smooth as possible. Before children start school, we invite both parent and child to an informative presentation with all the key information for parent's regard 'school readiness.' Parents and carers are given a welcome pack. Once the child has started school parents are invited in again to an informative presentation to learn about daily routines and the curriculum.

### **Starting Nursery**

Nursery staff conduct home visits to meet the child in their home setting, establish a partnership with parents and learn about the strengths of the child. All children starting Nursery are invited to visit the setting with their parent or carer for a play and stay session which is an ideal opportunity for parents to have the chance to talk through any worries or concerns.

### **Starting Reception**

All children starting Reception are invited to a stay and play session with their peers, new class teacher and teaching assistant. This is an ideal opportunity for parents to ask questions and share information about their child as well as interacting with other parents. Those children coming from different settings to our Reception are contacted by the Early Years Lead and their progress and development shared by their Nursery key worker. When necessary, the department lead will visit local nurseries to observe them in their current setting. We have a staggered start in our Early Years to ensure that children who need extra support are given time at each start date to settle in.

### **Starting Year 1**

In the summer term, Reception children visit their new Year 1 classes and teachers. During transition meetings staff pass on their knowledge of each child's development, progress and achievement towards the early learning goals to ensure that the next teacher has a well-rounded picture of the children prior to starting the new school year. All staff complete a transition form and meet to discuss pupils during the transition process.

### **Impact**

- Children being excited, motivated and happy to come to school.
- Children developing a love learning and are curious.
- High levels of engagement and motivation demonstrated from children.
- Children are independent and can express their needs in a meaningful way.
- All children access a balanced, diverse and challenging curriculum regardless of their background, needs or abilities.
- Confident and capable readers who demonstrate a love of reading.
- Children are supported by adults that are well-trained and passionate about providing the best education for every child.
- Children make good progress from their starting points and are offered a broad curriculum which meets each child's unique needs and are well-prepared for the next stage in their learning.

## **Health and Safety and Safeguarding**

At St Mary's the welfare and safety of both staff and children is paramount. We have robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place to ensure that everyone in our care is safe, happy and achieving to their best ability. This Policy has regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in Keeping Children Safe in Education ('KCSIE' September 2023), Prevent duty guidance and working together to Safeguard Children.

If there are concerns about the welfare or wellbeing of a child or adult, we follow our Safeguarding Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education document. Any concerns are reported directly to our DSL (Designated Safeguarding Leads) who ensure the correct actions are taken to keep all children safe.

Regular training from our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), external providers and annual Safeguarding updates are completed so that the staff understand the safeguarding policy and procedures to ensure 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.

For additional information please refer to our Safeguarding Policy.

## **Early Years Pupil Premium Fund (EYPP)**

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) was introduced by the Government to help providers support initiatives or interventions to narrow the gap in educational attainment.

The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is additional funding given to early years providers to improve the education they provide to some 3 and 4-year-olds.

During the admission process all Nursery parents will be invited to complete a voluntary form to identify whether their child is eligible for the EYPP.

Feedback from parents (parent voice), staff, children (pupil voice) or outside professionals will inform where and what fund is spent on.

## **Equal Opportunities Statement**

This policy applies to all and does not unlawfully discriminate because of the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.

## **Linked policies**

- Whole school - Health and Safety
- Whole school - First Aid
- Whole school - Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Whole school - Special Needs and Disabilities
- Whole school – Behaviour
- Whole school – Learning and Teaching
- Whole school- Phonics
- Whole school-English Handbook

- Whole school-Handwriting
- Whole school-Mathematics
- Whole school– Assessment
- EYFS – Intimate Care
- EYFS – Environment & Risk Policy

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be monitored by the school governors and reviewed annually, or as new legislation determines.

### **Appendix1:**

#### **Colourful Semantics:**

Colourful semantics is an approach created by Alison Bryan, first published in a case study in 1997. It is aimed at helping children to develop their grammar, but it is rooted in the meaning of words (semantics). Colourful semantics is a structured programme that supports children to compose sentences by introducing the unit parts of a sentence incrementally. Colourful semantics reassembles sentences by cutting them up into their thematic roles and then colour codes them. The focus is on the child mastering the unit component, before being introduced to the next part of a sentence. The stage-by-stage approach helps children to organise their sentences into key levels.

#### **Appendix2:**

##### **NELI:**

It is a comprehensive programme that includes assessment, training and intervention supporting speech and language in the early years. NELI helps children aged 4-6 years old with the weakest oral language skills catch up with their peers through targeted small group and individual sessions. It focuses on developing children's vocabulary, listening and storytelling skills. Large scale trials have shown NELI helps children make 3-5 months' additional progress on top of what they would usually be expected to achieve. NELI was developed out of decades of research into children's early language development.

#### **Appendix3:**

##### **Book Talk:**

'Book-talk' is about the ability to talk about books, developing the confidence to offer ideas and then reshape them in the light of other contributions. It helps children to trust their own ideas and interpretations, to talk effectively about a book, deepening their understanding, shifting their ideas, thinking together as a group and moving comprehension forwards.(Pie Corbett)

#### **Appendix4:**

**Fine motor and Gross Motor Skills:** Fine and gross motor skills are both very important for young children's development. **Fine motor skills** involve the small muscles in the hands and fingers. These skills are crucial for tasks like :Self-care, writing and drawing ,playing. **Gross motor skills** involve the large muscles in the arms, legs, and core. These skills are essential for: movement, balance and co-ordination, posture and stability.

**Here are some examples of Gross and Fine motor skills:**

- Complete activities whilst lying on their tummy, taking the weight through their elbows
- Climbing, seesaw, tug of war and swing activities with the child holding onto ropes.
- Craft activities – cutting, scrunching, gluing and ripping paper and bending pipe cleaners.
- Toy tools such as sawing, drilling, hammering, screws and bolts.
- Games involving flicking small objects e.g. flicking balls of paper of a table into a 'goal'.
- Place a firm elastic band around tips of fingers and thumb. Open and close it 10 times with each hand.
- Dough gym – pinching, pressing, rolling, squeezing.
- Holding a handful of items in hand and posting them into a jar one by one (buttons, coins)
- Picking up items with pegs, tongs, tweezers
- Ribbon dancing
- Threading beads, straws etc.
- Pop bubble wrap
- Turn keys in padlocks.
- Tying knots into string and linking paper clips
- Posting items into the 'hungry guy' (tennis ball with slit in the top)
- Picking up sequins off a table or stickers off a sticker sheet