

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:
REVIEW DATE:
This policy is reviewed biennial reviewed annually, or as
new legislation

Our School Vision

St Mary's school vision is to embrace a Christian like way of living, learning and teaching.

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.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

“Children learn and develop more from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives. If children are at risk of falling behind the majority, the best time to help them to catch up and keep up is in the early years. Every child can make progress, if they are given the right support. When we give every child the best start in their early years, we give them what they need today. We also set them up with every chance of success tomorrow.”

Development Matters (DfE 2021)

School Vision

At St Mary's, we greatly value the importance of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) in providing a secure foundation for future learning and development. This policy has been developed in conjunction with the relevant DfE guidance and legislation to ensure that each child has a happy and positive start to their school life in which they can build a foundation for a love of learning.

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 have high expectations, consider the development of the whole child and seek to foster resilience, perseverance and independence. We innovate our children to take the lead in their learning, encouraging confidence to explore new ideas, take risks, make links and seek challenge.

Our curriculum is designed to meet the needs of every child; ensuring no child's achievements are limited, regardless of their background, circumstances or need.

We aim to provide the essential knowledge and skills that children need to prepare them for their future success and to give children the best possible start to their early education. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as both a preparation for and a part of life, not solely preparation for the next stage of education.

Intent

Through the implementation of this policy, we aim to:

- Foster a love of learning which inspires curiosity.
- Provide experiences of awe and wonder.
- Develop high levels of engagement, collaboration and cooperation.
- Ensure all children have access to high quality learning opportunities.
- Develop knowledge and understanding of the community and wider world.
- Encourage and motivate children to become independent learners.
- Ensure communication and positive interactions are embedded in practice.

Implementation

EYFS guiding principles shape our practice:

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. The EYFS is based upon **four guiding principles**:

1. A unique child

We recognise that every child can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. Children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement appropriately as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning.

2. Positive relationships

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

3. Enabling environments

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting, extending and celebrating the children's learning. A safe, secure environment is provided for the children in which to interact and explore rich and diverse learning and developmental opportunities. Classrooms and outdoor spaces are designed each term to reflect a chosen topic and to enhance the children's sense of awe and wonder. There are areas where the children can be active, quiet and restful.

4. Learning and development

We recognise and value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. Through careful observations and formative assessments, we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and appropriate activities and experiences to extend their learning.

Curriculum Design Chris Quigley's basic principles

Our practice is further enhanced by following Chris Quigley's basic principles. These principles are based on the best available evidence into how children learn and how learning takes place giving clear, practical and scientific guidance.

- Brain development
- Executive Function and self-regulation
- Movement and Cognition
- Relationships
- The importance of play
- How learning happens

To put these principles into practice, the school aims to provide:

- Quality and consistency, so that every child makes good progress, and no child gets left behind.
- A well-constructed inclusive curriculum that ensures that all children are prepared and continue to be successful in their next stage of education.
- A secure foundation through learning and development opportunities that are planned around the needs and interests of each child and are assessed and reviewed regularly.
- Opportunities to develop effective partnership between practitioners and parents.
- Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported regardless of learning requirements.
- Appropriate experiences to develop children as confident, responsible citizens.
- Children with a secure grounding in the core skills necessary for children
- A rich cultural capital.

Cultural capital

Cultural capital is the background knowledge that helps our children navigate culture and alters the experiences and opportunities available to them. Our curriculum is to 'broaden horizons' to improve children's life chances so that they become true citizens of the modern world.

"Cultural capital is the essential knowledge that children need to prepare them for their future success. It is about giving children the best possible start to their early education. As part of making a judgment about the quality of education, inspectors will consider how well leaders use the curriculum to enhance the experience and opportunities available to children, particularly the most disadvantaged..."

The Education Inspection Framework (EIF), DfE.

Our curriculum is underpinned by Curriculum Design by Chris Quigley reflecting the context of our school community and our planning reflects starting points of children and their barriers to learning.

We aim to provide a rich cultural capital by:

- Planning a curriculum that is relevant and based on real experience.
- Providing firsthand experiences to put learning into context.
- Reflecting the diversity of social and cultural backgrounds in the class and community.

"Cultural Capital in early Years is essentially the knowledge children need to meet the ELG. If we want children to think, they need language with which to do so. Vocabulary is, therefore, a form of cultural capital or powerful knowledge."

Curriculum Design, Chris Quigley. 2022.

Curriculum - Learning and Development

The Early Years Foundation Stage is a curriculum from birth to five years old and encompasses all children in our Nursery and Reception classes. We follow the strands set by this curriculum and concentrate the learning opportunities on the seven areas of learning - 3 Prime and 4 Specific. The EYFS curriculum is based on an observation of children's needs, interests and stages of development.

The 'prime' areas of learning and development are:

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

The 'specific' areas of learning and development are:

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

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our provision is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely all areas through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. We follow Chris Quigley's Curriculum Design framework for how provision is sequenced and taught. It provides each area of learning with clear **Big ideas** and **Threshold concepts** which then form clear curriculum sequencing which is divided into:

- Learning experiences
- Continuous provision
- Outdoor environment
- Purposeful pedagogy
- Learning conversations

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Characteristics of Effective Learning describe behaviours children use to learn. To learn well, children must approach opportunities with enthusiasm, motivation and curiosity. Effective learning must be meaningful to a child, so they are able to use what they have learned and apply it in different and new situations. These

abilities and attitudes of our little learners will support them to make good progress in all areas of learning and development. **The EYFS curriculum encompasses our school motto 'Learn. Grow. Achieve. Flourish.'** We provide a free flow curriculum where learning happens inside and outside to stimulate learners and engage them in developing the three 'Characteristics of Effective Learning' as set out within the early years framework. Activities are planned with regard to three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

1. **Playing and exploring** – children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go.'
2. **Active learning** – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties and enjoy succeeding.
3. **Creating and thinking critically** – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

We ensure the environments within the EYFS have defined, accessible areas/zones that offer a range of play opportunities, experiences and continuous provision. These enabling environments promote curiosity and create positive attitudes to learning whilst providing a range of learning opportunities such as solitary play, independent group play, adult supported play, adult directed learning and discrete teaching.

Continuous Provision offers to children a constant stable environment that is safe for them to explore whilst challenging their learning. It allows children the freedom to explore and become independent in making choices. Enhancements are made to the provision on a weekly basis according to the focus text/topic to help scaffold and challenge children's learning.

To provide a rich and varied curriculum we also ensure the following:

- Quality first teaching across all areas of the curriculum.
- Effective practitioners who are committed to nurturing positive relationships and purposeful back and forth interactions.
- Promote good oracy skills to develop strong and effective communicators.
- A balance of child-initiated and adult led learning opportunities that are carefully planned and provide opportunities to build on prior learning.
- We promote a love of learning through real-life experiences that are relevant to our children.
- Planned opportunities for 'free flow' outdoor learning to enhance all areas of the curriculum.
- Good parental partnerships which encourage parents to become involved in school life and support their child's learning at home.
- Systematic approaches to teaching reading to ensure all children learn to read. High-quality phonics is started as soon as children begin reception and taught with fidelity.
- To support fine motor skills and correct letter formation development we use the Nelson Handwriting scheme.
- Opportunities for children and their families to develop a love of reading.

Learning through Play

The main part of children's learning will be through different play-based activities, some of which will always be available i.e. continuous provision and some based on the topic i.e. enhanced provision.

As well as adult-led activities, children will explore and experiment with materials and equipment to discover how the world works for themselves in child-initiated activities.

Teachers also provide activities based on children's interests to ensure children are motivated and learn through their choice of play/activity. Our teachers and professionals are experts who recognise young children learn best through play, especially when they are happy and confident.

Our aim in the Early Years is to help the children to share, focus, explore and enjoy a wide range of first-hand experiences. All these skills are developed from the start to help their intellectual and physical development, as well as provide a foundation for their future learning.

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. Rather than using classroom resources and equipment, children can use natural materials found in the woodland and enjoy activities such as collecting sticks and leaves, tying knots, making dens, handling tools, using twigs to write in the mud, climbing trees, jumping across stones and building fires.

Forest school can help children to develop:

- self-awareness
- motivation
- empathy
- social skills
- communication skills
- independence
- self-esteem and confidence
- physical skills including the development of both gross and fine motor skills
- problem-solving and risk-taking
- resilience
- concentration
- knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

Forest school, therefore, supports the EYFS curriculum and can be linked to other themes being covered at the early years provision or to experiences at home. 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.

Impact of our EYFS curriculum and ethos

- Children feel happy and safe and enjoy coming to school.
- Evidence of strong links with parents.
- High levels of engagement and motivation demonstrated from children.
- Children are independent and can express their needs in a meaningful way.
- Children demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning and are well-prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- 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.
- The percentage of children achieving expected within the EYFSP is in line with or above the national average.

Parental partnership

“Research shows that involving parents and carers in their children’s learning is the most important factor in enabling some children to do well regardless of background.”

(DfE 2023)

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 to:

- familiarise children with their prospective teachers.
- raise and address any safeguarding concerns.
- help staff understand the child’s home setting.

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 are 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 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 & Structure

"Young children learn from those they trust and with those who foster enthusiasm for learning."

Trevarthen, 2002

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.

Both nursery and reception have an indoor and outdoor space specifically developed to provide meaningful learning experiences and support children's development. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area, and daily outdoor activities are planned, unless circumstances, such as the weather, would make outdoor activity inappropriate and unsafe.

There are toilets in all the EYFS classrooms; Nursery have a designated hygienic changing area whilst Reception has a designated hygiene room.

Staff training and development

All staff in 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.

All leads are encouraged and supported to develop their leadership skills and knowledge by completing the National Professional Qualification in Early Years Leadership (NPQEYL).

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.
- Tales Toolkit – oral story telling.
- Nelson Handwriting Scheme

Staff Induction

All new members of staff receive a full induction that includes:

- Help in understanding roles and responsibilities, including supervision duties
- Information about emergency evacuation procedures
- Procedures, responsibilities and expectations for safeguarding and child protection
- Information on school and foundation policies, including the equality policy
- Health and Safety information, procedures and issues
- Curriculum familiarisation

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 parents 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 EYFS Lead / EYFS SENDCo 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.

Assessment

Summative Assessment

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.

This is usually through photographs of practical activities which are uploaded and shared on Tapestry (an online learning journey) with parents to provide an overall picture of the children's learning and development. These observations are used to shape future planning.

During speech and language assessment, if a child is found to not have a strong grasp on English, staff will contact the child's parents to establish their home language skills to assess if there is cause for concern about a language delay.

Formative Assessment

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

We complete phonics (RWI) assessments every 6 weeks and maths assessments half termly.

Every child 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.

The school takes reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children with EAL to use their home language in play and learning whilst also ensuring that these children have sufficient opportunities to reach a good standard of English.

At the end of the EYFS, staff complete the **EYFS profile (EYFSP)** for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child.

The profile is moderated internally (referring to the Development Matters guidance) to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.

Safeguarding

At St Mary's the welfare and safety of both staff and children is paramount. We have effective 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.

EYFS SEND

"Early identification of needs and the timely provision of appropriate support, together with high aspirations, can help ensure that the vast majority of children who have SEN or disabilities can achieve well and make a successful transition into adulthood."

Early years: guide to the 0 to 25 SEND code of practice, DfE., 2014

At St Mary's we adhere to the principles underlying the SEND Code of Practice (2014) and provide children with a supportive and fulfilling environment to help guide them to the best possible start to their life and education. We have clear arrangements to identify and support children with SEN or disabilities and to promote equality of opportunity for all children in our care.

During transition meetings and welcome visits parents will have an opportunity to express concerns about their child's development. All EYFS staff are alert to emerging difficulties and respond early. The EYFS Lead is also EYFS SENDCo and will discuss any cause for concern in a child's progress, especially in the prime areas of learning, with the child's parents. A strategy of support will be agreed upon and consideration will be taken as to whether the child may have a special educational need or disability which requires additional support.

The following strategies are used to support children with SEND in EYFS:

- **High-quality universal provision** – high-quality teaching and interactions, questioning, planning, differentiation, and personalised learning.
- **Inclusive practice** –making appropriate changes and modification to reduce barriers to learning.

- **Responding to concerns** – referral to NHS services via Children and Young People’s Integrated Therapies Berkshire Healthcare (CYPIT). Using the health and development section of the CYPIT website to support staff and families with strategies for a specific need.
- **Develop effective and supportive partnerships with parents** - communicate regularly, involve them with decisions about support and signpost parents to further support. E.g., Health Visitor, GP, Local Offer.
- **Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)** – inclusive strategies and referrals to our external speech and language therapist.

We offer the following interventions for EYFS SEND pupils:

- ELSA – Emotional Literacy Support
- Bag time - Attention, focus and listening.
- SEBDOS – External Provider that provides support, advice and training to meet the needs of pupils with social, emotional, mental health needs.
- Sensory Workout
- RWI Fast Track phonics tutoring
- Speech and Language Interventions – led by ELKAN trained staff
- Speech sounds
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- Construction club

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. Childcare providers can claim an additional £300 per year to spend on enriching our 3- or 4-year-old child's nursery education.

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.

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 – Teaching and Learning

EYFS – Assessment

EYFS – Intimate Care

EYFS – Environment & Risk Policy

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.

Monitoring and Review

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

September 2012, June 2014, February 2017, May 2019, November 2019, July 2023.