



St. Mary's CofE Primary

'Learning for Life'

Early Years Policy

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Approved by	<u>Full Governing Body</u>
Statutory policy	<u>Yes</u>
Review cycle	
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Related policies	Safeguarding Policy Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy SEND Policy

Version History Log

Date	Version	Comments/Summary of changes
<u>11/09/2023</u>	1	
<u>5/9/2024</u>	2	No changes
<u>10/11/2025</u>	3	Change from Tapestry platform to Marvellous Me.

Our Vision Statement

'Learning for Life'

'Learning for life' with Jesus' promise of 'life in all its fullness' is at the heart of St Mary's.

At our school, children are seen as unique and will feel loved, safe and empowered to flourish so they reach their full potential both academically and personally.

Aims and Objectives

At St. Marys, we believe “every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential” (Statutory Framework for the EYFS, 2023). In the Early Years, the learning is child-centred and led by the children. As facilitators, we use the Early Years Framework to provide overarching topics and within these allow the children to direct the learning according to their individual interests. Our curriculum has been designed to cover the essential foundations our children need to allow them to thrive as they move up through our school, ensuring full and well-rounded development that will prepare them to learn for life.

Using the EYFS Guidance, Development Matters and our bespoke EYFS curriculum, the Nursery and Reception teachers meet regularly to ensure the Foundation Stage at St. Mary’s meets the needs of our children, to develop to their full potential and be ready for learning in KS1.

The EYFS seeks to provide:

- Quality and consistency – to ensure every child makes good progress and no child is left behind.
- A secure foundation – robust planning for the development each child, including regular assessment and reviewing what they have learned.
- Partnership working – between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- Equality of opportunity – anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring every child is included and supported.

The EYFS is based upon four guiding principles which we use to shape our practice:

- The unique child – who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Positive relationships – enabling children to be strong and independent
- Enabling environments – with teaching and support from adults, who respond to individual interests and needs and build learning over time.
- Learning and development – understanding that children develop at different rates and using the characteristics of effective learning to inform planning.

A unique child

We recognise that every child is a competent learning 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 are influenced by feedback from others and therefore we use praise and encouragement (as per our Behaviour Policy) to facilitate positive attitudes.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities in provision that build upon and extend children’s knowledge, experience and interests and develop their self-esteem and confidence.
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children’s learning needs.
- Providing a wide range of opportunities through carefully planned continuous provision to motivate and support children.
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued.
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills.
- Monitoring children’s progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

Inclusion / Special Education Needs (SEN)

All children and their families are valued at St Mary’s Primary School. Children are treated as individuals and have equal access to all provisions available. All children are encouraged to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of each child. Assessments consider contributions from a range of perspectives to ensure that any child with potential special educational needs is identified at the earliest possible opportunity. Early identification of special needs is crucial to enable staff to support the development of each child. Concerns are always discussed with parents / carers at an early stage and the schools SENCO is called upon for further information and advice. Appropriate steps are taken in accordance with the school’s SEN policy.

Welfare

At St. Mary’s, we understand that “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” (Statutory Framework for the EYFS, 2023). It is of utmost importance to our that children in school are safe. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to

recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. (See Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.)

At St Mary's School we understand that we are legally required to comply with the safeguarding and welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for the EYFS, 2023. We understand that we are required to:

- Take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well by following our Safeguarding Policy.
- Ensure the suitability of adults who have contact with our children in the Early Years by following the "Suitable People" guidance outlined in the Statutory Framework for the EYFS (2023).
- Promote good health, including oral health, by providing healthy balanced and nutritious snacks and obtaining all dietary requirements and allergies for our children, carrying a first aid box and following our Health, Safety and Welfare policy.
- Manage behaviour, through following our Behaviour Policy.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures through following the guidance outlined in the Statutory Framework for the EYFS (2023).

Positive Relationships

At St Mary's School we recognise that children learn to be strong independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children.

We do this through:

- Home Visits for our Reception children and school-based stay-and-play sessions with parents for our Nursery starters.
- Talking to parents and previous settings about their child before their child starts in our school.
- The children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school during transition sessions.
- Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school and again during the first half term of the child's Reception year in order to detail how we aim to work with their child.
- Offering additional sessions for support with our Phonics scheme and Maths scheme throughout the year, if required.
- Encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns and ensuring a member of the EYFS team is always available to greet and dismiss the children to be available for parents.
- Hosting two formal Parents Evening meeting twice a year at which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress in private with the teacher.
- Providing two Progress Reports throughout the school year detailing their child's progress across all the Prime Areas, as well as Literacy and Mathematics.
- Providing the End of Year report detailing their child's Early Year Foundation Stage Profile results, and the opportunity to discuss this with the class teacher if required.
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents, such as class collective worships, school visits, parent readers.
- Providing parents an opportunity to celebrate their child's learning and development by completing 'proud clouds' to share "wow" moments from home which inform planning and provision, as well as sharing "wow" moments from school via Marvellous Me.
- Ensuring all parents know their child's teacher and teaching assistant.
- By providing a quiet and confidential area where parents are able to discuss any concerns through the availability of class teachers for additional meetings between Parents Evening appointments.

Enabling Environments

We aim to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment where children feel confident and secure and challenged. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision.

Play based learning is paramount and children direct their own learning from carefully planned opportunities provided by staff. Staff will enhance play and extend as needed to further individual learning as and when required.

Learning and Development

Teachers and teaching assistants provide the curriculum in the reception classes of up to a class size of 30 children.

Within the Early Years, there are seven areas of learning and development of which three are “prime areas,” and four “specific areas.”

The prime areas are:

- Communication and language.
- Physical development.
- Personal, social and emotional development.

The specific areas are:

- Literacy.
- Mathematics.
- Understanding of the world.
- Expressive arts and design.

The Monster Phonics Scheme is used in Reception to teach children Phonics and the early foundations for reading and writing across the Early Years classrooms.

In Reception, we use the NCETM Mastering Number Scheme is used to teach children a deep understanding of number and provide a strong foundation for their Maths learning in Key Stage 1 and beyond. The TalkThroughStories Scheme is used to inform English planning to give children the key skills they need for English throughout the rest of the school. Religious Education is also taught in accordance with Surrey guidelines.

Through careful assessments and observations, including information provided by parents and other settings, children’s development levels are assessed. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas. However, if a child’s progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child’s parents and / or carers and agree how to support the child. This may also include a discussion with the SENCO in order to access Special Educational Needs support.

At St. Mary’s...

In the Early Years at St. Mary’s, we understand the importance of promoting “the learning and development of all children in [our] care, and to ensure they are ready for year 1” (Statutory Framework for the EYFS, 2023). Each area of learning is carefully planned for in our progressive, bespoke curriculum and is implemented through purposeful and meaningful play during child-led learning.

Play in the EYFS

“Play is essential for children’s development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.” (Statutory Framework for the EYFS, 2023). At St. Mary’s, we consider the most effective ways to teach our curriculum, considering how to stimulate children’s interests and their needs. We guide our children’s development through warm, positive interactions and secure routines for play and learning. In Reception, greater focus is put upon teaching the essential skills and knowledge that will help to prepare the children for Year 1.

Teaching Methods and Approaches

Teaching methods vary according to our objectives within our planning. Nursery and Reception plan carefully to create their weekly timetables, with a balance of “carpet time” input sessions, activity-based input sessions and Discovery Time, child-led learning with continuous provision. In Nursery, children have free flow between the indoor and outdoor environments for the majority of the day. In Reception, children have free flow between both indoor classrooms and the outdoor environments for the majority of the day. The gate between Nursery and Reception is often open to allow the whole Early Years cohort to free flow between our outdoor areas. A visual timetable is provided so the children can identify the routines of the day.

Marvellous Me is used across the Early Years to record “wow” moments, and key learning for each child is collated in their Learning Journey folders.

Our curriculum

At St. Mary’s, we support children in using the three Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning. 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

Our bespoke curriculum (Appendix A) details the topics covered in each year that we use to guide our teaching. The curriculum is broken down into medium term plans which are used to inform weekly planning, considering the needs of the cohort and their individual interests.

Progression through the EYFS

Starting Nursery

In Nursery, children are invited to start the term after their third birthday. Children are offered 15 free hours, 2½ days, at the start or end of the week, top up session may be available. Some families are eligible for 30 free hours and can be in the Nursery full time. Within Nursery, individual 'learning journeys' are completed to capture the "wow" moments within the EYFS. On entry to Nursery and Reception children are assessed through liaison with parents and observations. Children new to Nursery have been offered a school "stay and play" visit with their parents to see the children on a 1:1 basis, get to know them and have an informal chat with parents before the child starts.

From Nursery to Reception

During the summer term prior to a child's entry into the Reception year, the following procedures have been put into place to ensure successful transition. Parents are invited to a meeting to ensure they know about school procedures and allocation of classes and any concerns they may want to express. During the summer term, parents are encouraged to complete an "all about me" booklet. It is used during the Autumn term to support transition and to inform planning. The children are invited to visit their reception class for a transition session in the summer term before starting with us. Members of staff have handovers with Nurseries and, if needed, visits to Nurseries. The number of visits will depend on the child's needs and how much information gathering is required in order to support the child's transition. Home visits are offered to children starting Reception.

From Reception Class to Key Stage 1

During the final term in Reception, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, staff and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against the Early Learning Goals, and their readiness for Year 1. The Profile includes whether the child is Emerging or Expected for each Early Learning Goal, whether the child has achieved Good Level of Development and a comment on the child against each Characteristic of Effective Teaching and Learning. A full handover is completed between the child's Reception teacher and new Year 1 teacher.