

# ST MARY'S CE (A) FIRST SCHOOL POLICY DOCUMENT FOR EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

*"Our Vision is to provide the best opportunities to become life-long learners.  
Our Christian values rooted in the Good Samaritan recognise everyone is loved by God.  
Our ethos is to show love and respect - to ourselves, each other and God's creation"*

## Philosophy

"When we succeed in giving 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, September 2023**  
In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children learn best through play-based activities and first-hand experiences. Every child deserves the best possible start in life, and we aim to provide this by observing and supporting them to become independent learners through a balance of child initiated and adult led experiences. Each child is unique and encouraged to achieve spiritually, socially and academically, within our Christian ethos of love, respect and kindness.

## Aims

- To offer a broad and balanced curriculum to enable each child to develop emotionally, socially, physically, creatively, intellectually and spiritually.
- To provide a secure environment where all children have the right to feel safe and happy.
- To provide a stimulating, exciting and challenging environment where learning is fun.
- To foster a love of learning, investigating and exploring while encouraging autonomous, independent learning.
- To develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children.
- To provide a caring and inclusive learning environment which is sensitive to the requirements of the individual child including those who have additional needs.
- To value the social and cultural diversity within our community.

## Guidelines

- Early Years education at St Mary's builds on what our children already know and can do.
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged.
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of younger children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors.
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment.
- It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers.
- Staff will observe, stimulate, extend, challenge and assess our children's play to broaden and deepen their learning experiences.
- **The Statutory Framework is mandatory for all Early Years providers from January 2024. The Framework refers to the following legislation:**
  - \*The learning and development requirements are given legal force by an Order made under section 39 of the Childcare Act 2006.
  - \* The safeguarding and welfare requirements are given legal force by Regulations made under section 39 of the Childcare Act 2006.

## Learning & Development

**The EYFS is made up of three prime areas of learning:**

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

**There are four specific areas of learning:**

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

## Effective Teaching & Learning

### **Effective learning and teaching are supported through:**

- the good partnership between staff and parents, helping children to feel secure and to develop a sense of wellbeing and achievement.
- the understanding that staff have the skills and knowledge to develop children's learning and this is reflected in their teaching.
- the range of activities providing first-hand experiences, with appropriate interventions to extend and develop children's play, through talk or other means of communication.
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve the expected Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on, and extend their interests, and develop their communication and intellectual, physical, social, emotional and spiritual abilities.
- the support for learning with appropriate and accessible space, facilities and equipment, both indoors and outdoors.
- the identification, through observations, of children's progress and next steps in learning, which are regularly shared with parents.

Practitioners reflect on the different rates at which children develop and adjust their practice appropriately.

**Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are: *playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically.***

## The Unique Child

Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

### **Practitioners:**

- understand and observe each child's development and learning, assess progress, plan for next steps.
- support children to develop a positive sense of their own identity and culture.
- identify any need for additional support.
- keep children safe.
- value and respect all children and families equally.

### **Inclusion:**

All children and their families are valued within our school. We believe that children should be treated as individuals and they should have equal access to the EYFS curriculum. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We help them do this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with additional needs and disabilities, children who are more able, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children from different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. We strongly believe that early identification of special needs is crucial in enabling staff to support the development of each child and fully meet their needs. Care and welfare is crucial and the children's needs are always paramount. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage in an open, honest and sensitive manner and we will always seek their support and involvement. The school's SENCo is responsible for providing additional information and advice to practitioners and parents, and for arranging external intervention and support where necessary.

**For further information, see our SEND Policy, Dyslexia Policy and SEND Information Report.**

## Positive Relationships

Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.

### **Positive relationships at St Mary's are:**

- warm, loving and foster a sense of belonging.
- sensitive and responsive to the child's needs, feelings and interests.
- supportive of the child's own efforts and independence.
- consistent in setting clear boundaries.

### **Key person:**

Young children need to develop relationships to support their emotional well being and learning. The class teacher and teaching assistants provide the child and their family with an opportunity to form close bonds, something of great importance when they are first settling in, and to share in the child's progress and development. However, throughout the day, all members of staff will work with all the children.

**Parents as partners:**

We believe parents are the initial 'teachers' for their children and when parents and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. We feel a successful partnership needs to have a good, two-way communication to share skills, knowledge and expertise and so we aim to provide opportunities to support this:

- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts school.
- Providing 'stay and play' opportunities for parents/carers and children to spend time in the classroom and find out how their children learn.
- Providing an induction meeting for parents/carers to meet with staff to discuss school routines, expectations and to answer any questions parents/carers may have.
- Holding a parent consultation early in the academic year to establish how their child is settling into the school environment.
- Operating an open door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns.
- Weekly contact if required, through the Home-School Reading Diary and school newsletters.
- Using an online platform - Cass Dojo - for parents and staff to communicate and share information.
- Information, events and learning opportunities on the 'EYFS' page of the school website.
- Inviting parents to attend workshops and family learning events in school, about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics, reading and maths.
- Offering regular parent/teacher consultation meetings throughout the year at which their child's progress is discussed.
- Provide activities and reading books to develop reading and encourage regular reading at home.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in Reception.
- Asking parents to sign a generic permission form for visits, photographs etc.
- Invitations to a range of activities throughout the school year such as worship, church services, workshops and sports day.

**Enabling Environments**

Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and carers.

**Enabling Environments:**

- value all people and value learning.
- offer stimulating resources, relevant to all the children's cultures and communities.
- offer rich learning opportunities through play and playful teaching.
- support children while they take risks and explore.

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development. We aim to create an attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment which will encourage children to explore, investigate and learn through first-hand experience. We aim to make it a place where children feel secure and confident and are challenged to develop their independence.

Activities are planned for both the inside and outside environment, and, throughout the week, children will have opportunities to move between the indoor and outdoor classroom. The Croft on the Heath is accessed regularly, providing outdoor learning and forest school activities. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Our planning is informed by observations we have made of the children in order to understand and consider their current interests, experiences, development and learning needs.

## Play & Exploration

**'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 practise and build up ideas, 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.

We support children's learning through planned play activities, through observation of child-initiated or adult-led play activities and then provide the most effective learning opportunities. We believe that it is important for adults to support children's learning through play, by getting involved in the play themselves and modelling by example.

### **Principles of High-Quality Play:**

- Play is an intrinsic part of children's learning and development. It has many possible but no prescriptive outcomes.
- Play challenges children and offers them the chance to learn in breadth and depth.
- Play draws on what children already know and can do and enables them to master what is new.
- Play enables children to apply existing knowledge and to practice their skills and encourages children to communicate with others as they investigate or solve problems.
- Play offers children opportunities to explore feelings and relationships, ideas, materials, connections and consequences and empowers children to make choices, to solve problems and to be independent in their learning.
- Play enables children to express fears or relive anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.
- Play encourages children to struggle, to take risks and to become resilient learners.
- Play can be supported and extended, but not interfered with, by adults.
- Play presents no barriers to children because of their language, cultures, abilities or gender.

### **Role of the adult:**

- To observe child-initiated play to understand and provide for their interests and needs.
- To support children's learning through planned play activities both inside and outside.
- To extend and support children's spontaneous/self initiated play.
- To extend and develop children's language and communication in their play.

## **Assessment**

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, plan activities and support learning and development.

- Initially, the Reception Baseline Assessment materials are used. This is a short assessment, taken in the first six weeks in which the child starts reception. It helps to establish the starting points for each child. Information is also gathered from previous settings (nurseries and pre-school) and initial observations by staff.
- All staff make observational assessments of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles and monitor whether children are on track to achieve the Early Learning Goals.
- We make informed decisions about attainment and progress, and this enables us to plan the next steps for individuals and groups of children by providing challenging and achievable, activities and experiences to extend learning and development.
- We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.
- At the end of the reception year, no later than June 30th, the EYFS profile is completed for each child. It provides a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities as well as their attainment against expected levels and readiness for Year 1.
- Foundation Stage staff are available to share children's achievements formally, each term, at consultation meetings with parents and each child is provided with an end of year report.

The collection of assessment data in the Foundation Stage Profile is a statutory requirement.

**'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 EYFS January 2024)**

At St Mary's, we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage, January 2024.

- To provide a setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence.
- To promote good health.
- To manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- To ensure that all adults who look after the children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so.
- To ensure that the setting, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for.
- To maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

**Keeping Safe** - It is important to us that all children in the 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. We encourage children to take risks and highlight the importance of keeping themselves safe by teaching them how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children.

We adhere to the mobile phone and smart technology guidelines and our Safeguarding Policy, to ensure any online devices are used safely and appropriately.

There is a first aid box in Nursery and Reception, and an Accident Book is kept for recording accidents, injuries and first aid treatment. Parents and carers are always notified of any accident or injury. All EYFS staff have a Paediatric First Aid Qualification which is renewed every three years.

At St Mary's, we implement the current school Safeguarding Policy, Child Protection Policy and we follow the Government Statutory guidance - Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and Working Together to Safeguard Children.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is the Head Teacher, Mrs J Moul. There are three deputy safeguarding leads - Mrs N Malkin (SENCo/Y2 teacher) Mrs S Norris (Nursery Lead) and Miss E Jeffery (Nursery Deputy Lead)

**Good Health** - All children are provided with a healthy snack each day as well as being given the choice of milk or water. They have access to water at all times and are encouraged to take part in physical activity throughout the day. We promote good oral health and model good practice with the children.

**Intimate Care** - In most cases, intimate care is linked with personal hygiene, and it is good practice for the school to inform the school nurse of all children requiring regular intimate care. Intimate personal care tasks can include:

- washing of the body,
- dressing and undressing,
- toileting and support with wiping children after using the toilet and changing underwear if necessary.

Most children are able to carry out these tasks themselves. However, depending on a child's age and stage of development, they may need some support. Parents are required to give consent for intimate care.

Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their

Policy agreed by Governing Body: April 2024

Reviewed: March 2026

Review March 2028