

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

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfill their potential. A child’s experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”

**“Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage”
Department for Children, Schools and Families**

Philosophy

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children learn best through play based activities and first hand experience. 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 church school ethos of love and respect for all.

Aims & Objectives

- 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.

Monitoring

It is the responsibility of those working in the Early Years to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Head Teacher and EYFS manager will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. The Curriculum Committee of the Governing Body will also be part of this process. This policy will be reviewed in July 2021 or earlier if necessary.

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

A Unique Child	Positive Relationships
Enabling Environments	Learning and Development

A 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 special educational 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 School Inclusion, Special Educational Needs, Dyslexia Friendly and SEND Information Report.

Positive Relationships

Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.

Positive relationships at St Mary's are:

- warm and 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.

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 Activity Book and school newsletters.
- Sending home 'wow' moments - designed to enable parents to record outstanding achievements for children to share in school.
- Information, events and learning opportunities on the 'Ladybirds' 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, maths and creativity.
- Regularly sharing 'Learning Journeys' through Learning Book (online Learning Journey accessed by parents at home) and valuing the on-going contributions from parents/carers.
- Offering regular parent/teacher consultation meetings throughout the year at which their child's progress is discussed.
- 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, food tasting and photographs etc.
- Invitations to a range of activities throughout the school year such as worship, church services, workshops and sports day.

Key person:

Young children need to develop relationships to support their emotional well being and learning. The class teacher and teaching assistant 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 of the children.

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. 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.

There are three stages of planning:

Long Term Planning:

The curriculum is currently organised through half-termly topics over the period of the academic year. The topics cover areas that are familiar and of interest to young children and also enable us to deliver a creative and balanced curriculum.

Medium Term Planning:

Learning objectives, assessment opportunities, activities and experiences are developed in more detail each term under the Prime Areas and the Specific Areas.

Short Term Planning:

Our curriculum is structured to provide opportunities for

- Every day to start with a story and the activities for the day will be based around the story.
- child initiated activities – where children can initiate their own ideas, resources, activities and learning;
- adult initiated activities - where staff intervene in children's play to develop, extend and stimulate to broaden the learning experiences;
- adult led activities – where children have the opportunity to learn through structured teaching and modelling, individually and in small groups.
- observation of children – observations of initiated or spontaneous activity and during planned play opportunities (indoors and outdoors), support our planning for the next steps in children's learning and development. Through this, learning objectives for the next short term plan are identified.

We use the whole environment, indoors and outdoors, to provide an enriched curriculum for children to experiment, investigate, interact, socialise and develop individually. Good personal and social skills are modelled and reinforced throughout the daily routine.

Play and 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 and Recordkeeping:

- Initially, the NFER Baseline Assessment materials are used to establish the starting points for each child as well as information from previous settings (nurseries and pre-school)
- All staff make observational assessments of each child’s achievements, interests and learning styles – anecdotal look/listen notes, focused narrative observations, learning journeys, targeted assessments, annotated examples of work, photographs, assessment using Learning Book and information from parents.
- 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, but achievable, activities and experiences to extend learning.
- We record each child’s level of development against the 17 early Learning goals as Emerging, Expected or Exceeding. We make regular assessments of children’s learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.
- 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.

Learning and Development

The EYFS is made up of Prime and Specific Areas of Learning.

Prime Areas	
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Making relationships Self-confidence and self-awareness Managing feelings and behaviour
Physical Development	Moving and handling Health and self-care
Communication and Language	Listening and attention Understanding Speaking
Specific Areas	
Literacy	Reading Writing
Mathematics	Numbers Shape, space and measure
Understanding the World	People and communities The world Technology
Expressive Arts and Design	Exploring and using media and materials Being imaginative

Learning and Teaching:

We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are intertwined.

Effective learning and teaching is 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, including the effective use of ICT;
- the identification, through observations, of children's progress and next steps in learning, which are regularly shared with parents.

Role of Parents/Carers

At St Mary's we strongly believe that an effective working partnership with parents and carers has a positive impact on children's development and learning.

We value parents/carers by:

- showing respect and understanding for the role of parents/carers as children's first and most important educator.
- encouraging parents/carers to share their child's development and any concerns they may have.
- providing a welcoming environment by being approachable and friendly and establishing an atmosphere of trust and confidence.
- inviting parents/carers to initial meetings to share information about their children and about our school.
- sharing information about the curriculum through newsletters, 'Stay & Play' events, workshops, newsletters/leaflets home about topics, displays, informal discussions, information window for Foundation and general school and community information.
- providing opportunities for parents/carers to attend social events with children and staff.
- meeting with parents/carers each term to share children's achievements and together discuss next steps for development.
- encouraging home school links through home activities eg phonics, reading, library books and maths activities.
- inviting parents to worship and other whole school events.
- inviting parents to become involved in the PTFA which supports the school in fund raising and organises social events for adults and children.
- by being available at the beginning and end of the day to talk to parents/carers on an informal basis. If further time is needed to discuss particular issues, an appointment can be arranged at a mutually convenient time.

Induction procedures:

We value the importance of a smooth transition into the Foundation Stage. All children and their families are offered a home visit and several taster sessions where children can 'stay and play'. Staff will visit children in their nursery in the Summer Term before starting school.

It is equally important that parents are comfortable with their child starting school, as it is for the child to have a settled start. For this reason, parents are invited to a meeting where they have the opportunity to look around the setting, meet the members of staff and ask any questions. This provides an opportunity to establish the vital partnership between parents and school.

Safeguarding & Welfare

**‘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 April, 2017)**

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, April 2017.

- 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.

(See our Safeguarding Children Policy).

Good Health - All children are provided with a healthy snack each day as well as being given the choice of milk. They have access to water at all times.

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.

Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child. The parent of any child who regularly requires intimate care will meet with the staff and agree the procedures of intimate care for their child.