



Learn and Grow Together in Christ

St. Mary's RC Primary School
Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy
2025-2026

Reviewed by A. Neill - November 2025

Agreed by Governing Board - November 2025

Policy will be reviewed by September 2026

Aims

At St. Mary's RC Primary School, we recognise that *'All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality early learning provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential.'* (The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, DfE: 2024)

We aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children, giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. Our Reception class is a safe, happy and challenging learning environment which enables children to become confident and independent learners.

We aim for children to benefit from meaningful learning across the curriculum, instilling a love of learning right from the beginning of their education. Our EYFS curriculum is broad and balanced, giving children the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress throughout school and later in life.

We value the individual child and work alongside parents and carers to meet their individual needs, helping every child to achieve their full potential.

We follow the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2024) and its four guiding principles to shape practice within Early Years. These principles are that:

1. Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured.
2. Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
3. Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments** with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
4. Importance of **learning and development**. Children develop and learn at different rates.

Curriculum

At St. Mary's RC Primary School, we plan a curriculum which is ambitious, well planned and engaging for all children. Our curriculum is flexible which means we plan around the needs and interests of all learners in each unique cohort. Our half-termly topics enable us to teach the breadth and balance of the curriculum whilst ensuring learning is meaningful.

Our curriculum covers all 7 areas of learning and development. We recognise that all areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

There are 3 prime areas:

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

Communication and Language involves - giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment with high quality conversations and the introduction of new vocabulary in order to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves, and to speak and listen in a range of situations. The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development involves - helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their emotions; to set simple goals and to persist and wait for what they want; and to have confidence in their own abilities. Children also learn how to look after their bodies and manage personal needs independently.

Physical Development involves - providing opportunities for children to be active and develop their co-ordination, control, spatial awareness and movement. Children will develop both their gross and fine motor skills. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy.

These 3 prime areas are particularly important for learning and forming relationships. They build a foundation for children to thrive and provide the basis for learning in all areas.

There are 4 specific areas:

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

Literacy involves - encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. We follow 'Little Wandle', a rigorous systematic synthetic phonics programme to ensure our children develop the skills necessary to become readers. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. It is crucial that children develop a life-long love of reading, helping them to make sense of the world around them. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).

Mathematics involves - developing a strong grounding in number so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. Children are provided with frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding by such as using manipulatives, tens frames and part whole models.

Understanding the World involves - guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them. Children listen to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems which foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world.

Expressive Arts and Design involves - the development of children's artistic skills, using their imagination and creativity. Children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and

materials. What children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through arts.

These 4 specific areas help strengthen and develop the three prime areas, and ignite children's curiosity and enthusiasm about learning.

The Early Learning Goals

The level of development children should be expected to have reached by the end of the EYFS is defined by the Early Learning Goals (ELGs).

At St. Mary's RC Primary School, we recognise that the ELGs should not be used as a curriculum or in any way to limit the wide variety of rich experiences that are crucial to children's development.

At the end of the Reception year, practitioners make a holistic, best-fit judgement about each child's development against the ELGs and their readiness for Year 1. Overall, there are 17 ELGs which children's level of development is assessed against. The terminology 'working towards the expected level' or 'working at the expected level' is used. This is shared with parents within their end of year report.

Planning

At St. Mary's RC Primary School, we use the Development Matters non-statutory guidance (DfE,2023) to help us plan and design an effective curriculum which builds on children's individual needs, interests and stages of development, meeting the needs of all children. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and adapt their practice appropriately. We recognise that there are 3 Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning:

- 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.

The children's interests are used as a hook for learning alongside well-planned half-termly topics which offer learning opportunities in all prime and specific areas.

As part of our daily practice and ongoing formative assessment, we observe and assess children's learning and development to inform our future planning. This enables us to understand children's interests and find out what they know and can do and devise ways to enhance their learning further. We use Blip It and Floor books to capture key moments of learning but recognise that physical evidence is not always required and we prioritise engaging with the children and providing high-quality interactions daily.

Teaching

At St. Mary's RC Primary School, we know that *'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 and learning that is guided by adults.'* (DfE, 2024). We therefore ensure that children take part in a combination of child-initiated, adult-guided and adult-led learning opportunities. During child-initiated learning, practitioners interact with the children, when appropriate, to expand their understanding and to challenge children further in their learning.

-Adult-led learning: *this is led by the adult and is planned to meet the specific learning needs of the child. This can be with the whole class, small groups or 1:1.*

-Adult-guided learning: *this is where adults support a child by guiding them through questioning, prompting or by providing specific resources in an area of the classroom which the child can independently practise or explore.*

-Child-initiated learning: *this is when the child chooses where to go and what to do in the learning environment. They will interact with resources within continuous provision and those extra added linked to the current topic or interests of the children.*

Our learning environment is well-organised, stimulating and accessible for all children. The classroom is arranged into specific areas of provision where children are able to find and locate resources independently. Children have daily access to indoor and outdoor provision where learning opportunities for all areas of learning and

development area planned for. We recognise that being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors.

Assessment

- At St. Mary's RC Primary School, ongoing assessment is an integral part of learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and carers.
- Children take part in the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment which focuses on assessing children's starting points in Language, Communication, Literacy and Mathematics. This assessment is completed within the first 6 weeks of children starting Reception class.
- Each half-term, the class teacher uses her professional judgement from ongoing formative assessment to identify whether each child is 'on track' or 'working towards' the expected level of development in each area of learning. This enables effective intervention to be quickly put in place to ensure all children achieve their full potential. Gaps in learning can also be identified and incorporated within adult-led and adult-guided learning opportunities.
- Our SSP scheme, Little Wandle, requires children's phonics knowledge to be assessed at least every 6 weeks. This takes place in a relaxed environment and in an enthusiastic manner. Again, this assessment enables gaps in learning to be quickly identified and interventions put in place to meet each child's needs.
- At the end of the Reception year, practitioners make a holistic, best-fit judgement about each child's development against the ELGs and their readiness for Year 1. The terminology 'working towards the expected level' or 'working at the expected level' is used. This is shared with parents within their end of year report.

Parent Partnerships

We strive to create and maintain partnerships with parents and carers as we recognise that together, we can have a significant impact on a child's learning.

We begin to establish effective relationships with parents and carers before their child starts school. Parents are invited to open evenings in the Summer Term where they have a tour of the school, find out important information and have the opportunity to speak to staff, including their child's EYFS teacher.

In the Autumn Term, parents are invited to a Meet and Greet where you are invited into your child's learning environment where you can find out more information about your child's learning journey at St Mary's, meet the staff and ask any questions you may have.

Each half-term, parents receive an overview for their child's new topic. This helps to make them aware of the knowledge and key skills their child will be developing each half-term and build upon this at home too.

Parents are invited to 2 parent consultation evenings per year where they can discuss their child's progress with the class teacher. Additional appointments are made throughout the year, when necessary.

Weekly home learning challenges are also set for parents to complete with their child at home. These aim to consolidate children's learning and bridge the gap between home and school.

Parents are invited to workshops throughout the year to help develop their subject knowledge of the EYFS curriculum and provide them with advice on how they can support their child at home too.

Working with other services and organisations is integral to our practice in order to meet the needs of our children. At times we may need to share information with other professionals to provide the best support possible. We draw on our links with the community to enrich children's experiences by taking them on educational visits and inviting members of the community into our setting.

Transition

At times of transition, we establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and with other settings. We complete nursery visits in the Summer term which enable us to find out key information about each child, including their likes and interests to aid a smooth transition into school.

Children attend two transitions day at St. Mary's RC Primary School in the Summer term where they attend for an afternoon session. The first session they attend alongside yourself and the second session they can attend on their own, if happy to do so. 15 children attend each session, allowing the children to get to know key staff, new peers and their new learning environment before beginning a phased start to school in September.

In September, children attend half days for their first week of school and then start full time the following week. This enables children to spend time building quality relationships in smaller groups and allows practitioners to deeply get to know each child.

Throughout the academic year, EYFS and Year 1 staff regularly liaise with each other to discuss children's individual levels of learning and development. Year 1 staff regularly visit Reception to see what learning looks like at different points in the year and identify the needs of each cohort. EYFS staff also visit Year 1 to identify how the children's learning has progressed from their time in Reception and identify ways to further prepare the next cohort for Year 1, where necessary.

In the final term in Reception, the Year 1 teacher will meet with the EYFS practitioners to discuss each individual child's development as measured against the Early Learning Goals in order to support a smooth transition to Year 1. This discussion helps the Year 1 teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children.

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