

*Living and learning, inspired by our faith*

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School

## **Early Years Foundation Stage Policy**



The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of Early Years education at our school. It relates to children in both the Nursery and Reception classes.

It should be used by all staff to ensure that children are happy, engaged in their learning and achieve well.

*CHR Sanku*

**Chair of Governors**

## Introduction

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five 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 together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation stage (2021)

At St. Mary’s we aim to:

- support and treat every child as an individual, building on their prior knowledge and recognising that every child learns at their own pace in their own way.
- provide a secure, safe, stimulating, happy and relaxed learning environment to support and extend every child’s development and learning.
- provide a broad, balanced, enjoyable and challenging curriculum (which reflects the requirements in statutory framework for the early years foundation stage) based on the individual needs and interests of all the children in our care.
- support them to learn through carefully planned, play-based experiences.
- promote teaching and learning to ensure the children’s school readiness
- give the children a broad range of knowledge and skills that provide a strong foundation for good future progress through school and life.
- build good relationships with parents and carers, working collaboratively to support the well-being and development of their child/ children.
- encourage the children to be confident and independent individuals, supported by the secure relationships formed within the setting (as well as at home).

This coincides with our school aims, to nurture every child’s academic and faith development so that they CARE (**c**onfident, **a**spirant, **r**esponsible, **e**ffective learners).

## EYFS principles

In the EYFS there are four guiding principles, these are:

- The belief that **every child is unique**, and that they are constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- That the children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
- Children learn well in **enabling environments with teaching and support from adults**.
- We recognise the importance of **learning and development** (recognising that every child develops and learns at their own rate)

In the EYFS we seek to provide:

- **Quality and consistency**, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.
- **A secure foundation** through planning for the learning and development of each individual child, and assessing and reviewing what they have learned regularly.
- **Partnership** working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers
- **Equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported

### **Inclusion**

At St. Mary's we deliver inclusive and effective practise for every child in our care. We treat every child as an individual and we ensure that we have high expectations of every child as well as taking on board their individual needs. We strive to remove barriers to participation and learning and eliminate discrimination by promoting equality.

Please see our 'Inclusion Policy' which will provide you with a detailed understanding of 'Inclusion' at St. Mary's.

### **Religious Curriculum**

As our School ethos states, at St. Mary's we are *Living and learning, inspired by our faith*, and therefore, providing the children with a Religious Education is at the core of everything we do. At St. Mary's we follow 'The Way, The Truth & The Life' syllabus.

This syllabus is based on the Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic schools. It has been developed by teachers in direct response to a perceived need for a clear framework for effective, systematic and rigorous teaching and learning, at least equal to that of other curriculum areas. To this end, it addresses both content and methodology.

Other faiths are addressed as a consequence of, and in the context of, Catholic teaching. Catholic teaching about the action of God in the world requires an informed and respectful approach to other faiths. By a study of the action of God in these faiths, Catholics can come to a deeper appreciation of the revelation of God in Christ. Catholics can also learn from the practices of other faiths (e.g. patterns of prayer, fasting, pilgrimages etc. cf. GDC para. 200).

### **The Curriculum**

The Curriculum is well-planned for and delivered through real-life, hands-on experiences. Our learning environment (both indoors and outdoors) is well-resourced and stimulating to allow the children to explore, investigate and learn through first-hand experiences. The EYFS covers learning in both Nursery and Reception classes, and we recognise the importance for continuity being maintained to support all of the children within the EYFS to flourish and progress at their own rate. To ensure this continuity the Nursery and Reception staff work closely together to

discuss: the Curriculum, assessments, our learning environment, resources, planning and to share ideas which recognise the wide range of abilities in both classes.

### **The areas of learning and development**

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape the educational programmes in the early years foundation stage. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

The **prime areas** are particularly important for building a foundation, igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving.

The **prime areas** are:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

The **specific areas** are:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

These areas include essential skills and knowledge. Through which the prime areas are strengthened and applied.

### **English as an Additional Language**

Having English as an additional language, and speaking more than one language has many advantages for children. We encourage families to use their home language for linguistic as well as for cultural reasons. At St. Mary's, we try our best to learn a few key words in the languages spoken in our classroom through a 'Language of the Month', to celebrate the multilingualism in our setting.

### **Special Educational Needs and Disability(SEND)**

All children are entitled to an education that enables them to achieve their best possible educational, and other outcomes. At St. Mary's we know how important it is to be alert to any emerging difficulties that children may have and to respond to these needs early on to provide effective provision and to improve long-term outcomes for the children.

We encourage parents to disclose any need or disability that their child has so that we can make appropriate arrangements to support their child as effectively as possible (ideally before their child starts school so we can prepare them for the transition into our Early Years setting) . We also ask that parents and family

members whom have a disability that impact's on their ability to contribute to their child's life at school let us know so that we can seek to support them too.

We work closely with parents/carers, the SEN co-ordinator and other appropriate bodies (such as health professionals) as we seek to work together in the best interests of the child and supporting their individual needs.

For more information, please see our school 'Inclusion Policy'.

### **Early Learning Goals**

The level of development children should be expected to have attained by the end of the EYFS is defined by the early learning goals (ELGs) as set out in the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage.

The ELGs are not used as a curriculum or in any way to limit the wide variety of rich experiences that are crucial to child development, from being read to frequently to playing with friends. Instead, the ELGs support teachers to make a holistic, best-fit judgement about a child's development, and their readiness for year 1. When we form a judgement about whether an individual child is at the expected level of development, we draw on our knowledge of the child and our own professional judgement. This is sufficient evidence to assess a child's individual level of development in relation to each of the ELGs.

### **The Characteristics of Effective Learning**

In the EYFS we also reflect on 'The Characteristics of Effective Learning'. These identify the ways in which children engage with others and their environment. They underpin learning and development across all areas and enable children to be effective and motivated learners. When planning the delivery of the Curriculum our EYFS Team not only think about what the children need to learn but how each individual learns (including the different rates in which they learn) to ensure that every child can access the Curriculum in a way best suited to them and their individual learning journey. The Characteristics of Effective Learning 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

### **Teaching and Learning through play**

Play underpins the EYFS. It also underpins learning and all aspects of children's development. Through play, children develop language skills, their emotions and creativity, social and intellectual skills. For most children their play is natural and spontaneous although some children may need extra help from adults. Play takes place at St. Mary's both indoors and outdoors and it is in these different environments that children explore and discover their immediate world. It is here they

practise new ideas and skills, they take risks, show imagination and solve problems on their own or with others. The practitioner's role is crucial in this, to provide time, space and appropriate resources for this play to take place.

At St. Mary's we:

- Provide the children with opportunities for periods of uninterrupted play.
- Have a wide range of resources for the children to play with by themselves or with others.
- Carefully plan and resource our indoor and outdoor learning environments to support and extend children's play.
- Have skilled and thoughtful practitioners who interact and play with the children in particular ways to enhance their learning.

During the school day, both classes follow a timetable with some set routines to provide the children with structure and security. We have a balance of adult-led/ directed tasks for the children to participate in as well as providing the children with time and opportunities to lead their own learning through self-selection and child-initiated tasks. This will look different in both classes as the year progresses, particularly in Reception as the children prepare for their transition into Year One.

### **Enabling Environments**

At St. Mary's we recognise how important the environment is for children's learning and development. Our setting is a place where we want the children to feel safe, explore and learn. We aim to create enabling environments in our Nursery, Reception and shared EYFS outdoor learning space. Our environments are child-centred and planned for based on the knowledge and understanding that practitioners have of their class and their classes interests and learning needs.

### **Observation and Assessments**

Throughout the year we observe and assess all the children in our early years setting which is an integral part of the learning and development process. This helps us to identify children's: needs, recognise their progress and helps us to plan and deliver a curriculum that meets the needs of all individuals in our care. Parents are kept up to date with their children's progress and development during the course of the year during formal parent-teacher meetings in the autumn and spring terms and they are provided with a written report at the end of year.

Assessment in the EYFS is carried out by the teachers, nursery nurses and other adults involved in the children's learning and development. It takes the form of interactions with the child, photographs and some written observations. The observations are recorded in children's individual 'Learning Journal' files. We value parents as being the first educators of their children and ask parents to make contributions to their child's/ children's learning journal in the form of 'Wow Moments'. These are the moments captured outside of school which can be linked to the seven areas of learning or a different learning experience that the child and family are proud of.

## Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)

At the beginning of the year a short assessment is carried out with every reception child (in the first six weeks in which the child starts reception). This assessment is called 'The Reception Baseline Assessment' (RBA). It is to provide an on-entry assessment of pupil attainment to be used as a starting point from which a cohort-level progress measure to the end of key stage 2 can be created. The assessment will be administered by the reception teacher, who will be working one-to-one with each pupil, with the assessment lasting up to 20 minutes per pupil. The assessments consist of practical tasks, using physical resources, and an online scoring system for the practitioner to complete as the pupil engages with the task. It is an age-appropriate assessment of mathematics and literacy, communication and language and it is delivered in English.

At the end of the year, an Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is completed for each child in reception. The Profile will provide parents and carers, practitioners, and teachers with a picture of the child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their attainment against expected levels, and their readiness for year 1. The Profile will reflect the practitioner's knowledge and professional judgement of each child to inform discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution. A report is also put together for each nursery child, this report is like similar to the Profile.

We report the results from the EYFS Profile to our local authority, upon request, who have a duty to return this data to the relevant Government department.

## Working in Partnership

At St. Mary's, we endeavour to form strong and positive relationships with parents and other appropriate bodies involved with the children in our care. We value the knowledge and understanding parents have of their child, and recognise parents as their child's first and foremost educator. At the beginning of the year, we have home-visits (or school visits- dependent on the current Covid-19 guidance), which we find extremely beneficial. These meetings help us to: get to know each other, and are a great opportunity for the child and family to ask any questions they may have, it is also a time for important information to be passed on to us so that we can support and tailor our teaching to meet the needs of every child. The Early Years staff greet families at the gate every morning and have conversations in passing at the beginning and the end of the day, however, if parents would like to meet with the teacher formally they are welcomed to request a time to meet (as well as having formal 'parent-teacher' meetings throughout the year).

## **Staffing and Organisation**

St. Mary's is a one-form entry primary Catholic school. In the EYFS, we have one nursery class and one reception class. In nursery we have a maximum intake of twenty-six children and in reception we have a maximum intake of thirty children. We maintain an adult/pupil ratio of 1:8 children in the nursery and 1:15 in reception. The children have daily opportunities for structured, child-initiated and free-flow play both in the classroom and in the outdoor area. This time is supported by an adult, who acts as a facilitator to the child's learning. The teachers liaise with the nursery nurses, regularly involving them in planning, preparation, and assessment.

In the Early Years our staff work as a team in order to provide high quality early learning experiences for all of the children in our care, however, we are always aiming to improve our teaching skills, knowledge and understanding. The team is encouraged to partake in continuous professional development opportunities, internally and externally, including training that is provided by the Local Authority to learn about new initiatives, ideas and teaching methods.

## **Safeguarding and 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 the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021)

The overall aim of St Mary's School is to care for and nurture our children both spiritually and academically. Our school is concerned about the welfare and safety of its pupils and we work to create a culture of security to enable them to feel valued, listened to and to know that their wishes and feelings are respected. For more information please refer to our: 'Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy', 'Health and Safety Policy' and 'Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy'.

## **Policy Review**

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and evaluated by the Head Teacher, EYFS Lead and the named Governor who is responsible for the EYFS.