



Great Marsden St John's Primary School

Church of England Academy

Headteacher
Mrs M Underwood
BA Hons | QTS | NPQH

Trent Road, Nelson, Lancashire, BB9 0NX T: 01282 615055
E: gmsjoffice@cidari.co.uk | www.stjohnsnelson.co.uk

Our Vision

Empowered by God's love, we uphold a culture where everyone is encouraged and supported to reach their full potential.

Our Mission

Rooted in God's love, inspiring all to aim high.

GMSJ EYFS Curriculum Policy.

Intent

At GMSJ, our EYFS curriculum is designed to provide every child with rich opportunities and meaningful experiences that build essential skills and knowledge in an immersive and engaging way. We aim for learning to be deeply understood and securely embedded in children's long-term memory. Alongside this, we prioritise holistic personal development, nurtured through strong, supportive relationships, our Christian ethos, and a wide range of enriching, varied experiences.

At GMSJ, we use the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021), Development Matters, and the Birth to 5 guidance as the foundation for shaping our EYFS curriculum. These documents are not treated as a checklist, but as a developmental pathway that supports children on their learning journey towards achieving the Early Learning Goals and a Good Level of Development by the end of Reception.

Our EYFS Curriculum Map is designed to ensure clear progression and breadth through well-defined themes. At the same time, it remains flexible and responsive, enabling us to place children's starting points, interests, and emerging needs at the heart of our daily provision.

At GMSJ, we recognise that many of our children enter school with lower-than-typical baseline starting points, shaped by a range of complex and varied factors. Our curriculum is intentionally designed to broaden their knowledge, deepen their understanding, and expand their sense of the world around them. Through carefully planned experiences, we aim to nurture children's appreciation of our culturally, socially, and ecologically diverse world, encouraging them to explore with curiosity, confidence, and wonder.

The EYFS curriculum at GMSJ is fully inclusive and responsive to the needs of all learners. It takes each child's starting point into account and provides bespoke learning opportunities that ensure every child can thrive and make meaningful progress.

Implementation

At GMSJ, curriculum sequencing, breadth, and purposeful repetition underpin our approach to high-quality early years practice. Our EYFS Curriculum Map provides a clear long-term structure,

while the day-to-day implementation is skilfully shaped by our experienced EYFS practitioners, supported by subject leaders who ensure strong curriculum coherence. To further enhance provision, we draw on the expertise of a highly specialised Speech and Language Specialist, ensuring that communication and language development remains central to our practice.

High-quality interactions are at the heart of our EYFS. Staff model learning, play, and the use of standard English grammar and pronunciation, maintaining consistently high expectations for behaviour and engagement. We use the SHREC approach to ensure all children are actively engaged in meaningful conversation. Through Sharing attention, Hearing and responding, Repairing and extending talk, Expanding language, and Conversational turn-taking, practitioners create rich, responsive dialogue that supports every child's communication development.

Communication and Language is a priority for all children entering Reception at GMSJ. Throughout the school year, we provide carefully planned opportunities that teach children the importance of listening, taking turns, and talking with others. These speaking and listening skills are essential, as much of our curriculum relies on children engaging in dialogue with peers and adults during group work and collaborative learning. Whole-class teaching and small-group interactions are used to build children's confidence as speakers and listeners, helping them to develop the communication skills needed to participate fully and feel valued within our classroom community.

For children who require additional support with their language development, we use the NELI programme to provide targeted intervention and ensure that every child has the opportunity to make strong progress in their speaking and listening skills.

Phonics is taught daily following Red Rose Phonics. Children will be introduced to the phonemes and graphemes within Phase 2 and 3 and taught the skills to read (blend) and write (segment) simple words, captions and sentences. Children will rehearse and practise recognising tricky words within each phase and recognise these words in their home reading books. Reading books sent home will be directly linked to the children's phonics week and will allow the children to practise and recognise phonemes/graphemes they are learning in the classroom at home. Guided Reading books in school will also be linked to the child's phonics that week and assessed by the support adult for when children are ready to move on. Fluency is a huge focus in reading and allows the children to reread a story to enable them to become more confident and fluent in their reading skills. Phonics is assessed at the end of each half term and flexible groupings are established to enable children to be stretched and challenged.

Maths and Literacy will be taught regularly throughout the week. This will be an adult led whole class carpet session led by a teacher, which will increase in length as the year progresses. Children will

then access small group adult led activities during provision time and challenges will be planned into provision for children to consolidate and embed new skills independently.

In Literacy, children engage with a broad range of text types and genres throughout the year. These texts are carefully selected and modelled by staff, with writing opportunities aligned to each child's phonics development. Exposure to stories, poetry, non-fiction, instructions, and simple reports enables children to develop an early understanding of different text structures and purposes. As the year progresses, children apply their writing skills with increasing independence across these varied genres. This breadth of experience supports a smooth and well-prepared transition into Year 1, where they will encounter a more formalised approach to reading and writing.

We recognise the importance of applying mathematical skills in real-life contexts and through meaningful problem solving. Wherever possible, links are made between maths and other areas of learning so that children can see how mathematical concepts are used in everyday situations. Throughout continuous provision and adult-led learning, children regularly count, compare, sort, estimate, and use a wide range of mathematical vocabulary. These frequent, purposeful interactions help children develop confidence and fluency in using maths to make sense of the world around them.

A baseline assessment of children's PSED needs will be carried in the autumn term and continually through daily adult interactions. Direct teaching of skills will be planned following assessment. EYFS will foster children's development in building relationships, managing self and self-regulation. Staff will actively celebrate children's birthdays, special achievements and cultural celebrations.

Learning through well-planned and well-resourced continuous provision offers all children opportunities to engage in a wide range of language-rich scenarios that promote independence and critical thinking. Our provision reflects the diversity of the wider world and ensures that all children see themselves and others represented. Enhancements to continuous provision are driven by the specific skills we want children to develop. These enhancements are planned to enable children to practise, apply, and consolidate learning from adult-directed teaching. Ongoing assessment is used to identify the needs of every child, allowing us to design bespoke opportunities that respond to the interests and developmental priorities of the cohort.

Role play, whether in the role play area, through small world play, imaginative play and outdoor learning is prominent in our provision. It allows children to develop communication and language skills, to act out and make sense of real-life situations, to explore, investigate and experiment and to develop social skills as the children collaborate with others.

Assessment in the EYFS is ongoing, responsive, and rooted in the Assess–Plan–Do–Review cycle. Sonar is used as part of our whole-school tracking system to monitor progress across the year and to support practitioners in identifying next steps for learning.

Examples of children’s writing are recorded in individual books, while wider topic-based learning is documented in our floorbooks to capture the breadth of experiences across the curriculum. Families are kept informed of their child’s learning through regular updates and photographs shared via Class Dojo, the school newsletter, and the school’s Facebook page, ensuring strong communication between home and school.

Impact

Monitoring takes place in two key areas: the delivery of the curriculum and the outcomes it secures for children. The quality of curriculum implementation is monitored through professional discussions, drop-ins, conversations with children and opportunities for peer-to-peer professional development. These approaches ensure that the curriculum model is consistently understood and effectively translated into classroom practice. Children’s progress and attainment are monitored formally three times per year using Sonar. Pupil Progress Meetings provide a structured opportunity for dialogue between the class teacher and the Headteacher, ensuring that next steps for individuals and groups are clearly identified and acted upon.

Assessment of children’s learning and development will be achieved and evidenced through:

- ★ Evidence in individual books and floorbooks, demonstrating progress across all areas of learning.
- ★ Professional dialogue within the EYFS team, including regular discussions with the class teacher.
- ★ Talking to children to gather insight into their understanding, interests and developing skills.
- ★ Parental input gathered during parents’ evenings and ongoing communication.
- ★ Sonar tracking to monitor progress and identify next steps.

To further develop the EYFS curriculum we intend to:

- ★ Work alongside the Lancashire Literacy Learning Team to refine and strengthen the Literacy curriculum within EYFS (Talk Reception Course)
- ★ Make the vision for EYFS at GMSJ clear, explicit and consistently understood by all staff.
- ★ Strengthen oracy within EYFS, embedding SHREC and aligning with whole-school Voice 21 approaches.
- ★ Embed mastery principles in early mathematics, including vocabulary, reasoning prompts and high-quality continuous provision.