



EYFS Policy

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Early years foundation stage policy

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. Our Early Years Foundation Stage accommodates children from the age of 4 to 5 years in FS2.

Aims

At St Mary's School we aim to give each child a positive and meaningful start to their school life, in which they can establish solid foundations on which to develop into independent and questioning lifelong learners. We will encourage children to develop independence within a secure and friendly atmosphere; to support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing; to help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and by developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

Our high expectations will enable each child to develop socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally and to achieve their full potential. We will offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited availability for development through a wide range of new and exciting first-hand experiences that will give children the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test their skills, knowledge and understanding alongside existing experiences. We will ensure that children are kept healthy and safe and that they achieve the knowledge and skills they need to start school

The Curriculum

The Reception children follow the curriculum as outlined in the 2017 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document, which is available on the school website or to download at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stageframework--2>.

This clearly defines what we teach. The following policy details the specifics of our setting.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

A Unique Child

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration/sharing assemblies and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Positive relationships

We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.

Enabling environments

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests and stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.

Learning and development

Our foundation stage has one reception classroom, a large outdoor classroom, which the children have free access to during free flow sessions and an outdoor forest school classroom in our onsite woods. All our learning environments are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The areas of learning are defined so that children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

Areas of Learning

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

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

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

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

At St Mary's all areas are delivered through a play based approach, with a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. Throughout the foundation stage our long and short term planning ensures that each child has the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in every area at the appropriate developmental level. Our long term planning ensures coverage so that all children have opportunities to work towards and achieve the Early Learning Goals (ELG's) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS. We follow a half termly topic based approach, which allows flexibility to ensure that both children's needs and interests are taken into account.

Play

Learning through play underpins our approach to teaching and learning in the foundation stage. We embrace the fact that young children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them to learn. In doing so we can provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning and to help them make sense of the world. Children have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experiences at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests, inspire those around them and consolidate their understanding and skills. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions.

Our adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating, teaching and extending play, skills and language.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning and the reception teachers plan activities with these in mind. The characteristics highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them. The three characteristics 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.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning underpin everything we do in FS2 and form the basis of the majority of our observations with the children. We report how the children are as learners to parents via our focus child system, online via our Tapestry learning journeys and in our final EYFS report in June/July.

Forest School

We are very lucky to have our own onsite woods and the FS2 children have 4 sessions in the woods per week, in all weathers. The forest classroom is set up in a similar way to our other provision, allowing the children to freely access the resources independently to support their learning. All children bring a set of all in one waterproofs or similar so we can go out in all weathers and learn and appreciate all the seasons. (see our separate Forest Schools policy).

Inclusion

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning and we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of individual children, so that children are able to reach their full potential. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. We aim to build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs

We will provide: a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively; a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued; resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping; challenging activities for all children and for those whose ability and understanding are advanced. We will monitor children's progress and take action to provide support as necessary. Where a specific need is suspected we will liaise with the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator and seek advice from outside agencies, such as the speech and language service, the educational psychologist and the bi-lingual support services amongst others. We adhere to the Equal Opportunity and Inclusion policies of the school.

Assessment

Throughout nursery and reception children knowledge, understanding, skills and achievements are assessed and tracked using the developmental stages set out in the document 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)'.

Our assessment depends on us getting to know our children very well and to this end we gather information from a range of sources; observations of the children in play, in adult led activities, through discussions with parents and carers and through talking to the children. We keep written and photographic evidence to help us build up a picture of children's strengths and achievements and to help us to plan for children's next steps in learning. Every child in nursery and reception has a 'Learning Journal' in which we record our observations and keep samples of the children's work. St Mary's uses Tapestry to record evidence which is shared with parents

On entry during September and October reception children will be observed so that the adults working with them can get to know them personally, socially and as learners. The teachers then use this information to decide where the children are in terms of development and we use this as their starting point into school. During the Oct/Nov parents evening this information is shared with parents and next steps are also shared so parents know what their child is working to achieve next. At no point are the children tested, judgements are purely made from observations of the children engaged in play and the usual classroom activities.

Observational evidence and samples of children's work throughout the school year will be used to assess children as 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding' based on their understanding and achievement of the Early Learning Goals set out in the EYFS curriculum. Our children's knowledge, skills and understanding will be tracked throughout the foundation stage and assessed against the ELG's at the end of reception to establish an end of foundation stage achievement and learning profile for each child in preparedness for their transition to key stage one. We use Tapestry as our online learning journey and use this to record observations and track progress through the reception year.

Transitions

At St Mary's we recognise that starting school and moving up classes has the potential to be a stressful time for both children and parents. To this end we have established a strong procedure for transitions to ensure that our children and parents are as confident and secure as they can be when facing the challenges of each year group.

The EYFS lead holds a meeting in the summer term before the children start school to provide parents with key information, school expectations, knowledge on our curriculum and assessment and advice on how they can help their child. All parents new to the school are offered an individual meeting at school, if required. This gives children the security of meeting with their teachers in a safe, familiar environment and gives parents time to ask questions and share knowledge or any concerns they have about their child. In the summer term reception children have the opportunity to meet with their teachers in their classroom during our transition sessions. Parents are welcome to stay and play for one session, but encouraged to leave their child for the subsequent visits. Where possible reception teachers also visit new children in their feeder nursery settings, again allowing for another opportunity to visit children in a safe environment.

At the end of reception, if the class is moving to another teacher, the children have the opportunity to meet with their new teachers in their classrooms prior to starting Year one. At the end of each school year teachers have the opportunity to share their knowledge of each child's knowledge, understanding and achievements, including end of year assessment data, with their next class teacher to ensure that all teachers have a wellrounded picture of the children prior to the new school year.

Partnership with Parents

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what their child does at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child and to feel comfortable in our setting. As well as the transition visit days we offer parents a variety of learning workshops to provide advice and information on how they can support their child's learning. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to share information about their child, to ask questions and to discuss their child's learning with the teachers.

We believe that all parents have an important role to play in the education of their child. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. Every child has a Tapestry online learning journey so that teachers can provide information on children's experiences in school and parents can share information about their child's experiences and achievements outside school. This information helps to build a well-rounded picture of the child for everyone.

Parents are encouraged to join in with their child's education from the very start of their school journey. In reception parents are encouraged to support children's learning through completing reading records, simple homework activities, sharing learning experiences online via Tapestry and by sharing assemblies and whole class activities.

At St Mary's we value the importance of the three-way relationship between children, parents and staff, as it enables children to make good progress and to maximise their potential. We have a focus child system where we share 'A snapshot of my learning' regularly throughout the school year. These are an opportunity to celebrate the children's progress and achievements, and to share areas for further development. Children, parents and staff all have the opportunity to contribute. This is in addition to a written report at the first parent meeting in Oct/Nov (which includes baseline observations) and to the final report at the end of FS2 (includes EYFS profile judgements). The final FS2 report is based around the characteristics of effective learning and fits academic success within this framework. Formal parents meeting are offered in Term 2 and Term 4, where parents have the opportunity of speaking with the teachers to discuss their child's progress and development, their next steps in learning. Parents are always welcomed to discuss their children informally at the end of the school day.

Health & safety and safeguarding

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. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2014) and we adhere to the school's safeguarding policy.

We are a healthy school and our children under 5 receive free milk and all children have access to fresh water and free fruit from a Government scheme. Reception children who stay for lunch are eligible for free school meals or can choose to bring in a healthy packed lunch.

The foundation stage children have access to their own toileting facilities and we teach the children the importance of hygiene, hand washing techniques and throughout the year we plan cooking activities to give children experiences of a range of healthy food.