

St Mary's Catholic Primary School



EYFS Policy



Bishop Chadwick
Catholic Education Trust

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Person Responsible: Mrs. Maria Walker

Review: Autumn 2027

Mission Statement

Work, Play, Pray Together

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, Department for Education, March 2025

The EYFS is based on four overarching principles:

- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
- 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/or carers.
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.**

Aims

At First Steps Nursery and St Mary's Catholic Primary School we aim to:

- Make the transition from Nursery (pre-school) to Reception (full time education) as smooth as possible.
- Provide a secure and caring learning environment in which children are happy and eager to learn.
- Provide a broad, balanced and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Provide opportunities for children to learn through planned and purposeful play in all areas of their learning and development.
- Develop a close working partnership between home and school.
- Provide quality and consistency in teaching and learning so every child can achieve their full potential.
 - Ensure that every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

Starting School and Settling In

Starting Nursery will be, for many children, the first time they have been away from their parents or familiar adults for a substantial length of time. It is therefore important that the transition from home to school is made as comfortable as possible. During the term prior to starting Nursery, the Nursery holds an Open Day for the children and their parents/carers to meet the staff, familiarize themselves with the building and experience some typical nursery activities. Parents will be given different times at which they can visit the setting with their child. This will also provide an opportunity for the Nursery team / staff to have an informal chat with both the child/parents/carers. The Nursery prospectus is easily accessed on the school website and provides information on all aspects of attending Nursery at St. Mary's.

Children with SEND will be assessed, and if necessary, appropriate adaptations will be put in place or extra adult support provided to enable equal access to the Nursery Curriculum.

Parents/carers are made aware of the effect irregular attendance has on a child's ability to settle, and also of the effects of coming back to school after a long absence.

When joining Reception, children have a transition morning visit during the Summer term. Parents will have access to a presentation / open evening which will provide them with all of the information needed about the start of their Reception year. If the children attend our Nursery they have many opportunities to meet their new teachers in the second half of the Summer term. Reception children attend full days from the beginning.

Staffing and Organization

The Early Years team are passionate about inspiring children from the very start of their journey at St Mary's. We provide a wide range of exciting opportunities and experiences through a curriculum which encompasses the best of both the indoor and outdoor space. Our aim is to ignite a child's appetite for learning, and provide them with the core characteristics required to become independent, confident, hardworking and creative individuals.

We have two part time Nursery sessions and we do offer 30 hours provision for eligible children. We maintain an adult/pupil ratio of 1:13 within the Nursery for 3-year-old children and 1:5 for 2 year olds. The children have daily opportunities for structured 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 children's learning. The staff liaise together in planning, preparation and assessment.

We have one Reception Class and we maintain an adult/pupil ratio of 1:15 within the Reception Year; there is a Teaching Assistant in the classroom throughout the school day. The children have daily opportunities for structured and free-flow play both in the classroom and in the custom built EYFS outdoor area. The Reception teacher liaises with the Teaching Assistants, regularly involving them in planning, preparation and assessment.

Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the latest version of the EYFS statutory framework that applies from September 2026.

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- **Communication and language** - children will be given lots of opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; to speak and listen in a range of situations.
- **Physical development** - children will be provided with opportunities to be active and interactive; to develop their co-ordination, control and movement. Children will be taught the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food.
- **Personal, social and emotional development** - help children develop a positive sense of themselves and others; forming positive relationships and develop respect for others; develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and have confidence in their own abilities.

Prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

- **Literacy** - children will be taught to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children will be given access to a wide range of reading materials to ignite their interest.
- **Mathematics** - children will be provided with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces and measures.
- **Understanding the world** - Children will make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.
- **Expressive arts and design** - Children will explore and play with a range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

Planning

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Staff respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction.

The Foundation stage staff use an agreed format which includes details of curriculum provision, deployment of staff, learning intentions and targeted skills and vocabulary. Annual and half termly

plans ensure that children experience a broad and balanced curriculum which is appropriate for their age and development. Short term plans select activities and learning objectives from medium term themes as deemed appropriate to meet the needs and interests of the children. Plans are extended and differentiated accordingly. Short term weekly plans also have scope for 'spontaneous planning', based on learning needs and interests as they occur through the week.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year 1.

Assessment

At St Mary's, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the 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 consider observations shared by parents and/or carers.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child starts Reception, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

At the end of each term, EYFS staff complete the EYFS profile tracker for each child using Arbor. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile reflects ongoing observations, assessments and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are shared with parents and/or carers during parents' evenings and in written reports. The profile is moderated internally (referring to the Development Matters guidance) in pupil progress meetings and in partnership with other local schools in South Tyneside / the BCCET, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority / BCCET.

Working with Parents / families

We recognise that Parents/carers are the child's first and most enduring educators. When Parents/carers and practitioners work together in early years' settings, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. A successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise.

Curriculum letters are sent home termly to keep families informed of their child's current curriculum and learning needs.

We operate an "open door" policy, whereby parents/carers can come and discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner and also to view children's work.

Each child is assigned a key person who helps to ensure that their learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. The key person supports parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home and also helps families to engage with more specialist support, if appropriate.

The progress check and EYFS profile helps to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

Parents have access to Class dojo in Nursery and Arbor in Reception as well as our school and nursery Facebook pages. Stay and Play sessions are offered every term for parents / carers to come into Nursery and work alongside the children and staff. Individual next steps and progress is discussed with parents/carers at parents' meetings in the Spring term.

Safeguarding and welfare procedures

We promote good health in the early years by talking to children about:

- The effects of eating too many sweet things
- The importance of brushing your teeth
- Positive mental and physical health.

The rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy. Children in the three year old room start to brush their teeth each afternoon in the Spring term to prepare for this daily routine in the Reception class.

Equal Opportunities

As in all aspects of school life, the children will be treated at all times with the requirements of equal opportunities in mind. No pupil will be disadvantaged by reason of race, class, gender or ability. This does not mean that all pupils will necessarily have an identical provision as, for example, those with Special Needs or English as an Additional Language may receive additional support or have separate programmes of work. However, all pupils will receive an educational provision which is equally suited to their needs. For specific reference to Special Educational Needs, please see school policy.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS practitioners to follow the principles stated in this policy. There is a named Governor responsible for the EYFS. This governor has the opportunity to discuss EYFS practice with the practitioners and provide feedback to the whole governing body, raising any issues that require discussion.

The Head teacher, EYFS Leader and Subject Leaders carry out monitoring of the EYFS through observation and discussion as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. EYFS staff meet each week to review their week and evaluate practice. Termly, cross-school moderation meetings are attended by EYFS teachers.