



St Matthew's Catholic Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Updated for the statutory framework effective 1 September 2026

Agreed by the Governing Body	Autumn 2026
Review date	Autumn 2027 or sooner following statutory change
Person responsible	EYFS Lead
Applies to	Reception / EYFS provision at St Matthew's

1. Policy statement and statutory context

At St Matthew's Catholic Primary School, we believe every child should experience a secure, joyful and ambitious start to school. Our EYFS provision reflects the school's Catholic mission and recognises each child as unique, valued and capable. We promote high expectations, inclusion, strong relationships, purposeful play, rich language and careful teaching so that children develop the knowledge, skills and characteristics they need to flourish.

This policy is written in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for group and school-based providers effective from 1 September 2026. It should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the current versions of Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children, together with relevant school policies including SEND, Equality, Behaviour, Attendance, Online Safety, Health and Safety, First Aid and Intimate Care.

2. Overarching principles

Our practice is shaped by the four EYFS 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 with teaching and support from adults who respond to individual interests and needs and build strong partnerships with parents and carers.
- Children develop and learn at different rates. Our provision supports all children, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

3. Aims

- Provide a safe, welcoming and nurturing environment in which children feel secure, valued and ready to learn.
- Support a smooth transition into Reception and onwards into Year 1.
- Deliver an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum across all seven areas of learning.
- Use a balanced approach of purposeful play, child-initiated learning and direct adult teaching.
- Prioritise communication and language, early reading, writing, mathematics, physical development and personal, social and emotional development.
- Work in close partnership with parents and carers, recognising them as children's first and most enduring educators.
- Identify needs early and remove barriers to learning, participation and belonging.
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice so that every child can thrive.

4. Starting school and transition

Before children start Reception, the school provides opportunities for children and families to become familiar with the setting, staff, routines and expectations. Information from parents, carers and previous settings is used to support continuity and identify individual needs. During Reception, staff work with families through regular communication and workshops, including support for phonics and mathematics. Transition into Year 1 is planned collaboratively so that children experience continuity in expectations, relationships, curriculum and support.

5. Staffing, supervision and organisation

Reception classes in maintained schools and academies are subject to infant class size legislation. St Matthew's organises staffing to meet statutory requirements, children's needs, the demands of the curriculum and safe supervision. Support staff are deployed flexibly to enhance learning, inclusion and welfare. Staffing arrangements are kept under review, including during outdoor learning, lunchtimes, educational visits and any mixed-age or extended provision.

All adults working in the EYFS are expected to understand their safeguarding responsibilities, follow school procedures, maintain appropriate professional boundaries and contribute to a culture in which concerns are recognised, recorded and acted upon promptly.

6. Curriculum and teaching

The EYFS curriculum comprises seven areas of learning and development. The three prime areas are Communication and Language, Physical Development, and Personal, Social and Emotional Development. The four specific areas are Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World, and Expressive Arts and Design.

At St Matthew's, the curriculum is sequenced to build securely on what children know and can do. Adults use high-quality interactions, modelling, questioning, stories, songs, vocabulary, direct teaching and purposeful continuous provision. Children have daily opportunities to learn indoors and outdoors. As children develop, there is a planned increase in adult-guided and direct teaching, while play remains an important context for learning.

Early reading is prioritised. The school uses the Sounds-Write phonics programme and provides frequent opportunities for children to enjoy books, develop language and comprehension, and practise the knowledge and skills needed for fluent reading and writing.

7. Planning and assessment

Planning starts from the statutory educational programmes, the school's intended curriculum, children's prior learning and identified needs. Practitioners adapt teaching responsively, using professional knowledge of children rather than generating unnecessary evidence.

Ongoing assessment is an integral part of learning and development. Practitioners use observation, interaction, children's work and information from parents and carers to

understand progress and plan appropriate next steps. Assessment should be proportionate and should not detract from high-quality interaction with children.

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is administered within the first six weeks of each pupil starting Reception in accordance with the current statutory assessment and reporting arrangements. At the end of the EYFS, the statutory EYFS Profile is completed for each eligible child against the 17 early learning goals, with judgements recorded as “expected” or “emerging”. Profile information is shared with parents and carers and supports transition into Year 1. Statutory data is submitted in accordance with current national and local authority requirements.

8. Inclusion, SEND and equality

We have high expectations for every child and make reasonable adjustments so that children with SEND and disabilities can access, participate in and benefit from the curriculum. Staff work closely with the SENDCo, families and external professionals where appropriate. Support is based on individual need and is reviewed for impact. Children learning English as an additional language are supported to develop English while their home language, culture and identity are valued.

The school complies with its duties under equality legislation. Practice actively promotes respect, belonging and fairness and challenges discrimination and prejudice. Decisions about provision are based on children’s needs and do not lower expectations for what children can achieve.

9. Working with parents and carers

Parents and carers are valued partners. The school maintains regular two-way communication about children’s learning, wellbeing, attendance and development. Parents and carers are encouraged to share information that may affect their child and to raise concerns promptly. Formal opportunities to discuss progress are provided during the year, alongside ongoing communication and the sharing of statutory EYFS Profile outcomes.

10. Safeguarding and welfare

Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility. EYFS staff follow the school’s Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, procedures led by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 and the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the current EYFS statutory framework. Concerns about a child, an adult working with children, or safeguarding practice must be reported without delay using the school’s procedures.

- Safer recruitment and suitability: required checks, including appropriate enhanced DBS checks and references, are completed in accordance with statutory requirements. From September 2026, the EYFS framework prevents new employees from commencing employment before receiving the required check and requires enhanced criminal records checks for volunteers, including supervised volunteers.

- Staff safeguarding training: staff receive training appropriate to their role and are expected to understand indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation, how to report concerns, and their responsibilities for information sharing and record keeping.
- Attendance and absence: unexplained or prolonged absence is followed up promptly in line with school attendance and safeguarding procedures, recognising that absence can be a safeguarding indicator.
- Paediatric first aid and medical needs: the setting maintains paediatric first-aid arrangements and manages medicines, accidents, injuries and health needs in accordance with statutory requirements and school procedures.
- Food and drink: children are supported to eat and drink safely. Staff take account of allergies, dietary requirements, choking risks and appropriate supervision, and promote healthy choices and oral health.
- Safer sleep: where sleeping arrangements are provided, the school follows the safer-sleep requirements in the current EYFS framework and relevant health guidance.
- Intimate care and privacy: toileting and personal care are managed with dignity, appropriate privacy, safeguarding oversight and regard to each child's developmental and additional needs.
- Online safety and screen use: technology is used purposefully and safely. The school has regard to the Department for Education's early years screen-use guidance, alongside whole-school online-safety, filtering and monitoring arrangements.
- Dogs and premises: registered childcare must not be provided from premises where a banned dog breed is kept or present, in accordance with the EYFS requirements effective from September 2026.
- Whistleblowing: staff can raise concerns about safeguarding practice in accordance with the school's whistleblowing procedures and statutory guidance.

11. Health, wellbeing and safe learning

Children are taught, in age-appropriate ways, how to keep themselves healthy and safe. This includes physical activity, healthy eating, oral health, emotional wellbeing, relationships, road and environmental safety, and safe use of technology. Risk assessment is proportionate and supports children to encounter appropriate challenge while adults maintain effective supervision.

12. Monitoring, leadership and governance

The Headteacher and EYFS Lead are responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently and that statutory requirements are met. Monitoring may include learning walks, discussion with children and staff, scrutiny of curriculum and assessment information, consideration of outcomes and review of the quality of the learning environment. The governing body exercises appropriate oversight of EYFS provision and safeguarding through the school's governance arrangements.

The policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier where legislation, statutory guidance or the needs of the school change.

13. Key statutory and national guidance

Document / legislation	Version / status referenced
Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers	Effective 1 September 2026
Keeping Children Safe in Education	September 2026
Working Together to Safeguard Children	March 2026
Reception Baseline Assessment: assessment and reporting arrangements	2026 to 2027
Early Years Foundation Stage Profile handbook	current version
Early years qualification requirements and standards	Effective 1 September 2026
Equality Act 2010	as amended
Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004	as amended
Childcare Act 2006	as amended