



St Thomas More RC Primary School

Early Years Policy

Date:

Review Date:

A copy of this policy can be obtained on request from the school office.

Mission Statement

As Servants of God, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Through His love, we guide each member of our family on their own spiritual and learning journey to achieve and grow.

We Love, We Learn, We Live with Christ.

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

In our Early Years Foundation Stage at St Thomas More RC Primary School, we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start in their school life. We view all children holistically and strive to enable them to develop and achieve their full potential in all aspects; personally, socially, emotionally and academically.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At St Thomas More RC Primary School, we currently have a 26 place Nursery class that offers the 30 Hour Entitlement and a 45 place Reception class. For this academic year 2024/25, our Nursery and Reception pupils are combined, in line with the other key stages in the school, and are based in the main school building.

In partnership with parents and carers, we enable the children to begin the process of becoming active learners for life. We aim to support children in their learning through “teaching and learning to ensure children’s ‘school readiness’ and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.” (Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021)

We aim to support each child’s welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Recognising that all children are unique and special
- Understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued by all practitioners working with them
- Fostering and nurturing children’s self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the wider world
- Teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways
- Encouraging children’s independence and decision-making, supporting them to learn through their mistakes.
- Developing children’s understanding of social skills and the values and expectations for behavior
- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions different to their own.
- Understanding the importance of play in children’s learning and development
- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children’s personal interests and areas of curiosity
- Providing experiences which build on children’s existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.

- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.
- Develop and maintain positive relationships with parents/carers and families.

Staffing and organisation

We have 26 places for Nursery aged pupils, we currently offer the 30 Hour provision for those children whose parents qualify for this entitlement and have provided school with their eligibility code. At St Thomas More RC Primary School, we currently have a 26 place Nursery class and a 45 place Reception class. For this academic year 2024/25, our Nursery and Reception pupils are combined, in line with the other key stages in the school, and are based in the main school building.

In our EYFS department, children are organised into two classes of mixed Nursey and Reception ages. We share one large classroom and outdoor space, have a space for separate class teaching inputs and we share continuous provision areas. In our EYFS department, we have two teachers and up to four teaching assistants working in the department.

The EYFS Team



Miss Barran - EYFS
Teacher & EYFS Lead



Miss Kadir - EYFS
Teacher



Mrs Coughlan - EYFS
Teaching Assistant (NNEB)



Miss Reeves - EYFS
Teaching Assistant



Mrs Williams - EYFS
Teaching Assistant



Mrs Patterson - EYFS
Teaching Assistant

Nursery

We have a 26 place Nursery setting at St Thomas More's RC Primary School that offers the 30 Hour entitlement.

To find out if you qualify for the 30 Hour entitlement, parents need to register themselves on the Childcare Choices government website, submitting their personal details.

If you are entitled to the 30 Hours, you will receive an 'Eligibility Code' once you have registered with Childcare Choices and submitted the required information. This code needs to be given to our school office as soon as you receive it.

For further information regarding the 30 Hour entitlement, please contact our school office or visit the Childcare Choice website:

www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

Toileting

It is expected that children are fully toilet trained before starting at St Thomas More RC Primary School.

If your child has an additional need that may affect this, we do ask that you discuss this with us as soon as possible so that we can create an Intimate Care Plan that will enable us to work together to ensure your child's individual needs are met.

Starting Nursery/Reception

Leaving parents for the first time or moving from Nursery into Reception is a big step in a child's life. To make this as easy as possible we hold 'Stay and Play' sessions at the beginning of September before the children start. Where possible, we also invite parents to 'sign up' for a Home Visit. This involves two members of our Early Years team visiting children and their parents in the home environment. We find these visits very beneficial to the children upon their transition into Nursery/Reception as it provides an opportunity for the staff to meet the children in the home setting and also an opportunity for parents to have conversations and share information about their child with the Early Years team prior to starting at St Thomas More.

September

For our Nursery children, we initially 'stagger' sessions for our Nursery children. We find this enables the children to ease into the new routine, become familiar with the new setting, practitioners and children and allows them time to 'settle in.' We gradually increase the time they stay within the setting before staying 'full time.'

For Reception, children start school after the 'stay and play' sessions. Once the children have started in Reception, they become full time members of St Thomas More.

The Nursery/School Day and Routines

Times:

- Nursery - 8.40am - 3.10pm (for those children accessing the 30 Hour Entitlement)
- Nursery **Part Time sessions** - 8.40am - 11.40am
- Reception - 8.40am - 3.10pm

The EYFS

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- **A Unique Child** - Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- **Positive Relationships** - Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- **Enabling Environments** - 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 carers.
- **Learning and Development** - Children develop and learn in different ways. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with

special educational needs and disabilities. Practitioners teach children by ensuring challenging, playful opportunities across the prime and specific areas of learning and development.

A Unique Child

At St Thomas More's RC Primary School, we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates and this is reflected in our provision. The characteristics of effective learning support the child to become a motivated and effective learner. Children will play and explore and 'have a go' at using all available resources; developing their experiences. Children will develop resilience and enjoy achievements through active learning and will make links, explore their ideas and strategies for problem solving through creating and thinking critically. Practitioners support the children in developing all these characteristics through playing alongside children and, where necessary, scaffolding and supporting their thoughts. Children are treated fairly regardless of race, religion, gender or abilities. We welcome all children and families into our settings so that they feel included, safe and valued. It is important to us that all children at St Thomas More RC Primary School are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them to develop these important life skills. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards, both within school and in the wider environment. We encourage a healthy lifestyle including taking exercise and eating healthy food.

Positive Relationships

We aim to promote positive relationships between staff, parents and children. Children are taught how to deal with difficult situations and relationships through their daily interactions with adults and other children. We recognise that parents are the child's first educators and their importance for the child's welfare and education is paramount. The team ensure that every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs. Staff will work with each child either on a one to one basis, in a small group or as part of a larger group. They are able to build up confidence, rapport and respect with each child so that the children feel safe, happy and enjoy their time at St Thomas More's.

Enabling Environments

In our EYFS at St Thomas More's RC Primary School, we recognise the importance of a rich learning environment both inside and outside. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The environment is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. In both our EYFS session we have outdoor learning environments. These have a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We observe the children during CIL (child initiated learning) and offer additional resources and support to enrich their learning. To ensure that we meet the individual needs of all of our children we make regular observations of the children's interactions, interests, skills, and development of concepts. These observations are used to inform our planning for groups of children, for individuals and our provision for resources as appropriate.

Learning and Development

There are seven areas of Learning and Development which are interconnected. Three areas (the prime areas) are crucial to develop lifelong learning and to help children form relationships.

- *Personal, Social and Emotional Development* – children develop confidence and self-esteem, learn how to manage feelings and respect others.
- *Communication and Language* – children have opportunities to speak and listen in a range of situations and experience a rich language environment.
- *Physical Development* – children have opportunities to be active and develop coordination (both gross motor and fine motor); they learn about healthy choices.

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through four specific areas:

- *Literacy* – involves children learning how letters link to the sounds and begin to read and write.
- *Mathematics* – children have opportunities to develop counting and calculation skills, to use numbers in everyday activities and recognise and describe shapes and measures.
- *Understanding of the World* – children have opportunities to find out about people and communities, the environment and technology.
- *Expressive Arts and Design* – involves exploring feelings and ideas through music, dance, role play and design.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning are the ways in which the child engages with other people and their environment – playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically – underpin learning and development across all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner.

Religious Education is also taught in our EYFS in our EYFS classes in accordance with the Salford Diocese guidelines and using the approved framework ‘Come and See.’

Active Learning through Play

At St Thomas More’s R.C Primary School we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our EYFS setting has an ethos of learning through play. We recognise the importance of children’s play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts. In our EYFS classes at St Thomas More’s R.C Primary School, practitioners provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences which will support children to discover, explore, investigate, develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity, and help to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts. Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding. In providing these active learning opportunities through play we understand the central position of play within the EYFS framework.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the effective running of the EYFS setting at St Thomas More R.C Primary School. Regular assessments are made of children’s learning and individual needs. A record of each child’s progress in all areas of their learning is kept in a “Learning Journey.” The main EYFS assessment method is through practitioners’ observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult focused activities and child initiated play. Observations take place on a daily basis.

At St Thomas More's RC Primary School, we use 'Tapestry' software which is an electronic method to record our observations of the children. All practitioners are involved in observing children. Practitioners use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. It informs them of children's abilities, needs, interests and learning styles. Observations are evaluated, children's learning priorities are identified and relevant learning opportunities are planned to support children to make the next steps and progress.

Other methods of assessing children in the EYFS setting include engaging alongside children in their play, annotation of children's written work and talking with children about their task or play. There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development using the Birth to 5/Development Matters statements. This is updated at least once each term to track individual progress. At the end of the year it provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements. At the end of the Reception year, our EYFS team complete the EYFSP (Early Years Foundation Stage Profile) for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals. Baseline assessments are carried out using the EYFS Profile during the children's first four to six weeks upon entering the setting. Judgments made on children's development in the Profile are based on practitioners' evidence of children's behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated activities across all Areas of Learning and Development. For Reception children, the Team will undertake the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) which is a statutory assessment that is required to be carried out during the first six weeks of school. More information about the RBA can be found on our school website and also via this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-baseline-assessment-information-for-parents>

Planning

The EYFS framework provides a long term plan to follow by ensuring that all Early Learning Goals are covered throughout the academic year. Medium term planning is created taking into account the individual children's learning and developmental needs. We have an overarching theme which we use as a stimulus and at St Thomas More RC Primary we also base each of our themes on a text and use this as a focus for our Literacy work but also in or areas of continuous provision.

Weekly plans specify specific learning for each area of learning and objectives for the provision areas. The EYFS team then make daily plans which are informed by our observations. All areas of learning are available to access within the setting. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child initiated activities indoors and outdoors. We value all areas of learning and development and understand that they are inter-connected. We aim to help children with their learning through observing, getting involved in their play, supporting their thinking and asking open questions.

Parents as Partners

At St Thomas More's R.C Primary School we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development. So, practitioners endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents.

We start the year with a new intake meeting (usually held in May prior to the new academic year) where the parents get to meet the EYFS teams and find out about the organisation and expectations of Nursery and Reception. At our new parents meetings, we offer the parents a Home Visit prior to their child starting at St Thomas More's. The Home Visits are conducted by two members of the EYFS team who visit the children and their families in their home environment. This is a great opportunity for staff to see the children in a more familiar environment and provides an opportunity for parents to speak to staff and ask any questions they may have about their child starting at St Thomas More in a more 'informal' setting.

During the first half term, parents evening is held for EYFS children to discuss how the children have settled into their new classes. We have an EYFS Information Evening during the autumn term and during this meeting we also explain to parents how we teach phonics at St Thomas More. There will be further opportunities throughout the course of the year for parents to have phonics updates in school. During the autumn term, we also hold 'Stay and Play' sessions and invite parents to come into school to spend some time with their child in the setting.

In the spring term we have another parents evening that discusses how the children are progressing and what parents can do to help their children at home. In the summer term the parents receive a written report about their child's progress and attainment in the early years.

Through informal chats at the beginning and end of the day, practitioners encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual. Parents are also encouraged to send in 'wow' moments from home, this enable us to build the bigger picture of the child learning. Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular newsletters, Twitter posts, Class Dojo stories, reading records and informal chatting at the beginning and end of the day. This also gives suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in school. All classes at St Thomas More's RC Primary school also have a Twitter account where day to day activities, experiences and achievements are shared @MissBarranSTM @MissKadirSTM.

In working in partnership with parents, we also use the 'Parent Share' facility within the 'Tapestry' software. This allows the EYFS team to share a selection of our observations with parents via email. Parents then have the opportunity to see what their child is learning and the skills they are developing whilst at school. Parents will then have the opportunity to 'comment' on the observation they have received and this will be included in the child's Learning Journey.