

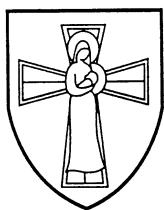


St. Mary's Catholic Primary School

Educate Protect Love Serve

Early Years Policy V2

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Early Years Policy

CAST's Vision

“Our mission is to be a community of outstanding schools in which our pupils flourish in safe, happy and stimulating environments and leave us with the knowledge and skills, personal qualities and aspirations, to make the world a better place, inspired by the Gospel.”

Our Vision

At St Mary's Early Years we endeavour to provide the children in our care with a safe and nurturing environment where they can thrive and flourish.

We understand that every child is unique. Through close partnerships with parents and an appreciation of the fundamental ways children grow and develop, we ensure that every child has the best possible start, allowing them to develop their aspirations and have a positive love of learning.

Through play, diverse and engaging learning opportunities which are built on the foundations of positive relationships with skilled, knowledgeable and respectful practitioners, we support the children of today in their learning for the world of tomorrow.

Within this Policy the Early Years is used to describe the Nursery and Reception class covering children from the age of three to five years of age.

“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 2012.

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 partnerships between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.**

This Early Years Policy includes the following:

1. Aims and Principles – curriculum intent, implementation and impact.
2. Planning and organising the curriculum and classroom organisation
3. Involving parents
4. Early Literacy and Maths
5. Assessment and record keeping
6. Monitoring and evaluation
7. Transition

1. Aims and Principles

- Practitioners should ensure that all children feel included, secure and valued.
- To provide a relevant curriculum with tasks that make sense to the children and are both practical and purposeful.
- To provide opportunities for children to engage in activities planned by adults and those that children plan or initiate themselves. Practitioners must consider the individual needs and interests of each child, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience in all areas of learning and development.
- Practitioners acknowledge the holistic nature of young children’s learning and natural links will be made between different areas of the curriculum, with the emphasis on learning through play and the importance of developing speaking and listening skills.
- Practitioners must create a learning environment that develops children’s imagination and encourages children to explore and express their ideas and feelings.
- Practitioners must respond to each child emerging needs and interests, guiding development through positive interaction.
- Involve parents and carers.
- Practitioners continually develop their professional knowledge in a variety of different ways
- To ensure that the environment provides planned purposeful learning opportunities where children can make links and initiate their own learning.

- To continue to make links between Nursery and Reception and build on those foundations to aid transition to Year One.
- The key worker system is used to help build positive relationships with children giving them the reassurance to feel safe and secure and also to build relationships with parents.

Curriculum intent, implementation and impact

Curriculum Intent

At St Marys we offer a curriculum rich in wonder and memorable experiences.

We work hard to provide a stimulating environment that provides exciting opportunities, promotes challenge, exploration and a real love of learning.

It is our intent that all children develop physically, verbally, cognitively and emotionally in an environment which promotes the Catholic ethos and gospel values.

We aim for our children to be confident and independent, to believe in themselves and interact positively with others.

We understand that play is an integral part of learning and this is at the heart of our Early Years curriculum. We believe that the correct mix of adult directed and child-initiated play ensures the best outcomes.

Warm and positive relationships between staff and children, consistent routines and strong relationships with parents are key.

We recognise the crucial role that Early Years education has to play in providing firm foundations upon which the rest of a child's education is successfully based

Curriculum Implementation

At St Marys we meet the welfare requirements laid down in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and actively safeguard and promote the welfare of all our children.

We prioritise creating a language rich environment through the use of songs, nursery rhymes, stories and providing time for quality interactions between adults and between peers. Children are encouraged to become early readers through enjoyment of books and the systematic teaching of phonics through the ReadWrite Inc. programme. In reception we follow Power Maths where children develop their mathematical thinking through direct teaching and exploration. In the nursery children follow the progression through Developmental Matters with daily counting and rhymes. We want children to become confident mathematicians who can apply what they have learnt to real life experiences.

We are part of The Plymouth Oracy Project focusing on children being able to talk about what they are learning and use talk to develop their understanding and communication with others.

Our learning environment is adaptable in order to reflect children's interests and progression. The children are supported to learn to work together, manage their feelings and ask questions.

The curriculum is taught through topics which are enriched with classroom enhancements, trips and visitors. Topics are supported by quality texts. These are chosen carefully to encourage children's speech, language and communication development. All planning however is flexible and responsive to children's needs so plans can be changed and adapted dependent on children's interests.

We understand the importance of parental engagement and believe that our parents have a crucial role to play in their children's education. We work hard to create strong partnerships between home and school. Parents receive planning each half term to inform them of what their child is learning and how they can support this at home. We use ClassDojo to message parents so they can engage in their child's learning and share experiences.

As part of the learning and teaching process, children are assessed in relation to their progress towards the Early Learning Goals. These judgements are made on the basis of accumulative observations and in-depth knowledge of the children through ongoing assessments. These are then used to inform planning, interventions and next steps in teaching and learning for all children throughout the year.

Curriculum Impact

Our curriculum and its delivery ensure that children, from their starting points make good progress. During their time with us children make progress towards the national expectation for a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of the reception year. Pupils also make good progress towards their age-related expectations both academically and socially, developing a sense of themselves before going into Year One. Children develop their Characteristics of Learning and are able to apply their knowledge to a range of situations making links and explaining their ideas and understanding. Children are confident to take risks and discuss their successes and failures with peers and adults drawing on their experiences to improve or adjust what they are doing.

We believe our high standards are due to our carefully planned environment, enriched play-based curriculum, quality first teaching and rigour ongoing assessments

Good level of Development in 2024 was 83% compared with previous years of 74%. This is above national average of 67% 2025 prediction is 72% cohort has high EAL and SEND

2. Planning and Organising the Curriculum

The curriculum for the Early Years forms the first stage of our whole school curriculum. It covers children in both Nursery and Reception.

There are seven areas of learning and development that must provide a framework for planning, teaching and assessing in Early Years settings. All areas of learning and development are interconnected.

The three prime areas of learning are:

- *Communication and Language* – Children will be supported to develop their confidence and ability to express themselves, to speak and listen in a range of situations and to use language as a powerful means of expression and understanding. Children will have access to both a language rich environment and a range of books and other reading materials that link with topics and the children's interests.

- *Physical Development* – Children will be provided with opportunities to be both active and interactive. Through planned activities and (learning opportunities provided), children will develop their co-ordination, control and movement skills. Children will be taught the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food.
- *Personal, Social and Emotional Development* – we will help children to develop a positive sense of themselves and others; forming positive relationships and to develop respect for others. We will support children to develop their social skills and learn how to manage their feelings and behaviour. Also understanding appropriate behaviour in different situations. We will support children to have a growing confidence in their own abilities and skills, developing their interests and exploring their likes and dislikes.

There are also four specific areas of learning, through which the prime areas are strengthened and applied:

- *Literacy* – children will have opportunities to enjoy language rich stories, rhyming activities and songs on a daily basis. Through a language rich environment and with the support of knowledgeable, articulate and expressive adults, children will develop an understanding of the spoken and written word.
- *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 and use shapes, spaces and measures appropriately
- *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 Art and Design* – Children will explore and play with a range of media and materials. We will provide opportunities and encourage children to share their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play and design and technology.

Our **Long Term Plan** is the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. This is the overarching framework that informs all of our stages of planning. It shows the range of experiences and learning opportunities that are available while children are in Early Years and progression of skills and knowledge from nursery to reception.

Our **Medium Term Plan** is based on the children's current interests and needs and is supported through the use of the Development Matters document. Plans feed into KS1 curriculum to show continuity and progression.

Our **Weekly Planning** selects the learning objectives from the Medium Term Plan as deemed appropriate to meet the needs and interests of the children to ensure they are always making progress. Activities are always extended and differentiated accordingly. Planning provides a clear balance between challenging the most able children whilst recognising that an attempt to implement the more formal work before a child is ready could damage a child's positive attitude towards learning.

There is a weekly planning meeting with Reception teacher (EYFS lead) and Head of nursery to ensure joint up thinking and progression between the two developmental stages.

Weekly planning identifies key vocabulary to be taught.

Classroom Organisation and Resources.

The organisation of our Nursery and Reception classes reflects the importance that is placed on children learning through play and engaging in first-hand experiences, developing their independence and having the opportunity to initiate their own activities.

Our environment also reflects our ethos and belief that children's learning is deeper and more purposeful when children can engage with real, authentic resources and with objects and events from and based around their real life experiences. We ensure all displays are purposeful, reflecting the child's voice and exhibiting their own creations, whatever that might be. We truly believe in process over product and this is reflected in our environment, on the walls and with the learning opportunities available to our Nursery and Reception children within the classroom.

Children in Early Years have access to the following:

- Small world area
- Construction area
- Interactive white board and circle time carpet area
- Home corner
- Maths shelves
- Story and quiet area
- Sand and water play
- Creative area
- Mark-making
- Fine motor skills
- Maths Challenge table
- Playdough area
- Free flow access to the outside – a safe, fenced area including opportunities for small world play, reading, writing and mark marking, role play, music and movement, maths exploration, gross motor skill development such as climbing, jumping, running, large outdoor construction, water

play, mud kitchen and nature observation area. (*Reception and Nursery children each have a pair of wellies so they can use the outdoor environment in all weathers*)

Even though our Early Years environments are well stocked and organised to deliver the EYFS, we understand the value of accessing a variety of areas from within the school that will support the children's learning and development. These can include –

- Use of the hall for dance, drama, physical education and joining in on whole school special assemblies and masses
- Use of the school field, playgrounds and their climbing equipment
- Timetabled Forest school sessions in the field
- Use of lap tops
- School library

3. Involving Parents

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. We aim to develop this by:

- Outlining how the EYFS is being delivered to parents/carers during a transition meeting held before children start in either the Nursery or Reception Class, which enables parents to understand the value of supporting their child's learning at home.
- Regular updates are sent to parents/carers in the form of letters, newsletters, Class Dojo posts, formal parent/teacher meetings and daily interactions with parents/carers.
- Topic based challenges are set both in Nursery and Reception which are linked to the terms learning objectives.
- We operate an open door policy, where parents/carers can discuss any concerns or ask questions in an informal manner on a daily basis.
- At St Mary's we use Class dojo to communicate plans, activities and newsletters to parents. Class dojo also allows parents to add their own observations of experiences and learning which their child has taken part in at home.
- Each ½ term, parents are invited into the Early Years to take part in different learning opportunities with their child. This provides us with the opportunity to continue to build positive relationships with parents/carers and for the children to share their learning with the adults in their lives.

- Formal parent meetings take place twice a year where information is shared with parents regarding their child's current levels of progress and attainment and what their next steps in learning will be. Resources are provided to parents in order to help them with their child's learning at home. Alongside a written report in the Summer Term.
- Parents are always invited to help within Early Years in a variety of capacities such as listening to children read, helping with specific activities or accompanying us on school trips.
- We have 'workshop' sessions where we will take different areas of the curriculum and provide parents with practical ideas which they can do at home. Spring term 2025 we have been involved in the REAL (Making it Real-Raising Early Years Achievement in Literacy) project. This has involved parental workshops with identified children. (Pupil Premium, EAL, and language needs)
- We actively encourage parents to become part of the PTA so they are able to join with the whole school community to raise additional funds for the school and all children.

4. Early Language and Literacy and Numeracy Support

Literacy and Language

- Nursery children borrow books from the class to take home so that parents can share high quality story books with their children. This allows all children the opportunity to be read too immersing them in fictional vocabulary and taking the first steps into becoming confident, independent readers.
- Trips to the local library are made so the children can experience a wide variety of books in a building which is local to them, this then allows the children to talk with their parents and can encourage family visits to share a love for books. The children will choose a book which is checked out on the class card, these books are then accessible to the children during nursery sessions.
- Phonics is taught daily and discretely, planned and delivered in interactive, stimulating and multi-sensory ways that engage children and ensure progress at a good pace. Phonics allows daily revisit and review of previously taught phonemes/graphemes and tricky words.
- Nursery start introducing phase 1 phonics through the 'Letter's and Sounds' programme which focuses on different aspects such as environmental sounds, rhyming, alliteration, blending and segmenting.
- Reception are taught Set One sounds following the RWI structure from the beginning of the Autumn Term. Once all the sounds have been taught, children are assessed and grouped according to individual needs, when children are ready they will progress onto Set Two sounds.

- The RWI programme maps incremental progression in phonic knowledge and skills enabling teachers to track children's progress, assess for further learning and identify difficulties early so that appropriate support can be provided.
- Children take home reading books in Reception Class, the first books allow the children to develop key skills such as reading text from left to right, using picture prompts, repetition in stories, carefully turning pages and beginning to recognise some key common words. When children are able to successfully sound build they move onto RWI 'Book Bag' books which closely follow the child's stage of phonic development.
- We have a designated TA who works with the children with early speech and language difficulties which have been identified either through speech and language therapists or through the NELI assessment and The Communication Progression assessment.
- We are part of The Plymouth Oracy Project focusing on children being able to talk about what they are learning and use talk to develop their understanding and communication with others.

Numeracy

- The Nursery follow Nursery White Rose Maths. The focus is on developing basic number skills such as number recognition, counting reliably with 1:1 correspondence and matching number and quantity. This ensures the children have the basic skills needed as they progress into Reception in order to give them the best possible chance to achieve the ELG at the end of the year.
- The Nursery introduce a 'cheeky number' where they are introduced to a number and this is explored in depth discussing one more / one less, counting, writing, making marks to represent numbers which gives the children a secure understanding.
- In Reception, Power Maths alongside White Rose Maths is used as a planning tool to ensure that the children are building on the key skills which they have acquired in Nursery. It allows for more able children to be exposed to greater depth learning.
- Parent workshops take place in order for parents to see how they can promote their children's mathematical understanding through every day learning opportunities.
- In both Nursery and Reception, maths forms part everyday life. Many parts of the daily routine have an aspect of maths linked into them such as counting the children in the morning after the register, using mathematical language to describe the position of a child in the line, songs linked to numbers and showing the children that maths is all around us.

5. Assessment and Record Keeping

On entry to Nursery and Reception, we make initial assessments on each child. These initial assessments are made up from a mixture of formal assessments and everyday observations through our daily and on-going interactions, questioning, listening and discussion with the individual child. Our formal assessments include:-

- On entry to Nursery children are assessed on key skills and concepts, shape and number, pencil grip, name recognition plus vocabulary, and questioning based on Blanks Questions
- On entry to Reception children are assessed on their number skills, phonic knowledge, early writing development, and other key skills and concepts.
- In the third week of Reception children undertake the government Baseline Assessment

The balance of these formal and informal assessments mean we are able to make professional judgements about what children know upon entry to Nursery or Reception and allows us to identify any children who find language and communication difficulty and need some early support

Every half term, we track each child's progress. This data informs our understanding of each child progress and of their possible next steps. It allows us to see any gaps in learning and identifies not only children who have not made good progress but also children who are more able. Intervention activities are then put in place for children who require additional support.

Communication plays a big part in assessment of all children. Professional discussions between Nursery and Reception take place on regular basis during times of transition.

At the end of Reception, children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals to show if children have met the expected level of development. This data is submitted to the local authority and then sent to the DfE.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

Nursery and Reception work very closely together and as such, are constantly evaluating our practise in order to ensure that we are providing the absolute best for the children in our care. Lesson observations are carried out by the EYFS leader and head teacher to ensure that the children are receiving a high standard of education. The EYFS leader and Nursery leader regularly meet to discuss data, specific children, staffing, any specific issues or concerns and to discuss any new ideas for implementation. We also meet to carry out moderation to ensure we are confident with the judgements which have made and try to take part in external moderations. The in-house moderation process also involves the Year

One teacher in the summer term before transition takes place to ensure they are happy with the end of year assessments.

7. Transition

The transition process into Nursery is crucial to ensure a smooth start for our Nursery children. We offer the option of home visits where 2 members of staff visit a new child before the start of term. This gives us a chance to meet the child in their home environment and so they can meet us in a safe space. We give the parents our Nursery welcome pack full of information about the sessions and they can fill out a 'Child Profile' sheet which informs us of the child's interests, needs, abilities and dislikes.

After the home visit, all new children are invited in to Nursery for an open session. They have the chance to explore the environment; meet other children and all the members of staff. The home visit, open session and Child Profile all go together to give us an overview on the child starting. The child can have more than one settling in session if required.

Nursery and Reception work closely together all year round, mixing for activities, playing and learning together in the shared garden and free flow access to each room. In preparation for children transitioning into reception, more structured transitional activities are planned for including a half day in Reception at the end of Summer Term.

Parents are invited into the school to meet with the Reception teacher. They are shown a brief presentation of what to expect when their child enters Reception, they are then provided with an information pack which contains all the necessary information. During the summer holidays parents and children are asked to complete holiday album which allows Reception staff to gain a deeper understanding of the child.

Transition from Reception to Year One

During the final term in Reception, children visit the Year One classroom where they spend the day in their new class with their new teacher. The Year One teacher will also complete regular 'pop ins' to the children when they are in Reception class. The Year One teacher will also take part in moderation sessions to ensure they are confident in the judgements that have been made at the end of the Reception Year.

Our aim is that at the end of Reception the children are secure, confident and excited about moving on to their next stage of learning. We aim to provide a seamless transition.

This Early Years policy was prepared by Kate Horsley

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Policy update -September 2023 V2 and March 2025 V3 -Kate Horsley

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