

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy



Loving, Laughing and Learning in the Light of the Lord

Contents

1. Introduction

2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

3. The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

4. Active Learning through Play

5. Enabling Environments

6. Assessment and Record Keeping

7. Planning

8. Parents as Partners

9. Admissions and Induction

10. Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements

11. Equal Opportunities

12. Special Educational Needs

Introduction

Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. It is a holistic education that encompasses all learning and development. This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at St. Mary's Catholic Primary School. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching adults.

In the policy the term 'setting' refers to the Early Years educational provision at St. Mary's Catholic Primary School. This is available to children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will be five years old. These children are in the final year of the EYFS. In the National Curriculum this is referred to as the Reception Year, or YR.

In the policy the term 'practitioner' refers to the members of staff working with children within the setting.

2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

At St. Mary's Catholic Primary school our aim is to provide a secure and caring learning environment in which all children feel eager and motivated to learn. We aim to promote the developing skills, concepts, confidence and independence of the individual child, enabling them to achieve their full potential by:

- recognising that all children are unique and special.
- encouraging children's independence and decision-making through positive relationships, ensuring that children feel happy and know that they are valued by the practitioners looking after them.
- providing enabling environments where practitioners respond to children's individual needs and establish strong partnerships between practitioners and parents and/or carers
- understanding that children develop and learn in individual ways and at different rates - physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the school community.
- teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- developing children's understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously.
- supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions differ 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 in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.
- providing effective learning experiences which build on children's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.
- providing exciting learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.

3. The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

Teaching in the EYFS setting at St Mary's Catholic Primary School is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' (March 2012). This document is a principled approach to Early Years education, bringing together children's welfare, learning and development requirements through four themes: 'A Unique Child', 'Positive Relationships', 'Enabling Environments' and 'Learning and Development'.

The curriculum is centred on 3 prime areas of learning:

1. Communication and Language.
2. Physical Development
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

We also support activities through four specific areas which strengthen the prime areas. These are:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding of the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

These areas of Learning and Development address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all areas of Learning and Development are all closely interlinked. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centered curriculum which allows children to make links between what they are learning. As effective early years practitioners we aim to plan a broad and balanced range of activities based on the needs of the children in our setting. The Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance material is used to support our planning.

When planning and guiding children's activities we reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice. At St Mary's Catholic Primary school we support children in using the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning. These 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; and
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

(Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2012)

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School the Foundation Stage is valued as a stage in its own right and should not be viewed simply as preparation for Key Stage 1. The Early Years Foundation Stage establishes expectations for most children to achieve by the end of the Reception year. These are stated as the Early Learning Goals.

4. Active Learning through Play

At St Mary's Catholic 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. Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding.

In the EYFS setting at St Mary's Catholic 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. These support children to discover, explore, investigate, develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity. They also help them to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts. Through play activities children can apply their knowledge and demonstrate 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. This is essentially a practical, play based curriculum and pedagogy as the provision of play opportunities underpins its delivery within our setting.

5. Enabling Environments

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School we aim to provide stimulating and safe learning environments both indoors and outdoors. Children will be encouraged to actively explore the world around them, developing their creativity, independence, thinking skills and ability to solve problems across the curriculum.

There is free-flow between the indoor and outdoor areas during child initiated activities. Both areas are also used for adult directed and adult initiated teaching. Resources used aim to stimulate, challenge and inspire children to engage in learning and should provide for both the planned and unplanned curriculum.

6. Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the effective running of the EYFS setting at St Mary's Catholic Primary School. Regular, planned and focused 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 by retaining and filing their assessment data.

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 regularly - both formally and informally. Practitioners make time to carry out planned observations of individuals and groups of children. They also make spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of children's learning. Observations are recorded in different formats (e.g. narrative style, post-it notes, whole class grids, photographs). Both 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, play schemas 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, talking with children about their task or play and in Learning Journeys. Learning Journeys record children's progress over the academic year in all Areas of Learning and Development of the EYFS framework. Samples of children's work are gathered, along with photographic evidence and observations.

There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development using the new Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (2012). 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. Early assessments are carried out against the Development Matters age bands during the children's first six weeks upon entering the setting. Judgements made on children's development are based on information given by parents during parent interviews as well as transfer information from nurseries and pre-schools. These are supplemented by practitioners' evidence of children's behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated activities across all Areas of Learning and Development.

7. 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 by the early years practitioner and takes into account individual children's learning and developmental needs. Short term plans are created by both practitioners following a review of the previous week's learning. Children's activities and interests are noted and are used to inform planning for the following week.

All Areas of Learning and Development are planned for and available to access within the setting. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child initiated activities both indoors and outdoors.

Educational visits within the local community and further afield are also planned to support children's learning within the classroom.

8. Parents as Partners

At St Mary's Catholic 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 and so we endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents.

We recognise and value parents as the child's first and most enduring educator. Through informal meetings and the document 'I am special' practitioners encourage parents to share their knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports practitioners in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through termly class and RE letters, KIRF sheets, weekly newsletters, reading records and informal meetings usually at the end of the day. Each child also has a phonics book which is sent home every day to help consolidate sounds taught in school.

Parents also have the opportunity to attend two meetings which are held in October and March. Two written reports in December and July also inform parents about their child's progress and the next steps in their child's learning.

9. Admissions and Induction

St Mary's Catholic Primary School provides full-time Early Years education for children in the Reception Year. This is for children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will be five years old.

Before they start in the setting, all children are offered a visit during the Summer term, on the school 'Changeover Day'. The purpose of this visit is for the children to meet their new practitioners and start to become familiar with the setting environment. The lead practitioners will also go to visit the children in their own homes. The aim of these visits is to develop the practitioner's knowledge and understanding of each child in order to make the transition period to St Mary's Catholic Primary School as smooth as possible. Practitioners also take part in information sharing with pre-school settings, through meetings and sharing of assessments.

A meeting for new parents is held during the Changeover Day. A short presentation is given by the Headteacher about St. Mary's and the Foundation Stage. During the home visit, parents meet both practitioners and are able to discuss their child. This helps practitioners' to learn

about and understand the needs of each individual child. At this meeting information regarding the induction process and what goes on in the setting is shared. There is also time for parents' questions. School Welcome packs will be distributed to parents at the Changeover Day meeting, detailing school routines and expectations.

From September the oldest children attend the setting from the start of term, with younger children starting a few days later. Parents are informed of the start date for their child before the end of the Summer term. Every effort is made to make children feel safe, secure and happy. There is a relaxed and open ethos in the setting.

Established routines, a calm atmosphere and encouraging talk are some of the strategies practitioners use to maintain children's positive feelings about school.

See the Admissions and Transitions Policies of the school for more information

10. Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School we understand that we are legally required to comply with the welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2012. We understand that we are required to:

- promote the welfare and safeguarding of children.
- promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose .
- ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

It is important to us that all children in the 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 develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

In the EYFS setting at St Mary's Catholic Primary school there are clear procedures for assessing risk which includes procedures for keeping children safe during outings and for any aspects of the environment or provision that may require a further risk assessment. In addition to this an annual risk assessment is conducted in the EYFS.

See the following school policies: Safeguarding, Child Protection, Health and Safety, Behaviour, Fire and Emergency Evacuation Procedure and Policy. See also Risk Assessment documents.

11. Equal Opportunities

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is inclusive and facilitates the needs of all children regardless of their age, size, mobility, gender, ethnicity and ability. Our planning aims to foster an appreciation of each other's cultures and beliefs along with the promotion of a healthy and positive self-image. This is linked to the school's role as a Christian community.

See Equalities Policy for more information.

12. Special Educational Needs

All children are encouraged to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. Assessments take into account contributions from a range of perspectives to ensure that any child with potential special educational needs is identified at the earliest possible opportunity. Early identification of special needs is crucial to enable practitioners to support the development of each child. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage and the schools special needs co-ordinator is consulted for further information and advice. Appropriate steps are taken in accordance with the school's policy for Special Educational Needs.

See Special Educational Needs Policy.

Mrs Mabley December 2013

Signed _____

Headteacher Mrs Robertson

Signed _____

Approved by governors

Signed ___6.3.14_____