

## St Mary's Catholic Primary School

### EYFS Policy

2016

*Our school family at St Mary's wants this to be a safe, caring, creative and happy place, where we all have a fair chance to learn and grow together and to do the best we can. We do this by knowing and loving Jesus more every day and by following his teachings in a joyful way.*

### MISSION AND AIMS

To provide a safe, caring, happy community where each individual is given an equal opportunity to develop to their full potential in the light of Christ's teaching and to share in His mission. We aim to achieve this vision via the quality of education we provide in partnership with the home and parish. Here at St. Mary's, education is for the whole person.

We aim to:-

- a) assist the growth and development of the whole school by encouraging that growth and development in all its members;
- b) meet each member of the community on their faith journey and help them grow and develop in their relationship with God;
- c) provide a well-balanced and broad-based curriculum that fulfils the legal requirements placed on it and develops the spiritual, moral, social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of the individual;
- d) create an outward looking working community united by our common aim. This includes the pupils, staff, parents, governors, clergy and wider community.

## The Curriculum

The Nursery and Reception follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document. This clearly defines what we teach. The following policy details the specifics of our setting. The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected but three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive (DfE 2014: 1.3), they support children's learning in all other areas, they are known as the prime areas.

### The prime areas are:

- **Communication and Language** - Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking
- **Physical Development** - Moving and Handling and Self care
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** - Making relationships, Managing feelings and behaviour and Self-confidence and Self-awareness The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. The specific areas are;
  - **Literacy** - Reading and Writing
  - **Mathematics** - Numbers and Space, Shape and Measures
  - **Understanding the World** - People and communities, The world and Technology
  - **Expressive Arts and Design** - Exploring and using media and materials and Being Imaginative

### Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Nursery and Reception teachers plan activities within the Nursery and Reception classrooms with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them.

### The three characteristics 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
- **Creating and Thinking Critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

## Teaching strategies

We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In some cases the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible.

By the Summer term in Reception the children will experience many more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to year 1.

## Play

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Using children's interests as a starting point, we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child initiated play, which is controlled, and adult led activities is very important to us.

## Teaching

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on. Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. This looks quite different in the Nursery and Reception classes. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc

## **Reading and story play an important part of the day.**

We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern classics. We make sure there is always time for whole class story at the end of the day but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times. Every child is given their own book bag and has a designated day when they will have one-to-one time sharing books with an adult (although it is fine for others to listen too!) or, in Reception, a group reading session.

## **Planning**

We believe many children need to be given a starting point to learn new things and find topics are a great way to fire the imagination. We have a three year topic cycle so both classes are working together on the same theme; topics are usually based on the following areas of learning, 'Understanding the World', 'Literacy' and 'Communication and Language'; and range from a topic on Dinosaurs to Under the Sea or Traditional Tales. The topics are flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests, school themes and local or national events e.g. the Olympics. Every half term (and occasionally termly) staff plan the next topic, and book visits and visitors that will enhance the learning. Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis using daily notes, observations and interactions with children to inform where the learning journey should move to. Although class teachers are responsible for writing plans, the EYFS plan as a team, with Teachers, Nursery Nurses and Support Staff all giving an input whenever possible.

## **Visits and visitors**

The part that visits and visitors play in the curriculum at St Mary's is given great emphasis, even in the Early Years. We actively seek parental support on trips, aiming for a ratio of one adult for three children in Nursery and a minimum of 1:5 in Reception. For safety reasons we say no to younger siblings coming along on school trips. Visitors also really enhance a topic and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children, a doctor for example.

## **Classroom organisation**

Our Early Years classrooms have defined areas with clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. Each classroom is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning. Classrooms have a maths area, creative area, cosy corner, role play area, building area, small world area, modelling area, investigation area, physical area, outdoor area and carpeted teaching area. Opportunities for writing are in all of the seven areas. A variety of activities are planned for and set up in the different areas each day. The adults move to whichever area their focus for the session/day is. The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside for much of the day.

We try to ensure that the range of activities outside reflects the different curriculum areas, for example setting up quiet spaces for a maths game, reading and for construction. The Reception class has a smaller outdoor area so often have more physical play during P.E. and occasional extra sessions in the main playground. Each child has their own labelled peg and box in the cloakroom. We encourage children to take responsibility for keeping their clothes, book bag and work safely in one place!

Assessment, observations and portfolios Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies all of which come together in their individual portfolio. We are very proud of our portfolios: these are collections of children's work, photos and observations which create a detailed picture of the child. Where appropriate, we include individual next steps for children's learning. These next steps are discussed by the EYFS team in informal meetings after school each day and in the weekly planning meetings, these next steps inform planning for the next day and week ahead. Staff have their own iPad which is used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning. Parents have access to the portfolios which are stored in the classroom. They are encouraged to contribute through the use of our weekend news books. Parents are also given WOW cards. WOW cards are where significant events that happen at home can be recorded. The portfolio is given to parents when their child enters Year 1 or leaves our setting. On entry to Nursery and Reception we carry out baseline assessments for each child. Throughout the Early Years the Class Teacher submits end of term assessment data to the Head Teacher showing each child's development across the seven areas of learning. At the end of Reception the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding'. This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report and can be discussed in the final Parents' Evening in Reception.

### **Role of staff and key worker**

The class teacher is the named key worker for each child in the setting. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years setting actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being now and their future successes. There are rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class and we aim to be consistent in who covers these absences.

### **Partnership with parents and carers**

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. As well as the Nursery and Reception visit days we offer workshops and other sessions for parents. When a child gains a place at St Mary's we ask them to attend a session at the school alongside all other children who will be starting and with their parents. We give each family an 'All About Me' booklet to complete with their child over the summer and this document is the first piece in their portfolio. We have a slow staggered entry into Nursery and a slightly quicker staggered entry into Reception. Parents are invited to attend a Parents' Meeting each term and teachers are available most mornings and evenings to talk and to discuss more urgent matters.

### **Health & safety and safeguarding**

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2014). This is in line with St Mary's Safeguarding Policy. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in children's portfolios, in class displays and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school website through the paperwork in their initial starter packs. We are a healthy school and our children receive free fruit and milk from a Government scheme. We take all accidents seriously and always log and text home if a child bangs their head. We have cold compresses stored in the Nursery freezer. We encourage all children to start school without nappies but will support any children struggling with this. We acknowledge that young children often have 'accidents' (i.e. wet themselves!) and have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. We ask parents to help keep our stocks of clothes high by returning anything their child has borrowed. Children are changed in the nursery toilet. All large climbing equipment is checked by our site officer and fire alarms are held regularly in line with whole school policy. There is an annual external check of equipment. We follow whole school procedures for child protection (see separate policy). Farley Marsh, head teacher, is the named Child Protection Officer and all concerns are discussed with him. We have separate policies for medicine in school and off-site visits.