ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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Contents

1. Aims 3
2. Legislation 3
3. Structure of the EYFS 3
4. Curriculum 3
5. Assessment 5
6. Working with parents and carers 6
7. Staff 7
8. Safeguarding and welfare procedures 8
9. Monitoring arrangements 11
Appendix 1. List of statutory policies and procedures for the EYFS 11

1. Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe
- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them 'school readiness' and a secure foundation for learning, development and good progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- A close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

This policy is guided by the following 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 their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between staff and parents and/or carers
- The importance of learning and development, with a consideration that children develop and learn at different rates

2. Legislation/Guidance

This policy is based on requirements set out in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS framework), effective from 1 September 2026, and the latest version of the Department for Education's statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.

3. Structure of the EYFS

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School we have 60 children in the Reception year, split in to two classes of 30 children. Each class has a teacher and a learning support assistant to support the development of 30 children. Children enter the school building at 8.40am when the classroom doors open. Children will come in by themselves and are encouraged to be independent by being responsible for their own belongings. The children will bring a snack and water bottle school. Children may also bring a packed lunch.

4. Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the latest EYFS statutory framework.

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that we must teach. All areas of learning and development are important and interconnected. Three areas, known as the prime areas, are seen as particularly important for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

We also support the children in 4 specific areas which help strengthen and develop the 3 prime areas, and ignite the children's curiosity and enthusiasm:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

The curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage aims to support future learning by providing a caring and supportive atmosphere in which all children are given the opportunity to succeed. The principle of the Early Years Foundation Stage is to provide effective education that is carefully structured according to each child's needs by practitioners who understand and can implement the curriculum. The first year of school is a unique and special time in every child's life and needs to be valued as such. The staff recognise that all aspects of child development i.e., emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, spiritual and social are interwoven and equally important. The aims below set out the rationale behind the teaching of early years in our school.

We aim to support each child's welfare, learning and development needs by:

- ✓ Recognising that all children are unique and special.
- ✓ Ensuring each child feels loved, support, welcome and heard.
- ✓ Understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates- physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- ✓ Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued by the staff looking after them.
- ✓ Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community.
- ✓ 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 codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously.
- ✓ Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation of others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions that 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 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.
- ✓ Providing a welcoming environment for children and their families, establishing positive relationships with parents.
- ✓ Keeping parents well informed about the curriculum and their child's progress.
- ✓ Making careful observations in order to support and extend children's learning appropriately
- ✓ Ensuring that children with special educational needs are identified and receive appropriate support.

4.1 Planning

Our staff are ambitious for all children, and plan activities and experiences for the children that enable them to develop and learn effectively. In order to do this, staff working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime areas.

Staff also take into account the individual needs, interests and development of each child in their care, and consider whether the child needs any addition support. They use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience.

Where a child may have a special educational need or disability (SEND), staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

In planning and guiding the children's activities, staff reflect on the different rates at which children are developing, and take these into account.

All areas for learning and development are planned for and available to access within the continuous provision.

We use a systematic approach to phonics and use the scheme Read, Write Inc. which develops children's knowledge in reading and writing.

We provide educational trips and visits within the local community to create excitement around themes and learning opportunities. We also provide children with the opportunity to develop their cultural understanding and awareness.

Short term planning will be used to show how teachers plan for children to engage in purposeful learning and for necessary interventions.

4.2 Teaching

Staff make sure that the children experience the 3 key characteristics of effective teaching and learning: playing and exploring; active learning; and creating and thinking critically.

They respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction.

As the children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more focus on teaching essential skills and knowledge in the specific areas of learning, to help the children prepare for Key Stage 1.

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, we recognise that young children learn best through active learning. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that the Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our EYFS setting has the 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 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 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 is also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding. Whilst children are playing, the EYFS staff focus on shared communication using the techniques of ShREC (Shared Attention, Respond, Expand and Conversation) and STAIRS (Sharing Attention, Thriving Attention, Avoiding Frustration, Important Features Need Highlighting, Review Progress, Self-Motivation).

5. Assessment

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, ongoing assessment is an integral part of learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their progress, development and interests. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers and keep them up to date with the child's progress and development. Staff will address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents and/or carers, and any relevant professionals.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child starts reception, staff will administer the reception baseline assessment (RBA). [The requirements for the RBA are set out in Annex B of EYFS statutory framework]. We also do our own baseline assessment. We use this to inform our teaching and interventions. This is to ensure teaching is tailored to each child's individual needs and to ensure children are rigorously tracked.

In the final term of the academic year in which the child reaches age 5, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child (before 30 June in that term). Each child is assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

We share the EYFS profile the child's year 1 teacher. This helps to inform a discussion between reception and year 1 teachers about the child's stage of development and learning needs, and helps with planning activities in year 1.

In exceptional circumstances, after discussion and only in agreement with parents and/or carers, a child might stay in EYFS provision beyond the end of the academic year in which they turn 5. In these exceptional cases, we will continue to assess the child throughout their time in EYFS provision and complete their profile at the end of the year before they move into year 1.

The profile is moderated internally and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. We submit EYFS profile data to the local authority on request.

6. Working with parents and carers

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there's a strong partnership between our staff and each child's parents and/or carers. An effective partnership with parents is essential to ensure regular support and sharing of information. We aim to work closely with parents in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. This will inevitably have a positive impact on children's learning and development.

We aim to do this in several ways:

- Open mornings for parents to come and visit the school prior to admission. This is an opportunity for parents/carer to look round, see the early years provision and staff and to meet the head, deputy and Early Years Lead.
- Welcome evening talk where staff explain routines and are available to talk to parents. Parents are also given an opportunity to visit the classrooms.
- Taster sessions
- Home visits prior to starting
- A weekly newsletter informing parents of events within the school
- Information and photographs of what has been covered in class are shared on Parent Hub
- Practitioners are available to talk to parents every day
- Communication via the Home/School Planners which are looked at by a member of staff every day
- Parents evenings- parents are invited to attend a parents evening during the first term after their child has started school and a parents evening in April after the Spring assessments.
- A mini progress report giving details of the Christmas Assessments.
- Formal report of achievement is given annually in the final half term of the school year

We value the role of parents as the children's primary educators. All of the above will give them the many opportunities to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports our staff in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests. We will also give suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in the setting.

Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as educational visits, coming in to school to help with reading, as well as offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, art,

music) to support children's learning. Parents are invited into the setting on other occasions such as open afternoons where children show them their work, or stay and play afternoons when they are invited to learn with the children in the classroom environments.

St Mary's Catholic Primary School has a friendly open-door ethos. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have.

We keep parents and/or carers up to date with their child's progress and development. The progress check and EYFS profile help to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

Each child is assigned a key person who helps to make sure that their learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. The key person supports parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home. The key person also helps families to engage with more specialist support, if appropriate.

We ask parents/carers to provide more than 2 emergency contact numbers for their child (where possible)

7. Staff

7.1 Staff training

We will:

- Train all staff in safeguarding procedures in line with Annex C of the most recent EYFS framework and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance
- Support all staff to feel supported and confident in implementing our safeguarding policy and procedures
- Renew training every 2 years, or more often when it's needed to help maintain skills; keep up to date with any changes to our safeguarding procedures; or because of any safeguarding concerns
- Outline how training is delivered, and how staff are supported to put it in place, in our child protection and safeguarding policy (see website: st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk)

Our designated safeguarding lead (DSL) will:

- Provide ongoing support, advice and guidance to all staff
- Attend a training course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex C of the most recent EYFS framework
- Liaise as needed with local statutory children's services agencies and our local safeguarding partners

7.2 Safer recruitment

When recruiting staff, we will follow the procedures set out in the latest EYFS framework guidance on checking the suitability of new recruits, including:

- Obtaining a reference for any member of staff (including students and volunteers) before they are recruited
- Recording information about staff qualifications and identity checks, vetting processes and references

See our safeguarding policy for details of our safer recruitment procedures (see website: st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk)

7.3 Whistleblowing

We make sure that all staff are aware of our whistleblowing procedures; feel able to raise concerns about any poor or unsafe practice; and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team.

In the event that a member of staff feels that they need to blow the whistle on misconduct, they should report their concern to the headteacher. If the concern is about the headteacher or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the chair of governors: Mario Santoro msantoro@st-marys.derebyshire.sch.uk

See our whistleblowing policy for details of our safer recruitment procedures and more detail on our procedures for handling whistleblowing (see website: st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk).

7.3.1 Malicious or vexatious allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith, but investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, we will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

8. Safeguarding and welfare procedures

We recognise that 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 safeguarding and welfare requirements to provide a welcoming, safe and stimulating environment where children can enjoy learning and grow in confidence.

All practitioners are alert to any issues of concern in children's lives at home or elsewhere.

See our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (see website: st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk) for more information.

8.1 Responding to allegations or concerns

If we have concerns about children's safety or welfare, we will immediately notify our local authority children's social care team, in line with local reporting procedures. In emergencies, we will also inform the police.
If a concern or allegation is about:

- A member of staff (including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers and contractors) posing a risk of harm to children, we will report it to the headteacher as soon as possible
- The headteacher, we will report it to the chair of the governing board-Mario Santoro
- Where we believe there's a conflict of interest in reporting to the headteacher, we will report it directly to the local authority designated officer (LADO).

We will then follow the procedures set out in our child protection and safeguarding policy (on our school website-https://st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk/ for managing the allegation.

If an allegation of harm or abuse by anyone living, working or looking after children at the premises is made (whether the alleged harm or abuse happened on the premises or elsewhere), we will inform Ofsted as soon as it is reasonably practicable and within 14 days of the allegation being made. We will also inform Ofsted about the action we have taken in response to the allegation(s).

8.1.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the headteacher – referred to from here as the 'recipient' – they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative or other accompanying person
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting, and record the information
- Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there **is**, then:
    - Arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the governing body if appropriate. In some cases, the recipient may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In others, they may need to report the matter to the police

- Inform the person who raised the concern about how the matter is being investigated and give an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps

8.1.2 Outcome of the investigation

Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred.

The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority in line with local reporting procedure, or police.

They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the headteacher, governors and other staff, if necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

While we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

8.2 Staffing ratios

We make sure that the appropriate statutory staff:child ratios are maintained in our setting to meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety:

- We have at least 1 member of staff for every 13 children
- At least 1 member of staff is a school teacher as defined by section 122 of the Education Act 2002
- At least 1 other member of staff holds an approved level 3 qualification, or has received approval to be included in the ratios at level 3 after attaining experience-based route status
- We comply with infant class size legislation and have at least 1 teacher per 30 pupils

8.3 Paediatric first aid (PFA)

We have at least 1 person with a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate on the premises and available at all times when children are present, including on outings. This PFA certificate is renewed every 3 years as required. We have a list of staff who have a current PFA certificate.

8.4 The designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

We also have a DSL who has lead responsibility for safeguarding children. They are also responsible for:

- Liaising with local statutory children's services agencies, and with the LSPs (local safeguarding partners)
- Providing support, advice and guidance to all other staff on an ongoing basis, and on any specific safeguarding issue as required
- Attending a safeguarding training course that complies with the criteria set out in annex C of the latest EYFS framework

8.5 Absence

We're required to promptly follow up on absences.

If a child is absent for a prolonged time or if their parents/carers haven't told us about the absence, we will attempt to contact the parents/carers and alternative emergency contacts.

See our attendance policy (see website: st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk) for more on this, including our expectations of parents/carers to report child absences.

8.6 Oral health and tooth brushing

We promote good oral health, as well as good health in general, in the early years by talking about:

- The effects of eating too many sweet things
- The importance of brushing your teeth

The rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, which can be found here: st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk.

8.7 Safer eating

While children are eating, there will always be at least 1 member of staff in the room with a valid Paediatric First Aid certificate (from a course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex A of the latest EYFS framework). All children will be within sight and hearing of a member of staff while eating, and seated safely in an appropriate chair where possible, in a designated eating space.

Before a child joins our setting, we will get information on their:

- Dietary requirements and preferences
- Food allergies and intolerances
- Health requirements

We will share this information with all staff involved in food preparation and handling. At each mealtime and snack time it will be clear which staff member is responsible for checking that the food meets all the requirements for each child.

We will make sure that all staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis; the differences between allergies and intolerances; and that children can develop allergies at any time, especially during the introduction of solid foods.

We will consult with parents/carers to:

- Create allergy action plans for their child – with the help of health professionals, where appropriate
    - We will also keep this information up to date and share it with all staff
- Discuss their child's progress with solid foods
- Work with them to move on to the next stage at a pace that's right for their child

We will prepare food in a way that:

- Prevents choking
- Meets each child's individual developmental needs
- Is in line with the DfE's Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance

In the event of a choking incident that requires intervention, we will record details of the incident and make the child's parents/carers aware. We will periodically review the records to identify whether we can change anything in our practice to make eating safer, and then take action as appropriate.

8.8 Accident or injury

We keep a first aid box (which contains appropriate items for children) always accessible.

We keep a digital record of accident or injuries and any first aid treatment using the app medical tracker.

We will inform parents or carers the same day as, or as soon as reasonably practicable after, of any:

- Accident or injury sustained by the child
- First aid treatment given

We will notify the relevant authority of any serious accident, illness, or injury to, or death of any child while in our care and inform them of the action taken, as soon as reasonably practicable.

8.9 Safety of premises

We make sure that our premises, including overall floor space and outdoor space, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children we care for and the activities provided on the premises.

We comply with requirements of health and safety legislation, including fire safety and hygiene requirements.

8.10 Toileting and privacy

We make sure that there are:

- Enough toilets and hand basins available for the children
- Suitable and hygienic nappy changing facilities
- An adequate supply of necessary items such as clean bedding, towels and spare clothes
- Separate toilet facilities for adults

During nappy changes and toileting, we will balance children's privacy with their safeguarding and support needs.

8.12 Screen use

We have regard to the DfE's help for early years providers: screen use guidance when making decisions about how and when children use screens in our setting. We also have a screen time policy for EYFS which can be found on our school website: https://st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk/

8.13 Organising premises for confidentiality and safeguarding

We make sure that:

- There is an area where staff may talk to parents and/or carers confidentially
- There is an area for staff to take breaks away from areas being used by children
- Children are only released into the care of individuals of whom the parent and/or carer has explicitly notified us
- Children do not leave our premises unsupervised

We take all reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised persons entering our premises and have an agreed procedure for checking the identity of visitors.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Senior Leadership Team every year.

At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

Appendix 1. List of statutory policies and procedures for the EYFS

This isn't an exhaustive list of policies and only includes policies specific to the EYFS. For a full list of our policies, see st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk.

Statutory policy or procedure for the EYFS	Where can it be found?
Safeguarding policy and procedures	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy https://st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk/policies/
Procedure for responding to illness	Health and Safety Policy https://st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk/policies/
Administering medicines policy	Supporting Children with Medical Conditions https://st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk/policies/
Emergency evacuation procedure	Health and Safety Policy https://st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk/policies/
Procedure for checking the identity of visitors	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy https://st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk/policies/
Procedures for a parent/carer failing to collect a child and for missing children	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy https://st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk/policies/
Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints	Complaints Policy https://st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk/policies/