

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy



Written by: Annie Trent September 2014
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Our Vision

Our vision at St. Mary's is to provide a stimulating environment where children feel happy, safe and loved. We believe that in order for a child to achieve their full potential it is important to nurture the development of the whole child: social, emotional, physical and intellectual. We aim to create as many opportunities as possible to provide our children with skills, knowledge and understanding of themselves and the world around them and to allow them to make informed decisions and choices about their lives. We encourage our children to develop their own personalities and promote confidence and self-esteem through positive teaching and play. We want our teaching and learning environments to inspire and motivate our children, generating excitement, focus and enquiring minds; a 'life long learner'.

Early Years Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the statutory framework published in 2012 by the Department for Education that sets the standards for the development, learning and care of children from birth to five.

Overarching principles

The four overarching principles from the EYFS that shape and lie at the heart of our practice in our Early Years setting are:

- 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 partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- **children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

The areas of learning and development

There are seven areas of learning and development in the Early Year Curriculum, all of which are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas are called the prime areas. They are:

- **communication and language**
- **physical development**
- **personal, social and emotional development**

There are also four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- **literacy**
- **mathematics**
- **understanding the world**
- **expressive arts and design**

Teaching and Learning

Within the Foundation Stage each area of learning and development holds equal importance and are dependent on each other. All areas are delivered and implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult led and child initiated activities. There are three key characteristics of effective learning set out by the EYFS Profile that really underpin our teaching at St. Mary's. They 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.

Child initiated learning - learning through play

We believe that play is fundamental in the development and learning for young children. Play enables the children to make choices, relate to others, solve problems, explore, investigate, recreate, practise and embed their skills. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. All of our children are encouraged to take risks and become confident, independent learners. We feel play allows our children to develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally. The children will develop their skills through playing, sharing, taking turns and talking with others.

At St. Mary's 'child initiated play' is also known to the children as 'Plan, do, review' time. In the planning stage children are given the opportunity to express their ideas and decisions to each other and adults. The children are then responsible for fulfilling their plans. The adult's role is to listen, interact, observe, encourage, extend, and suggest possible developments and alternatives, when appropriate. It is also a great opportunity to observe and assess how children are progressing. The children are able to develop skills during this time, which are then carried over into other activities during the school day. After they have had the opportunity to carry out their plans and tidy up, the children have a time to reflect upon the outcomes of their plans during review stage. Adults model and teach key questioning skills that the children independently begin to use as the year progresses in order to extend the children's learning.

In order to help support the children prepare for the transition into Year 1, the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults as the year progresses.

Assessment

Assessment plays an important part in helping to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. It is an ongoing process that involves observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are then reflected upon and used to inform and shape learning experiences for each child. The majority of our observations are recorded in the children's individual learning journals so that a journey of the child's progress can be seen.

Baseline Assessment

During the children's first half term in Foundation, we use the transition information provided by our feeder Pre-schools, parental information and our initial observations of the children to complete a 'Baseline Assessment'. These assessments are then used as a tool to monitor progression from 'Baseline' to the final assessment of the Early Learning goals in June. Using School Pupil Tracker, we plot where each child is on their learning journey. Children's progress in all 17 Early Learning Goals are tracked and monitored throughout the year.

End of Year Assessment

In the summer term each child's level of development is assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals. It will be indicated whether children are meeting expected levels of development, exceeding expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging').

Moderation of our judgements are made in May /June with two link moderators trained by the Borough of Poole. The data is sent to the Borough to collate and analyse. Parents are given Annual reports that share whether children are meeting expected levels of development. Parents can feedback on the report by adding a personal comment if they so wish.

Evidence and Learning Journals

Evidence to support judgements comes from a variety of sources, including:

- Bubble ups -snapshots annotated with area of learning during child initiated learning
- Learning stories
- Photos
- Videos
- Adult led observations during teaching inputs and guided activities

The Role of Parents

At St. Mary's we recognise the importance of parents and families as the first and most enduring educators in their child's life. We therefore seek to develop an effective partnership between home and school. We do this by:

- Inviting all new Foundation parents to a welcome evening during the term before their child starts school
- Giving our new Foundation children the opportunity to spend time with their teachers in the term prior to entry. The children are invited into school to participate in play experiences
- Promoting an open door policy for parents to share concerns and celebrations about school and home.
- Sending weekly Foundation Newsletters that shares learning covered during the week and homework activities
- Holding regular coffee mornings for Foundation parents/carers with key information
- Holding regular parent consultation meetings to discuss their child's progress

Inclusion

At St. Mary's we believe that every child is unique and should be given every opportunity to achieve their best and reach their full potential. We aim to meet the needs of all children by:

- planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence
- using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued
- using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping
- monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary

Please refer to our Inclusion policy for further information.

Safety

Children's safety and welfare is paramount. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We have stringent safeguarding policies and procedures in place which also includes the implementation of the Prevent policy to ensure children's safety.

Please see our separate policies and procedures on safeguarding and 'The Prevent Duty & promoting British Values Policy'.

Transition to Year 1

To ensure that there is a smooth transition between Foundation and year 1, the children are given the opportunity to spend some time with the Year 1 teachers in the summer term. The Foundation and year 1 teachers will work together to ensure that information on the children's development and learning needs are shared so that they can plan effectively for the requirements of all of the children. In the autumn term of year 1 the provision allows for the children to have opportunities for child initiated learning and the environment has been set up in order to enable this continuation.

Review

The Headteacher, Early Years Leader, staff and governors will review this policy annually (September 2016) unless there are any changes to the current Early Years Curriculum which may result in the policy needing review before this time.