



# Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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## **Our Vision**

In St Mary's School our Christian vision shapes all we do.

We treasure each child and enable them to flourish, using their God-given potential, establishing a secure foundation for them to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

We are a 'Christ-centred school, with a child-centred curriculum' where wisdom and love guide and influence learning and teaching for our whole community.

## **Curriculum Intent**

**ACTIVE, MEMORABLE, MEANINGFUL and ENGAGING.**

Our whole school curriculum is ambitious and builds progressive core knowledge and key curriculum concepts to prepare our pupils for life. Most of our curriculum is history-, geography- and science-led and is focussed around strands which run all the way through the learning to allow the children to develop their subject knowledge and make connections. Our curriculum will lead pupils to being able to recall and describe the knowledge and concepts in familiar, unfamiliar, local and global contexts. It activates their prior learning, and builds on their lived experiences. Pupils are empowered to use written, oracy and digital communication skills to purposefully share and articulate their learning to others. Our curriculum enables our pupils to be successful, confident and responsible citizens.

Early Years is an integral part of this intent as we lay the foundation and start off the learning journey that children take at St Mary's. Understanding, knowledge and skills then develop further as the child grows older and concepts are repeatedly revisited.

## **Early Years**

### **Our Vision for our children**

Our vision incorporates all the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). However, the basis of our success is through the pedagogical leadership of professional, knowledgeable and sensitive St. Mary's staff.

The St. Mary's Pedagogy is reflective of our approach. This means that each element of the pedagogy is designed to strengthen children's social and cultural capital through language, social opportunities, cultural experiences and friendships. The seven elements of the pedagogy are designed to strengthen children's educational success by widening their network of social relationships and expanding their cultural horizons. So, just by attending St. Mary's Primary School, children build social capital through the friendships they make with people from all different backgrounds and their involvement in the local community. Their cultural capital is expanded through a rich language and literacy approach as well as trips to the park, where we are cultivating a small area of land, Forest School, Pulborough Library and the beach. At St. Mary's our aim is to create a learning environment and build relationships which support, enhance and invite a child's curiosity and confidence to flourish, regardless of background, circumstances or need.



## Our Intent

At St. Mary's we believe that children's early learning experiences deeply affect their future physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. We understand that building secure relationships with children and their families at an early stage is key to understanding how we can maximise learning opportunities for each and every child in our setting. We are fully committed to taking the time to understand and follow children's interests and provide a rich curriculum that supports learning, consolidates and deepens knowledge and ensures that children achieve their next steps. Both our indoor and outdoor provision is carefully planned and demonstrates a thorough knowledge and understanding of the way in which our children learn. We aim to prepare our children to achieve the Early Learning Goals at the end of the summer term and ensure that all children have made good or better progress from their individual starting points. Our ultimate goal is to prepare our children with the knowledge and skills needed for the next stage of their learning journey in KS1. This is so important, as we know that what our children learn in these vital first years of life will stay with them forever and that optimising children's early education is the best investment we can make in ensuring their future success.

We endeavour to provide first-hand experiences which make our curriculum purposeful and relevant. Every child is recognised as a unique individual and we celebrate and welcome differences within our school community. The ability to learn is underpinned by the teaching of basic skills, knowledge, concepts and values.

Community involvement is an essential part of our curriculum at St. Mary's as we celebrate local traditions, learning new skills to enable the children to take an active role in events throughout the year. Both classes take part in weekly sessions of Forest School which are led by two level three practitioners. We welcome people from the community without whom we could not run our sessions.

## Implementation

As a team we follow the Development Matters, Strong Foundation in the first years of school, Early Years Foundation Stage framework and 'Best Start in Life'. Four overriding principles which our early year's education is based upon:

- **Unique Child** – Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- **Positive Relationships** – Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- **Enabling Environments** – 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 carers.



- **Learning and Development** – Children develop and learn in different ways. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early year's provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

The curriculum provides a play-based and experiential learning environment, combined with focussed teaching and basic skills, to ensure children make rapid progress before moving onto Year 1. The children are provided with many opportunities, accessible in both our indoor and outdoor provision. They engage in planned, focussed activities as well as self-initiated and free flow activities. The learning experiences within our Early Years are linked to the seven areas of learning and development within the EYFS. These areas are split into three prime areas and four specific areas. The three prime areas are those which the children should develop first and are considered most essential for the healthy development and future learning of our children. These include:

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.
- **Communication and Language** – involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.
- **Physical Development** – involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

As children grow and make progress in the prime areas, this will help them to naturally develop skills within the four specific areas. These are:

- **Literacy** – the early teaching of literacy involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children are given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.

**Transcription:** In Reception, we prioritise teaching children the component parts of transcription including correct pen grip, letter formation and spelling. Children practise and apply these component parts through dictated sentences that closely match their phonics knowledge. In addition, handwriting is taught in letter family groups daily as a discrete session.

- **Mathematics** – the early teaching of mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and describing shapes, spaces, and measures.



- **Understanding the World** – this involves guiding children to 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 Arts and Design** – this involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

A vital aspect in the development of essential knowledge and skills is the use of continuous provision. This means that children are using and developing taught skills throughout the year on a daily/weekly basis. We constantly provide enhancement opportunities to engage learners and link to our children's interests. We encourage children to become independent in the continuous provision through the use of 'challenges'. We support children to be intrinsically motivated to complete the challenges and therefore take ownership of their own learning. As well as learning through the continuous provision, children also access adult-directed activities in which adults teach children particular skills, with guidance taken from 'Development Matters' and 'Birth to Five'. Children also take part in daily focussed phonic sessions, which we plan using our phonic scheme which is holistic in order to maximise learning for all. Each phoneme is linked to experiences the children will have across all areas of their learning at St. Mary's. Children are encouraged to transfer the skills they learn in phonics sessions into their independent reading and writing in the continuous provision.

We place huge importance on the development of children's vocabulary and the staff are skilled in assessing early speech and language development and have the expertise to support children in being able to communicate their thoughts and ideas and explore the meaning of new words. Staff use their knowledge of the Characteristics of Effective Learning to ensure that they plan appropriate activities and organise their provision in a way that demonstrates a clear understanding of the way in which our children are motivated to learn.

### **Characteristics of Learning**

- 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 their achievements;
- Creating and Thinking Critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

We are influenced by the theories of: • Froebel • Pestalozzi • Vygotsky • McMillan • Montessori • Gardner • Te Whariki • Emerging knowledge about brain development.

We know that all children are unique, with their own individual fascinations, and it is for this reason that we believe a balance of child- and teacher-led activities is crucial in order for our children to become fully engaged and excited by their learning. We feel that effective



provision both indoors and out is based on a clear understanding of what we want our children to learn and how we plan to achieve this. We want our children to be independent in accessing quality, play-based experiences that encourage them to notice, question and wonder. Effective interactions between staff and children and regular home/school communication ensures that our curriculum planning and provision is flexible and continuously adapted to meet the needs of all learners and to reflect children's needs and interests as they continue to develop and grow.

Planning is most effective when:

- It gives staff clear guidance on to how to meet the needs of the children.
- It is flexible so it takes into account children's developmental stages, needs and ideas, but also allows learning to develop spontaneously. Children pass through developmental stages, but will also be continually moving backwards and forwards along the developmental continuum. It is important to understand that a range of life experiences can affect how children develop. For example, the birth of a sibling, a change in their routine, moving home or parental stress can affect how easily a child reaches developmental milestones.
- It is thoughtful and appropriate and a joint team effort where ideas and experiences are brought together to effectively contribute to the service provided to the children.
- Parents are informed and involved. Parents will be given the opportunity to add their comments to Learning Journeys, as well as being able to fully discuss their child's progress through regular pedagogical conversations.

We use a combination of paper, online 'Evidence Me' observations and Learning Journals to celebrate children's achievements, record observations, assess and track children's progress and identify their next steps. Regular parents' meetings, stay and play sessions and workshops ensure that parents are kept up to date with their children's development and progress and are fully aware of how they can continue to support their children's learning outside school. Our dojo app and 'Did you know?' slips offer the opportunity for parents/family members to send information about their children's news and achievements outside school and this provides us with a really well-rounded picture of our children.

## Nutrition and Healthy Eating

- Our policies and procedures are aligned with the guidance found in the 'Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance' publication:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6839b752210698b3364e86fc/Early\\_years\\_foundation\\_stage\\_nutrition\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6839b752210698b3364e86fc/Early_years_foundation_stage_nutrition_guidance.pdf)

- Academy's nutrition and allergen guidance can also be found in the following procedure documents: 'Allergen and Anaphylaxis Procedures' and 'Healthy Eating Approach'.



- We provide the children with a snack in the mornings which is always a healthy snack, usually a piece of fruit. We also provide milk.
- Children are only allowed water in their bottles at school. They are not allowed juice, squash or anything else. Children can fill up their bottles as and when they need at school.
- The children learn about Healthy Eating and Nutrition as part of our curriculum.

## **Parent involvement**

- Parents are invited to parents' evenings each term; however, EYFS has an open-door policy and parents are welcome to talk to the team at the start and end of the school day.
- A quiet space is available for confidential discussions between staff and parents.
- Parents are asked to sign permission slips for any visits out of school, use of photographs of their child and using the school internet.
- It is recommended that parents download the MCAS app. This is a great way for parents to receive reminders and get messages home ASAP.
- Google Classroom is used to share curriculum and learning updates as well as to promote communication between school and home.
- Parents are asked to complete admission forms, including a medical form, as part of the induction process when a child starts school.

## **Impact**

The experiences of the task with thought to skills and knowledge, will be revisited and demonstrated through being deeply engaged in play. Our children will grow to be confident, competent, lifelong learners and good citizens. We strive to ensure that all of our children make good or better progress during their time in Foundation Stage. Children who achieve the expected standard within the Early Learning Goals have the knowledge and skills needed to continue to maintain the good progress they have made into Key Stage 1 and beyond. We understand that when assessing children against the Early Learning Goals, there will be many children who are awarded the same level but may be working at differing levels within this range. Effective communication between EYFS and KS1 staff is therefore crucial to achieve an effective transition for children and to plan accordingly for the next stage of their learning journey. As a team, we carry out regular internal moderation sessions and also make sure that staff attend external meetings and training to ensure that we feel confident with our judgements and that these judgements are consistent with a range of other settings. In



addition to regular formative observations, staff input summative data on a termly basis and complete their own data analysis records to ensure that our children's progress is monitored carefully, the impact of actions are evaluated and next steps are identified.

We believe our high standards are due to the enriched play-based exploration alongside the rigour of assessment and teaching the children have as they move through the early years – a rich diet of balanced learning experiences is undoubtedly the best way to develop happy, curious children.

The Foundation Stage team

