

St Mary's Catholic Primary School



Foundation Stage Policies

Our School's Mission ...

TO LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS

BY

LEARNING TOGETHER

LOVING OURSELVES

LOVING EACH OTHER

LOVING ALL PEOPLE

LOVING LIFE ITSELF

AND

CONSTANTLY STRIVING FOR

EXCELLENCE

WORTHY OF OUR GOD GIVEN GIFTS.

Admissions

Parents apply for admission to the Reception classes by completing a personal details proforma – our School Supplementary Information form. The application is kept in a file in the school office.

The governors of St Mary's send out offers of places in the April/May prior to date of admission. A criterion for admission is strictly adhered to and this is also the process for appeals.

Criteria of Admission to School

Please see Governor tab of our school website for the Admissions Policy.

How does the Foundation Stage work?

Foundation Stage Team

We aim to provide an environment that stimulates and challenges all different groups of pupils. Pupils can access the resources they need independently. We encourage children to plan and reflect on their own learning. We want our pupils to be happy, confident and competent learners who are able to communicate their needs and ideas.

Reception

Transition from Nursery to Reception Class

It is important to note that children at St Mary's come from over 15 different feeder nurseries. Our transition procedures are therefore rigorous and highly supportive to ensure every child settles into school well and enjoys learning.

- In the June before children start school, the children come into school for a morning or afternoon (15 at a time). This ensures they spend quality time with their new teachers and teaching assistants. Following this, each child's nursery is contacted and the class teacher speaks to each child's key worker, to discuss each child and share assessments / important information.
- If there are any children with special needs/ concerns nursery visits are made by the Reception Class teacher, Foundation Stage Co-ordinator an SENCO, in order for provisions to be made to facilitate each child's learning.
- There is also an open evening held during this time, where parents where information is shared with parents about the setting and parent have the opportunity to discuss any concerns with teachers.
- During the first week of school, the class teacher meets 1:1 with each parent and discusses each child in detail. Nursery records are shared and discussed and any special needs / support is discussed and plans drawn up.
- The children come to school part time for the first two weeks. This enables children to settle into school gradually and so build up their confidence. During this time detailed observations and assessments are made of the children. This enables teachers to plan for each child's next steps in learning in each area of the curriculum from the very start.
- These observations and assessments are then shared with parents verbally and written down in the Parent Home /School book in order to support parents in helping their child at home.

Parents encourage their children to enter the classroom independently, where they self register. They then begin the day with prayers and registration. The children will gather on the carpet in their class room two or three times a day for RE, music, phonics or maths sessions. Other learning challenges to be undertaken independently will be explained and the learning behind each one shared with the children. This is followed by 'Learning Time' during which challenges set by the teacher and those set by the children themselves are completed. Children's own goals and challenges are valued and encouraged.

During 'learning time' Teachers or T.A.s will carry out focus groups with the children that are differentiated for the children's needs. All children will take part in these small group teaching sessions which run throughout the day. The other adult will either be observing or joining child led play. A balance of adult and child led activities should be sought.

It is important here to define what we understand by the terms adult led and child led:

Adult led means that the adult provides the starting point for an activity and has a clear idea about the vocabulary, concepts and outcomes that are likely. Adult led activities are differentiated for different learners needs. Initially it is likely that the adults will be modelling how to use the resources in the different areas of the setting (ensuring children understand the names of equipment, how to access and clear up resources, talking about the play going on etc). As the academic year progresses the role of the adult should shift to one of initiating a plan, do, review process.

Adult Initiated means an activity that has already been supported and led by an adult previously, children therefore have the opportunity to practise and consolidate previous learning independently.

Child led means that the children have decided upon the area of the setting they are playing in and direct the play. Adults should join the play if invited by the children and should be guided by the children. Adults can facilitate children accessing resources and ask children to describe what they are doing in this situation. Adults should watch, wait (to be included) and join in! These interactions may inform the activities and resources offered to children in subsequent sessions.

Planning in the Foundation Stage

The new EYFS Statutory Framework (2012) states,

Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.

All plans are led by the Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage 2012 document. Learning objectives adapted from this document follow a progression via the age related bands in Nursery and towards the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) for Reception. Planning should reflect the different points children are at in their learning journey; "children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates." (EYFS Statutory Framework 2012).

All planning should be mindful of the Characteristics of Effective Learners (Development Matters 2012) and seek to provide opportunities for children to develop as capable, resilient and independent learners. Above all we should encourage children to adopt a 'can do' attitude. We should plan for children recording and sharing their learning and ideas; providing space for many voices and an atmosphere of collaboration. Planning should reflect a plan, do, review process.

The EYFS 2012 has 3 prime areas (Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language and Physical Development) and 4 specific areas (Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design). The prime areas each support children's development in all other areas. The specific areas include essential skills and knowledge for children to acquire. Both prime and specific areas have ELGs to be assessed and reported by the end of June.

Continuous Provision Plans (CPP) detail the provision in different areas of the setting such as the book corners, writing areas, role play, block play and water play. Adults should familiarise themselves with the expectations for these areas. Possible resources, key concepts, vocabulary and the adults' roles are outlined in these plans. The CPP documents also reference the Specific and Prime areas.

Books are the principal starting point for planning with staff developing planning ideas from the children's interests by selecting texts on topics the children enjoy. Staff discuss observations they have made of

children's learning and interests. This informs any planning changes needed and ensures that all staff are part of the planning process. When possible this happens every day.

Separate plans are made to ensure clear progression in phonics work, literacy and maths. During phonics teaching each day the class of 60 children is split up into 4 differentiated groups, daily planning for each of these groups is provided to ensure each group is challenged and supported effectively in order to enable them to progress to their next phase in learning. Reception Class use the THRASS programme, to systematically work through the Phonics Phases in 'Letters and Sounds'.

All planning must show differentiation for learner groups, make it clear what adults are doing and have activities for the inside and outside in all prime and specific areas.

Planning will be monitored by the Foundation Phase co-ordinator and subject leaders as appropriate.

Play policy

In the Foundation stage at Saint Mary's, we are committed to meeting the individual needs of all the children. The welfare of the children is central to our work. All children are respected and valued. We aim to provide a safe, secure environment in which children feel able to take risks and learn from their mistakes. We help to foster the development of the whole child and enable all children to fulfil their individual potential. We believe children develop and learn best through a play based curriculum.

Play is motivating for young children and the core of how they learn. When children enjoy what they are doing and are self motivated, they will learn to their full potential. Through play we aim to develop the whole child in terms of emotional, social, physical and aesthetic areas of growth. At St Mary's, we aim to enable all children to have equal access to good quality play opportunities both indoors and outdoors. We realise that the curriculum needs to be carefully planned and structured ensuring a strong routine. To be effective the curriculum will provide:

- Planned provision for children's different starting points.
- Opportunities for child initiated play – with resources clearly labelled and easily accessible to the children.
- Adult led challenges to match the children's needs and abilities
- Opportunities to gain new skills and experience new things.
- An expectation that children plan their activities, carry them out and review how they have gone (plan, do, review)
- Encouragement to record and share ideas

What do children gain from play?

Through play children:

- Develop independence.
- Experience success and failure without fear and therefore develop their confidence and self esteem.
- Explore and investigate.
- Develop social skills.
- Practise, consolidate and revisit skills.
- Imitate and replay real life experiences.
- Develop emotional well being through testing / acting out difficult or worrying situations and emotions in a safe environment.
- Develop social inclusion. It helps children understand the people and places in their lives learn about the environment and develop their sense of community.
- Acquire skills of problem solving and organisation.
- Develop language
- Develop imaginative skills
- Develop creativity.
- Keep healthy and active.

Outdoor Policy

In the Foundation Stage at Saint Mary's we aim to provide high quality outdoor provision to develop the children's learning. The Reception class children have equal access to a very well resourced outside 'classroom' on a daily basis.

Why do the children need an outdoor Learning Environment?

The outdoor environment provides children with unique, pleasurable and positive learning experiences which often can not be gained from indoor play. Gail Ryder discusses some of the opportunities in an article in "Early Education",

"Being in direct contact with the natural world, the weather, the seasons, they can enjoy whole-body multi-sensory experiences which offer a new perspective on their worlds as they walk, run, climb, roll, slide, smell and feel. With more space to move around in, they are free to encounter a variety of spontaneous opportunities for investigation and exploration."

The outside areas are planned to include all seven areas of learning on a daily basis. Plans are made to match the children's needs as observed by staff and informed by the EYFS 2012 and Development Matters documents.

The outside environment provides opportunities for children to challenge themselves physically and with that there will be an inevitable small element of risk. All risks will of course be considered by staff and catered for to the best of our ability. As an article in "Grounds for Learning" states,

"Young children deserve a learning environment that enables them to take suitable risks and manage the challenges they present to enable them to grow up into competent, confident adults."

It also states,

"A too safe environment may be the cause of accidents if a child has no awareness of risk or has not developed the ability to rise to challenges. The role of the practitioner is to enable them to do this safely, not to stop them by providing appropriate activities."

All children will be involved in discussion about the outdoor rules. New equipment will be added after discussion about how to use it safely if necessary.

Weather

Children will be allowed to use the outdoor area in all weathers – they need to experience them in order to really know about them. Only extreme weather conditions will mean the children do not have access to outside e.g., very strong wind which is causing larger objects to blow around.

During periods of high temperature the children will be encouraged to drink water frequently, parents will be asked to apply sun cream before each session and children will be encouraged to play in the shaded areas and advised to take breaks from the sun as assessed by staff to be needed (discussing with them why their bodies need it). Sunhats are available.

Snowy and rainy conditions are very exciting and motivating for children but appropriate clothing will need to be worn – coat, gloves, Wellington boots etc. Waterproof coats and trousers are available.

Recording and Assessing Learning

Each child in the Foundation Stage has a Learning Journey containing nursery records, contributions from parents, baseline assessments, observations of their learning and interactions as well as samples of work such as writing, drawing and maths. These folders are an ongoing snapshot of children's progress that is completed throughout their time in the Foundation Stage.

In addition to individual records, class record sheets are completed by all staff carrying out focus tasks. Written notes are kept for all children during adult led activities. These are referred to when checking off progress against Development Matters and Early Learning Goals on the school pupil tracker.

Children's work can be recorded in a range of ways throughout the Foundation Stage. Whiteboards can be photocopied and filed, photographs of practical recording (patterns made with shapes, number sentences made with cards,) and children's own recording of writing or mark making (including mathematical marks such as tallies).

Parental involvement in Assessment

All parents are regularly informed of their child's behaviour and academic performance. There are parent workshop sessions, weekly written feed-back and a detailed end of year report.

An individual 'Learning Journey' for each child is given to each child's parents in the first term during a 1:1 meeting. The learning Journey explains the Early Year's Curriculum and gives parents the Development Matters Frames work objectives in a manageable format. This process enables parents to support their child's next step in learning at home. The parents of the children are then asked to bring their child's 'Learning Journey' to Phonics workshops, Maths and Writing workshops, parent consultations and reading meetings.

Every child is read with by a teacher each week and their parent is given individual written feed-back in the Home School Book. Activities/ home learning is also given that explains how parents can help their child at home. Parents are encouraged to comment during the week, and describe how their child enjoyed the learning at home. These Home school books are also used to share each child's phonics assessments each term. The next steps for each child are also given following this information being shared with the parents.

Pastoral Care & Discipline

Saint Mary's aims to provide a secure, safe happy environment for its children. We believe that good discipline is internalised through good modelling and clear communication of expectations. A copy of our Pastoral Care Policy can be requested from the school office and is available on the school website.

Child Protection

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. All staff, governors, parents and volunteers / visitors are expected to share in this commitment.

Staff are always advised not to keep a child in a room with them if it means they are alone. In disciplining a child it should be done in a place that is "open" and not behind closed doors and with others present. Foundation Stage staff need to be especially careful when dealing with children who have wet or soiled themselves. Fresh clothing is provided and children are asked to change themselves. If necessary a parent/carer can be called in to assist their child but staff cannot dress or undress children. Simple instructions can be given to break the task down for a child.

A number of Senior staff are fully trained in Child Protection – any concerns should be referred to Mr Blaney (Lead), Miss Cusack, Mrs Jones and Mr Clinton.

Mobile Phone Policy

All staff in the Foundation Stage must keep their phones in a locked cupboard in the Classroom. They must only use it in the staffroom, away from any children.

Staff must not take photographs of children on their mobile phones or personal cameras. Photographs of children may not leave the school building as paper copies or digitally.

Staff are aware of child protection procedures and know who to report any concerns to as regards any child in their care.

Risk Assessments

Daily risk assessments are carried out in the Reception Classroom each morning before school, with special attention given to the outside classroom. To ensure the classroom is a safe secure learning environment for all children.

Link with Parish/Community

Saint Mary's links with the parish and community are strong. The Church is used for whole school Mass and the Key Stage 2 is involved in a Parish programme for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.

Reception children are welcomed into the school community during our 'Rite Of Welcome' after their first full week at school. Children attend all masses and at Christmas perform their own Nativity in the Church for the rest of the school and the Parish. A Foundation Stage mass is held in the Summer term. Members of the community are always welcome to the school to share their experiences and to help out.

Special Needs

Special needs children are identified early in Reception mainly through language difficulties. Early years teachers are aware of the Special Needs Code of Practice, and extra support is put in place early for children who are working below the expected level for their age according to the Development Matters Framework. Concerns about a child are shared with parents early on with the advice of the SENCO sought if needed. Parents of Nursery children may be directed to their Health Visitor or G.P. in the first instance if a language or hearing difficulty is suspected.

Equal Opportunities

All people, irrespective of age, colour, creed, gender, disability are given equal opportunities within each key stage to develop their knowledge, skills and attributes to the best of their ability. We promote the Gospel values of love, peace and justice to all as reflected on our school mission statement.

This policy will be reviewed and updated annually.

Elizabeth Russell
Foundation Stage Co-ordinator
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