



St Mary's C of E (VA) Primary School

Working together
in an inclusive Christian environment
to allow every pupil to shine brighter and brighter.

St Mary's is an inclusive school where we believe that all people are of equal value, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, ability or sexual identity. We recognise and respect differences.

EYFS

This policy is GDPR compliant.

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Vision

The EYFS is concerned with what children learn as well as how they learn. St Mary's recognises that effective early years practice combines play, adult modelling, guided learning, direct teaching, meaningful interactions and opportunities for children to initiate and sustain their own learning.

Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- Children experience a safe, secure, welcoming and enabling environment in which they can develop independence, curiosity, confidence and a love of learning.
- Children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life.
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress.
- Teaching, play, interactions, assessment and the learning environment are responsive to children's individual needs, interests, development and experiences.
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity.
- A close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.
- That safeguarding and children's welfare are central to all aspects of EYFS provision and that all staff understand their responsibilities to protect children from harm. *

Legislation and statutory framework

This policy is based on the requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers, effective from 1 September 2026.

The EYFS sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. The current DfE framework for group and school-based providers applies to St Mary's EYFS provision. The policy should be read alongside the school's other policies and procedures (See Appendices).

Structure of the EYFS

St Mary's EYFS comprises a 26 place Nursery class and 30 place Reception class. The Nursery is open from 8.40–11.45am daily and 15 hours are offered to Nursery children. The Nursery class is run by a qualified teacher and a Level 3 Early Years Practitioner.

A privately run pre-school offers a lunch and afternoon session, in the same setting, for those children that are eligible for 30 hours or who wish to pay for additional sessions. St Mary's Nursery works closely with the pre-school to ensure a seamless handover as children transition between settings.

Reception class is run by a qualified teacher and teaching assistant from 8.40am–3.20pm.

Nursery and Reception classes share the outdoor learning space in the morning. The Reception class and St Mary's privately run pre-school share the outdoor space in the afternoon.

Staffing arrangements, deployment and supervision will be reviewed throughout the day to ensure that children's needs and safety are maintained, including during transitions, outdoor learning, eating, toileting, intimate care and other higher-risk activities.

Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the revised EYFS Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers.

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and 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

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

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

The curriculum is designed to build secure foundations in the prime areas while developing knowledge and skills across all seven areas. Staff recognise that children develop at different rates and that learning is interconnected rather than confined to individual subject areas.

The curriculum will provide children with opportunities to develop:

- communication and language;
- vocabulary, listening and attention;
- physical strength, coordination and control;
- positive relationships and emotional regulation;
- independence and self-care;
- early reading and writing;
- mathematical knowledge and understanding;
- knowledge of the natural and wider world;
- creativity, imagination and self-expression;
- resilience, curiosity and problem-solving skills.

Planning

St Mary's EYFS staff have considered the skills that young children need to develop across all areas of the Early Years Framework and have created a skills progression map for children aged 3–5 years.

The staff have also planned how these skills will be developed through classroom activities and learning opportunities. Each year the EYFS staff agree priority areas for development for the cohort based on assessments, school context and school priorities.

The skills progression map and EYFS priorities are the basis for how we plan activities and experiences, which enable our children to develop and learn effectively.

All 7 areas of learning and development are planned for within our setting.

Staff working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime areas.

Staff working in Reception will begin to work on specific areas of learning through schemes of work or specific learning programmes which align with individual subject policies.

Staff take into account the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience.

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

In planning and guiding children's activities, staff reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice.

Curriculum leaflets outlining learning expectations and opportunities are shared with parents each half term to ensure that parents have the opportunity to be involved in learning and to understand how to support their children.

Planning will not unnecessarily constrain children's learning or require excessive written documentation. Practitioners will use their knowledge of children, observation, professional judgement and assessment to identify appropriate teaching opportunities and next steps.

Planning will respond to:

- children's interests and fascinations;
- their current knowledge and skills;
- identified gaps or misconceptions;
- language and communication needs;
- SEND and additional needs;
- children's cultural and family experiences;
- opportunities for sustained shared thinking;
- cohort and school priorities.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

St Mary's recognises the three Characteristics of Effective Teaching and 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 achievements;
- Creating and Thinking Critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

Practitioners will observe these characteristics alongside children's knowledge and skills and use them to inform teaching and provision.

Teaching

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

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

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning experiences in Year 1 and beyond.

Teaching and learning is a collaborative process between parents and school.

Teachable moments and next steps are provided through Tapestry (Online Learning Journal) so that parents can support their children on their learning journey.

Equally, parents share learning and memorable moments with staff so that we have a holistic view of their child's learning.

Tapestry is also used to share Early Years learning with subject coordinators within the school so that leaders understand how subject specific learning takes place in our Early Years.

Practitioners will use a range of teaching approaches, including modelling and demonstration; questioning and discussion; narration and commenting; explicit teaching; guided play; child-initiated play; storytelling and shared reading; songs, rhymes and repeated experiences; sustained shared thinking; small-group and whole-class teaching; and opportunities for children to explore, investigate and learn independently.

Children will be given sufficient uninterrupted time to develop and sustain play and learning.

St Mary's recognises the evidence-informed value of play-based learning. The EEF identifies positive evidence for play-based approaches, while also noting that the evidence base is limited and that implementation and professional judgement are important. In particular, St Mary's will:

- provide environments that support language, literacy and mathematical development through play;
- consider the appropriate balance between child-initiated play and more structured activities;
- organise resources so that they encourage active learning, play and exploration – See Educational environment Policy 2026;
- prepare practitioners to interact purposefully with children during play;
- evaluate whether approaches to play are improving children's learning.

Assessment

At St Mary's, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes.

Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning.

Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

Formative assessment takes place throughout the learning journey, and at specific points summative assessment takes place and is discussed with senior leaders at termly pupil progress meetings.

Parents have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress every term and to hear from the class teacher.

Assessment will be proportionate and purposeful. Staff will avoid unnecessary recording or assessment activity that takes practitioners away from interacting with children.

Assessment information will be used to identify what children know, understand and can do and to determine appropriate next steps in teaching.

Reception Baseline Assessment

Within the first 6 weeks that a child starts Reception, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA), in accordance with the statutory requirements and guidance applying to the assessment.

The RBA will not replace teachers' ongoing professional assessment of children's learning and development.

EYFS Profile

At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff complete the EYFS Profile for each child.

Pupils are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals, indicating whether they are:

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

The Profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions with parents and/or carers.

The results of the Profile are shared with parents and/or carers for their child at the end of the school year.

The Profile is moderated internally, referring to the Development Matters guidance, and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements.

EYFS Profile data is submitted to the local authority.

The EYFS Profile must be completed for all children, including children with SEND.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate, and specialist assistance will be sought where necessary. EYFS Profile results will be reported to the local authority as required.

Working with parents and carers

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between staff and parents and/or carers.

Regular opportunities are provided for parents to become involved in school activities and find out about how their children are learning through information evenings, classroom visits and volunteering.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development through Tapestry.

The observations provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

Teachers support parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home.

They also help families to engage with more specialist support, if appropriate, in conjunction with the school's SENCo.

Where concerns arise about a child's learning, development, attendance, behaviour, health or welfare, staff will work with parents/carers wherever appropriate while ensuring that safeguarding responsibilities are not compromised.

Safeguarding and welfare procedures

St Mary's recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

All practitioners must remain alert to issues of concern in a child's life at home or elsewhere.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead has lead responsibility for safeguarding children within the school and works with local statutory children's services and other safeguarding partners.

The rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The school will follow Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and relevant local safeguarding partnership procedures.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 applies in full to early education and childcare settings and schools.

Safer recruitment, suitability and safeguarding training

St Mary's EYFS operates as part of the school and therefore follows the school's statutory safeguarding, safer recruitment, suitability, whistleblowing and staff conduct policies and procedures. These policies are maintained and updated by the school in line with the statutory requirements effective from 1 September 2026. All staff, students and volunteers working within EYFS are subject to these school procedures, including the required checks and suitability arrangements. New employees must not commence employment before the required criminal record check has been received, and enhanced criminal record checks apply to volunteers, including supervised volunteers, where required by the statutory framework. Staff must disclose any information that may affect their suitability to work with children. This EYFS Policy works within and sits

under the school's statutory policies and procedures and does not replace or duplicate them.

Safeguarding concerns and allegations

Any concern about a child's safety or welfare will be managed in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, statutory safeguarding requirements and local safeguarding procedures. Concerns or allegations relating to staff, volunteers or other adults will be managed through the school's procedures for allegations against adults. From 1 September 2026, the EYFS statutory requirements refer to allegations of "harm", rather than "serious harm", where notification to Ofsted is required. Any required notification will be made by the school within the statutory timescale. This EYFS Policy works within and sits under the school's statutory safeguarding policies and procedures and does not replace or duplicate them.

Attendance and unexplained absence

Attendance and unexplained absence are managed in accordance with the school's Attendance Policy, safeguarding procedures and the statutory requirements applicable from 1 September 2026. St Mary's will follow up unexplained or prolonged absence promptly and will consider any relevant safeguarding concerns or individual circumstances. Where appropriate, concerns will be escalated in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures. This EYFS Policy works within and sits under the school's statutory Attendance and Safeguarding Policies and does not replace or duplicate them.

Health and wellbeing

St Mary's will have regard to the DfE's EYFS nutrition guidance when planning and providing food and drink. We promote good oral health, as well as good health in general, by providing a healthy snack each day.

During the day, we promote drinking of water or milk and healthy eating.

EYFS take part in health initiatives organised at St Mary's such as Feeling Good Week, Healthy Living Week, and school sports day.

Children's dietary requirements, allergies and relevant medical needs will be identified before or as soon as reasonably practicable after they start the setting and will be kept up to date.

Self-Care and intimate care

There are separate toilets for the children in the Nursery and Reception which are accessible from the classroom.

Children will be encouraged to develop independence in toileting and personal hygiene according to their developmental stage. For those children that are toilet training, there is also an Intimate Care Policy which outlines procedures for cleaning and changing children.

Intimate care will be undertaken respectfully and sensitively, while maintaining appropriate safeguarding and supervision. Children's privacy is considered and balanced with safeguarding and support needs when changing nappies and toileting. The Intimate Care Policy provides further detail.

Safer eating

Children will be seated safely while eating. All children are supervised during mealtimes and snack time and there will be at least one member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate. Children will be within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating so they can be sure children are eating in a way that will reduce the likelihood of choking and to prevent food sharing in case of unexpected allergic reactions. Where possible, staff will position themselves so that they can observe children closely while they eat.

Staff will be alert to choking, including the fact that choking may be silent.

Where a choking incident requires intervention, the incident will be recorded, parents/carers informed and records reviewed for trends or common features.

Food will be prepared and served in accordance with children's individual dietary, allergy, developmental and medical needs.

All staff involved in preparing and handling food will receive appropriate food hygiene training. The EYFS framework requires suitable facilities for hygienic food preparation and competent food handling. * training online for all

Paediatric First Aid

At least one person who has a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate must be on the premises and available at all times when children are present and must accompany children on outings. The PFA qualification must meet the criteria specified by the EYFS framework and must be renewed every three years.

The school will consider the number of children, staffing and layout of the premises to ensure that a paediatric first aider can respond quickly to an emergency.

Safer sleep

EYFS child sleeps or rests during the school day, St Mary's will follow the safer-sleep requirements contained within the revised EYFS statutory framework. Any child who falls asleep unexpectedly will be monitored and supported in accordance with the school's safeguarding, health and safety and welfare procedures. These include:

Sleeping children will be frequently checked to ensure that they are safe.

Sleep arrangements will be appropriate to the child's age, developmental stage and individual needs.

Children will remain within sight and hearing of staff in accordance with the EYFS requirements.

Any sleep-related concern or incident will be dealt with in accordance with safeguarding, health and safety and medical procedures.

Staff will be familiar with current DfE safer-sleep guidance and will receive appropriate information/training should their role require them to supervise sleeping children on a regular basis. This EYFS Policy works within and sits under the school's statutory policies and procedures and does not replace or duplicate them.

Behaviour and relationships

St Mary's promotes positive relationships and supports children to understand and regulate their emotions and behaviour.

Staff will:

- model kindness, respect and appropriate social behaviour;
- establish consistent and predictable routines;
- help children name and understand emotions;
- teach strategies for self-regulation;
- recognise and praise positive behaviour;
- consider the underlying needs and causes of behaviour;
- provide appropriate support for children with additional needs;
- work with parents/carers where appropriate.

Physical intervention will only be used where necessary and reasonable to prevent immediate danger of injury to themselves or others. Any physical intervention will be recorded and parents/carers informed on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

SEND and inclusion

St Mary's is committed to ensuring that all children, including children with SEND, have equal access to the EYFS curriculum and environment.

The EYFS team works closely with the school's SENCo and, where appropriate, external professionals.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to the environment, curriculum, teaching, communication and assessment process to ensure children can participate fully.

Children with SEND will receive appropriate support in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice and the school's SEND Policy.

The EYFS Profile will be completed for children with SEND and reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate.

English as an Additional Language

Children learning English as an additional language will be supported to develop both their home language and English. Staff will value children's languages and cultures and use appropriate strategies to support communication and learning. Parents/carers will be consulted about the child's language background and needs, and the EYFS environment will reflect and celebrate the languages and cultures represented within the school community.

Digital technology and screen use

From 1 September 2026, St Mary's will have regard to the Department for Education's Screen use guidance for early years settings.

Screen use will be:

- limited;
- purposeful;
- carefully planned;
- developmentally appropriate;
- linked to a clear learning or communication purpose;
- supported by adult co-engagement.

For children aged two to five, screen time should be limited to up to one hour per day, less if possible, recognising that children's total screen use may also occur at home.

- Screen use will not replace:
- high-quality adult interaction;
- conversation;
- physical activity;
- outdoor play;

- stories and books;
- imaginative play;
- social interaction;
- sleep or rest.

Screens will not be used as a routine behaviour-management tool, to occupy children or as background entertainment.

Where screen-based assistive technology is required by a child with SEND, it will be considered separately from general screen-time limits.

Staff will not allow children to access inappropriate online content and will follow the school's online safety arrangements.

The DfE guidance advises that children should not use screens alone and that adults should co-engage with children when screens are used.

Mobile phones, cameras and electronic devices

The school's safeguarding policy and acceptable-use arrangements will set out how mobile phones, cameras and other electronic devices with imaging or sharing capabilities are used.

Personal devices must not be used to photograph or record children except where specifically authorised under school procedures.

Images and videos of children will be kept to the minimum necessary and shared with parents/carers only through a secure and approved system such as Tapestry. Tapestry will be used in accordance with the school's GDPR, safeguarding and acceptable-use and data protection arrangements.

Safety of premises and equipment

The premises, including indoor and outdoor areas, will be fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children and activities provided.

The school will comply with relevant health and safety, fire safety, hygiene and accessibility requirements.

Fire exits will remain clear and emergency procedures will be regularly reviewed and practised.

Equipment will be:

- safe;
- suitable for children's age and development;
- appropriately maintained;
- regularly checked;
- stored safely where necessary.

A first aid box with appropriate items for children will be accessible.

Accidents, injuries and first aid treatment will be recorded and parents/carers informed in accordance with the EYFS and school procedures.

The statutory framework requires providers to ensure premises and outdoor spaces are fit for purpose and suitable for the children and activities provided.

Supervision

Staff will maintain effective supervision at all times.

- Supervision will take account of:
- the number and ages of children;
- children's individual needs;
- the layout of the environment;
- activities taking place;
- outdoor provision;
- toileting and intimate care;
- eating and drinking;
- transitions;
- children's vulnerability;
- staff deployment.

Children will normally be within sight and hearing of staff and will always be within sight or hearing as required by the EYFS.

Staff will position themselves so that they can observe and respond effectively rather than relying solely on fixed supervision points.

Staff supervision and professional development

EYFS staff are part of the wider school team and follow the school's policies and procedures for induction, safeguarding, supervision, professional development and training. Staff will attend annual statutory EYFS updates, participate in school appraisal and performance development meetings, and complete relevant training to maintain the knowledge, skills and qualifications required to meet EYFS statutory requirements and support children's learning, development, health and welfare. This EYFS Policy works within and sits under the school's relevant statutory policies and procedures and does not replace or duplicate them.

Transition

St Mary's recognises that effective transition supports children's emotional security and learning.

Transition arrangements will include, as appropriate:

- information from parents/carers;
- information from previous settings;
- visits and familiarisation opportunities;

sharing of relevant learning and assessment information;

- meetings with parents/carers;
- liaison with other professionals;
- support for children with SEND;
- stay and play sessions from pre-schools to Nursery
- appropriate transition sessions from Nursery to Reception;
- transition sessions for Reception to Year 1.

The school will work closely with the privately run pre-school sharing the site to support continuity and a seamless transition between settings.

Partnership with other professionals

Where appropriate, St Mary's will work with:

- the local authority;
- health visitors;
- speech and language therapists;
- educational psychologists;
- SEND services;
- children's social care;
- other health professionals;
- previous or future education settings;
- other relevant agencies.

Information will be shared appropriately and proportionately in accordance with safeguarding, data protection and information-sharing requirements.

Information and record keeping

EYFS information and records are managed as part of the school's existing information governance, GDPR, safeguarding and record-keeping procedures. EYFS staff will ensure that records are accurate, up to date, securely stored and only accessed or shared appropriately and in accordance with school policy, statutory requirements and legitimate educational, safeguarding or welfare needs. This EYFS Policy works within and sits under the school's relevant statutory policies and procedures and does not replace or duplicate them.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the EYFS team and approved by Lauren Bishop, EYFS Lead, every year.

When significant changes are made and/or at the specified review date (whichever comes first), the policy will be shared with the governing board.

Monitoring will be proportionate and will focus on the impact of provision on children's learning, development, safety and wellbeing.

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

Statutory policy or procedure for the EYFS	Where can it be found?
Safeguarding policy and procedures	See Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Procedure for responding to illness	See Health and Safety Policy
Administering medicines policy	See Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
Emergency evacuation procedure	See Health and Safety Policy
Procedure for checking the identity of visitors	See Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Procedures for a parent failing to collect a child and for missing children	See Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Procedures and consent for intimate care	See Intimate Care Policy

Procedures for attendance	See Attendance Policy
Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints	See Complaints Policy
Whistleblowing procedures	See Whistleblowing Policy / Staff Code of Conduct
Safer recruitment and suitability procedures	See Safer Recruitment procedures and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Food, nutrition and safer eating procedures	See Health and Safety Policy / Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
Screen use and digital safeguarding procedures	See Online Safety Policy / Acceptable Use Policy/GDPR Policy
Safer sleep procedures Mobile phone, camera and electronic-device procedures Special Educational Needs	See Health and Safety Policy / EYFS procedures See Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy / Acceptable Use Policy/Online safety See SEND Policy

Appendix 2 – Key statutory and non-statutory guidance

This policy should be read alongside the current versions of:

- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers, DfE – effective from 1 September 2026.
- Development Matters, DfE.
- Early Years Foundation Stage Profile guidance.
- Reception Baseline Assessment guidance.

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, DfE.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, DfE.
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- EYFS nutrition guidance, DfE.
- Safer sleep guidance, DfE/NHS.
- Screen use guidance for early years settings, DfE.
- Early Years Inspection Toolkit and Operating Guide, Ofsted.
- Early Years Qualification Requirements and Standards, DfE.
- Relevant local safeguarding partnership procedures.
- Relevant school policies and procedures.