Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Statutory Review By: Local Governing Body
This Policy was agreed in: May 2026 It will be reviewed in: September 2028

Our Mission Statement

At St Mary's we celebrate God's love for us, as we learn and grow together. We live life to the full, to become the best that we can be.

If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact the School Office on 01502 565 384 and we will do our best to help.

Policy Consultation & Review

This policy is available on the school's website and in hardcopy from the school office on request.
The policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Assessment Policy
- SEND Policy
- SEND Information Report
- Accessibility Plan
- Medical Needs Policy
- Learning Beyond the Classroom Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Intimate Care Policy

Contents

1. **School mission statement**
2. **CMAT EYFS Vision statement**
3. **Aims**
4. **Legislation**
5. **Principles in Practice**
6. **EYFS Curriculum**
7. **Planning and Teaching**
8. **Observation and Assessment**
9. **Parents as Partners**
10. **Transitions**
11. **Attendance**
12. **Behaviour**
13. **Health and Safety and Safeguarding**

14. **Staffing**
15. **Intimate Care**
16. **Monitoring and Review**

1. St Mary's Mission

As God's family we nurture and inspire our children by broadening their horizons as they learn. Through rich and varied experiences, we enable them to be a loving and caring influence on our world.

2. St. John the Baptist Multi academy Trust – EYFS Vision Statement

In the early years in St. John the Baptist CMAT we want children united in God's love to become happy, confident, well rounded individuals with a love of learning. Our children are provided with a safe and stimulating environment that fosters independence which enables children to learn through play, to explore and express their own ideas knowing that they are valued. We are committed to providing the best possible start to their school life, nurturing positive attitudes, teaching them skills and giving them experiences which will ensure their well-being and success both now and in the future.

'To think, to feel, to do' – Pope Francis

3. Aims

Early Years Education, in particular Reception Class is about much more than knowing their numbers and letters, writing their name and beginning to read. This is the year that they become 'school-ready'. They will develop their confidence, independence, resilience and curiosity. We encourage all our children to achieve their full potential, and to **'be the best we can be, for ourselves and others'.** It is an exciting time, for children and parents. So at St Mary's we aim to:

- Offer a secure, warm and inclusive environment to allow children to grow and become a loving and caring influence on the world.
- Provide rich, stimulating and enjoyable experiences which nurture and inspire our children.
- Provide an enabling environment which is engaging and allows them space to become curious and ask questions, be creative and use their imagination and feel comfortable to express their ideas and feelings.
- Provide a curriculum which includes adult focused and child led activities which support, enhance and challenge children's knowledge, skills and experiences.
- Through continuous assessment recognise and understand each child as a unique learner and guide them on their journey as they make their next steps.
- Develop excellent relationships with parents and carers in order to build a strong partnership and together we will support the development of their child.

4. Legislation

As outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) guidance, 'All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life'; therefore, 'their experiences in Early Years have a major impact on their future life chances'. This policy is based on the requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework effective
from 1 st September 2025.

We adhere to the **EYFS statutory framework** and the four guided principles that shape practice within early years' settings.

- 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/carers.
- **Learning and Development**. We recognise that children learn in different ways and at different rates.

5. Principles in Practice

As part of our practice we:

- Provide a balanced curriculum using the EYFS guidance across the seven areas of learning and use play as a vehicle for learning.
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. We provide early intervention for those children who require additional support.
- Work in partnership with parents and within the wider context.
- Plan challenging learning opportunities, based on the individual child, informed by observation, assessment and planned next steps in learning.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult-directed and child initiated.
- Have a key person approach to develop close relationships.
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and out.

6. Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interest and stages of development across the seven areas of learning, to enable the children to achieve and exceed the early learning goals.

All of the seven areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. The three prime 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 the **prime** areas:

Communication and Language
Physical Development
Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Children are also supported through the 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

At St Mary's we always remain flexible to allow for unplanned circumstances and children's responses. Our planning is continually evaluated by all staff to ensure that children's individual 'Next Steps in Learning' and personal learning needs are met.

Children will engage in whole group and small group activities alongside their independent learning. There are also allocated times for whole class daily 'carpet learning sessions'.

The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined by the EYFS framework: 'Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child- initiated activities'.

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those which are planned by adults. During children's play, the adults in class interact when appropriate to stretch and challenge them further.

In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and build these into our practice. We create a stimulating learning environment to encourage children to free-flow between inside and outdoors as far as possible.

We recognise the importance of play, and our curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined in the EYFS. 'Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities.' This approach enables us to apply the Characteristics of Effective Learning in all that we offer.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

- **Playing and exploring – engagement**
  Finding out and exploring
  Playing with what they know
  Being willing to 'have a go'

- **Active Learning – motivation**
  Being involved and concentrating
  Keeping trying
  Enjoying what they set out to do

- **Creating and thinking critically – thinking**
  Having their own ideas
  Making links
  Choosing ways to do things

7. Planning and Teaching

At St Mary's , our long term plan includes a series of topics each of which offers experiences in all seven areas of learning. We then plan further themes based on the children's interests using PLODs (possible lines of direction) which offer experiences across the four themes and all seven areas of learning. Environmental enhancements are then planned on a daily basis and relate to the children's current needs and interests from observation. Children have daily planned carpet times which teach and model new concepts which children are then encouraged and supported to apply in their independent play. Daily taught sessions increase as the children progress through the EYFS in line with their level of development. All children access a planned daily phonics session following 'Letters and Sounds' which is differentiated to meet the needs of the children.

There is a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are planned and led by the adults. We create a stimulating environment to encourage children to free-flow between inside and outside. During the children's play, early years practitioners interact with them and offer challenge though commenting and questioning to extend their learning.

In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn, and adapt out practice to meet the needs of the individuals in our care.

8. Observation and Assessment

As part of our practice all early years' practitioners observe children at play to assess their understanding and level of development. These observations are recorded using photos, videos and written notes and are presented in the form of an on-line learning journey - Tapestry. The on-going observations are used to show the children's individual achievement and progress and also inform targeted next steps to further extend children's learning. Observations are also used to inform the planning of both indoor and outdoor learning opportunities and enhancing provision.

The on-line learning journey is shared between home and school and parents are strongly encouraged to contribute any significant WOW moments of their child's achievements from home. Parents who are unable to access Tapestry at home are invited into school to come and view these documents as well as being able to request this at any time.

Parents/carers are invited to attend more formal parent meetings during the autumn and spring terms where the children's development, progress and targets are discussed. In the summer term parents are given a

written report in the form of a 'Record of Transfer', which is shared with the child's new teacher to support continuity of learning. As legally required parents of Reception children are given an end of EYFS reports showing the child's attainment against the early year's foundation stage profile and parents are given the opportunity to discuss these judgements with the class teacher.

9. Parents as partners and the wider context

We strive and maintain partnerships with parents and carers as we recognise that together, we can have a significant impact on a child's learning. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate in their child's education through regular stay and play and story café sessions.
Working with other services and organisations is integral to our practice in order to meet the needs of our children. At times we may need to share information with professionals to provide the best support possible. We draw on our links with the community to enrich children's experiences by taking them on outings/inviting members of the community into our setting.

10. Transitions

Transitions are carefully planned for and time given to, to ensure continuity of learning. At any transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child including other settings such as pre-schools. Children and parents / carers are invited to attend stay and play introductory sessions before starting reception, to develop familiarity with the setting and practitioners. Families are also offered a home or school visit prior to starting to build relationships between all parties. A welcome pack is given before starting at the school which contains a small photo booklet for children to familiarise themselves of the setting and staff. Children are also encouraged to complete an 'All About Me' booklet with their parents to support staff with knowing the individual child.
In the summer term the reception teacher liaises with the year one teacher to discuss the individual children, their needs, learning styles and to analyse the EYFS profile assessments to inform future planning and ensure the continuity of learning.

11. Attendance

Although education is not compulsory until the age of five, it is expected that parents who have chosen to send their child to St. Mary's ensure that their child attends regularly. Good attendance has a positive impact on all aspects of a young child's learning and development and a regular routine supports young children to feel settled and secure.

12. Behaviour

In our setting we are committed to establishing a learning environment that promotes positive behaviour and relationships, where children treat each other with care and respect. We have an inclusive setting that supports all children as they take increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions, and consider the welfare and wellbeing of others.
We have high expectations for behaviour and support children to achieve this through a positive and supportive approach, where good behaviour is rewarded through verbal praise and the school's reward systems. To support children with their behaviour while at school they are given gentle reminders through words or pictures of what is expected. Where behaviour falls below the expected requirement, children will be quietly spoken to and the school behaviour system will be used. The child will then receive a consequence for their actions e.g. time out (see schools behaviour policy), as well as having the opportunity to talk through the incident calmly with an adult to support their understanding of their feelings and actions and ways in which to manage these more appropriately.

13. Health and Safety and Safeguarding

Children learn best when they are happy, safe, and secure, where their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with adults who care for them. We follow the Safeguarding and Welfare

requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2025) and the school's safeguarding policy.
Children's safety and welfare are paramount. We create a safe and secure environment that is risk-assessed and provide a curriculum that teaches children how to be safe, make choices, and manage risks.

14. Staffing

The staffing arrangements are provided to meet the needs of all the children and ensure their safety. Children must be within sight and/or hearing of a staff member. As we provide a fluid environment where children can engage in activities inside and out, we ensure that our staffing ratios enable a good level of supervision. As per the School Admissions (Infant Class size) Regulations 2012, we have up to 30 pupils to one school teacher while an ordinary teaching session is conducted. In addition to this we have qualified teaching assistants, and when appropriate students on long term placement.

15. Intimate Care

At St Mary's we encourage the children to be as independent as possible with regard to their personal care, however there are times when a child may require support with their intimate care while at school which may include:

- A child who is still toilet training.
- When a child has wet or soiled themselves.
- When a child is still yet to meet continence as part of a specific medical condition or developmental delay.
- When a child has vomited.
- When a child has become dirty or wet from involvement in play activities.
- When a child requires support with changing for PE.

In these circumstances children may require some support from staff with their intimate care. All staff providing intimate care are DBS checked. Where necessary practitioners may be required to help a child to use the toilet, support with cleaning and wiping of intimate parts of the body, and assisting with changing of clothes. All children have the right to be safe and be treated with dignity and respect and all staff will be sensitive to children's individual needs. Where intimate care has been given parents will be informed at the end of the session.

16. Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to follow this policy. This policy will be reviewed every 3 years before the start of each academic year and will incorporate the views of the EYFS team concerned.