ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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'Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it.' Proverbs 22:6

Introduction

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up." (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Department for Education, 2017)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth until the end of the Reception year.

It is based upon four overarching principles:

♥ 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.

♥ 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.

This policy will outline how we implement the EYFS through these four main principles, here at St Mary's Catholic Primary School. These principles are woven through our whole school ethos, "together we are a family of God, a family of love and a family of learners".

Unique Child

We recognise that when children join our St Mary's family, they each bring with them a wide range of skills, abilities, interests and personalities. So too do they have different experiences and understanding of the world. We promote **independence** so that children have the **confidence** to develop their own ideas and the freedom to **express** them. We understand the importance of challenge and the value of taking risks to move learning forwards. We know that all children develop in individual ways and at varying rates.

Here are some of the ways that we ensure that children experience their own personal learning journeys:

♥ We tune into the children's interests and plan meaningful learning opportunities around these interests (based on existing knowledge and experience).

♥ We foster intrigue, curiosity, creativity, adventure, determination, imagination, cooperation, investigation and conversation!

♥ Children are provided with rich, real-life experiences which develop their own understanding of the world.

♥ The children explore, investigate and discover through a mix of child initiated and adult led learning experiences.

♥ Children play an active role in shaping these learning experiences by planning and making decisions about what they would like to do and then reviewing their learning.

♥ A variety of teaching strategies are used – individual, small group and whole class, which are adapted according to individual learning needs.

♥ We place high importance on each child's emotional well-being and involvement which has a direct impact upon learning and development.

♥ **Every child matters** and we value the diversity of all children within our school.

Positive Relationships

Here at St Mary's we pride ourselves on the secure and positive relationships that we have worked hard to build and continue to develop. We understand that for children to thrive within their environment and to engage with learning opportunities, they need to feel loved, respected and valued. This extends beyond the classroom door at St Mary's. Once children join in Class R, they will be warmly welcomed into the whole school family. Children will also be assigned a "buddy" from Year 6 who will help guide them into their new surroundings and support them throughout their first year at school. In fact, the youngest children are very much like celebrities when they first join us, as everyone just can't wait to meet them!

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them. We understand the valuable contribution that parents and carers make towards children's learning and we strive to build healthy and positive relationships with families. We actively encourage involvement in school life.

We do this by:

♥ Meeting children and their parents/carers before beginning school – both at home and in the school environment.

♥ Developing strong links with a number of nursery and pre-schools in the area and the attendance to transition days where individual children can be discussed to ensure all known needs are planned for.

♥ Inviting children and families to school events (such as Easter egg hunts) and by inviting the children to stay and play sessions in the Summer term prior to starting school.

♥ Encouraging families to support children's development of reading by sending reading books home to be shared on a daily basis and other phonics based activities.

♥ Regular parent consultations, termly curriculum blogs on our website and end of year reports.

♥ Providing workshops to share our approaches to learning in certain areas e.g. Phonics.

♥ Operating an open-door policy and encouraging parents/carers to speak to us to share any celebrations, concerns or worries they may have. We use Dojo as a form of communication to individual parents and as a whole class.

Enabling Environments

♥ We aim to provide a rich and varied learning environment to evoke children's curiosity and increase their motivation to explore, imagine, think and create! Carefully planned resources within the learning environment are stimulating, multi-sensory and well organised. This encourages child involvement thus maximising the development of learning experiences.

♥ The Yr R class environment includes both the indoor and outdoor classroom areas, with clearly defined areas and carefully planned resources. This "continuous provision" is designed to offer open ended, practical learning opportunities that are linked to real life. This provision is then enhanced to deepen and extend learning opportunities, through the addition of different resources in response to particular interests of children or to promote another aspect of learning.

♥ Resources are clearly labelled and organised into areas of learning, enabling the children to access them with a high level of independence.

♥ Most child-initiated sessions include free-flow access to the outdoor area. The dedicated outdoor area is used in all-weather so the children have access to wet weather suits and wellies when needed!

DEFINITIONS
Continuous Provision: Clearly defined areas inside and outside containing resources that have been planned to reflect children's interests and to promote the areas of learning and development. These are CONTINUOUS as they are in place every day throughout the year.
Enhanced Provision: These ADDITIONS made to our continuous provision which enhance the experiences and opportunities. These may be books, pictures, resources, artefacts, visits, and visitors. They are often added in response to children's interests and lines of enquiries as well as to promote an aspect of learning.
Provocations: These are resources, artefacts, books etc. that are introduced by an adult to PROVOKE children's interest and thinking.

Learning and development

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood."
(Fred Rogers)

At St Mary's we recognise play as a learning tool that brings together social, emotional, sensory, linguistic and physical development. We believe that young children develop and learn best through high quality play and first-hand experiences, with the companionship of other children and the support of adults who provide challenge, facilitate and broaden learning opportunities.

• Children's well-being and involvement is assessed regularly using the Leuven Scales, recognising the importance of emotional well-being. Support is put into place to enable all children to feel safe and happy.

• We teach the children about the importance of making healthy choices about food, drink, activity and tooth brushing

• Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. As such, learning opportunities at St Mary's are a combination of child initiated and adult led.

These are the **HOW** of children's learning.

"Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level."

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which helps them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

These are the **WHAT** of children's learning.

Intent: Our curriculum intends to give children memorable and inspiring experiences, opportunities and direct instruction that will motivate their learning and increase engagement.

Implementation: In Reception class we learn through planned, purposeful play using a range of adult directed and child-initiated activities. We plan our adult led activities/direct instruction using a 'Big Question' that provides a theme for our learning and is linked to the Early Learning Goals and the children's own interests. Within these questions are opportunities to explore, explain and create in response to key questions.

The 7 areas of learning are:

Impact: In the EYFS assessment of attainment and progress is based on observation, discussion, questioning and evidence of children's independent learning.

Within these areas of learning, there are 17 early learning goals which refer to the knowledge, skills and understanding that the children should have attained by the end of their first year in school. During the academic year, children's progress against these early learning goals is continually measured, recorded and used to inform next steps for learning. At the end of the year, as a school we indicate (to the Department for Education) whether children are meeting expected levels of development or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging').

Transition into Year 1

♥ The information about whether a child has met the expected levels of development is then shared with the Year 1 teacher to inform next steps for that individual child.

♥ In the final Reception term, we begin a programme of transition to support children moving from EYFS to Key Stage 1. This involves getting to know the Year 1 teacher and classroom environment. A special book including photos can be created for children who may need additional support to help with this transition.

♥ The Year 1 classroom will reflect aspects of the EYFS such as continuous provision for the first part of the year.

Please refer to the school website for all other school policies.

Welfare

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

"Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them." (unknown)

At St Mary's we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage.

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, we:

♥ promote the welfare of children;

♥ promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill;

♥ manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs;

♥ ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so;

♥ Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose;

♥ Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs;

♥ Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.