



# St Margaret Mary's RC Primary Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Approved by: Head teacher & Governors

Date: December 2023

Next review due by: December 2024

## **1. Introduction**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. In partnership with parents and carers we enable the children to begin the process of becoming active learners for life.

## **2. Aims**

This policy aims to ensure:

- At St Margaret Mary's we aim to continuously raise the standards of education and care we provide for our children and are guided by our school mission statement:

**We try to follow Jesus in everything we do.**

*We help everybody in our school family and we try to let our light shine as the light of Jesus shines. Everyone at St. Margaret Mary's is special. We feel happy and safe. We are encouraged to value ourselves and each other in an atmosphere of trust, good humour, acceptance and enjoyment.*

- Provide a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging programme of learning and development for the children to experience as they begin their journey through school.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond and enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children.
- Provide a caring and inclusive learning environment where every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

## **3. Legislation**

This policy is based on requirements set out in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

## **4. Structure of the EYFS**

At St. Margaret Mary's we work as an EYFS unit. We have a 90 place capacity for nursery and reception aged children with three teachers and sufficient TA support.

Our nursery children join the EYFS unit in the September after their third birthday and are offered a full time place. The nursery children settle in at their own pace and we offer a staggered intake over a three week period.

Majority of our nursery children move up to our reception cohort with a small percentage of children entering reception from another setting.

We ensure our children have access to continuous indoor and outdoor provision all year round.

All parents and children are aware of and build positive close relationships with a designated key worker.

## **5. Curriculum**

St Margaret Mary's SLT and teachers have developed a curriculum that meets the requirements outlined in the new statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021.

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and interconnected. 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. It also includes the 7 areas of learning educational programmes that are the foundations to which our curriculum is based on.

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

**Communication and Language** The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development** Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive 9 relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good

friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.

**Physical Development** Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives<sup>7</sup>. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

**Literacy** It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).

**Mathematics** Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes.

**Understanding the World** Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.

**Expressive Arts and Design** The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

*(Educational Programmes as set out in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021)*

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- **A unique child** – developing resilient, capable, confident and self-assured individuals.
- **Positive relationships** – supporting the children in becoming strong and independent.
- **Enabling environments** – where opportunities and experiences respond to the individual needs of the child by developing a strong partnership between practitioners, parents/carers and the child.
- **Learning and developing** – An acknowledgement that children learn in different ways and at different rates

### **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

We ensure that our environment and delivery of our curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- **Playing and exploring** - children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.

Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, 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.

- **Active learning** - children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

- **Creating and thinking critically** - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Children should be given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children's thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning.

## **5.1 Planning**

Our St Margaret Mary's curriculum statement sets out our intent, implementation and impact of our curriculum. The new Development Matters 2021 and Birth To 5 Matters 2021

non statutory documents, along with learning & developmental intentions identified by EYFS teachers and SLT have been used to support the creation of our St Margaret Mary's progress model which has been specifically tailored to support practitioners in planning and identifying the intended learning outcomes, skills and development for the EYFS children at St Margaret Mary's. A long term plan maps out coverage of our St Margaret Mary's progress model that is in line with the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage 2021. Our medium-term planning identifies the intended learning with activity ideas that are linked to our overarching half termly theme.

We have an overarching theme each half term which we use as a stimulus but priority is always given to the child's interests and next steps in learning. Each week staff meet to discuss and formulate weekly plans for both indoor and outdoor continuous play provision.

Key workers support individual children's learning through an 'In the Moment Planning' map. The key worker will work closely with 2 identified children over a period of two weeks whereby learning opportunities are supported, recorded and instant 'next steps' in learning can be provided. Staff take into account the individual needs, interests, and stage of development for each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experiences.

Where a child may have a special educational need and/or disability, staff will liaise with school inclusion manager and consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate. We ensure planning is inclusive for all of our young learners.

We plan specific lesson activities for our 'carpet sessions' across nursery and reception. This academic year our nursery plan daily phonics and have transitioned from using Phase 1 guidance from the 'Letters and Sounds' document to our 'Little Wandle' phonics scheme. Reception are continuing to embed the Little Wandle phonics scheme in reception.

## **5.2 Teaching**

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful, play, and through a mix of adult-led and child initiated activities. Practitioners respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. The indoor and outdoor learning environment supports a huge part of every child's independence and daily learning experiences. When planning and teaching practitioners always reflect on the characteristic of effective learning and have this at the core of the practice and provision.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more activities led by adults, to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for Year 1.

We have a clearly structured timetable that allows time for child initiated learning and incorporates some formal teaching sessions, for example, daily phonics, daily maths, RE adult led focus as well as other areas of development from the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage. All practitioners take responsibility for teaching whether that be individual children or groups of children.

## **6. Assessment**

The Foundation Stage Profile is the nationally employed assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and to summarise pupils' progress towards the 17 Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021.

We record each child's level of development against the 17 early learning goals as emerging or expected. We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, photographic evidence and through planned activities. Assessment is completed regularly and involves both the teacher and other adults, as appropriate. The collection of assessment data in the Foundation Stage Profile is a statutory requirement.

During the first half term in Nursery, the teacher and Key workers work closely with their key worker children to gauge a baseline judgement based on the 'prime areas' of learning, i.e. communication & language, personal, social and emotional development and physical development. This is through the use of observations and interactions, staff will measure against the St Margaret Mary's progress model. End of year nursery results are the basis for which reception practitioners use and build on through observations and assessments to form the baseline judgement for reception children. Reception children will also complete the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) which was introduced from September 2021. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the curriculum and teaching programme for individual children and groups of children.

Foundation Stage staff use observations as the basis for planning. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests, characteristics of learning and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning. Relevant and significant observations are recorded in year group learning journey floor books and children's individual learning journeys. Key workers update progress records and learning journals and records examples of each child's work which is overseen and monitored by the class teacher and EYFS leader. Class teachers, with support from key workers will identify termly progress made of every child which is measured against the St Margaret Mary's progress model. Children's progress and attainment will be monitored weekly and half termly following formal assessments, interventions and teacher observations. Learning, 'next steps' and children's interests are also recorded on 'In the Moment Planning' maps.

We are involved in termly cluster school moderation meetings, half termly whole school moderation meetings and regular in-house EYFS moderation meetings.

Towards the end of the final term in Reception we have a moderation meeting from the local authority to quality assure our Foundation Stage Profile judgements then once judgements are secure they are submitted to the LA for analysis.

## **7. Working with parents**

Parents as Partners - We recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education through:

- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts school at our open evenings and induction morning.
- Arranging, where possible, visits by the teacher to all children in their home setting or childcare provision prior to their starting school.
- Providing a handbook of information about commencing Nursery and Reception at St Margaret Mary's.
- Outlining the school's expectations in the Home-School agreement.
- Inviting parents/carers and children the opportunity to spend time in the EYFS unit for an induction visit before starting school. Providing an opportunity to meet with staff to discuss school routines, expectations and to answer any questions parents/carers may have.
- Parents evening to share child's progress, usually Autumn term and Spring term.
- Operating an open door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns. Conversely, if foundation staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them.
- Written contact through school newsletters and regular school twitter/website updates.
- Publishing EYFS Curriculum long term plan and topic map detailing the areas of learning and activity ideas with the overarching theme of the half-term.
- Inviting parents to attend workshops and observe teaching and learning to give them an insight of learning taking place in school, for example, phonic, RE, internet safety.
- Inviting parents in to share their child's 'in the moment' learning map and learning journey with their child's key worker and/or teacher.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress in the summer term.
- Asking parents to sign a generic permission forms for visits, photographs and publishing of photographs/video's on school website etc.
- Regular updates sharing children's learning on our school Twitter page.
- Parents are invited to a range of activities throughout the school year such as assemblies, Christmas productions and sports day etc.
- End of year transition meeting, where parents from nursery and reception are invited to discuss transition as our children prepare for moving into reception and Year 1.

## **8.Safeguarding and welfare procedures**

Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy.

## **9. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed and approved by Head/deputy head/SLT every year. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.