



**ST. MARK'S CE SCHOOL**

ONE SCHOOL - SERVING ALL - THROUGH EXCELLENCE

# Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) policy

Policy Date: Summer 2026

Review Date: Summer 2027

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## 1. Introduction

At St Mark's Church of England School, our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is designed to give every child the best possible start to their education. Grounded in our Christian values of Love, Service and Belonging, we aim to create a nurturing, inclusive and inspiring environment where every

child is valued as a unique individual and encouraged to flourish. This policy outlines our principles, provision and practice within the EYFS and applies to all staff working with children in Reception.

## 2. Our Vision and Values

Love

We create a compassionate environment where relationships are built on respect, kindness and care. We recognise the importance of wellbeing and emotional security as foundations for learning.

Service

We encourage children to serve others through acts of kindness, teamwork, collaboration and responsibility. We model and teach the importance of contributing positively to the school and wider community.

Belonging

We celebrate diversity and promote an inclusive culture where every child feels safe, known and valued. We work closely with families, recognising that children thrive when school and home work in partnership.

## 3. Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- That 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 and no child gets left behind;
- A close working partnership between staff and parents and/or carers;
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice;
- That the teaching and learning in our EYFS adheres to the [Early years foundation stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#)

Our aim is to provide a high-quality early years education that:

- Promotes children's emotional, social, physical and cognitive development.
- Balances adult-led teaching with child-initiated learning through play and discovery.
- Encourages curiosity, creativity and independence.
- Supports children to become confident, resilient learners.
- Ensures progression towards the ELGs (Early Learning Goals) while valuing process over product.
- Builds strong relationships with parents and carers as partners in learning.
- Upholds our Christian ethos through daily lived experiences of love, service and belonging.

## 4. Our EYFS Curriculum

### 4.1 Our Curriculum Intent:

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework sets the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to 5 years. The seven areas of learning are:

**Prime Areas:** Personal, Social and Emotional Development  
Physical Development  
Communication and Language Development

**Specific Areas:** Literacy  
Mathematics

## Understanding the World Expressive Arts and Design

Our practice is guided by the four EYFS statutory principles:

1. Every child is a unique child
2. Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships
3. Children learn and develop well in enabling environments
4. Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates

We support these principles through a blend of structured teaching and open-ended exploration.

### 4.2 Our EYFS curriculum design:

At St Mark's, our EYFS curriculum has been specifically designed to recognise our children's prior learning and experiences, both from previous settings and their experiences at home. As a Church of England school, our Christian values of love, service and belonging underpin all we do and teach in school to develop the whole child in partnership with parents, the church and the wider community. Through a balance of high-quality, direct teaching of essential skills, knowledge and values, and plenty of time to engage in 'exploration' and sustained periods of play during our 'Discovery Time' learning, we inspire our children to develop a curiosity and love of learning from the onset of their primary schooling.

We prioritise the development of the prime areas of learning; Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development and Communication and Language, including oracy. Within our diverse school community, we invest heavily in developing children's communication and language from the onset of their schooling, as we believe that oracy not only improves academic outcomes, but is a life skill to ensure success beyond school, in life and future employment. As children grow and progress, these prime areas will support them to develop skills in the four specific areas.

Although our curriculum is knowledge rich, progressive and sequential, our design enables and encourages flexibility in planning to stimulate children's interests and imaginations through engaging and carefully planned experiences that support learning and deepen knowledge to ensure all children make good progress from their starting points. Children in EYFS learn by playing and exploring, being active and through creative and critical thinking which takes place both indoors and outside. We ensure activities support the Characteristics of Effective Learning in order to develop collaboration, independence, creativity and resilience. These are:

- **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 and develop strategies for doing things

We reinforce and celebrate these characteristics with our school learning values of resilience, adaptability, innovation, pride and self discipline.

By the end of the reception year, our core aim is to provide a solid platform, ensuring that all children are equipped with a strong foundation of knowledge, skills and self-confidence, not only as readers, writers and mathematicians, but across the spectrum of subjects, enabling them to continue their journey as scientists, historians, artists and geographers at St Mark's.

### 4.3. Our Implementation for Our Curriculum

Our curriculum is delivered through six overarching topics that have not only been chosen to provide inspiration for learning, but which are also associated with rich, high quality texts that form our reading spine for Reception.

Our daily timetable is carefully structured so that children have directed teaching during the day. These sessions include whole class as well as small, focused group work, allowing teachers to systematically check for understanding, identify and respond to misconceptions quickly and provide real-time verbal feedback which results in a strong impact on the acquisition of new learning. In our timetable, we also ensure that the children have plenty of time for 'exploration' through play, with a variety of experiences carefully planned to engage and challenge them in the provision.

#### **4.4 Planning**

Staff plan activities and experiences for children that enable children to develop and learn effectively. They 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.

The 'Year R Curriculum Planner' forms the foundation for planning and in guiding children's activities. Staff reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice. Maths, writing, phonics, PSHE and RE plans are aligned with the whole school expectations while our 'Discovery Time' planning encompasses all other planned learning opportunities. Additional activities include 'Time for Talk' where children are engaged in meaningful opportunities to talk together and 'Fine motor skills' which supports children with their fine motor control.

#### **4.5 Teaching**

Staff use a range of techniques to teach depending on the purpose of the learning. Whole-class teaching forms an important part of each day together with adult-led and child-initiated activities and plenty of time for learning and development to be implemented through planned, purposeful play.

Staff respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. There is an emphasis on developing communication and language skills with a focus on children learning core vocabulary; planned key questions and through children being encouraged to use whole sentences to describe what they are thinking and doing.

We value all our children as individuals, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and supports them at their own pace. We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents/carers and outside agencies. We have a designated Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) in school who supports us with SEND. We work closely with parents/carers to ensure that children's individual needs are met.

### **5. Assessment**

At St Mark's CE Primary School, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff interact with and observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning.

A combination of formative and summative assessment is used within EYFS. The main summative assessment is the Reception Baseline which is completed within the first six weeks of a child starting school and the EYFS profile at the end of Reception.

Within the first 6 weeks of starting in Reception, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). This assessment is used to measure children's progress throughout their primary education until they reach Year 6. Staff also use our own baseline assessment so that they know their pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding when they begin their Year R journey.

Throughout the year, adults conduct half termly assessments using the curriculum milestones as a guideline to assess whether individuals are on track or not to meet the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). These are used to inform future planning, next steps in children's learning and additional support that may be needed by individuals so that they can continue to make good progress.

These assessments are discussed at half termly monitoring meetings and termly pupil progress meetings. These are recorded on SIMS and a Year R data spreadsheet using the codes of 1 (not on track) and 2 (on track). Progress of the percentage of the cohort in achieving GLD is also reported as part of these.

At the **end of the EYFS**, 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 ('emerging')

"Staff should use their professional judgement to make EYFS profile assessments, using their knowledge and understanding of what a child knows, understands and can do." EYFS profile Handbook 2025.

Recorded, written or photographic evidence is not required. However, staff should have a deep knowledge of each child's development. They should reflect on a child's progress over time and not use isolated snapshots to inform their assessments. This can be achieved by engaging with children during Discovery Time to understand their thinking, observing learning as it naturally occurs and using knowledge of the child during adult led inputs or groups.

When assessing the ELGs a best fit approach should be used. This should consider what a child can do consistently in their day to day play and learning. Staff will use a variety of sources to ensure they have a deep understanding of each child's development. This includes phonics tracker assessment results and work in literacy and maths books from adult led groups and observations and interactions with the children.

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. The profile is moderated internally to ensure consistent assessment judgements. Moderation of teacher assessments for the ELGs is done through professional discussion with staff using anecdotal evidence from Tapestry and children's books to assist with this. The EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority.

NELI is also used to identify and track children's progress in communication and language skills throughout the year and identify those who may benefit from receiving targeted speech and language support.

## **6. Working with parents**

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and carers. Engagement with our induction programme is requested before a child starts attending which includes visits and face to face meetings. These meetings enable practitioners to talk to parents about routines, interests, current learning, involvement with external agencies and outcomes of progress checks to date. It also gives parents the opportunity to raise questions and give additional information about their child.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development through parent meetings, the use of Tapestry, end of term reports and through informal day to day conversations as they arise. Tapestry is used to record anecdotal notes, capturing meaningful moments that highlight development

for each child. This could be in the form of photographs or written observations by teachers or TAs. For literacy and maths, evidence of independent application of learning can be captured via photographic evidence or recording verbal responses observed as part of interactions with the child. Tapestry is also used to capture pieces of work or interactions relating to the other areas of learning that have been observed. Parents are able to upload observations of the children's learning in their home environment. This ensures staff have a holistic view of the child when making assessments.

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

Where parents or staff have concerns about children's progress, the SENDCO and external agencies may provide specialist support.

Throughout the year, parents and/or carers are invited in for workshops about a variety of topics to enable them to help support in their child's learning and development as well as parent events and celebrations such as nativity.

## **7. Transition**

Transitions are carefully planned for and significant time is given to ensure continuity of learning and care. At times of transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with parents and preschools and other professionals as needed. Children have introductory sessions with their parents/carers to develop familiarity with the setting and practitioners. Our EYFS team contacts all feeder preschools/parents/carers to gain useful information about each child's learning journey so far and to consider whether additional visits or a more individualised transition is necessary. For children starting in Reception, parents/carers are encouraged to take up the offer of a parent meeting prior to starting school. This is a valuable time to talk, find out about each child's likes and preferences and answer any queries they may have. At the end of EYFS, our team meets with the Year 1 team to discuss the individual children, learning and development at the end of EYFS and any specific needs before they visit their new teacher.

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

The safety and welfare of our children is paramount at St Mark's Church of England school. We have robust policies and procedures in place to ensure their safety with all available to read on our school website or on request from the school office.

Across EYFS, we provide a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to take risks, follow rules and stay safe. We comply with the welfare requirements set out in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage and understand that we must:

- Promote the welfare of all children;
- Promote good health (including promoting good oral hygiene);
- Manage behaviour effectively and appropriately;
- Ensure all adults working with children are suitable to do so;
- Ensure that the environment is safe and all equipment and furniture is fit for purpose;
- Ensure all children have a challenging and enjoyable learning experience.

We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways including the provision of nutritious fruit snacks, access to water throughout the day, allocating significant time for physical development and following set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.

Staff and visitors must follow our child protection and safeguarding policies including those outlining mobile phone and internet use. EYFS staff hold a Paediatric First Aid qualification (12 hours training), which is a statutory requirement of EYFS. The Safeguarding Policy is in place to ensure the safety of all stakeholders at

St Mark's CE School. We have a dedicated safeguarding team consisting of a designated safeguarding leader (DSL) and five deputy designated safeguarding leaders (DDSLs). Staff have access to CPOMS safeguarding record to log any concerns regarding any aspects of safeguarding and behaviour. All staff have read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education and are vigilant in reporting concerns.

All other safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy

## 9. Monitoring and reviewing

The EYFS Leader oversees the quality of provision and ensures this policy is implemented effectively. This policy will be reviewed by SLT and governors.

### 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 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 Safeguarding Policy
Procedures for a parent failing to collect a child and for missing children	See Safeguarding Policy
Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints	See Complaints Policy