



St Matthew's Catholic Primary School



Early Years Policy

2025- 2026

Lead: Mrs J Collins

Principles

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

A unique child

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning.

Positive relationships

We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.

Enabling environments

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.

Learning and development

The Early Years Unit is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The unit is set up in learning areas where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

This policy is based on the requirements set out in the new Early Years Foundation Stage framework. At St Matthew's we are very committed to the CPD for all our Early Years staff and have ensured that these recent changes have been embedded into our setting. Our two main focuses in line with the new framework are to;

- improve outcomes at age 5, particularly in early language and literacy
- reduce teacher workload such as unnecessary paperwork, so practitioners can spend more time with the children in their care.

Early childhood is the Early Years on which children build the rest of their lives. At St Matthew's Primary School we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure Early Years for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. We view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education. The EYFS for children is from birth to five years of age. All children begin school with a wide variety of experiences and learning and it is the privilege of the adults working in the Early Years stage to accept the task of building upon that prior learning experience. This is done through a holistic approach to learning ensuring that parents and guardians, support staff and the Early Years Stage team work effectively together to support the learning and development of the children in their charge.

Curriculum Intent, Implementation and Impact

Our EYFS curriculum is designed to give every child the best start in life by developing their knowledge, skills and attitudes across all areas of learning.

- **Intent** – We want children to be confident, independent, resilient and curious learners, with a strong foundation in communication, early literacy and maths, personal development, and an enjoyment of learning.
- **Implementation** – We achieve this through a balance of child-initiated play, adult-guided learning and high-quality interactions, enriched by indoor and outdoor provision. We plan purposeful learning opportunities that build on children’s interests and experiences.
- **Impact** – We assess what children know, can do and enjoy, and adapt our provision to ensure good progress for all. By the end of Reception, children are ready for the next stage of learning in Year 1.

Learning and development is categorised into three prime areas of learning:

- Communication and language.
- Physical development.
- Personal, social and emotional development.

Additionally, there are four specific areas of learning:

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

At St Matthew’s our environment is set up in such a way that all 7 areas of learning are accounted and planned for.



The characteristics of effective learning underpin achievement of these prime and specific areas of learning. They describe factors which play a central role in a child's learning and in becoming an effective learner and are vital elements of support for the transition process from EYFS to Year 1. The characteristics represent processes rather than outcomes. Information describing the child's characteristics of effective learning will provide Year 1 teachers with vital background and context when considering the child's next stage of development and future. Staff at St Matthew's are fully aware of the importance of the Characteristics of Effective Learning and are able to identify them.



Planning within the Early Years

At St Matthew's Catholic Primary School planning is divided into long term, medium term and short term. Long term plans state the topics to be covered for each year. Medium term plans illustrate the objectives being taught each term. Short term or weekly plans, show specific activities planned to achieve the objectives. Staff ensure that all children are encouraged to experience all areas of activity during the week, although they may not experience them each day. A mixture of directed and free choice activities are planned and children's choices are carefully monitored to ensure a balanced programme. The children begin Early Years by having free choice of activities for most of the sessions and as the year progresses; the school day becomes more structured. This ensures the children are prepared for the for the Key Stage One framework. Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do.

Our planning shows how the principles of the EYFS are put into practice and is always informed by observations we have made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning needs. All staff that work in the Early Years Stage are involved in this process. The planning within the EYFS is based around the children's interests. These plans are used by the EYFS team as a guide for weekly planning. However, we may alter these in response to the needs of the children. This fostering of the children's interests develops a high level of motivation for the children's learning.

Our Early Years practitioners carry out ongoing assessments of the children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in our EYFS does not require excessive paperwork and we ensure that practitioner's interactions with the children are our number one priority. This also ensures that teacher workload is reduced and gives more time for the professional dialogue to take place at weekly meetings. Practitioners know the children's level of achievement and interests, and this is reflected in their teaching and learning experiences. The parents and guardians are given the opportunity to meet with the Early Years Teachers each term and, at the end of the third term, we provide parents/guardians with a written report in relation to the children's early learning goals.

Learning Through Play

At St Matthew's Primary School, we do not make a distinction between work and play. Children learn through planned play activities and our skilled staff will decide when child-initiated or adult-led play activities would provide the most effective learning opportunities.

The Learning Environment

The Early Years classrooms are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, quiet, creative etc. The classroom has defined learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. The Foundation Stage has an enclosed outdoor area, and children are able to free-flow between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Being outdoors offers the children opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. They are able to explore, use their senses, develop their language skills and be physically active. We plan activities and resources both inside and outside enabling the children to develop in all the areas of learning.

The Outdoor Environment

Learning outside the classroom supports the development of healthy and active lifestyles by offering children opportunities for physical activity, freedom and movement, and promoting a sense of well-being. It gives them contact with the natural world and offers them experiences that are unique to outdoors, such as direct contact with the weather and the seasons. Outdoor play also supports children's problem-solving skills and nurtures their creativity, as well as providing rich opportunities for their developing imagination, inventiveness and resourcefulness. And, of course, the outdoor environment offers more space than indoors and therefore is particularly important to those children who learn best through active movement. We have waterproof suits for children to enjoy learning outdoors whatever the weather!

Cultural Capital

We enrich children's learning by providing a wide range of experiences they might not otherwise encounter. These include visitors, trips, celebrations of different cultures and festivals, and opportunities to engage with our community. Through this we help children develop curiosity, confidence and a sense of belonging.

Assessment and Moderation

Assessment in the EYFS includes the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) within the first six weeks of school and the EYFS Profile at the end of Reception. Judgements are informed by a wide range of evidence, including observations, learning journals and interactions with families. Assessment information is moderated internally across the EYFS team and, where required, externally with local authority networks to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Health, Safety and Welfare

At St Matthew's Catholic Primary School, the health, safety and welfare of all children, staff and visitors is of paramount importance. We ensure full compliance with the statutory requirements set out in the EYFS Framework (2024), the Health and Safety at Work Act, and our Annual Health and Safety and

Welfare Guidance.

Our approach to health and safety within the Early Years Foundation Stage is proactive, reflective and regularly reviewed in partnership with the Local Authority and school leadership team.

Key Principles and Practice:

- We carry out a comprehensive annual Health, Safety and Welfare Audit in line with local authority and EYFS statutory guidance.
- Daily risk assessments are completed by EYFS staff, covering both indoor and outdoor learning environments. These assessments are shared with the EYFS Lead, and any actions or areas for improvement are followed up promptly.
- Risk assessments are also completed for all educational visits, activities, and changes to the environment, ensuring children's safety and inclusion.
- All EYFS staff are responsible for maintaining a safe and healthy environment and for reporting concerns immediately to the EYFS Lead or the School Business Manager.
- Termly health and safety checks are carried out as part of whole-school monitoring, and outcomes are reported to the Governing Board.

Implementation of Statutory Guidance and Updates:

Our policy and procedures are reviewed annually in line with any changes to the EYFS Statutory Framework and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

Recent KCSIE 2025 updates have been embedded into practice through:

- Enhanced training for all EYFS staff on recognising early indicators of harm and abuse, including online and contextual safeguarding risks.
- Strengthened procedures for recording and reporting concerns via CPOMS, ensuring timely communication with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Updates to our Safer Recruitment and Supervision of Staff systems to reflect the latest guidance.

- Reinforcement of clear procedures for managing allegations, whistleblowing, and safer working practices.
- Any new or emerging guidance is shared and implemented through regular EYFS and safeguarding meetings, staff briefings, and annual training updates.

Promoting a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment:

- The EYFS environment is designed to promote children's independence while maintaining safety through well-defined boundaries, supervision, and age-appropriate equipment.
- The outdoor area is risk-assessed daily and reviewed seasonally to ensure it remains safe, stimulating, and inclusive.
- The school promotes good health, including oral health, hygiene, nutrition, and emotional wellbeing, in line with the EYFS Welfare Requirements
- Staff ensure that all accidents, incidents, and first-aid interventions are recorded and reported in line with school procedures.

The Induction Process

During the summer term, your child's Class Teacher or the Early Years Lead will visit your child in their nursery setting. They will stay and play with your child and get to know them and ask their key person any relevant questions. The new reception children and parents are also invited to three taster sessions in the summer term to provide them with essential information for the next academic year. In addition to this, the children and parents get to spend time in their new classroom with the Early Years Staff. Parents have the opportunity to speak to all staff and ask any questions. When children join the school in September, they start on half days for one week to gradually adjust to their new surroundings. After this they will then stay in school full time, including staying for their dinner.

Organisation of classes

In Reception we have 2 registration classes, each having around 20 children. Children are not assigned a class straight away as we like to get to know more about our children and ensure there is mixture of needs in each class. The school day begins at 8:45m and ends at 3:10pm. All children must be accompanied to and from school by a known adult.

Intimate Care

'Intimate' care is any care which involves washing or touching that most children are able to carry out themselves. However, depending on a child's age and stage of development, they may need some support, for example dressing after using the toilet or changing underwear following an accident. In most cases, intimate care is to do with personal hygiene and the school will always inform the parents when intimate care has been carried out. Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child. At St Matthew's we encourage our children to be independent in the toilet but if they are unable to do this then we will contact parents and a positive toileting plan will be implemented. Intimate care is only provided in extreme cases and no intimate care is to be given without the express written permission of the parent or guardian of that child. All parents and guardians will be asked to provide that permission when their child joins St Matthew's.

Inclusion, Equal Opportunities, EAL and Vulnerable Groups

Children with special educational needs will be supported as appropriate to enable them to access the curriculum fully. This includes children that are more able and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. Individual Play Plans identify targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support commensurate with the school's Special Educational Needs Policy. The school's SEN Coordinator is responsible for providing additional information and advice to staff and parents and for arranging external intervention and support as necessary. In line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy, we will provide all children, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability with equal access to all aspects of school life to ensure that every child is valued as an individual. All staff are role models and are aware of the influence they have in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical attitudes.

We are committed to supporting children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) by valuing their home language, providing visual and practical support, and encouraging parents to use their first language at home. We also pay particular attention to supporting children who are disadvantaged, looked-after or otherwise vulnerable, ensuring they have access to the same high-quality provision as their peers.

Parents as Partners

We share children's learning and progress regularly through the Class Dojo platform, parent workshops, stay-and-play sessions, and informal conversations at drop-off and pick-up. Parents are encouraged to contribute to learning journals and share achievements from home.

Safeguarding

Prior to starting school, Nurseries will share any relevant information involving outside agencies to ensure that we can best support that child at our school. The school takes its child protection responsibilities very seriously. Any concerns, which the school has, will be noted and, if deemed necessary, will be reported to the relevant agency. The safety of the child is always of paramount importance and in Reception it is vital that children are picked up by a familiar adult. A letter is sent home in September for parents to indicate who will be picking their child up and staff will always refer to this. The full Safeguarding Policy is available in school and online for parents to read if they wish.

Children's Wellbeing and Mental Health

We place a strong emphasis on children's emotional wellbeing. Staff support children to recognise and regulate their emotions, build positive relationships, and develop resilience. Our provision includes quiet spaces, opportunities for movement, and planned activities to promote mental health and wellbeing.

Positive Behaviour Management

Reception follows the same Positive Relationship and Behaviour Management policy and systems as the rest of the school. Our emphasis is on rewards to reinforce good behaviour. We believe that rewards such as Dojo points, certificates, postcards and Good to be Green winners have a motivational role in helping children to see that good behaviour is valued. Please refer to Positive Relationship and Behaviour Management Policy for more information.

Staff Training and CPD

All EYFS staff undertake regular training in safeguarding, paediatric first aid, and EYFS curriculum development. Staff have access to ongoing CPD, including local authority training, in-school workshops and opportunities to reflect on and improve practice through peer support and coaching.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the EYFS Lead in consultation with the SLT and governing body. Updates will reflect statutory changes, best practice guidance and evaluation of provision.

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to follow this policy. The Senior Leadership Team will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring system

Revised: September 2024

Reviewed: September 2025