



St Matthew's Catholic Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Agreed by the Governing Body on	Autumn 2025
Review Date	Autumn 2026
Person Responsible	EYFS Lead

Mission Statement

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 use early learning together provide the solid foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. We believe that by investing in children's early years, we are equipping them with the skills and resilience they need to thrive in later life.

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Department for Education, March 2021

The EYFS is based on 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, which provide them with a secure base for their development.
- Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, where their experiences are carefully tailored to their individual needs and there exists a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, requiring attentive observation and tailored support to foster their potential.

Aims

At St Matthew's, we aim to:

- Make the transition from Nursery (pre-school) to Reception (full-time education) as smooth as possible so that children feel secure and ready to learn.
- Provide a secure and loving learning environment in which children feel happy, valued, and eager to engage in learning experiences.
- Deliver a broad, balanced, and creative curriculum that lays down a solid foundation for future learning and development in Key Stages 1 and 2, ensuring that all aspects of children's growth—cognitive, physical, social, and emotional—are nurtured.
- Create opportunities for children to learn through planned and purposeful play in all areas of their learning and development, recognising play as essential for their development.
- Develop a close working partnership between home and school, promoting consistent approaches and effective communication with parents and caregivers.
- Ensure high quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child can achieve their full potential, regardless of their background or starting point.
- Guarantee that every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices, celebrating diversity and fostering an inclusive environment.

Starting School and Settling In

When children are set to join Reception, they will have a preliminary visit with their parents during the previous term. This visit allows children to familiarise themselves with their new environment, meet their teachers, and engage in activities in the classroom. Parents will have access to a presentation that will provide comprehensive information about the start of their child's Reception year, including expectations, routines, and policies.

In their first term of school, parents and carers will be invited to attend both a Phonics workshop and a Maths workshop. These workshops are designed to empower parents with strategies to support their child's learning at home and build strong bonds between school and home from the outset. This partnership approach underscores the importance of familial involvement in the educational journey.

Staffing and Organisation

The Early Years team at St Matthew's is dedicated to inspiring and motivating children from the very start of their educational journey. We recognise the importance of engaging children in enriching experiences through a curriculum that seamlessly integrates both indoor and outdoor learning opportunities. Our aim is to ignite their passion for learning while equipping them with core characteristics needed to become independent, confident, hardworking, and creative individuals.

- We have one Reception class with a maximum intake of thirty children. We maintain an adult/pupil ratio of 1:15 within the Reception Year; a Higher Level Teaching Assistant is available in the classroom throughout the school day to provide additional support. Children engage in daily opportunities for structured and free flow play both in the classroom and within the custom-built EYFS outdoor area, which is designed to encourage exploration and creativity. Reception Teachers work closely with their Teaching Assistants, regularly involving them in planning, preparation, and assessment to create a dynamic and supportive learning environment.

Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the latest version of the EYFS statutory framework, ensuring that we provide a comprehensive and engaging curriculum that meets the developmental needs of all children in our care.

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development that are equally important and interconnected. However, three areas—known as the prime areas—are seen as particularly critical for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, as well as for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships, and thrive.

The prime areas are:

- **Communication and Language:** Children will be immersed in a rich language environment through storytelling, songs, and conversations. They will be provided with numerous opportunities to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves and to engage in speaking and listening activities across various contexts.
- **Physical Development:** Through a variety of activities, children will be encouraged to be active and interactive. They will develop their coordination, control, and movement skills, learning the significance of physical activity as well as making healthy choices regarding nutrition. Fine motor activities, outdoor play, and music/dance sessions will all contribute to their physical development.
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development:** The school is committed to helping children form a positive sense of self and their relationships with others. Through group activities and social play, children will develop respect for others, acquire social skills, and learn to manage their feelings. We teach children appropriate behaviour in different social settings, helping them gain confidence in their abilities and develop independence.

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through four specific areas:

- **Literacy:** Children will receive explicit instruction linking sounds and letters to begin their reading and writing journeys. The school follows the Sounds-Write Phonics Scheme, which provides structured support for phonics development. Additionally, children will have access to a wide range of reading materials that aim to inspire curiosity and foster a love of reading.
- **Mathematics:** Structured opportunities will be provided for children to develop their counting skills, understanding and use of numbers, as well as calculating simple addition and subtraction problems. They will gain experience in describing shapes, spaces, and measures through engaging, hands-on activities.
- **Understanding the World:** Through exploration and observation, children will make sense of their physical world and community. They will engage in activities that allow them to investigate people,

places, technologies, and the environment around them, building their knowledge and understanding of the world.

- **Expressive Arts and Design:** Children will have the opportunity to explore and experiment with a variety of media and materials, including art, music, movement, dance, and role-play. We will create opportunities for them to express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings through engaging activities that foster creativity and self-expression.

Planning

Every area of learning and development is implemented through carefully planned, purposeful play, complemented by a balanced mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Staff are skilled at observing each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interactions that encourage exploration.

Foundation stage staff utilise an agreed format for planning, which includes details of curriculum provision, the deployment of staff, the learning intentions, and the children targeted for specific support. Annual and half-termly plans ensure that children experience a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate for their age and development needs. Short-term plans select targeted activities and learning objectives from medium-term themed plans, responding to the current interests of the children. These plans are adapted and distinguished accordingly to suit the varying abilities of the children. Additionally, short-term weekly plans incorporate spontaneity, allowing for 'on-the-spot' planning based on the children's needs and interests as they arise throughout the week.

As children grow older, and as their developmental maturity allows, the emphasis gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities, equipping children to prepare for the more structured format of formal learning in Year 1. The goal is to support a smooth transition by fostering vital academic and emotional skills.

Assessment

At St Matthew's, ongoing assessment is an integral part of both the learning and development process. Staff observe pupils to identify their levels of achievement, interests, and preferred learning styles. These observations are essential; they inform future planning and adjustments to teach them effectively. Staff also take into account feedback and observations shared by parents and/or carers, recognising the vital insights they provide into their child's learning journey.

Within the first six weeks of a child starting Reception, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). This serves as an essential tool for establishing a starting point for each child's educational progress.

At the conclusion of the EYFS, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child, which assesses pupils against the 17 early learning goals. Each child's attainment is categorised to indicate whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development.
- Not yet reaching expected levels (classified as 'emerging').

The EYFS profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions with parents and/or carers, offering a holistic picture of each child's knowledge, understanding, and abilities. The results of the profile will be shared with parents to keep them informed of their child's progress.

The EYFS profile undergoes internal moderation (utilising the Development Matters guidance) and collaboration with other local schools to ensure consistent assessment judgements. Data collected from EYFS profiles is submitted to the local authority, contributing to broader early years data monitoring and support.

Working with Parents

We firmly believe that parents/carers are the child's first and most enduring educators. When parents/carers and practitioners collaborate in early years settings, the outcomes have a profound positive impact on the child's potential development. A successful partnership is grounded in a two-way flow of information, knowledge, and expertise.

We operate an “open door” policy, enabling parents/carers to come and discuss any concerns or developments informally. This encourages parents to engage actively with their child’s education and to seek clarification or share insights into their child’s experience. Parents are also invited to view their children’s work regularly to appreciate their progress and achievements.

Individual next steps and holistic progress are discussed with parents/carers during meetings held in the Autumn and Spring terms. Through regular updates, the progress check, and the EYFS profile, we aim to provide parents/carers with a well-rounded perspective of their child’s knowledge, understanding, and abilities.

Safeguarding and Welfare Procedures

Promoting good health in the early years is a key component of our ethos. We actively engage children in discussions about:

- The effects of consuming excess sugary foods and drinks.
- The importance of maintaining oral health, such as brushing teeth regularly.
- The benefits of mental and physical health practices, including exercise and mindfulness.

Furthermore, the rest of our safeguarding and welfare procedures are comprehensively outlined in our safeguarding policy. We ensure that every individual in our care is educated about their rights and responsibilities, and that they feel secure in a caring and protective environment.

Equal Opportunities

In all aspects of school life, we remain committed to ensuring that every child is treated equitably and fairly, adhering to the principles of equal opportunities. No pupil will be disadvantaged for reasons including, but not limited to, race, class, gender, or ability. We understand that equality does not necessitate identical provisions for every child; for example, those with Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) or English as an Additional Language (EAL) may receive specialised support or have tailored programmes of work fitted to their unique requirements. However, every pupil will receive an educational provision that is well suited to their needs, affirming our commitment to inclusive practices and differentiated support. For specific reference to Special Educational Needs, please refer to the school policy.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS practitioners to adhere to the principles laid out in this policy. We have appointed a named Governor responsible for the EYFS, who holds regular discussions with practitioners about EYFS practices and provides insightful feedback to the governing body, highlighting any issues that warrant discussion or adjustment.

The Head Teacher, EYFS Leader, and Subject Leaders conduct monitoring of the EYFS provisions through observations and discussions, aligning this with the school-wide monitoring schedule. Internal half-termly moderation meetings allow Reception teachers and teaching assistants to collaboratively assess Learning Floor Books, maths and literacy books, discussing progress and evaluation in relation to the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). We also participate in termly cross-school moderation meetings with other EYFS teachers, fostering a culture of shared learning and best practice.

The EYFS policy was created by the EYFS Leader (Miss H Shawcross) in consultation with her EYFS colleagues and the Head Teacher (Mrs E Alderson). This collaborative effort ensures that this policy is comprehensive, practical, and reflective of our collective vision for early years education.

This comprehensive approach ensures that all children receive the highest standard of care and education during their vital early developmental years, fostering a lifelong love for learning. By engaging parents, tailoring our approach to individual needs, and promoting holistic development, we set the foundation for future success and the development of well-rounded individuals.

