

St Mark's Church of England Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

May 2026



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Document Control Table

Document History			
Version	Date	Author	Note of revisions
1			
2	November 2024	Lorna Jackson	
3	May 2026	Lorna Jackson	Change to Phonics scheme and information about Phonics lessons Removal of learning values Removal of sports day from events new starters are invited to Section added about eating and first aid Section added about smart watches

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.’ (Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, 2024)

At St Mark’s we recognise the importance of Early Years education in providing the essential foundation for all future learning. We know that the starting point in children’s education is what they know, can do and their prior experiences. We also know that adults responsible for the children must make themselves aware of each child’s individual needs and make provision for them. We acknowledge that play is a powerful medium for learning and that, in the Early Years, children learn best through first-hand experience. We know that young children are particularly receptive learners and they need educational opportunities that will foster their social, moral, spiritual, emotional, physical, creative and intellectual growth and development.

Principles

The children in Reception are in the final phase of the Early Years Foundation Stage, which starts at birth and ends when children enter Year 1 at the age of 5.

The EYFS is based upon four 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 with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates. (See 'the characteristics of effective teaching and learning' paragraph 1.15). The Early Years Framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Aims of the EYFS

1. To provide high quality learning experiences through practical activities and play.
2. To provide a happy, safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment.
3. To provide a curriculum which continually responds to each child's individual and developmental needs.
4. To use, celebrate and value what each child can do, assessing individual needs and helping each child to continually make progress.
5. To allow children space and time to become absorbed in their learning; as well as opportunities to reflect and revisit activities.
6. To ensure children have the language and communication skills to access the curriculum.
7. To ensure activities are structured, balanced and relevant to the child.
8. To ensure the children have experiences of success at their own levels, to give them confidence and motivation for learning.
9. To provide children with challenging learning opportunities to enable them to become resilient learners with a 'can do' attitude.
10. To identify gaps in learning and plan provision and teaching so that children catch up and keep up.
11. To enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
12. To provide an enriched curriculum which provides the skills and attitudes required for all children to achieve the Early Learning Goals at the end of the Reception year.
13. To work in partnership with parents/carers and value their contributions, ensuring that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability are treated equally.

Teaching and Learning; Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

Characteristics of Effective Learning		
Playing and Exploring	Active learning	Creating and thinking critically
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Finding out and exploring · Playing with what they know · Being willing to have a go 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Being involved and concentrating · Keep trying · Enjoy achieving what they set out to do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Having their own ideas · Making links · Choosing ways to do things

Prime Areas	
Area of Learning and Development	Aspect(s)
Communication and Language (CL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Listening, Attention and Understanding · Speaking
<p>The development of children’s spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning. 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.</p>	
Physical Development (PD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Gross Motor Skills · Fine Motor Skills
<p>Physical activity is vital in children’s all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. 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 resources, puzzles, creative materials and small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.</p>	

Personal, Social and Emotional Development. (PSED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Self-Regulation · Managing Self · Building Relationships
<p>Children’s personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for them 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 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.</p>	
Specific Areas	
Literacy (L)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Comprehension · Word Reading · Writing
<p>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 the rhymes, poems and songs they enjoy 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 letter formation) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech before writing).</p> <p>In Reception, Phonics is taught whole class through Oxford Owl’s Essential Letters and Sounds scheme. When teaching a new sound, these lessons follow the same routine of recap, teaching the new sound, reading, letter formation and then writing (segmenting). The children use a mixture of magnetic letters and writing to form the words. In most sessions, children are taught to read and write ‘harder to read and write words’.</p> <p>Regular assessment provides an overview of which sounds would benefit from a whole class recap and which children would benefit from specific sound interventions.</p>	
Mathematics (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Number · Numerical Patterns
<p>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 and have 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 (including using manipulatives), children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In</p>	

<p>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 key 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.</p>	
<p>Understanding the World (UtW)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Past and Present · People, Culture and Communities · The Natural World
<p>Understanding the World involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world, their community and their place in the world. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and understanding of the world around them – from welly walks and other visits 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.</p>	
<p>Expressive Arts and Design (EAD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Creating with Materials · Being Imaginative and Expressive
<p>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.</p>	

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Throughout the EYFS curriculum, learning is carefully considered to ensure a broad and varied curriculum which enables the children to be assessed against the Early Learning Goals and to be prepared for the National Curriculum. Teaching and learning takes place within both the indoor and outdoor classroom, wider school environment and local community. We operate a free flow system between the inside and outside where the children choose where they would like to learn regardless of the weather. We provide a well planned continuous provision that is enhanced by a variety of curiosities and activities for them to choose from. We ensure there is always an appropriate balance of adult led and child initiated activities. We believe that planned, well-resourced and purposeful play, both indoors and outdoors, is fundamental to the way in which young children learn. Through this type of play, children will be developing skills across all the Prime and Specific Areas of learning.

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. The continuous provision constant resources are carefully considered as to their purpose and how they meet the

needs of the children. Continuous provision enhancements are added when appropriate, informed by observations and, to reflect the current interests, whole class learning or individual developmental needs of the cohort. We make regular informal and formal assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.

Our Integrated Projects are designed to inspire and engage children's learning skills. They link different areas of the curriculum to give the children broad and balanced learning themes and experiences. Through exciting hooks, the children are motivated to follow, extend and develop lines of enquiry leading towards purposeful outcomes.

The first assessment completed is the school's own baseline observations and simple assessments, including Phonics, which are carried out during the first four to six weeks of each child's start to school. This informs planning immediately and helps to ensure children are challenged appropriately. We also complete the government Reception Baseline Assessment ([Reception baseline assessment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reception-baseline-assessment)) that is statutory and informs the government of the progress pupils make during their time in Primary education. During the year, at regular intervals, we record the progress made for each child on a Class Progress Tracker. There are a variety of assessment methods we use. Some assessments take the form of long and short observations of individual children and they involve the teacher and all adults who work with the children. Children are also assessed during adult led activities against the learning objectives. They are then used to inform judgements made on each child's learning and their present attainment. At the end of the Reception year, the Reception Teacher uses her knowledge of each child to assess them against the Early Learning Goals in order to complete the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.

Transition into Reception

The move to 'big school' is an exciting and important time for children and their parents. At St Mark's we believe in the importance of a smooth transition by building a solid relationship with families and having a professional dialogue with children's previous setting (e.g. nursery, pre-school, child minder).

During the Summer term before starting at St Mark's the children and their families are engaged in a range of induction events. These include:

- Parent Welcome Evening with Class Teacher, Headteacher and other relevant staff
- 'Come and Play' sessions (during one of these sessions, the parents/carers are invited to a PTA coffee morning)
- Teddy Bears' Picnic – Children are invited to attend in small groups with their parents in September to familiarise themselves with the classroom, including finding their pegs and photos of themselves in the classroom. The picnic also provides parents/carers with an opportunity to ask any questions that have arisen over the summer holidays.
- Home visits – the Reception Class Teacher and LSA will visit each child and their family at home.
- Nursery visits (where possible) – the Reception Class Teacher will visit the children's current educational setting and have a professional discussion with their Key Worker. Where a physical visit is not possible, a telephone call is arranged between the Reception Teacher and

Nursery Key Worker.

- Invited to attend school events (for example PTA Family BBQ and the Summer Performance dress rehearsal)
- Where necessary, additional transition meetings are arranged for children with specific needs: these meetings include key people that have been involved in the child's development (eg. S&L, Ed Psyc. SENDCo, Keyworker from pre-school setting, class teacher etc.) and, where appropriate, include the completion of a Transition Partnership Agreement

The families are also given a range of materials to support the child's transition into Reception.

These include:

- A picture book all about life at St Mark's aimed at the children
- 'All About Me' books to be completed and returned to school
- Weekly Tapestry memos during the summer holidays, mainly teacher story videos
- Other relevant St Mark's and Hampshire documents such as the dinner menu

Settling In

Every effort is made to ensure the settling in period is as smooth as possible.

Children start school over a period of a week, gradually building to full days by the end of week 2 of the Autumn Term. Initially staying till 11.30 am, then 12.30pm (including eating lunch) and finally all day.

At the end of the 'Reception Rules' project in the Autumn term, parents are invited to attend a stay and play session with their child.

Children are gradually introduced to whole school events e.g. worship/assemblies, harvest festival and the school nativity.

Parents are kept informed of how their children are settling by informal contact with the class teacher at the start and end of each day and through Tapestry observations and whole class memos sent home, or by other means, as necessary. The whole class memos include a few highlights from the week that parents can talk to their child about and any reminders for the following week.

Home and School Links

We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educators and they know their child best. We aim to build a close and positive partnership with parents right from the start as we recognise the important role they play.

We develop this partnership between the school and parents and carers as follows:

- We hold a 'Parent Welcome Evening' in the Summer term for all parents and carers to meet their teachers and to get a feel for the Early Years Curriculum and expectations. They are given tips on how to get their child school ready and given the opportunity to discuss any initial concerns.
- We arrange home visits for each child during July to get to know the children and their

parents in their home environment.

- The parents are also invited into school with their child during July. This provides them with an opportunity to meet other parents (and the PTA) whilst their child visits their class for two 'Come and Play' sessions with their teacher and new peers.
- Observations of the children's learning and significant moments are shared with parents via Tapestry.
- Parents receive a weekly Tapestry memo about the week's learning. These can aid sharing at home.
- We encourage parents to share what they do at home through Tapestry during the summer holidays before their child starts school and throughout the school year. Observations from home are shared with the class by the child.
- We operate an open door policy so all parents know they can approach us at any time if they have any concerns or questions.
- We hold parent consultations in the Autumn term to establish how a child is settling into the school environment and show their learning. This is followed by a further consultation in the Spring term to discuss academic progress. Parents are given a written report in the Summer term and given the opportunity to discuss this report with the class teacher if they so wish.
- We hold an Early Reading meeting for parents and carers to enable them to become familiar with the teaching methods used in school and to make it easier to emulate them at home.
- A rationale of each Integrated Project is sent home each term with a home learning task.
- Parents are invited to celebrate the children's learning in Project Outcomes when appropriate.
- There are opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school on a volunteer basis to assist with the children's learning in class across the year group.

Transition from Reception to Year 1

It is recognised at St Mark's the importance of a smooth transition from Year R to Year 1 to ensure the children move gradually and happily into KS1 and that learning and progress are continuous. Throughout the year the Reception children informally meet and spend time with the Year 1/2 teachers and the Year 1 children, for example at lunchtime, in worship, at the nativity and during Infant trips.

In the Summer term the following opportunities are planned:

- Reception children meet regularly with the Year 1/2 teachers in informal contexts, e.g. playtime, to begin to build a relationship.
- The Reception children visit their new classroom and teacher for a number of transition days.

In the summer term, the teachers meet to discuss each individual child both pastorally and academically. The EYFS profile assessment is used to support the professional dialogue.

In the Autumn term the Reception Teacher visits the Year 1 children to see how they are settling in and share in their new experience. The Year 1 children regularly see the Reception Teacher during the school day.

Eating and first aid

A member of staff with a valid paediatric first aid certificate is present at all times in the classroom.

From September 2025, changes were made to the Safer eating requirements in Reception. The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (2025) states:

- 3.36 At least one person who has a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate must be on the premises and available at all times when children are present and must accompany children on outings. The certificate must be for a full course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex A. PFA training must be renewed every three years and be relevant for people caring for young children and babies.
- 3.37 Providers should take into account the number of children, staff, and layout of premises to ensure that a paediatric first aider is able to respond to emergencies quickly.
- 3.63 Whilst children are eating there should always be a member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate for a full course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex A.
- 3.67 Providers must prepare food in a way to prevent choking.
- 3.69 Children must always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating. Choking can be completely silent, therefore, it is important for providers to be alert to when a child may be starting to choke.

In response to these changes, morning snack time now takes place as a whole class after the morning input. All of the children sit on the carpet facing a supervising adult. At lunchtime, the children are supervised by a member of staff with paediatric first aid certificates. As fewer children wish to eat in the afternoon, rolling snack continues to take place. The children are taught to tell a member of staff if they would like to eat and then they are supervised while they eat. If they are unable to be supervised the children are asked to wait. In situations where fewer children are wanting morning snack, this snack time will change over to a similar process to the rolling afternoon snack time. Care is taken to ensure all school provided snacks are prepared in a way to prevent choking.

Smart watches

Members of staff wearing smart watches will remove them before assisting a child with changing.

Role of the Early Years Coordinator

This involves:-

- Responsibility for a rich, broad and varied Early Years Curriculum
- Responsibility for Early Years Provision by supporting staff and sharing ideas.
- Attending Early Years briefings, groups and meetings to keep up to date on recent developments.
- Identifying curriculum needs through monitoring, planning, assessment and discussion with staff.
- Ensuring Year R plans fulfil the needs of children in order for children in Reception to be exposed to many learning opportunities and experiences so that they build a strong foundation for future learning and in the hope that all will achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.
- Continually monitor and record children's progress and complete the Foundation Stage Profile at the end of the Reception year.
- Liaising with Year 1 staff to ensure continuity and progression in planning for Key Stage One as a follow on from the Foundation Stage.
- Responsibility for the provision and upkeep of appropriate resources for the Early Years.
- Provision of, and reviewing the Early Years Policy.

This policy was reviewed by the Subject Leader in Spring Term 2023, Autumn 2024 and May 2026.

It is due for review May 2027.