

St Mary and St John Catholic Primary School

Early Years Policy

2025 – 2026



St Mary and St John Catholic Primary School
Review date: September 2026

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

Statement of Intent

At St Mary and St Johns Catholic Primary School, we value the importance of the EYFS in providing a secure foundation for future learning and development. This policy has been developed in conjunction with the latest *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, September 2025)* and all relevant guidance and legislation.

We ensure that children learn and develop well, are kept healthy and safe, and are prepared for the next stage of their education. Our provision offers:

- Quality and consistency so that every child makes good progress and no child is left behind.
- A secure foundation through learning opportunities planned around individual needs and interests.
- Partnership working between practitioners and parents.
- Equality of opportunity and anti discriminatory practice so that every child is **included** and supported.

1. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to the following legislation and guidance:

- **Childcare Act 2006**
- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)**
- **Data Protection Act 2018**
- **DfE (2025) Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage**
- **DfE (2023) Keeping Children Safe in Education**
- **DfE (2021) Development Matters**
- **Early Education (2021) Birth to 5 Matters**
- **DfE (2024) Working Together to Safeguard Children**
- **DfE (2015) The Prevent Duty**
- **UK Council for Internet Safety (2020) Education for a Connected World**

This policy works alongside the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- SEND
- Online Safety
- Health and Safety
- Risk Assessment documentation
- Medical Needs Policy
- Safer Recruitment
- Data Protection
- Fire Safety
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Complaints

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The **Governing Board** is responsible for ensuring compliance with EYFS statutory requirements, monitoring implementation and ensuring this policy is reviewed annually.

The **EYFS Lead**, supported by the Principal/Head of School is responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of the EYFS.

All **staff and volunteers** working with EYFS pupils must:

- Read and follow this policy and the EYFS Framework.
- Remain alert to safeguarding or welfare concerns.
- Hold or be working towards, a **Paediatric First Aid (PFA) qualification** in accordance with EYFS 2025

3. Aims

Through the implementation of this policy, SSMJ Catholic Primary School aims to:

- Give each child a happy and positive start to school life where they can build a solid foundation for lifelong learning.
- Enable each child to develop socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- Encourage independence within a secure, nurturing and faith-based environment.
- Support children in forming positive relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and empathy.
- Work in close partnership with parents and carers to ensure each child's individual needs are met and they reach their full potential.

Four Overarching Principles

The EYFS is based on four guiding principles which shape our practice:

1. **Every child is a unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
2. **Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.**
3. **Children learn and develop well in enabling environments**, with teaching and support from adults who respond to their individual interests and needs, and build their learning over time.
4. **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.**

To put these principles into practice, the school will:

- Provide a broad and balanced curriculum that takes children's developmental stages into account.
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti discriminatory practice.
- Work in partnership with parents and carers.
- Plan challenging learning experiences based on individual needs, informed by observation and assessment.
- Assign the FY class a teaching assistant to ensure that their learning and care are tailored to meet individual needs.
- Provide a safe, inclusive and stimulating learning environment both indoors and outdoors.

4. Learning and Development

In partnership with parents and carers, the school promotes the learning and development of all children to ensure they are ready for the next stage of education.

The EYFS provision and practice will be based on observations of children's needs, interests, and stages of development. Learning will be carefully planned to provide each child with a challenging and enjoyable experience across all seven areas of learning and development.

The Prime Areas

- **Communication and Language** – Listening, attention and understanding; Speaking.
- **Physical Development** – Gross motor skills; Fine motor skills.
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – Self-regulation; Managing self; Building relationships.

The Specific Areas

- **Literacy** – Comprehension; Word reading; Writing.
- **Mathematics** – Number; Numerical patterns.
- **Understanding the World** – Past and present; People, culture and communities; The natural world.
- **Expressive Arts and Design** – Creating with materials; Being imaginative and expressive.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

- **Playing and Exploring** – Investigating and experiencing, being willing to have a go.
- **Active Learning** – Concentrating, persevering, and celebrating achievements.
- **Creating and Thinking Critically** – Developing ideas, making connections, and applying what is already known.

Our educational programmes are flexible, inclusive and designed to meet individual developmental needs. Staff will ensure that learning experiences reflect diversity, cultural heritage and individual backgrounds.

Staff will ensure that the faith identity of the school is always present in FY teaching and RE is taught in line with the diocesan direction for FY pupils.

5. Assessment

Assessment plays a key role in recognising children's progress, understanding their needs, and planning future learning opportunities.

- **Formative (Ongoing) Assessment:** Practitioners will make informal observations during play and learning to understand each child's progress and inform next steps.
- **Summative Assessment:**
 - **Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA):** Completed within the first six weeks of the Reception year.
 - **EYFS Profile:** Completed at the end of the Reception year, summarising each child's development against the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) and readiness for Year 1.

Parents and carers will be kept informed about their child's progress through regular communication, parent meetings.

Where a child appears to be falling behind or is at risk of not meeting expected levels, practitioners will discuss concerns with parents and implement targeted support. If a child may have **Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)**, the SENCO will be consulted and additional support or assessment may be arranged.

Children with **English as an Additional Language (EAL)** will be supported to use their home language, where possible, in play and learning, while also developing their English proficiency.

Assessment records will be maintained in line with the **Assessment Policy** and the **EYFS 2025 Framework**, ensuring that evidence gathering does not detract from direct teaching and interaction.

6. Inclusion

All children are valued as individuals regardless of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability, or gender.

The **Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy** ensures that every child's needs are met and that provision is inclusive and accessible.

Children with SEND (and those with suspected SEND needs) will receive support tailored to their specific needs in line with the **SEND Code of Practice (2015)**. The **SENCO** and **EYFS Lead** will work closely with parents, external agencies, and relevant staff to ensure appropriate interventions and resources are in place.

Planning and provision will reflect each child's unique learning journey, enabling them to thrive at their own pace.

7. The Learning Environment and Outdoor Spaces

The learning environment is designed to promote curiosity, independence, and exploration. It includes accessible areas for reading, creative play, investigation, construction, and reflection.

Children have daily access to a secure and stimulating **outdoor learning environment**, which is viewed as an extension of the indoor classroom. Outdoor learning experiences encourage physical activity, risk-taking, environmental awareness, and teamwork.

Toilets and hygienic changing facilities are available within the main building, and spare clothing and nappy-changing resources are provided when required.

Risk assessments are regularly reviewed to ensure the environment remains safe, inclusive and promotes the dignity of the children involved in personal care.

8. Safeguarding and Welfare

The welfare of every child is paramount. Safeguarding arrangements comply with **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)** and the **EYFS Statutory Framework 2025**.

- The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** is Mrs Stephens
- The **Deputy DSL** is *Mrs Lynch, Mrs Vernalls, Miss Vale, Mrs Du Noyer, Miss McGrath, Mrs Grainger*
- The **Early Years Leader** is also a trained DSL.

All staff receive induction and annual safeguarding training, including how to identify signs of abuse, neglect, or radicalisation. Staff understand their duty to report concerns immediately to the DSL.

Mobile phones, cameras, and digital devices are managed in line with the **Online Safety Policy**.

The EYFS provision supports children's wellbeing through routines, emotional literacy and health promotion, including oral health and hygiene.

9. Mobile Phones and Devices

For the purpose of safeguarding, the term "mobile phone" refers to any electronic device capable of taking images, videos, or accessing the internet.

- Staff will not use personal mobile phones or cameras in the presence of children.
- Mobile phones must be stored securely and remain on silent during contact time.
- Personal devices may only be used in designated areas such as the staffroom and only during non-contact time.
- School-owned devices will be used to capture and document learning, with parental consent and in accordance with the **Data Protection Policy**.
- Staff may only use mobile phones on trips for emergency communication.
- Parents and visitors must seek permission before taking photographs at school events and are strongly advised not to post images on social media.

Any misuse of devices will be treated as a safeguarding concern and reported to the DSL.

10. Use of iPads and Digital Learning

In line with the *DfE (2025) Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Education for a Connected World* guidance, iPads are used to enhance learning across all curriculum areas rather than as a standalone subject.

Our aims:

- Enable children to explore, create and communicate using technology in safe, imaginative ways.
- Encourage collaboration and problem-solving through shared digital activities.
- Develop fine motor and coordination skills through interactive play.
- Introduce early concepts of online safety, supported by adult guidance.

Integration across the EYFS:

- **Communication and Language:** Children record and retell stories.
- **Physical Development:** Touch-based activities promote coordination.
- **PSED:** Turn-taking and sharing digital resources support teamwork.

- **Literacy:** Phonics and mark-making apps enhance early writing.
- **Mathematics:** Interactive games develop number and pattern recognition.
- **Understanding the World:** Virtual exploration and simple coding support curiosity.
- **Expressive Arts and Design:** Apps encourage creativity through music, drawing and design.

Safety and Management

- iPads will be used under adult supervision.
- Content will be age appropriate and educational.
- Devices are passcode protected and fitted with online filters.
- Photos and videos are only taken with parental consent and used for learning documentation.
- Staff receive annual training in safe and effective digital learning practice.

11. Health and Safety

The school promotes the good health of all children, including **oral health** education.

- There are staff supervising EYFS pupils who are **Paediatric First Aid (PFA) trained**, ensuring immediate care for illness or injury.
- Accidents and first aid incidents are logged and reported to parents on the same day.
- Serious incidents are reported to the MAC CEO/Directors
- Only prescribed medication is administered in line with the *Administering Medication Policy*.
- Food and drink provided are healthy, balanced and nutritious.
- **A separate EYFS Risk Assessment** covers health and safety, **nutrition** and **choking prevention** measures.
- Fresh water is always available and no smoking is permitted on the premises.

12. Behaviour and Emotional Wellbeing

At SSMJ Catholic Primary School, we recognise that promoting positive behaviour and emotional wellbeing is central to children's learning and development. EYFS 2025 guidance highlights the importance of supporting children's **personal, social, and emotional development (PSED)** as a priority.

- **Positive Behaviour:** Children are encouraged to understand acceptable behaviour through consistent modelling by adults, praise, encouragement, and the use of clear, age-appropriate expectations.
- **Emotional Literacy:** Staff help children to identify, express, and manage their feelings. Strategies include circle time, emotion cards, reflective activities and guided discussions.
- **Support and Intervention:** If a child displays challenging behaviour, staff implement appropriate strategies including:
 - Observational assessment to understand triggers
 - Individualised support plans
 - Collaboration with parents, SENCO, and external agencies as needed
- **Physical Intervention:** Only used as a last resort to prevent harm, in line with the school's **Positive Handling Policy**.
- **Integration of Catholic Values:** Children are guided to demonstrate empathy, respect, forgiveness, and cooperation, consistent with the school's ethos.
- **Wellbeing and Mental Health:** EYFS staff support self-regulation and resilience, including quiet spaces, mindfulness activities and targeted emotional support where needed.

13. Transitions

Transitions are recognised as significant for children's wellbeing, learning, and sense of security. EYFS 2025 emphasises effective **transition planning** to support continuity of learning.

- **Starting School:**
 - Induction sessions are offered to all new starters.
 - Parents provide information about children's routines, interests, and abilities to support personalised provision.
 - Children are gradually introduced to the classroom environment, enabling strong attachments to key persons.
- **Transition to Year 1:**
 - Reception and Year 1 staff meet to share information about children's learning, development, and wellbeing.
 - Children participate in structured visits to Year 1, with opportunities to explore learning areas and meet new teachers.
 - Social stories, visual timetables and small group activities help children understand upcoming changes.
 - Parents are actively involved through meetings and discussions regarding readiness for Year 1.

14. Partnership with Parents and Carers

EYFS 2025 guidance emphasises that strong partnerships with parents are essential for effective learning.

- **Communication:** Parents are kept informed through newsletters, meetings, informal discussions and formal parents evenings.
- **Engagement:** Parents are encouraged to contribute to their child's learning journey by:
 - Sharing observations from home
 - Participating in learning workshops, stay-and-play sessions and school events
 - Supporting reading, mathematics and digital learning at home
- **Consultation:** Parents are consulted about their child's progress, wellbeing and any additional support needed.
- **Access to Records:** Parents have access to their child's records, assessment information and long-term curriculum plans.

15. Staffing, Supervision, and Training

Staffing is central to the quality of EYFS provision. EYFS 2025 outlines the importance of **qualified, trained, and supported staff**.

- **Safer Recruitment:** All EYFS staff are recruited in line with **Safer Recruitment Policy**, including enhanced DBS and safeguarding checks.
- **Staffing Ratios:** Ratios meet statutory requirements:
 - Reception: 1 teacher to a maximum of 30 children
 - Additional support staff as required for SEND or vulnerable children
- **Paediatric First Aid (PFA):** At least one trained staff member is present at all times when EYFS children are on site or on school trips. Staff supervising FY pupils must hold a current PFA certificate.
- **Professional Development:** Staff receive ongoing training in:
 - Safeguarding and child protection
 - SEND and inclusion

- o Health, safety and nutrition (including choking prevention)
- o Digital learning (iPad use)
- o Behaviour and emotional wellbeing
- **Supervision and Reflection:** Staff participate in regular supervision meetings via the MAC FY curriculum group.

16. Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective monitoring ensures quality provision and continuous improvement.

- **Learning and Development:** Regular observations, assessments and moderation of EYFS Profile outcomes.
- **Safeguarding and Welfare:** Health and safety audits, risk assessment reviews and safeguarding checks.
- **Quality of Teaching:** Lesson observations, learning walks and review of planning.
- **Stakeholder Feedback:** Input from parents, children and staff informs evaluation.
- **Reporting:** Findings are reported to the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Board and used to inform the School Development Plan.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Policy, provision, and practice are updated based on monitoring, statutory guidance and best practice.

17. Curriculum

The EYFS curriculum is designed to provide a **broad, balanced, and engaging programme** that supports holistic child development and prepares children for the next stage of learning.

- **Planning:** Curriculum is planned around children's interests and developmental needs, integrating both adult-led and child-initiated learning.
- **Integration:** iPads are used to support creativity, communication, problem-solving, and digital literacy in a safe, supervised way.
- **Long-Term Plan:** A copy of the **Foundation Year (FY) long-term curriculum plan:**
 - o Available on the **school website**
 - o Can be viewed by parents and carers to support learning at home
- **Inclusivity:** Curriculum is accessible and responsive to children with SEND, EAL and other additional needs.
- **EYFS Principles:** All areas of learning (prime and specific) are fully embedded, including characteristics of effective learning.

Policy Review

- Reviewed annually by EYFS Lead, Principal/Head of School and Governing Board.
- Changes reflect statutory guidance (EYFS 2025), safeguarding updates, and school priorities.
- Stakeholders, including staff and parents are informed of changes.
- **Next scheduled review:** September 2026