



St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Fowler Road, Islington, London N1 2EP

'Believe and Achieve'

Early Years Policy

Our Early year's policy describes the framework upon which the beliefs and practice of this school are based. This policy should be used in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning policy, Assessment policy and SEN policy.

Our philosophy

We believe that every child deserves the best possible start in life and at St Mary's we have confidence in providing children with motivating and inspirational learning experiences that enable them to reach their full potential. Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

In the Foundation Stage children learn best through play based activities and first hand experiences. Each child is unique and is valued as an individual. We aim to provide a secure foundation through learning and development opportunities based around the needs of each individual child.

Ofsted report 2012: "Pupils make an excellent start in the Reception class in relation to their below expected starting points. Much effort has been put into supporting the areas where they have the greatest weakness, such as with their language, which has ensured they make exceptional gains in their communication skills."

Objectives

- To encourage children to become self-motivated and independent learners with a positive attitude to life long learning.
- To value the cultural diversity within our school and community.
- For the children to become aware of moral and social values and Christian ethos of the school.
- To develop warm and secure relationships between children and adults.
- To foster positive home school links through home visits and on-going parental workshops.
- To provide a happy, caring, safe and secure environment for learning, which meets the individual needs and interests of the children.
- To encourage active learning through first hand experiences through both in indoor and outdoor environments that reflect exploration, play and communication.
- To provide a high quality curriculum that fosters the key characteristics of learning skills: play and exploration, active learning and creating and thinking critically.
- Inform parents about their child's development against the development bands, the ELGs and the characteristics of learning.

- To support a smooth transition to KS1 by informing the professional discussion between EYFS and Key Stage 1 teachers.

The Foundation stage

The content of the curriculum is set out within the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook found at www.education.gov.uk/assessment. The handbook provides guidance on effective learning and teaching through the seven areas:

Prime Areas

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical development
- Communication and Language

Specific areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive Arts and Design

All areas of learning are important and interconnected. The prime areas are crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The EYFS principles which guide our teaching are grouped into four distinct but complementary themes:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

Effective practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage is built on these four guiding themes. They provide a context for the requirements and describe how we should support the development, learning and care of young children. This policy outlines how we meet each of the four themes at St Mary's.

1: A Unique Child

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

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school. We give children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children.

We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of all groups of children; children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence in a stimulating indoor and outdoor environment.
- using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- working in small groups to ensure all children can access learning.
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.
- Providing opportunities to explore different cultures, customs and lifestyles.

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well being of all children. (See Child Protection Policy)

Welfare

The 2014 Early Years Foundation Stage Handbook states: (3.4) "...enable all children to reach their full potential...practitioners should reflect on all children, their interests, needs and inclinations to demonstrate attainment that is motivating to them."

We understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage. We understand that we are required to:

- promote the welfare of children.
- promote good health, good hygiene and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- ensure staffing arrangements are organised to ensure safety and to meet the needs of the children.
- ensure visitors and parent helpers wear appropriate ID badges.
- ensure outdoor and indoor spaces, furniture, equipment and toys, are safe and suitable for their purpose.
- ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

We endeavour to meet all these requirements through:

- using the school's Child Protection Policy;
- providing parents and carers with an updated early years booklet containing all required information;
- having secure premises;
- requesting parents/carers complete a written permission form stating who is allowed to collect their child;
- using the school's SEN policy;
- having trained paediatric first aiders;
- providing children with fresh drinking water, milk and a healthy snack;
- ensuring our premises are smoke free;
- using the school's behaviour policy;
- having any one who works directly with children DSB checked;
- following the staff to child ratios set out in the statutory framework; which are 1:15.
- carrying out a risk assessment each term for indoor and outdoor equipment.
- planning to meet children's needs;
- keeping up to date records of children in our setting
- following the school's Educational Visits Policy.

2: Positive Relationships

We recognise that in the Foundation Stage children learn to be resilient and independent learners and form secure relationships with adults and their peers. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with our children and their families and we aim to do this through our strong, distinctive Christian ethos of developing children's values in forgiveness, loyalty, hospitality, truth and peace. All of these qualities combined help our school to be a very special place.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents/carers have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:

- visiting all children in their home setting prior to their starting reception;
- providing a welcome meeting for parents/carers before beginning reception class;
- offering parents/carers regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress;
- offering parental consultations each term at which the teacher and the parent/carer discuss the child's progress.
- Offering parents the opportunity to view their child's on going assessments and leave comments on their child's 2simple Build a profile.
- providing parents/carers with a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year through the 2simple Build a Profile and characteristics of learning reports.
- facilitating a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents/carers: celebration assemblies, class assemblies, creative curriculum days, sports day and workshops to support parents when helping their child at home;
- sending ½ termly curriculum newsletters to parents/carers;
- using 'About Me' books for on entry assessments of each child's needs and sharing this information with parents.
- Termly work share where parents can come into classes and look through their child's learning records.
- Parent questionnaires.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. At our school the class teacher acts as 'Key Person' to all children in their class, supported by the teaching assistants.

3: Enabling Environments

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Children must have access to a rich learning environment that provides opportunities to explore, create, invent and communicate. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

The reception classroom is organised to allow children to independently explore and learn securely and safely. Equipment is clearly labelled and accessible to children. There are areas where the children can be active or be quiet and rest.

The classroom is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. There is an outdoor area, which reception children can access freely and this area is set up to reflect the same learning opportunities

as indoors. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan daily activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that compliment the development of children in all the areas of learning.

4: Teaching and Learning

Ofsted 2012: "In an exciting Reception lesson, children were spellbound and totally captivated by the class teacher's animated and gripping use of song and imagery to convey the concept of number. They were fascinated as 'Pixie' flew around the room when they were not looking and mischievously took numbers from their number line. They then loudly shouted out the numbers that had been taken."

We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected. At St Mary's we have a Creative Curriculum 2 year cycle with specific learning goals for 'understanding the world' and 'expressive arts and design.'

At St Mary's we pride ourselves on teaching exciting and inspirational topic subjects like: 'All About Me', 'Choccy Woccy Do!', 'Inventions that changed the world' and 'To infinity and Beyond.' The topics progressively cover the knowledge (the facts and information children might learn, the skills (those practical abilities children need to be able to do) and the understandings (the deeper awareness of key concepts which develops over time).

We feel strongly about applying our children's interests to our creative curriculum and we do this by using a pupil voice wheel. We also question their starting knowledge and what they want to find out on their learning journey.

We use Mini Challenges to motivate and extend children's learning and to assess their individual needs. The mini challenges create an exciting and challenging contexts for pupils to develop the core skills of knowledge, practical skills and understanding through co-operative and collaborative learning.

Whole school creative curriculum days at St Mary's!

We have whole school creative curriculum topic buddy days every term and they promote practical quality first teaching activities with fun, exciting and inspirational learning experiences. These days promote all the fantastic learning taking place at St Mary's and reinforces the children's love of learning. Parents are well informed of the creative curriculum learning cycle, through a half term newsletter and are always welcome at St Mary's creative curriculum days.

Children should be given opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults can support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

Play

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations. Our timetable ensures that there is a balance of child-initiated and adult led play based activities.

Characteristics of effective learning

The characteristics of effective learning describe factors, which play a central role in a child's learning and in becoming an effective learner. The characteristics runs through and underpin all seven areas of learning and development. The key aspects of effective learning are:

- Playing and exploring;
- Active learning;
- Creating and critical thinking.

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfactions as they take ownership of their learning and will be willing to have a go; be involved and concentrate, have their own ideas and persevere, find new ways to do things and enjoy achieving what they set out to do.

Teachers and Learning Assistants knowledge of the child is gained from continuous observation in self-initiated activities and some adult-led activities as it offers an insight into the child's attainment and forms the basis of what they know about the child's understanding and what the child can do. The impact of observing the children using these characteristics is that the teachers are able to build up a profile of the child's abilities and measure their achievements and next steps using the terminology of emerging in a development band, expected in a development band or exceeding in a development band.

5: Planning, observation, assessment

It is statutory to complete the Foundation Profile for each pupil and it is completed in partnership with parents. Children's progress in the development bands are monitored through a weekly rota using guidance from the Development Matters document. Children are assessed using best-fit judgements about whether they are showing typical development for their age. They are tracked each term using the emerging in a development band, expected in a development band or exceeding in a development band criteria.

This termly data tracking is in line with the whole school assessment cycle. Alongside this cycle EYFS teachers continuously record observations using 2simple build a profile. This

continuous cycle of observation informs our planning and enables us to deliver a curriculum that is specific to the children's interests and needs.

Long term and medium term planning is based around the Development Matters age progress bands and related whole school creative curriculum topic themes. The topic themes take into account the interests and needs of the children through a pupil voice wheel. Weekly planning in reception consists of daily phonics and numeracy sessions and a variety of topic activities for 'understanding the world' and 'expressive arts and design.'

Religious Education is taught each week and there is also continuous daily provision both inside and outside to support children during child initiated learning.

We use 2simple Build a Profile to assess formatively by using narrative observations, anecdotal notes, photographs and samples of work. This involves the teacher and all other adults involved with the child i.e. teaching assistants, parents and learning support. These assessments make reference to areas of the profile a child has achieved/is working towards.

Termly environment walks, planning, data tracking and parent questionnaires are moderated by the KS1 phase leader.

In the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their progress against the ELG's developmental bands and characteristics of learning. The EYFS profile assessment is an accurate bank of observations and evidence contributed from a range of perspectives including the child, their parents, the teacher, teaching assistants and other important adults. The EYFS profile makes a judgement for each of the 17 areas of learning, which are; expected level of achievement, emerging level of achievement and exceeding level of achievement at the end of the Foundation Stage.

The commentary regarding the characteristics of learning should consist of a short description of how the child demonstrates the three key characteristics: playing and exploring; active learning and creating and critical thinking.

We also provide parents with a 2Simple learning journey profile.

Parents have access to their child's 2simple profile through the use of a secure email link from 2Simple Build a Profile and the school Admin email. Parents can only view their child's current progress and leave comments.

7: Transition

To maintain the smooth transition from EYFS to KS1 through a transition schedule and professional discussion between EYFS and KS1 teachers that plans for an effective and appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of all the children. See appendix for the Transition policy.

8: Admissions

We follow Islington Local Authority's admissions policy for allocating places. We have places for 30 children. Admission to our Reception class must be applied for by completing the Local Authority's application form.

9: Role of Governors

Governors determine, support, monitor and review school policies. They support the use of appropriate teaching strategies by allocating resources appropriately. They ensure that the building and equipment is safe. They monitor pupil attainment across the school and ensure that staff development and performance management ensure good quality teaching and learning.

Evaluation and Review

The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored by: Ms Silim and Miss Kennedy
Date: Autumn 2014.

Written by

Policy reference material, guidance or link policies

Reviewed by

Ratified by

Ratification date

Review cycle

Next review date

Review committee

Senior Leadership Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory guidance: Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.Please also see information on the DfE website about the EYFS curriculum.
Standards and Curriculum
Standards and Curriculum
14 th October 2015
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Children, Families and Community