



# Reception at St Mary's Church of England Primary School

*I can do all this through him who gives me strength.  
Philippines 4:13*

## Intent for the Reception curriculum at St Mary's:

At St Mary's the Reception year is full of special and exciting moments. We celebrate that all children are unique and ensure that all children succeed in the future by establishing secure foundations.

We provide a **safe** and **secure** setting where children's **emotional wellbeing** is at the forefront of everything we do. We understand that relationships with each other and with parents are key if we are to nurture and develop children's **confidence** and **independence** so that every child can **reach their full potential**. Our core Christian Values of 'Compassion', 'Friendship', 'Koinonia' (Sense of fellowship and Community) and 'Trust', underpins all aspects of learning. Children are actively encouraged to discover the **awe and wonder of the world** around them.

We aim to **ignite** children's love and thirst for learning so that children become **resilient, thoughtful learners** that challenge themselves, **problem solve, negotiate** and communicate effectively with one another.

## Implementation:

At St Mary's, our school culture of high expectations for learning and behaviour is introduced in Reception and continues through to Year 6 with Reception children forming part of a successful, hard-working school community. Children are inspired and motivated to learn more about themselves and the world around them in a caring, engaging and supportive environment. An engaging, safe and positive environment allows children to thrive academically, personally and socially.

We provide a carefully planned, structured and monitored, child-initiated and adult-led engaging curriculum that enables each child to develop their self-confidence, self-motivation, and resilience whilst learning positively, happily and collaboratively with others. The EYFS curriculum is mapped out in collaboration with Key Stage 1 learning themes whilst also allowing for flexibility to follow the children's interests. We constantly reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust our practice appropriately. The Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning form a key part of our curriculum and help us to better understand the children in our class. These are:

*Playing and exploring* – children are actively encouraged to investigate, experience things and 'have a go'

*Active learning* – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements

*Creating and thinking critically* – opportunities for children develop to their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things

The Statutory Early Years Foundation Stage Framework and Development Matters guide the progression of learning towards the end-of-Reception expectations.

Reception children at St Mary's thrive on our ambitious and stimulating curriculum that ensures that all seven areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) learning and development are taught in an engaging way through a range of activities and experiences. We understand that for successful learning across these areas the essential skills of Communication and Language, Personal Social and Emotional and Physical Development are of utmost importance.

Along with this the EYFS classroom at St Marys has been carefully organised through areas of provision which allows children to play, explore and investigate both indoors and outdoors. When beneficial to learning, our continuous provision is enhanced to develop skills further. Adults skilfully play alongside children ensuring progress through higher level questioning and support; A wide variety of teaching approaches are used to support, encourage and challenge children in their learning. Our learning themes guide children's learning but do not dominate. Child led play often leads to a completely new adventure and even deeper learning!

Whilst we understand that the following areas of learning are interconnected each area of learning will now be explored in turn and how it is implemented at St Marys.

### **Communication and Language**

This is at the heart of everything we do in Early Years at St Mary's. Developing language is key to every learning experience and is intertwined throughout all areas of learning. Language development is based around the aspects: listening, attention, understanding and speaking. Children have opportunities to experience a rich language environment, to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves and to speak and listen in a range of situations. The adult's role is to model language, hold conversations with the children and ask stimulating questions to foster such development. The adults also introduce, clarify and extend the children's vocabulary throughout the day. The ability to communicate effectively is a key skill and the better a child is at it, the better their future prospects will be. At St Mary's we realise these ambitions by fostering good language skills that will make it easier for our children to strike up conversations with peers, listen to others and interpret non-verbal clues. For those children who find communication a challenge we offer language interventions.

### **Personal Social and Emotional Development**

Our St Mary's ethos, as part of our Christian Values, is to develop the whole child and ensure that children develop a positive sense of themselves and others. They are supported to form positive relationships and have respect for others. They develop their social skills and learn how to manage their feelings appropriately in different contexts.

We also develop emotional resilience from an early age with children in Reception developing a "can do" attitude and a positive approach to challenges. We understand that the development of self-regulation and executive function is consistently linked with successful learning, including pre-reading skills, early mathematical and problem solving skills. Our junior partners further model our behavioural expectations whilst also supporting and nurturing the younger children's emotional wellbeing.

Children are supported to become independent, caring and resilient individuals. This begins with being able to look after themselves and their belongings. We actively encourage our children to place high regard on responsibility and safety for themselves and others. The children have the opportunity to find out about how to keep their bodies safe and healthy and how to make healthy choices in relation to food.

## **Physical Development**

At St Mary's we value the importance of being active in order to learn. Activities are planned to provide opportunities for children to be active as well as develop their co-ordination, control and movement. These activities include daily access to the outdoor play environment, focused weekly fine motor opportunities, weekly PE sessions and Forest Schools. These all help support the development of both fine and gross motor skills.

### **Fine motor skills**

Fine motor skills are involved in smaller movements that occur in the wrists, hands and fingers. It is important that children have the opportunities to strength these areas of the body in preparation for writing and forming letters. In the Early Years at St Mary's we provide a range of different activities to support this development:

- Cutting and using scissors
- Using tweezers
- Threading
- Using pegs
- Use of malleable materials such as play dough
- Funky finger sessions
- Puzzles and jigsaws
- Drawing with pens, pencils and crayons
- Painting with various sized painted brushes
- Model making with bricks such as Lego
- Letter Join and Write Dance Sessions

### **Gross Motor Skills**

Gross motor skills are involved in movement and coordination of the arms, legs, and other large body parts and movements. For children to develop larger movements and have the ability to walk, run, hop, skip, slide, catch, jump and kick they must practise these movements regularly. Activities to strength these movements include:

- Using big tools to paint, dig and clean with
- Bats, ball, hoops
- Crawling through things
- Balancing
- Climbing
- Carrying large boxes and crates
- Riding bikes and scooters

## **Reading**

We love reading at St Mary's Primary School and have a strong reading culture! As well as daily opportunities to read through our phonics sessions children have access to a wide range of engaging and exciting books throughout the provision. Literacy lessons, guided reading and daily story time sessions, as well as fortnightly visits to the library van, not only develop reading skills but a lifelong love of reading. In addition to daily story time, we also have daily poetry and rhyme

sessions which give children more opportunities to listen to and learn new rhymes/ retell stories. Each child takes home a reading book from the very first week and books are changed regularly. Children start their reading journey with some wordless picture books before moving onto phonically decodable books, in which children are able to successfully and accurately apply their phonics learning to segment, blend and read a variety of texts.

### **Daily Phonics**

We have a rigorous approach to teaching and acquisition of phonics. There is a daily 20 minute whole class session every day. Bug Club Phonics is used to ensure a systematic approach to learning. Each adult led session is split into four parts, revisit, teach, practise and apply. There is an equal focus on reading and writing. Phonics activities are also woven into the indoor and outdoor provision in a practical, engaging and stimulating way. Through our 'Stay and Play' sessions parents are invited to visit throughout the year where they can observe phonic teaching and observe suggested phonics games. They experience first-hand how children are taught to read and write in the early years of school so they can feel more confident supporting their children at home.

### **Mark Making and Writing**

Mark making and writing are essential skills that are fun and exciting. Children see writing as an independent skill purposeful to their learning. Writing is all around and not just confined to the writing area. Cursive script is taught from the outset.

We promote the writing of:

Stories,  
Lists  
Cards  
Labels  
Recipes  
Invitations

Whilst learning to write, resources are suitable for the child's stage of development and they are taught correct pencil grip and how to sit at a table. Resources include:

- Pens
- Pencils
- Crayons
- Paints
- Making marks in shaving foam, sand and salt
- Card
- Post its
- Glue, scissors, rulers, sharpeners, and rubbers
- Paper, card, stickers, clip boards, envelopes and books

### **Mathematics**

There is a constant focus and drive on mathematics in Reception at St Mary's Primary School. The National Centre for Excellence in Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM) helps to guide the adult-led focus sessions, enable us to teach for Maths Mastery. The knowledge acquired in these sessions is then extended and deepened through activities in our areas of provision, both indoors and outdoors, providing mathematics based problem solving play activities daily. We also follow daily Number Sense Maths sessions where we children further develop their understanding of number by discussing what we can see (subtising) and describe how we see it (composition of number).

As with reading and writing, mathematics is literally everywhere in the Reception classrooms at St Mary's. In addition to focused teaching sessions, children enjoy learning through real life experiences, be it using a phone in the role-play, building with blocks so they do not fall down, pouring a drink that does not spill or playing shops - the mathematical brain is always working. At St Mary's, we provide many opportunities to promote mathematical learning including:

- Singing number rhymes and songs
- Play mathematical games and opportunities to subitise
- Recognising, matching and sequencing numbers
- Learning and using mathematical language
- Recognising and using 2D and 3D shapes in the environment.
- Using programmable toys to promote positional language such as, in front, behind and on top
- Showing an awareness of patterns, time, measure and money
- Solving problems
- Sharing and grouping, doubling and halving

Resources are readily available and can be found all around the areas of learning. Resources include:

- Numbers
- Measuring resources and timers
- Different sized containers, scoops, spoons and pans
- Scales
- A variety of 2D and 3D shapes for building and investigating
- Money, tills and purses
- Real life resources such as telephones and key boards in the role play

### **Understanding the World**

Understanding the world around us creates exciting, new learning experiences. Children show fascination when investigating uncharted topics. At St Mary's, we foster an ethos of curiosity and

challenge amongst the children. Children's own interests are woven into the provision and each half term Early Years shares a learning project with Key Stage 1 which allows for many new and exciting learning opportunities. We offer hands-on experiences and trips to further extend the children's knowledge.

Children's knowledge grows the more they experience from visiting museums, theatres, libraries and from meeting important people of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. We provide a variety of experiences fostering:

Respect for others

Knowledge and understanding of religions, cultures and diversity (Cultural Capital)

Understanding of nature and the animal kingdom

Deepening understanding of present and past events in British History

Comparing similarities and differences in environments from their local community

Accessing to a variety of different technologies

### **Expressive arts and design**

Expressive arts and design supports children to use different materials and media to express themselves through art, design, drama, music, movement and dance.

At St Mary's, we have a dedicated music teacher, teaching all aspects of music. Children have access to a range of different musical instruments. They experience sound and movement, listening to and making their own compositions.

Children's learning and development in this area is enhanced by the use of resources that are readily available for the children to express themselves creatively, independently and collaboratively:

- Paint
- Crayon
- Colouring pencils
- Chalk
- Fabric
- Play dough
- Clay
- Modelling materials
- Joining materials such as glue and sellotape
- Collage materials

Being imaginative is an integral part of Reception learning. Children are encouraged to use their

imagination in all areas of their learning. This encourages problem solving skills, independence, resilience, perseverance and exploration.

## **Outdoor Learning and Forest School**

Forest school and learning outside supports the holistic development of the child. At St Marys it forms a valuable part of our ambitious curriculum.

It fosters:

- Teamwork
- Exposure to manageable risks
- Building confidence and independence
- Learning about spiritual meaning
- Better sleep and mood
- Feeling empathy for others and nature
- Improved mental health
- Physical fitness
- Learning by experience
- Problem solving

## **Forest School**

### **Intent for Forest School at St Mary's**

Forest School is an educational process, that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. It is a specialised learning approach that sits within and complements the wider context of outdoor and woodland education. Its roots reach back to early years pioneers in outdoor learning and across the sea to Scandinavia.

The Forest School programme at St Mary's Primary School encourages and inspires children (EY and KS1) to experience, explore and learn about nature in our forest environment. They are often challenged by our ever-changing weather conditions; developing knowledge and real awareness of the Seasons.

### **Aims of Forest School at St Mary's**

We aim to provide our children with the exciting opportunity to love, appreciate and value the importance of protecting our beautiful, natural environment. At Forest School all children are viewed as:

- equal, unique and valuable
- competent to explore & discover
- entitled to experience appropriate risk and challenge
- entitled to choose, and to initiate and drive their own learning and development
- entitled to experience regular success
- entitled to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people
- entitled to develop a strong, positive relationship with their natural world

Forest School learning at St Mary's is achieved through the following:

- a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than a one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.
- using in a natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world (the wildlife area at the bottom of the field).
- using a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.
- promoting the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
- offering learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

## **Inclusion**

We believe that every child should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Inclusion is at the very heart of our curriculum. Activities are carefully planned and resourced with this in mind ensuring access to all. Children are closely monitored to ensure that no child is knowingly left behind. Children identified with special educational needs embrace our language rich curriculum. Support plans and packages are carefully and collaboratively planned with parents and carers and reviewed regularly.

## **Parent partnerships**

Partnerships with parents is a vital part of education in the Reception year at St Mary's. Working closely with parents enables practitioners at St Mary's to ensure parents feel confident that their child is safe, well looked and is receiving a high quality education during their school hours. Reception parents have daily face to face contact with the teaching staff at St Mary's as well as direct email contact to the class teachers. There is an on-line learning journey called Tapestry, that allows practitioners and parents to communicate with each other on a regular basis. Parents are able to share home experiences by uploading pictures and sharing activities. It is a privilege to be able to see the children and their experiences out of school.

In addition to Tapestry, there are plenty more experiences to further strengthen partnerships.

- Parents evenings to update on progress
- Inviting parents into school to share in their child's learning
- Information sessions about aspects of the children's learning
- Reading records are sent home daily where both parents and practitioners can record listening to children reading and include resources to support reading
- Information leaflets shared that will help support learning at home through the seven areas of learning as set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum

## **Transition**

We understand that when your child starts school it can be a daunting prospect, therefore we ensure there are lots of transition opportunities for you and your child to get to know us a bit more. Here are just a few of the ways that we help to make the transition to school as smooth as possible.

- Visits to see your child in their current setting
- Visit to our school and our especially to our magical Forest Schools area
- Welcome Prospectus and Information Letter/ 'All about me' sent home
- Sports Day Invitation (New Starters Race) and School BBQ
- Opportunities to contact the teachers via email
- September Arrangements: Small group transition days in the first week to help us get to know your child and flexibility for those that need a longer transition.



## **Impact**

The impact of our ambitious curriculum is that children are confident, independent learners who are eager to discover more. They have the knowledge and skills that they need to succeed in future transitions and they can apply this knowledge in everyday situations. They can confidently express their views but also have Mutual respect for others.

We hope this has given you a flavour of the learning that takes place in Reception, but if you have any further questions, please feel free to contact our Reception teachers:

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