

FOUNDED 1789



*'Learning for life with God as our guide'*

# **St Mary's CEP (VA) School, Dover**

## **Early Years Foundation Stage Policy**

**Date: January 2026**

**Reviewed and Ratified by: Governing body 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

**Review Date: January 2029**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Rev'd Melissa Carter, Chair of Governors**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Helen Comfort, Executive Headteacher**



## ST MARY'S Church of England Primary School

*'All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years 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 provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential.'*

*The EYFS sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.*

*The EYFS is about what children learn, as well as how they learn. Effective practice is a mix of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other and through adult-guided learning.*

*The EYFS seeks to provide:*

- Quality and consistency in all early years settings, so that every child makes good progress, and no child gets left behind.*
- A secure foundation through planning for the learning and development of each individual child and assessing and reviewing what they have learned regularly.*
- Partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers.*
- Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.'*

*(Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework 2025)*

### **Equality**

We recognise our duty and responsibility to establish equality for all pupils, staff, other members of the school community and service users regardless of their ethnicity, gender disability, sexual orientation, age or beliefs as defined within existing equalities legislation.

## **1. Aims**

At St. Mary's CEP we aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to his/her full potential. Each child is valued as an individual and teaching and learning is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates.

At St Mary's CEP we aim to:

- provide opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development
- provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child, including children with additional needs
- use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress
- enable choice and decision-making, encouraging children to think critically fostering independence and self confidence
- work in partnership with parents/guardians and value their contributions ensuring that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable program of learning and development
- provide experiences for all children, whatever their needs, which are

- inclusive rather than parallel
- provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond

## 2. Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the [statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#), effective from 1 September 2025.

## 3. Curriculum

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the latest EYFS statutory framework.

### **The EYFS is based upon four principles:**

#### **1. A Unique Child:**

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children at St Mary's CEP are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school and we believe that all our children should be given every opportunity to be successful. We aim to do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the EYFS we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, 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 background.

At St Mary's CEP we aim to provide all pupils, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, equal access to all aspects of school life and work to ensure that every child is valued fully as an individual. Practitioners, as role models, are aware of the influence of adults in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical ideas.

#### **2. Positive Relationships:**

At St Mary's CEP we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. When the children start school we aim to form meaningful relationships with children and parents quickly and effectively. We hope that the setting is a place where parents feel comfortable to ask questions share feelings, ideas and opinions. We recognise that we should celebrate families and diversity. We understand that the children are at different stages within the Early Years Foundation Stage and value parent's perceptions of the setting. With the guidance of the EYFS framework we aim to make them feel involved as partners in learning.

We do this by:

- Providing a range of activities (including Stay & Play sessions) to enable a smooth transition from pre-school and successful induction to school.

- Offering informal and formal times to talk and provide parents with information about their child's progress, and encouraging parents to talk to their child's teacher about any concerns they may have.
- Welcoming the children and parents each morning.
- Providing contact books for parents and child to record special times and achievements at home, which they can share in school. Notes are made in children's Reading Records and Home Learning books.
- Providing events and workshops that offer parents the opportunity to find out more about the teaching and learning in the Reception Year at St Mary's CEP.
- Keeping parents informed through displays, notice boards, newsletters and the school website.

### 3. Enabling Environments:

At St Mary's CEP we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. We aim to create an attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment which will encourage children to explore, investigate and learn through first-hand experience. We also aim to make it a place where children feel secure and confident, and are challenged to develop their independence. Activities are planned for both the inside and outside environments. The rooms are set up in learning area workshops, which encourage quiet areas and more active areas within the indoor and outdoor learning environments. Here children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. The Early Years have their own enclosed outdoor classroom. This has a positive effect on the children's development; being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children opportunities to explore using their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that help the children to develop in all 7 areas of learning.

### 4. Learning and Development:

At St Mary's CEP 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 inter connected. We aim to deliver all the areas of learning through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities that encompass the three main characteristics of learning: Playing and Exploring, Active Learning and Creating and Thinking Critically.

The EYFS framework includes **7 areas of learning and development** that we must teach. All areas of learning and development are important and interconnected. Three areas, known as the prime areas, are seen as particularly important for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The **prime areas** are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

We also support the children in **4 specific areas** which help strengthen and develop the 3 prime areas, and ignite the children's curiosity and enthusiasm:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

At St Mary's CEP we embrace play and active learning; and understand that it sits at the heart of the Learning and Development theme in the EYFS framework.

Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practice and build 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 learn how to build resilience in controlled and safe situations.

### 3.1 Planning

Our staff are ambitious for all children, and plan activities and experiences for the children that enable them to develop and learn effectively. In order to do this, staff working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime areas.

Staff also consider the individual needs, interests and development of each child in their care, and consider whether the child needs any additional support. They use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience.

Where a child may have a special educational need or disability (SEND), staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

In planning and guiding the children's activities, staff reflect on the different rates at which children are developing, and take these into account.

### 3.2 Teaching

Staff make sure that the children experience the 3 key characteristics of effective teaching and learning: playing and exploring; active learning; and creating and thinking critically.

They respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction.

As the children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more focus on teaching essential skills and knowledge in the specific areas of learning, to help the children prepare for Key Stage 1.

## 4. Assessment

At St Mary's CE, ongoing assessment is an integral part of learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their progress, development and interests. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers and keep them up to date with the child's progress and development. Staff will address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents and/or carers, and any relevant professionals.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child **starts reception**, staff will administer the reception baseline assessment (RBA). The requirements for the RBA are set out in Annex B of EYFS statutory framework.

In the final term of the academic year in which the child reaches age 5, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child (before 30 June in that term). Each child is assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

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

We share the EYFS profile assessment with the child's Year 1 teacher. This helps to inform a discussion between reception and Year 1 teachers about the child's stage of development and learning needs, and helps with planning activities in Year 1.

The school shares the child's EYFS profile outcome (but not the reception baseline assessment) with their parents and/or carers.

In exceptional circumstances, after discussion and only in agreement with parents and/or carers, a child might stay in EYFS provision beyond the end of the academic year in which they turn 5. In these exceptional cases, we will continue to assess the child throughout their time in EYFS provision and complete their profile at the end of the year before they move into Year 1.

The profile is moderated internally and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. We submit EYFS profile data to the local authority on request.

## 5. Induction of new children into EYFS

At St Mary's CEP, the induction is key for a smooth transition in to EYFS. All new children will spend complete up to three Stay & Play sessions in June and July prior to them starting the academic year in September. For the June Stay & Play session, parents and/or carers are encouraged to stay if they wish until their child feels secure and happy. During these taster sessions children are able to become familiar with both the indoor and outdoor classrooms, and meet the class teacher and teaching assistants. The Class Teacher will share key information with parents and/or carers at the first Stay & Play session in June. Additional sessions in school may also be offered to children if this is deemed necessary.

St Mary's CEP feeds from many nursery and playgroups. The EYFS lead teacher will visit pre-school settings to see the children in familiar surroundings and to talk with their current teachers. The SENCO and/or EYFS lead teacher will always visit any child with special educational needs identified by the pre-school to discuss the child's exact needs; this includes liaising with relevant agencies to support transition.

## 6. Working with parents and carers

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there's a strong partnership between our staff and each child's parents and/or carers.

We keep parents and/or carers up to date with their child's progress and development. The EYFS profile help to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities. There are many opportunities for parents and/or carers to communicate with class staff for example: at key transition times at the beginning and end of the school day; termly open afternoon (including a Meet the Teacher event); and Parent-Teacher Consultations.

We ask parents/carers to provide more than 2 emergency contact numbers for their child (where possible).

## 6. Staff

### 6.1 Staff training

We will:

- Train all staff in safeguarding procedures in line with Annex C of the most recent EYFS framework and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance
- Support all staff to feel supported and confident in implementing our safeguarding policy and procedures
- We comply with infant class size legislation and have at least 1 teacher per 30 pupils

Our designated safeguarding lead (DSL) will:

- Provide ongoing support, advice and guidance to all staff
- Attend a training course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex C of the most recent EYFS framework
- Liaise as needed with local statutory children's services agencies and our local safeguarding partners

We make sure that all staff are aware of our whistleblowing procedures; feel able to raise concerns about any poor or unsafe practice; and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team.

## 6.2 Safer recruitment

When recruiting staff, we will follow the procedures set out in the latest EYFS framework guidance on checking the suitability of new recruits, including:

- Obtaining a reference for any member of staff (including students and volunteers) before they are recruited
- Recording information about staff qualifications and identity checks, vetting processes and references

## 6.3 Paediatric first aid (PFA)

We have at least 1 person with a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate on the premises and available at all times when children are present, including on outings. This PFA certificate is renewed every 3 years as required.

## 7. Safer eating

While children are eating, there will always be at least 1 member of staff in the room with a valid Paediatric First Aid certificate (from a course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex A of the latest EYFS framework). All children will be within sight and hearing of a member of staff while eating, and seated safely in an appropriate chair, where possible, in a designated eating space.

Before a child joins our setting, we will get information on their:

- Dietary requirements and preferences
- Food allergies and intolerances
- Health requirements

We will share this information with all staff involved in food preparation and handling.

We will make sure that all staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis (where necessary); the differences between allergies and intolerances; and that children can develop allergies at any time, especially during the introduction of solid foods.

We will consult with parents/carers to:

- Create allergy action plans for their child – with the help of health professionals, where appropriate
  - We will also keep this information up to date and share it with all staff
- Discuss their child's progress with solid foods
- Work with them to move on to the next stage at a pace that's right for their child

We will prepare food in a way that:

- Prevents choking
- Meets each child's individual developmental needs
- Is in line with the DfE's [Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance](#)

In the event of a choking incident that requires intervention, we will record details of the incident and make the child's parents/carers aware. We will periodically review the records to identify whether we can change anything in our practice to make eating safer, and then take action as appropriate.

Last reviewed: September 2025 by Mrs S Tomkinson

At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.