Early Years Foundation Stage Policy 2026

Nationally accredited by Elklan and OCN London

Communication Friendly Early Years

July 2025 - July 2028

Founded in hope St. Mary's CE (VA) Primary School is a place where all can find their voice, grow in wisdom and live well in community and service. Within the early years we strive to provide young children with the best possible foundations to succeed and fulfil their potential. We understand that through positive relationships, high quality interactions and teaching and well-planned environments, every unique child can grow in wisdom and make a positive contribution to their community.

Living in Community and Service:
We know that early years is the time in which to build crucial relationships with parents, we recognise that they are their children first and foremost educators and it takes a whole community to raise a child. We welcome parents and carers into our school to share reading mornings, target setting and to enjoy playing with their children. In doing this we can share information and build up a holistic view of the child.

Finding our Voice:
Within St Mary's early years unit, we pride ourselves on our ability to support children to develop their language. We understand that to grow and develop in to strong resilient learners' children need to be able to use high quality language across all areas of learning; to voice their opinions, extend play, show their understanding and develop their emotional literacy. We are a communication friendly setting and place speaking and listening at the heart of everything we do.

Growing in Wisdom:
Within our early years we have high ambitions and expectations of all children regardless of their backgrounds, circumstances or needs. We hope that our curriculum continually provides a purposeful acquisition of skills and knowledge equips children for their future learning at St Mary's.

St. Mary's serves a rich, ethnically diverse, inner-city community with significant location deprivation. We welcome children and families from a broad range of cultures and backgrounds resulting in a high proportion of children having English as an Additional Language (EAL) across school. For many children the absence of early language development, results in low levels of speech, language and communication skills on entry to school. Low levels of communication skills have a negative impact on the social interactions that are essential in cementing and strengthening speech and language. In order to plan a curriculum that ensures high quality early years learning we work alongside the Statutory Guidance (DFE, 2025) and the Development Matters (DFE, 2021).

Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the 2025 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation and the DfE Development Matters non statutory guidance. Available to download at;

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2

Curriculum

The learning and development requirements

Our EYFS curriculum is ambitious and thoughtfully structured to support children in building their knowledge progressively over time in preparation for Year 1. The learning intentions are underpinned by the Early Years Framework (2025) alongside Development Matters and knowledge of child development. While we recognise that young children's learning is often shaped by their own interests, our sequential planning remains flexible to accommodate this. We place strong emphasis on depth in early learning, ensuring that children retain and apply what they learn. One of the ways we do this is by revisiting prior learning in our floor book and photo books within the provision to enable recall and constant use of key vocabulary.

As stated in the framework, we ensure a strong focus on Foundational knowledge this comprises of the core literacy, numeracy, language, and personal-social skills required for children to access the wider curriculum later. It focuses on building secure skills in communication, reading, writing, mathematics, and physical development before tackling more complex tasks.

The overarching principles that shape practice in early years are;

- ***Unique child***

All children develop at different rates and at St Mary's we are aware of every child's next steps. This is also shared with parents/carers. Through interactions and observations adults are also aware of children's interests and ensure this is promoted and reflected within the provision.
Adults are aware of how to support children with SEND and this is supported by guidance from Wakefield authority SEND advisors; WISENDSS, SENDias, VI team
Our SEND policy is available on the school website.

- ***Positive relationships.***

It is the role of the adult to be well informed on child development and support learning through;

- *Back and forth interactions;*
- *Commenting on what children are doing;*
- *Echoing back what children say with new vocabulary added;*
- *The use of objects and pictures for non-verbal children;*
- *Taking turns and giving time for a child to respond;*
- *Adapting language to meet the needs of individual children*
- *Join in with children's play and comment, repeat back, wonder aloud and add new words to develop their language.*

- ***Enabling environments***

Our pedagogy draws on a blend of approaches. Children learn through play, through adult modelling, by observing peers, and through guided learning and direct teaching. Practitioners carefully design enabling environments that foster high-quality play. At times, they provide the time and space for children to create their own play; at other times, they join in to sensitively support and extend learning. Group work also plays a key role, with practitioners guiding children's collaborative learning. A well-planned environment, both indoors and outdoors, is central to our pedagogical approach.

Ongoing assessment ensures that our provision reflects the children's needs. All adults are aware of why enhancements are in place and how to support children in these areas.

The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provison, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) (Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage 2025-p.6)

Seven areas of learning and development

The three Prime Areas are – Communication and Language, Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

The four Specific Areas are – Literacy (Reading & Writing), Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

The three prime areas form the building blocks for learning and underpin our curriculum across all areas so we place particular attention upon these within our nursery. Good development in all of these areas is essential for all other learning to take place. We pride ourselves on the promotion and development of PSED and Communication and Language so that children can go on through school to reach their full potential. We develop Communication and Language through quality interactions in our provision and a focus on developing vocabulary.

Early Learning Goals

The level of development children should be expected to have attained by the end of the EYFS is defined by the early learning goals (ELGS)

<table>
<tr><td>Communication and language

• Listening, Attention and Understanding
• Speaking</td><td>Personal, Social and Emotional Development

• Self-Regulation
• Managing Self
• Building Relationships</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Physical Development

• Gross Motor Skills
• Fine Motor Skills</td></tr>
<tr><td>Literacy

• Comprehension
• Word Reading
• Writing</td><td>Mathematics

• Number
• Numerical Patterns</td></tr>
<tr><td>Understanding the World

• Past and Present
• People, Culture and Communities
• The Natural World</td><td>Expressive Arts and Design

• Creating with Materials
• Being Imaginative and Expressive</td></tr>
</table>

Characteristics of effective teaching and learning

In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners must reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

• Playing and exploring - children investigate and 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 - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

(Statutory framework for the EYFS 2025)

The learning environment

Our EYFS curriculum is ambitious and thoughtfully structured to support children in building their knowledge progressively over time in preparation for Year 1. The learning intentions are underpinned by the Early Years Framework (2025) the educational programmes, Development Matters and knowledge of child development.

At St Mary's we value the role of play. Children learn through both planned and self-initiated play opportunities. Children are encouraged to make choices and explore ideas.

> *Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals, and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play and learning that is guided by adults. (Early Years Statutory Framework 2025)*

Teachers plan learning opportunities and enhance the environment to enable all children to learn and achieve their next step. This is done through the continuous provision and enhancements linked to assessments or children's interests.

Both indoor and outdoor environments are planned to support children's next steps across all areas of learning. Classrooms offer a broad range of continuous provision, which is regularly enriched with additional resources that reflect current topics and address areas where assessments show further support is needed.

A wide range of provision is also available outdoors which enables children to work on a larger scale; developing their motor skills, providing freedom to move around safely in a variety of ways.
The outdoors provides opportunities to explore the natural world; the effects of seasonal changes, planting and observing fruit and vegetables, observing minibeasts.

Our EYFS Long Term planning is available on the school website.

30 hours

St Mary's nursery offers 30 hours of provision providing a government-funded place for eligible three- and four-year-olds, giving families access to high-quality early education across the week. The nursery structures these hours so children can attend for full days. This extended provision supports children's learning, social development, and readiness for school, while also helping parents balance work and childcare. Schools usually work closely with families to explain how the hours can be used and to ensure every child benefits from a consistent, nurturing environment.

Assessment

At St Mary's we recognise that all children are unique and unique in their learning. Learning is not liner nor automatic it requires effective high-quality, first-hand experiences that have the child at the heart. Assessment plays a key role in the early years to ensure that adults are responsive both, in the moment and within planned taught session to ensure children are being provided the opportunities to achieve their next steps.

The 2 Year Check

At St Mary's we offer provision for ten 2 year-olds, 5 in the morning and 5 in the afternoon.
This is assessment is completed between a child's second and third birthday.
The progress check at age two has three main purposes;
1. Partnership with parents. While practitioners and other professionals can support children's development and wellbeing individually, they can achieve so much more by working together.

2. Action for every child. Writing down observations and sharing reports do not help children. Practitioners need to listen to the child, talk with each other and then plan together. Working together can make a difference.

3. Early identification. Some children need extra help for a while as they grow and develop – for example, with their communication. Other children may have long-term developmental needs. Some families may struggle and need support. Whatever the circumstances, sensitive early intervention can make a big difference. Children develop rapidly between the ages of two and three – practitioners need to be quick to support and identify help where it is needed.
(DfE Non statutory guidance for the early years foundation stage)

EYFS Baseline assessment (Reception)
Within the first six weeks of a child starting Reception children will take part in an age appropriate interactive assessment in communication and language, literacy and mathematics. The Department for Education (DfE) will use RBA data to create school-level progress measures for primary schools, which will show the progress schools make with their pupils from reception until the end of key stage 2 (KS2).

EYFS Profile (Reception)
In final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, and no later than 30 June in that term, the EYFS profile is completed for each child.

As stated in the Early Years Foundation Stage Handbook (2025) 'The profile is intended to provide a reliable and accurate summative assessment of each child's development at the end of the EYFS, in order to support children's successful transitions to year 1.' It is also used to inform parents about their child's development.

'Children are defined as having reached a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS, if they have achieved the expected level for the ELGs in the prime areas of learning plus the specific areas of Literacy and mathematics.' *Early Years Foundation Stage Handbook (2025)*

This supports teachers and parents to understand broadly what a child can do in relation to national expectations.

Formative assessment
Observations enable to us to plan appropriately pitched activities which capture the children's interests and enhance the characteristics of effective learning.

At St Mary's we use an electronic based learning journey system, called 'Learning Journals' this enables us to capture and assess each observation quickly and efficiently. In order for observations to be meaningful we take a step back and look for the 'wow' moments that children have achieved.

Half termly assessment objectives taken from Development Matters are displayed in the class for all adults to annotate when achieved by a child. During whole class teaching sessions, teaching assistants often record children's responses, use of vocabulary and level of understanding.

It is through our interactions with the children in their play that we develop the most accurate assessments.

Summative assessment
We understand that reliable summative assessment grows out of formative assessment and that summative assessment should not become a long laborious task that takes practitioners away from children.

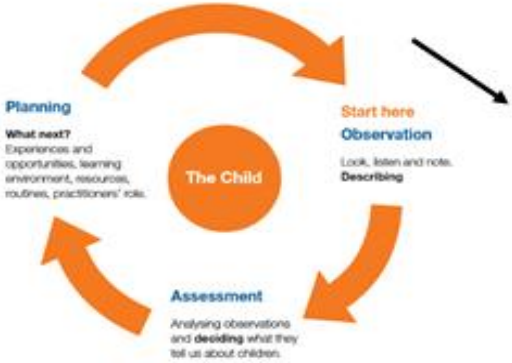
Summative assessment involves stepping back to gain an overview of children's development and progress. When assessing children for summative purposes practitioners make a 'best fit' judgement of the holistic child in order to determine whether a child is developing 'typically' for their age.

St Mary's EYFS Planning and Assessment Cycle

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Assessment data feeds into planning

Planning and provision supports children's needs, supporting them to achieve their targets. Through their interactions staff annotate assessment grids which feed into half termly summative assessment.



Wow! Moments are logged on Learning Journals for parents to view and comment on. They are encouraged to upload photos from home too.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

All children are baselined using the diagnostic communication and language tool. Targets and support is then provided if needed.

Assessment happens naturally as children engage in both adult guided activities and their own self directed play. Practitioners observe and extend children's interests, respond to their emerging needs, and support their development through positive, meaningful interactions.

Individual next steps are shared and discussed with parents.

Teaching and Learning-Support from adults

Adults know to be aware of children's interests and support this when the opportunity arises. All children have a Key Person who develops a close relationship with the child as well as having knowledge of the child's development. Planning is a team approach and all adults are aware of what the children are experiencing and why. Throughout the day there are both teacher-led and child-initiated play, whereby adults engage with the children, modelling and extending play. Throughout the year activities become more adult-led as we prepare children for Year1.Target vocabulary is displayed for all adults and this is promoted throughout the day at every opportunity.

Language and Vocabulary

Children at St Mary's have low starting points of communication and language, due to this the teaching and development of language is crucial within our early years. We are a Communication Friendly setting accredited by Elklan with oracy at the heart of all our teaching opportunities. Within the provision we ensure that practitioners' model high quality language that is both learnt in play and explicitly taught. We share the weekly key vocabulary that we are promoting with parents to encourage the use of these words at home too.

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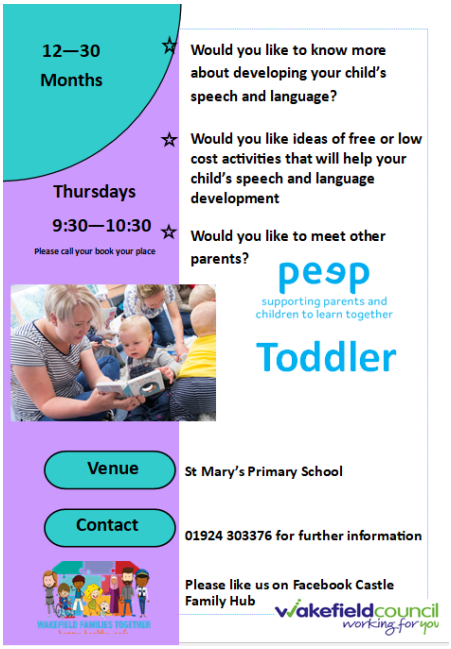
We also use the Wellcomm speech and language toolkit to carry out baseline assessments and then set targets for children highlighted as having delayed language skills. These targets are also shared with parents.

Families are also supported with their child's speech and language needs through our Family Hub PEEP sessions and Henry sessions which focus' on supporting a range of areas.



Inclusion

All children will receive high-quality teaching every day, with learning experiences adapted to meet individual needs. When a child begins to fall behind, targeted support will be introduced to help them keep pace with their learning.

To deliver a graduated approach to support, staff will work closely with parents and the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Co-ordinator to identify and implement a personalised programme of support. Further details can be found in the school's Special Needs Policy.

EAL

At St Marys we serve a diverse community, who speak many different languages. Within the early years we understand that children learn best from being immersed in language and that some children will go through a quite period before becoming confident to talk to adults and other children. We value the importance of a good modelling of home language at home and encourage parents to use this with their children. See inclusion policy for further guidance.

Partnerships with parents and carers

At St Mary's we pride ourselves in our relationships with parents/carers and their involvement in their child's learning and development Each week parents/carers are invited to stay for 15 minutes to read and practise targets.
Class newsletters are sent home weekly so that parents are always aware of what their child is learning and how they can support them.
Our online Learning Journals also enable home and school to share news with each other and are extremely beneficial in promoting communication and language as we find that children are enthusiastic to talk about themselves and their family.
Parents are children's first and most important educators and we value the contribution they make. Parents play a crucial role in educating their children.

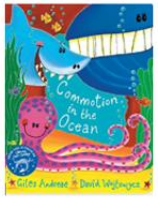
We promote parents as partners through:

- flexible transition arrangements to meet the needs of individual children
- regular parent meetings at the beginning and throughout the year
- encouraging parents to stay and join in with daily learning activities at the beginning of the session
- parent consultations, in line with whole school meetings
- targets to promote high expectations and encourage parental involvement with their child's next steps in learning
- providing a quiet and confidential area for parents to sit and talk to practitioners or share concerns
- sharing topic and learning with parents
- weekly newsletters.
- Family hub support sessions
- Inspire mornings such as phonics/reading

Appendix 1

Example Nursery Newsletter

This week in nursery we are reading



- We will name lots of sea creatures and talk about their features.
- We will discuss the verbs in the book; swimming, hiding, jiggle, tickle
- We will use words to describe the sea creatures.

Key Vocabulary

ocean sea fish octopus lobster tickle swimming pointy

We have three Letters and Sounds groups. Please ask your child whose group they are in and continue to support their learning at home.

Miss Landini's group

Singing nursery rhymes and playing instruments to the rhythm.

Mrs Aslam's group

Alliteration-Hearing the initial sounds of words.

Mrs Kuzbik's group

Segmenting and Blending-

An adult will segment the sounds

in the words e.g. c-u-p and the children will blend the sounds together to

identify the correct picture. Children will then segment the sounds that they can hear in simple words.

AT HOME

Please sing the rhyme 1,2,3,4,5, once I caught a fish alive. Can your child represent the amount using their fingers?

Can you create a sea creature using different resources, maybe painting or collage materials.

You could visit Pets at Home to look at the fish there.

Every half term we will be encouraging families to participate in some activities taken from 50 Things to do before you're 5. It is a fun resource that offe wide range of experiences to support children's development.

You can download the app to view the selection of activities.

This half term can you and your child complete these activities;

#18 Dance!

#20 Mini Artists

#47 Great Wakefield Baking

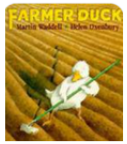
#29 Pitter Patter

#40 Happy History

Please remember to send photos to Learning Journals.

Example Reception Newsletter

This week in Reception we will continue to read



Please read this book at home or listen to it on YouTube. Ask your child questions about the chatacters and how they are feeling.

- We will recall our visit from the farm, talking about our favourite animal.
- We will discuss the meanings of key vocabulary from the story.
- In maths we will be exploring number 6.

Our key vocabulary

crept, wriggled, creaked, wearily, fled, squeezed. autumn, season

PHONICS

This week we will be starting our phonics lessons. The letter sounds we will be learning this week are

h b f l

Our new tricky word is

the

Please continue to practise the previously learnt sounds and tricky words

is and **I**

s, a, t, p i n m d g, o, c, k, ck, e, u, r

You can find out how to pronounce these sounds by following the link for Little Wandle.

For parents | Letters and Sounds

Phase 2 sounds taught in Reception Autumn 1

When we learn to form the letters we have a formation phrase. You can also use these when your child is practising writing their name. We put a lot of emphasis on correct letter formation.

Please see attached formation phrases.

What is the first sound in……?

It is important that children can hear initial sounds in words.

Playing games such as I spy with my little eye will help with this.

Children enjoy listening to the Jenkins phonics song on YouTube which supports this skill.

IMPORTANT DATE

Phonics meeting

Thursday 16th October 9am

We will discuss how phonics is taught in school and how you can support your child with this at home.

Transition

Home to Nursery

When arriving at St Mary's we aim to make the transition for children as smooth and as easy as possible. Before children begin in nursery families are invited to come and visit the setting to complete admission forms and ask questions. Families then attend weekly stay and play sessions, so that children can become familiar with the setting and adults in school as well as discussing expectations with parents/carers.

If needed a child's entry to nursery may be staggered in order to allow staff the time to settle each child and ensure they have a positive start.

Nursery to Reception

Due to the layout of our early years, transition for our nursery children into reception is often a smooth process. Children recognise staff and the provision is familiar.
For all children who start with us in Reception we hold a parents/carers meeting where we discuss the daily routines and expectations from home.
We arrange transition days for children to visit their class and teacher and begin to be familiar with the classroom environment. For children who have been at private day nurseries we contact the staff and arrange visits to meet the children and talk about their ability. As a unit we also attend termly transition meetings with the schools and nurseries in the central Wakefield area. We understand that all children are different and we will endeavour to follow the child's lead in order to support their transition.

Reception to Year 1

Staff come to meet the children in their reception class in order to develop relationships and children have the opportunity to visit their new class during a transition morning.

Safeguarding and Welfare

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe, secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the people caring for them. The framework sets out the safeguarding and welfare requirements providers must meet. They are designed to help providers create a high-quality, welcoming, and safe setting where children can enjoy learning and grow in confidence.
(Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage 2025, 3.1)

In school we follow the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' statutory guidance. Posters are around school to ensure all adults are aware of the Designated Safeguarding Leads and the process we follow.

Intimate care

We promote independence and self-care skills when a child first starts our nursery and information on toilet training is available to parents.
If a child does need support with dressing, changing following a toileting accident then we do have an intimate care policy.

Health and Safety

School provides healthy and balanced meals. Reception children are provided with the universal infant free school meal. We cater for children with special dietary requirements. Each day children are provided with a healthy snack and the option of milk. Parents are asked to ensure their child brings a water bottle to school each day so that children are able to get themselves a drink whenever they are thirsty, especially in the warmer seasons to keep hydrated.
Children are taught about the benefits of regular exercise and keeping themselves clean. We use every opportunity to teach children about hygiene e.g. washing hands before eating.
In partnership with Public Health and Wakefield Council, St Mary's are part of the supervised toothbrushing scheme.

Positive behaviour management

Adults consistently promote positive behaviour expectations and explain the reasons behind them, supporting children's personal, social, and emotional development (PSED).

See Behaviour Policy for further guidance.