



St Mary's School
C A M B R I D G E

EYFS Curriculum Policy

This policy is the responsibility of the EYFS teacher.

Last review: March 2021

Next review: May 2022

Introduction

St Mary's School, Cambridge (the School) recognises that all pupils of every age are entitled to a curriculum which is characterised by breadth, balance, coherence, relevance, differentiation and progression. As a Catholic school which espouses the value that all are created in the image and likeness of God, our ethos and our pastoral care is the structural framework that underpins academic achievement. Through the delivery of consistently good teaching and the implementation of support mechanisms, our pupils become successful, confident young women who will be enabled to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and become economically self-sufficient.

It applies to all pupils in the EYFS Reception class (admitted from their fourth birthday).

We aim to:

- provide a strong moral and spiritual framework.
- promote a strong sense of responsibility towards others, both inside and outside the school community
- promote independent learning in each pupil through encouraging a sense of her own worth and talents.
- provide the highest academic education.
- enrich the pupils' lives with creative, challenging and enterprising opportunities.
- nurture core values of integrity, justice, and respect for human dignity

Learning and development framework

We sought and were granted exemption from the EYFS in 2012. We sought exemption from the learning, assessment and development requirements so that we were not constrained by conditions that controlled the way we taught pupils and managed their assessment. We believe that no two schools have the same intake of pupils and that the statutory framework also limited parental choice.

We now have the freedom to teach the curriculum and monitor the pupil's achievements in a way that better suits their needs. However, we have chosen to keep many of the excellent principles, curriculum guidelines and assessment models from the EYFS within our own Reception learning and development framework.

The education we provide is guided by the following beliefs:

- Each pupil is unique.
All pupils learn in different ways and at different rates. We quickly establish the pupils needs through assessments and observations and teach the girls from their individual starting point.
- Every pupil has the potential to be a competent learner.
We support each pupil individually because we get to know them before they start school, through visits to the classroom and from talking to the parents. Our small class size enables us to work on a one-to-one basis or in small groups.
- Positive relationships
Pupils learn to be strong and independent learners through secure relationships with parents and teachers.
- Enabling environments
We provide an environment where the pupil's development is supported and their individual needs are accounted for. We value parents' contribution and support in their pupil's learning. We take our lead from the parents, because they know their daughter better than anyone. Parents are welcome to come into school in the mornings for an informal chat with the teacher or to see their daughter's work.
- Learning and Development
Pupils develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. All pupils receiving early years provision, including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, have equal access to the curriculum and resources.

Admissions

Pupils usually join reception in the school year that they turn five following an informal assessment carried out by either the Pre-Prep Coordinator or the EYFS Coordinator.

The Reception classroom and staff

The Form teacher and key person: Mrs Agata Richards

The key person is responsible for ensuring that each pupil's learning is tailored to her needs and to guide parents about how to help their pupil's development at home. The class teacher is best suited to this role because she is with the pupil every day in the classroom guiding her learning.

Learning support assistant: Mrs Melanie Osmant.

The learning support assistant supports the teacher and works with individuals and small groups, both inside and outside the classroom. Learning support assistants often help to manage playtimes and lunchtimes.

We also have a specialist Music teacher, Mrs Kate Wolton (maternity cover), a specialist Computer Science teacher, Mr Andrew Severy, a specialist PE teacher, Mrs Cindy O'Connell and an after-school supervisor: Miss Helena Melich – Miret.

The curriculum

A creative curriculum is maintained throughout the School where areas are related as much as possible, making the learning more relevant and accessible. The curriculum is divided into seven areas of learning and these are underpinned by the ‘characteristics of effective learning’. These are:

- playing and exploring – engagement
- active learning – motivation
- creating and thinking critically – thinking.

The seven areas of learning are:

Prime areas:

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

Specific areas:

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

Communication and language allows pupils access to an environment which is rich in language. Pupils will develop the confidence and skills to express themselves and to speak and listen in many different situations.

Physical development provides opportunities to be active and to develop co-ordination, control and movement skills. Pupils are helped to understand the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices at lunchtime.

Personal, social and emotional development helps pupils to have a positive sense of themselves and others and is largely taught through the EYFS PSHEE scheme of work. Pupils will learn to form positive relationships, foster their social skills, learn how to express and manage their feelings. Pupils are helped to understand appropriate behaviours and to have confidence in their own abilities.

Literacy involves the teaching of reading and writing. Pupils learn to link letters to sounds and they are given access to a wide range of reading materials to stimulate their interest, such as phonic and interactive games, a variety of books and classroom labels and signs. The pupils will also develop early writing skills through play, with a wide range of writing materials always at hand, and through teacher directed activities. We listen to the girls read individually three times a week and once during a group reading session.

Mathematics provides pupils with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers. Pupils will learn to calculate simple addition and subtraction problems and to recognise and describe shapes and to use appropriate measures in activities.

Expressive arts and design encourages pupils to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. Pupils will be given the opportunity and encouraged to share their ideas, thoughts and feelings through a variety of activities in Art, Music, Dance, role play and STEM.

Understanding the world helps pupils to make sense of their physical world and their community by exploring, observing, and finding out about people, places, technology and the environment.

Within the main areas of learning some discrete lessons are taught by specialist teachers: Music, Computer Science and Gymnastics.

Technology: we help pupils to understand that a range of technology is used in places such as home and school. They select and use technology for particular purposes in creative play and in teacher directed learning.

[RE in the curriculum](#)

Religious education is part of Understanding the World but is also taught in discrete lessons throughout the school. It includes development of knowledge of the Catholic faith and other world religions. Each pupil's faith and cultural heritage is respected in line with our ethos and Mary Ward characteristics.

The Fundamental British Values in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Pupils learn the Fundamental British Values through the curriculum: Democracy, Rule of Law, Individual Liberty, Mutual Respect and Tolerance. An understanding of these values encourages pupils to:

- Develop a positive attitude to diversity and equality and to respect different cultures and beliefs.
- Know their views count through democratic action, such as voting to choose themes for the role-play area.
- Understand their own and other's behaviour.
- Distinguish right from wrong.
- Agree and follow simple rules
- Develop a positive sense of self and build self-confidence.
- Reflect on our differences and develop a tolerant outlook.
- Challenge stereotypes, for example through stories that reflect the value of diversity.

Assembly

Assembly may take place in the morning or afternoon, sometimes it will be with the whole Junior School and on other days it will only be with the pupils in Year 1 and Year 2.

Teachers lead a themed assembly which includes a hymn, a prayer and reflection.

A certificate assembly takes place weekly during which the pupils celebrate their achievements. Certificates are displayed on the star pupil board. Once a week pupils join in with a hymn practice. We invite visiting speakers to lead an assembly related to charity work or linked to areas of the curriculum. Reverend Beckett from St Paul's Church is also a regular visitor to our assemblies.

Provision

Learning is highly practical and purposeful. Our team of dedicated and caring teachers and LSA plan a challenging, enjoyable and high-quality curriculum.

- We have an open-door policy where parents are encouraged to come into school and talk about their pupil's learning and development. We develop very good relationships with parents and consider the partnership between parents and teachers to be invaluable.

- The small classes enable the teacher to consider the individual needs of the pupils when planning activities so that every pupil has the opportunity to achieve their potential.
- Small classes ensure the emotional and social needs of every pupil are met so that the pupil's confidence and independence develops.
- We identify and help pupils in our care with additional educational needs including more able pupils.
- We provide a rich variety of academic, social and moral, artistic, musical and physical education.
- We respect the pupil's faith, cultural heritage and individual needs. These are reflected in the activities planned and in our assemblies.
- Specialist teachers help us to provide a rich variety of learning experiences.
- We have stimulating and exciting indoor and outdoor areas where resources are clearly labelled and accessible to the pupils.
- Routines are established early so that pupils quickly gain in confidence and can access activities and equipment independently
- The Mary Ward characteristics play an active role in day to day teaching and learning so that the pupils' social and moral understanding develops alongside their academic education
- Early Years pupils build good relationships with the older pupils through their house families and attending house meetings. Year 6 pupils help younger pupils at lunch times.
- Pupils are always safe and well supervised and both inside and outside and ratio guidelines are adhered to.
- Pupils have access to a wide range of resources and equipment, both inside and outside. These are regularly checked, as a part of our daily risk assessment to ensure they are safe.

Equal opportunities

We are committed to providing equal opportunities and all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and resources in accordance with The Equality Act 2010, our Equality Policy and SEND Policy.

Pupils for whom English is an additional language

If a pupil's first language is not English, the form teacher will plan a programme to provide opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in the English language.

The teacher will communicate with parents/guardians, using an interpreter if appropriate, so that the learning is understood and supported at home.

It is important that the pupil also develops their home language in School and feels it is valued. To support development of their home language there will be opportunities to explore it, where possible, through books, role play, oral activities and mark making materials.

Transition

Transition opportunities are important to help pupils settle quickly, calmly and happily.

- Preschool pupils are visited by the Reception class teacher in their nurseries so that they can see the pupil at play. Information will be shared about the pupil's needs and development.
- Parents/ carers have the opportunity to meet with the teacher before their daughter starts school. Information regarding routines and learning will be given by the class teacher and the parents can discuss their pupil's needs, interests and requirements.

- Every pupil is invited into school for a taster morning or afternoon. This usually takes place in the summer term before they start school and helps the teacher/ LSA to get to know the pupil.

Planning and assessment

In our planning we reflect on the different ways pupils learn.

The three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- playing and exploring – pupils investigate and are helped to develop a ‘have a go’ approach to learning.
- active learning – pupils concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties
- creating and thinking critically – pupils develop their own ideas, make links, and develop strategies for doing things.

Observation and ongoing formative assessment are the core of our practice.

At the start of the school year, the form teacher will assess each pupil’s knowledge and understanding related to literacy and numeracy in a baseline assessment to establish an individual starting point for her learning and to inform planning.

Each pupil will be regularly observed and assessed in her daily activities and assessments will be made in all areas so that we can plan the next stage of teaching and learning. Observations of each pupil are matched against expectations with a series of goals. The goals incorporate the knowledge, skills and understanding which the pupil should acquire by the end of the School year. Each pupil’s level of development is recorded against assessment scales and these give a picture of what the pupil achieves. Achievements will be fed back to parents at parent/teacher consultations and more informally throughout the year.

In order to keep parents informed about their pupil’s experience at school we will record our observations using an online learning profile platform called ‘Tapestry’. This allows us to share photographs and notes with parents on a regular basis. Parents are also able to respond and upload any observations or feedback that they would like to share with the School.

Each pupil will have a book in which written work is recorded and a folder for all other pieces of work. Parents and pupils are welcome to view the book and folder at any time and, alongside their photographs and observations, this provides evidence of each pupil’s learning journey over their year in Reception.

The on-going dialogue between the teacher and parents is essential in the learning process. We are keen to keep parents informed on a daily basis and we will take the opportunity to talk informally about a particular achievement or to ask for support if a pupil has found something challenging. Parents’ evenings and our written reports are based on the progress made against the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). Parents’ evenings take place in the Autumn and Spring Terms. Written reports are sent home in the Autumn and Summer Term.

Pupils are encouraged to talk about their learning: what they like or dislike and what they find difficult. We encourage through praise, and we give them time to show work of which they are particularly proud. House points are regularly awarded and each pupil’s name is recorded in our book of achievement when she achieves an academic or personal target. She is then awarded a Beatrice Bee certificate in assembly. Each week a pupil who has exemplified a particular Mary Ward value has hot chocolate with the Head in the winter, and lemonade in the summer.

It is important to identify pupils who find areas of their learning difficult so that early support strategies can be put in place as soon as possible. The teacher will meet with the SENCO to discuss the support needed and staff will work closely with the parents.

Please read the school's SEND Policy for further details.

Learning at home

We share our observations with parents on an informal, day to day basis as well as at parents' evenings. Homework begins with the sound book. Each week, different letters are put into the book with help given on how to sound the letter and how to form it. Ideas for extension activities are also given. Later in the School year, a homework book is sent home each week with simple literacy and numeracy activities to complete. Any homework will be based on the learning that has taken place that week in the classroom. The class teacher will also discuss any homework with the parents because each pupil will have different needs at this early stage. Advice is always available on how to help pupils at home and the teacher will suggest games, books and simple activities.

We strongly encourage parents to keep up to date with their pupil's progress and development and we encourage them to support learning at home.

The school day

Before school

The school is open from 8.00am and the pupils settle into their chosen activities. Pupils are allowed in their classrooms at this time and are supervised by our learning support assistants. From 8.00am, teachers are available in the morning for a quick chat with parents. School begins at 8.45am with registration and our morning prayer.

Morning lessons

Morning lessons usually begin with numeracy or literacy activities. Pupils may work together as a class to introduce the learning point and key skills before working in small groups directed by the teacher. There may also be self-chosen activities related to the areas of learning.

Morning break

Morning break is from 10.10am to 10.30am. The pupils play outside, either on the grass if the weather allows or on the small, contained playground outside the Reception building.

Morning lessons continue until lunchtime at 11.50am.

Snack-time is before assembly or after playtime depending on the timetable. Fruit, milk and water are provided although some pupils like to bring their own snack. We ask all parents to ensure that nuts/products with nuts are not provided as snacks. The snack comprises fruit or vegetables; either fresh or dried. Water is always available in the classroom.

Lunch

Lunch is eaten in the dining hall at 11.50am. The younger pupils are served by their teachers and helped by girls in Year 6, to cut up their food and serve salad and dessert.

Pupils are encouraged to try new foods but are not compelled to finish if they have had enough. We will always let parents know if their pupil is not eating well. We monitor what the pupils eat, and remind them about healthy eating and balanced diets.

We always have high expectations for good table manners.

All food is labelled, and we attempt to cater for pupils with medical or religious dietary needs when possible. Parents are asked to notify the School of any dietary needs. The weekly menus are displayed on the Pre-prep

notice board. Lunch is usually a happy and sociable time for the pupils and is followed by playtime in the playground.

[**Afternoon lessons**](#)

Afternoon lessons begin at 1.30pm with registration. There are many activities related to the different areas of the curriculum. Pupils choose their own activities from a variety of planned and self-initiated play activities, inside or outside the classroom.

Creative play sessions allow the pupils to explore and try out the skills they are learning and develop the areas that particularly interest them.

[**After-school**](#)

We offer a late stay club until 5.00pm for pupils who need to stay after school finishes at 3.20pm. Pupils are collected by a learning support assistant and they are taken to tea in the dining room.

After tea, the pupils choose from a variety of play activities prepared for them by the supervisors in the late stay room. If the weather is fine pupils play outside.

We also offer Twilight Club which runs from 5.00pm to 6.00pm for those pupils who cannot be collected at the end of the late stay club. There is a charge for after-school care.

Pupils can be booked in to attend these clubs on a regular basis or can be booked in on the day by phone, email or a note to the teacher in the contact book.

[**Outings and visits**](#)

Parents will be informed of any outings or visits we plan to take. The pupils in Reception usually go on a variety of trips. Some are local and within a walking distance of the School, for example the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Botanic Garden. Others may include a short coach journey, for example to Wimpole Hall Farm.

When the outing is further afield, a trip letter will be sent out in good time before the visit setting out the details of the trip and any specific requirements and risk associated with it. Parents/carers will be asked to confirm their child's medical information and to sign their consent for the trip.

The teacher will always carry out a risk assessment when taking pupils on a visit, or when visitors come into the classroom, and they will also decide on the safe staff/pupil ratios depending on the destination, type of visit and risk involved. A paediatric first aider will always attend the outing.

The risk assessment will also include the transport method. Pupils may travel by minibus or coach when the outing is further afield and the risk assessment includes the method of transport. For further details please read our Off-site Visits Policy and Visitors Policy found on the website.

[**Other useful/related policies:**](#)

- *Off-Site/Educational Visits Policy*
- *Whole school Curriculum Policy*
- *SEND Policy*
- *Equality Policy*

For further information regarding the Early Years Foundation Stage please access the website www.education.gov.uk, Schools: Statutory guidance, Early Years Foundation Stage.