

St Mark's CE Primary School

Ramslye Road
Tunbridge Wells
TN4 8LN



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Headteacher: Simon Bird
Chair of Governors: David Hill

Our Vision

St Mark's CEP School is committed to developing children that are flourishing, building strong foundations, making excellent all-round progress and reaching their potential. We Aspire, Believe, Succeed.

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Signed by Chair of Governors: _____

Date: _____

Introduction

“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.”

**“Statutory Framework for school-based providers in the Early Years Foundation Stage”
Department for Education, 2024**

Starting School

- All children join St Marks School in the September at the beginning of the school year in which they turn 5. Initially children come part time, from 8.45 – 11.55 normally Thursday and Friday of the first week of school, the following Monday and Tuesday they stay for lunch (8.45 – 12.55) and then they become full-time (8.45 – 3.15).
- Towards the end of October we hold an open morning for prospective parents of children due to start school the following September.
- In June, parents with children confirmed to start school that September are invited to a new parent’s meeting. This is attended by office staff, the Head Teacher, Deputy-Head, SENCo, Early Years Leader and representatives from the PTA and breakfast club. Parents are given information and advice relating to their children starting school.
- Prior to this meeting the Early Years teachers visit as many children as possible at their nurseries. *This may not be possible for all children*, for example when there is only one child in attendance at a particular nursery. In this instance the nursery is telephoned and the child is discussed. If the nursery feel it is vital for the child’s well-being for them to meet their new teacher in the safe and familiar environment of a nursery then a visit may be arranged.
- In July the new children are invited to spend time in the Early Years’ class. These events include a stay and play, story time and transition morning and are spread over several days, allowing children a significant amount of time to get to know the new setting.

Home Visits

- Home visits are undertaken for all children on the two days before the children start and in the afternoon of the first week (when the children are part-time)
- Parents are allocated a time for their home visit in the welcome letter that is sent to them following the allocation of school places. We try to organise the visits by location as this minimises the time that staff have to travel. If parents do not wish the visit to be at the home address then this meeting can happen at school.
- The objective of the visit/meeting is to give parents the opportunity to talk openly about their concerns and ask questions in a private and non pressured environment. It also allows for children to show practitioners their house or special toys and tends to make children feel more at ease and helps to form a bond between children and teachers.

Class Selection

- After nursery visits are completed, children are allocated classes. Classes are split so that as far as possible each class has an equal amount of boys and girls. We also take into account the transition information that we have received from the children's nurseries.
- From our experience twins do better in different classes and so as a school it is our policy to split twins. However, we are happy to discuss each individual case separately before the children start school.
- The EYFS classes work as a unit with areas of continuous provision split between the two classrooms and the outside area. Children are free to move around all areas of learning during child-initiated time. The classes are mostly taught separately for teacher directed times such as phonics and maths sessions and to cover areas of the curriculum.

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Foundation Stage is vital as it lays the foundations for the rest of school life, in particular for Key Stage 1 and the National Curriculum. Development Matters, sets out what is expected of children at each stage of their development and the Early Learning Goals provide an expected standard for the end of the Reception Year. The EYFS profile will provide a nationally reported, summative assessment in the summer term. The majority of children join us from a variety of local preschool settings and bring with them a wide range of knowledge and experiences.

The education that we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on children's previous learning and experiences via a planned child led approach within a rich and stimulating environment.
- It recognises that each child is different and ensures that all children have equal opportunity to succeed.
- It offers a structure for learning that has a variety of starting points, content and activities that allow for learning both indoors and outdoors.
- It is grounded in the school's Christian ethos and policy.
- It recognises that parents and teachers need to work together to make a positive impact on children's education and wellbeing.
- It promotes the characteristics of effective learning as outlined in the EYFS curriculum – playing and exploring, active learning, creating and thinking critically.
- It prepares the children for the next stage in their learning/school journey

Curriculum

The EYFS curriculum underpins all future learning by supporting, fostering, promoting and developing children's learning through seven areas, three 'prime' areas and four 'specific' areas.

Prime

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Communication and Language Development
- Physical development

Specific

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

Effective pedagogy is a mix of approaches. In Early Years, children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other and through guided learning and direct teaching. Careful planning ensures a cross curricular approach, teaching all seven areas of learning through an overarching theme or 'topic' that is then led by the interests of the children in the class. The specific areas of learning are given equal weighting and learning in the prime areas underpins all that we do and supports development in all other areas. In all Early Years planning and organisation, care is taken to ensure that the characteristics of effective learning; playing & exploring, creativity & thinking critically and active learning are all catered for throughout teacher directed and child initiated learning and that children are immersed in a language rich environment from the minute they enter school. Children are able to access all aspects of the curriculum indoors and outdoors.

Phonics/reading

- Discreet phonics is taught daily following the *Little Wandle* programme.
- They are taught to write as soon as they start school. Along with a range of fine motor skills activities we teach letter formation as the graphemes are learnt.
- The 'scaffolding writing' approach is used to start to teach early writing. In brief; Children are asked to say their sentence and an adult then draws a line, of an appropriate length for each word. Children then rehearse the sentence several more times before beginning to write each word. As their writing develops these lines are no longer used to support the writing process.
- Children are read to daily.

Numbers and Patterns

- Children are taught discreet daily number lessons. Each number is looked at in terms of the varying representations of that number including where possible o'clock.
- Children are taught to add and subtract within this number including in the context of money.

Child initiated learning in the Foundation Stage

Child initiated learning (learning through play) is an integral part of the children's learning in the Foundation Stage. In some respects, all learning in the Foundation stage at St Mark's is child initiated, as the overarching themes mentioned in the curriculum section above are ever changing and are borne of the interests of the children in the class. Through a range of carefully planned opportunities, resources and activities indoors and outside the children at St Mark's develop their knowledge and skills, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of the world around them. Through collaborative play children begin to understand their role in the school community as they learn to resolve conflict and adhere to the class and school rules. They have opportunities to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own and to communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. During dedicated child-initiated learning sessions, the adults in the

Early Years environment work with and alongside the children, scaffolding their learning and unobtrusively encouraging the acquisition and embedding of skills and knowledge.

Routine

- Initially children come part time, from 8.45 – 11.55 (Mon/Tue), 8.45 – 12.55 (Wed/Thur) for the first week and a half and are then full time 8.45am - 3.15 pm.
- Early Years children are able to come in between 8.35am and 8.45am.
- Children in Early Years do not attend whole school assembly initially, instead having their own small collective worship sessions. They gradually join whole school assemblies from Term 3 until they attend daily.
- Early Years children have access to milk and a fruit/veg based snack throughout the morning. Lunch is from 11.45am – 1pm, with the KS1 children.

Homework

- Children in Early Years are expected to share books nightly with parents for 10 minutes and **record this in the reading record**. Two books will be sent home, one is a decoding text for the children to read having learnt these sounds and skills in class and the other is a picture book to develop pleasure in hearing stories for parents to read. The ideal goal is that this happens 5 nights out of 7.
- Each week parents are informed about what learning has happened via Class Dojo.
- At the end of each phonics unit the sounds learnt and the high frequency words taught are sent home.

Assessment

- On starting school children who have attended a pre-school bring a record of transfer with them. This provides an initial picture about the children for staff. The National RBA 'Baseline' assessment is completed within the first six weeks of their arrival at St Mark's
- From this initial assessment teachers meet with members of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss potential progress for the children by the end of early years. This discussion feeds directly into the teacher's Performance Management targets and is discussed regularly during Pupil Progress Meetings throughout the year.
- Throughout the academic year the class teacher and teaching partners make regular assessments based on their knowledge of the children and meaningful interactions. This information is used to ensure future planning reflects the identified needs of the children.
- At the end of the year the children will be assessed against the EYFS profile. A set of 17 Early Learning Goals against which children must be judged to be either emerging or expected levels of attainment. A child who has achieved the 'expected' level in each of the ELG's for the prime areas of learning, literacy and maths is considered to have reached the expected end of year benchmark.
- In accordance with the statutory guidance parents are provided with information about their child's achievement against each of the early learning goals through the end of year report.

Inclusion

All children are special and everyone unique, we strive to give all of our children every opportunity to achieve their best. Throughout the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging goals for the children, looking ahead to the next steps in their learning whilst ensuring that we celebrate their most current successes. We take into account the differing needs of boys and girls, children who

may be gifted or talented, children with special needs, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Staff in the Early Years work closely with the SENCo and other agencies from outside of school, e.g. speech therapists, to provide the appropriate curriculum and any necessary interventions for every child. For more information on this please consult the SENCo through the school office.

Staffing

There are a maximum of 30 children within each Early Years class, they have a class teacher and teaching partner at all times.

The role of parents

We believe that parents have a valuable role to play in the education of their children. We recognise the role that parents have played and have yet to play in educating their children. We communicate with parents and actively encourage their involvement in a variety of ways which have mostly already been outlined above, these include;

- Home visits in the first few days of their child starting school
- Inviting parents to an open morning before they start.
- Offering parents, the opportunity to contribute to the profile through home-school sharing books.
- Encouraging parents to share information about their child with teachers through sharing books and the allocation of a key person.
- Holding regular parent's evenings throughout the school year. (Term 2 and Term 4)
- Sending home termly newsletters to inform parents about topics and the kind of activities undertaken within the class.

Transition

- Staff in Early Years work very closely with staff in Year One to ensure a smooth transition between classes. Children in the EYFS see the Year 1 staff regularly during the year and have a taster session within the Year One classroom in July.
- Staff from Year One and the Foundation Stage meet more formally in the summer term to ensure that staff in Year One have a clear idea about the children's needs and abilities both socially and academically.
- The EYFS profile is used by staff in Year One at the beginning of the year to inform their planning and where relevant the EYFS curriculum continues to be delivered. The classroom routine in Year One is set up in a similar way to the Reception class until the children are ready to move from the EYFS curriculum to the national curriculum, providing the children with a seamless transition from one curriculum to the other. Where appropriate we aim to make the transition for all children by the beginning of their second term in Year One.