



Saint Michael Catholic Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Excellence • Enrichment • Enjoyment

Date policy accepted by the Governing Body: September 2023

Updated: September 2026

Date for review: September 2027

Introduction

We aim to provide a safe, happy and inspiring environment in which the children in our care can learn and thrive. We strive to follow the children's interest to ensure they access the EYFS curriculum in a challenging and creative way. Every child is an important and distinct individual, we ensure that we get to know each one in order to help them to achieve their full potential. We work closely with parents and guardians to create a working relationship to support every child and create a whole picture of their capabilities and needs.

Our legal responsibilities are set out in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2014, September 2026. Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes follows Birth to Five Matters and Development Matters documents to support their planning.

EYFS Themes

The EYFS themes that guide our work are:

- A child centred approach
- Considering every child as a unique individual
- Building positive relationships with pupils and parents alike
- Creating enabling, creative and challenging learning environments
- Learning and development

A Unique Child

At St Michael we recognise that all children are made in the image of God. They are unique and develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning can be moulded, encouraged and influenced by teachers; we use positive praise and encouragement, stickers, marbles in the jar and 'well done' assemblies to encourage the children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children at St Michael are treated fairly regardless of race, religion, age or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best in a growth mindset model of learning approach. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning. We encourage the children to challenge themselves daily and to learn from their mistakes. We plan 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 for whom English is an additional language.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence
- using a range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs
- providing a range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued
- using resources which reflect diversity
- planning challenging activities for children
- monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

Welfare

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 the EYFS 2026)

We are legally required to comply with the welfare requirements as laid out in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage Updated September 2026. We understand that we are required to:

- promote the welfare of children
- promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill
- manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs
- ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so
- ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs
- maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children

We aim to teach children boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We aim to protect the physical and psychological wellbeing of all children.

Positive Relationships

At St Michael we recognise the importance of positive relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. All children are expected to follow the school rules set out in our behaviour policy and clearly displayed in the classroom. In the St Michael's Nursery, the class teacher and TAs act as 'Key Person' to specific children in Nursery, with the Class Teacher having overall responsibility for the whole class and the EYFS leader overseeing the whole phase.

Parents as Partners

'When parents and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on children's development and learning.'

(Birth to Five Matters 2021)

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and that good communication between home and school is vital. In order to promote and assist this process we:

- have a welcome meeting and induction for new children and parents in the term before they begin school, virtually if not possible in person
- provide the opportunity for children to meet their teacher before starting school through home visits and having a photograph of teachers and transition booklet to reference throughout summer
- encourage parents to use our open door policy and talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns, including having direct email access to the teacher and phase leader
- invite parents to come into the classroom with their children to settle them into Nursery at the beginning of the year where necessary
- provide a newsletter every Friday to help parents support their children's learning in both Nursery and Reception
- have a Reception Class *Tea with the Teacher* 'meet and greet' afternoon where the curriculum is explained and parents are informed what is covered so they can enhance learning at home
- hold formal parents' meetings twice a year, at which the teacher (and in Nursery also the child's key worker) and the parent discuss their child's progress
- provide a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of the school year
- arrange a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents: Stay and Play, Reading in Mother Tongue, The Nativity, Mass, Class assembly, Sports Day, PTA events

- publish the whole school newsletter from the Head Teacher giving notice of forthcoming trips, events, sports fixtures and achievements.
- conduct parent surveys annually
- hold a phonics workshop once a year to explain to parents how phonics will be taught in school so they can support their children at home

Home Visits

We understand that starting school can be daunting for everyone involved, so with this in mind, we want to do all we can to make the process as stress free and enjoyable as possible for families and their children.

Our school will work in partnership with parents. As parents are a child's first educator, this will help ensure the best outcomes for the children. The first step of this partnership is a home visit for every family before a child starts at school. We believe that this enables parents and children to meet members of staff in the place where they feel most at ease, at home.

Your child's class teacher and teaching assistant will carry out the visits and parents will be notified of the visit before the child begins school. If your child has already attended St Michael's Nursery then there will not be a home visit for Reception unless specifically requested, as the Nursery staff will carry out a comprehensive hand transition handover about the child.

The teaching assistant takes a small selection of activities to complete with your child during the home visit while the teacher completes any necessary paperwork and addresses any queries you may have.

If staff are aware of special circumstances or arrangements for home visiting, these must be discussed with the Head Teacher in advance who will decide on the necessary additional arrangements required to carry out the visit.

It is expected that parents ensure the staff members are kept safe and secure during the visits and the visit remains professional.

Enabling Environments

At St Michael we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning interesting and challenging activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

The Learning Environment

The classrooms are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active or quieter. The classroom is set up to reflect the 7 areas of the EYFS curriculum, where children are able to find and located equipment and resources independently. The EYFS classes, both Reception and Nursery, have their own outdoor area which is communal. There is a covered area, with equipment, resources and activities provided. We very much believe that a child's learning should follow their play and that resources can be used inside and outside. This has a positive effect on the children's development by promoting independence and developing their learning skills. We subscribe to the Wanderlust in Nature Hygge approach, encouraging children to learn through encountering and observing the nature around them and the seasons they are experiencing. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors, it offers a continuation of learning rather than restricting learning. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active. The children have free flow access to both indoor and outdoor learning spaces throughout the day and appropriate clothing is on hand to ensure their learning is not impeded.

Learning and Development

At St Michael we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development and understand that they are inter connected.

"Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is used as an essential part children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. There is an on-going judgement to be made by practitioners about the balance between activities led by children, and activities led or guided by adults. Practitioners must respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. As children grow older, and as their development allows, it is expected that the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults, to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for Year 1." (Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2023)

Learning and development is underpinned by the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning. These 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.*

Areas of Learning

There are seven areas of learning and development. The 3 pillars of the EYFS, the prime areas run through and support learning in all other areas;

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

The further specific areas are;

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

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are all important and depend on each other. The areas of learning are delivered through a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS. We recognise that every child progresses at a different rate and by observing and working with the children we are able to continuously assess progress and plan for next steps in their learning, providing support or extra challenges. 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 backgrounds.

COMMUNICATION and LANGUAGE

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength,

co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive 9 relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.

LITERACY

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).

MATHEMATICS

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS and DESIGN

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

In Reception classes we use the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile to record assessments of progress towards the Early Learning Goals (taken from the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage). In Reception classes we use the online assessment tool Insight to record and track the children's attainment and progress across all areas of the EYFS curriculum. In Nursery we use Arc Pathway for tracking and recording.

In both Nursery and Reception Classes we use Arc Pathway to gather evidence to support teacher judgement. Parents can contribute observations to this too.

In both Reception classes and the Nursery, children are assessed through regular short written observations of spontaneous, child-initiated activities, as well as during adult led and focused group work sessions too. Arc Pathway is used to capture short observations of the children which will often have an accompanying video or photograph. Each child should have one short observation made about them each week, in their learning journal folder or on Arc, either as part of a whole class, group or individual activity.

All parents have the opportunity to contribute to their child's online Learning Journal through capturing learning moments and achievements made by their child at home and uploading them to Arc Pathway. Next steps for children are logged in their online Learning Journal and discussed as part of parent's evenings which take place twice a year.

Within the first term of Nursery, all children will complete a Wellcomm Speech and Language assessment and help to identify any areas of need as soon as possible.

Within the first six weeks of the child starting in our Reception they will complete the statutory baseline assessment. During the final term of Reception, we will assess the children against the EYFS Profile Early Learning Goals, stating whether they are Emerging or Expecting. We will provide a written summary to parents. These assessments are used to provide valuable transition information to Year 1 staff and those children who are not ready to be assessed against the National Curriculum and will continue to be assessed against the Early Learning Goals.

Safeguarding Children

The school takes its child protection responsibilities very seriously. Any concerns, which the school has, will be noted and, if deemed necessary, will be reported to the relevant agency. The safety of the child is always of paramount importance. The full Safeguarding Policy is available on the school website and from the school office.

Health and Safety

We have a Health and Safety policy which all staff and students are familiar with and we have designated people responsible for first aid in school. Children are taught the safe and appropriate use of equipment and materials. Children are taught to be mindful when moving around the school and are aware of safety issues. Risk assessments are undertaken before after school activities take place and before we embark on school outings. A full Health and Safety Policy is available on the school website and from the school office.

Allergies

Parents/carers will be asked to inform us of any foods their children are allergic to or any foods they do not wish their child to eat. A note of this is kept on our online systems, and in the Dining Hall by the lunchtime supervisors and the kitchen staff. All adults involved are informed.

Medical Needs

We keep a note of any medical needs, allergies, children who need inhalers, Piriton, epi-pens and insulin in the school office and in the class so everyone is aware of the individual needs.

Equalities and Disabilities

All pupils in this school are entitled to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum regardless of ability, gender, race and social circumstances. The curriculum is adapted to suit all levels of ability. We have a full Equality and Diversity and Equal Opportunities policy available on the school website and from the school office.

Special Educational Needs

Care is taken to assess the needs of each child from Nursery age onwards. Should a child have any special need the parent will be informed at an early stage. Group and individual help is provided within the school where possible. We have links with various agencies and when necessary their involvement may be required to support certain children. Parents/Carers will always be informed if an outside agency is assisting us to support their child. The full SEN Policy is available on the school website and from the school office.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS teachers to follow the principles stated in this policy.

There is a named Governor for the EYFS, Anne Bulfin. The Head teacher and EYFS Leader will carry out monitoring of the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.