



EARLY YEARS POLICY

Nursery and Reception | 2026-2027

Learning our faith. Living our faith. Loving our faith.

Policy owner	Headteacher / Early Years Leader
Applies to	Nursery and Reception
Approved by	Governing Body
Approval date	October 2026
Review date	September 2027, or earlier if statutory guidance changes
Statutory basis	EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective 1 September 2026

Mission and Catholic Ethos

St. Michael & St. Martin School follows the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church in its daily life through celebration of the Liturgy and through following the values taught in the Gospel of Jesus, by:

Learning our faith.

Living our faith.

Loving our faith.

Thus the school recognises the dignity of every human person because s/he is a child of God, while fostering awareness of the world's poor. Equality of opportunity for every person is therefore paramount and precludes all forms of discrimination on grounds of colour, gender, race, social class or ability.

The school aims to nurture the spiritual, intellectual and physical growth of each pupil through a holistic approach, which takes due note of the needs of every child while, at the same time, striving for excellence in all aspects of education in a secure environment.

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out the principles, curriculum, practice and safeguarding arrangements that underpin Early Years provision at St Michael & St Martin Catholic Primary School. It applies to all children in Nursery and Reception and to all staff, students and volunteers working within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The policy should be read alongside the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, SEND Policy and Information Report, Behaviour Policy, Attendance Policy, Equality information and objectives, Health and Safety Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, Allergy Safety Policy, Intimate Care procedures, Online Safety Policy and other relevant school policies.

Our provision follows the Department for Education EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers effective from 1 September 2026. We also have regard to Development Matters as non-statutory curriculum guidance. Development Matters supports professional judgement and is not used as a tick-list or rigid assessment scheme.

2. Our Early Years Vision

We believe that every child is unique, created and loved by God, and entitled to a safe, joyful, ambitious and language-rich start to school life. We aim to provide an environment in which children feel secure, develop positive relationships, become increasingly independent and acquire the knowledge, vocabulary, skills and attitudes that prepare them for future learning and for the fullness of life.

- place Christ and the dignity of every child at the centre of our provision;
- build secure, warm and respectful relationships;
- provide an ambitious, inclusive curriculum for every child;
- develop communication, language and vocabulary across all areas of learning;
- balance purposeful play, high-quality adult interaction and direct teaching;
- promote curiosity, creativity, resilience, self-regulation and independence;
- identify barriers to learning early and provide timely support;
- work in genuine partnership with parents and carers; and
- ensure smooth transitions into Nursery, Reception and Year 1.

3. Statutory Principles of the EYFS

Our practice reflects the four overarching principles of the EYFS:

The unique child

Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. Staff recognise children's individual starting points, interests, culture, language, strengths and needs.

Positive relationships

Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships. Adults are responsive, encouraging and consistent, and model respectful communication and Gospel values.

Enabling environments with teaching and support from adults

Children learn and develop well in environments that respond to their individual needs and provide rich learning opportunities indoors and outdoors.

Learning and development

Children develop and learn at different rates. Our curriculum and provision are inclusive of all children, including those with SEND, those learning English as an additional language and those who may be disadvantaged.

4. Curriculum Intent and the Seven Areas of Learning

The EYFS curriculum comprises seven interconnected areas of learning and development. All are important and support children's spiritual, moral, social, emotional, physical and intellectual development.

Prime areas

- Communication and Language – developing listening, attention, understanding, speaking and a rich vocabulary.
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development – building relationships, self-regulation, confidence, independence and an understanding of healthy choices.
- Physical Development – developing gross and fine motor skills, coordination, strength, movement, self-care and healthy habits.

Specific areas

- Literacy – developing comprehension, a love of reading, phonological awareness, early reading and writing.
- Mathematics – developing a deep understanding of number, numerical patterns, shape, space and measure through practical and meaningful experiences.
- Understanding the World – making sense of people, communities, the natural world, past and present, technology and the wider world.
- Expressive Arts and Design – exploring materials, music, movement, imaginative play, art and design, and expressing ideas creatively.

The curriculum is carefully sequenced so that children revisit, practise and deepen important knowledge and skills. Staff are clear about what they want children to know, understand and be able to do, while retaining flexibility to respond to children's interests, experiences and emerging needs.

5. Religious Education, Prayer and Catholic Life

Catholic life permeates the Early Years curriculum and daily routines. Children are introduced to prayer, scripture, liturgical seasons, the life and teachings of Jesus and the values of the Gospel in an age-appropriate way. They learn that each person is precious and deserves dignity, care and respect.

- daily prayer and reflection;
- age-appropriate Religious Education in accordance with diocesan expectations and the school's RE curriculum;
- celebration of key feasts and liturgical seasons;
- opportunities to visit and learn about the church and parish community;
- care for creation and growing awareness of Catholic Social Teaching; and
- respectful learning about families, cultures and faith traditions represented within the school community.

6. Teaching, Play and the Characteristics of Effective Learning

High-quality Early Years teaching includes carefully planned experiences, purposeful play, sustained shared thinking, direct teaching, modelling, questioning, storytelling, singing, practical exploration and responsive

adult interaction. Adults observe what children know and can do and use this knowledge to decide when to step in, model, explain, extend or allow children time to explore independently.

We support the characteristics of effective teaching and learning: playing and exploring; active learning; and creating and thinking critically. Children are encouraged to have a go, persist, make links, develop ideas, solve problems and reflect on their learning.

Continuous provision is deliberately designed to enable children to revisit and apply learning. Resources are accessible, purposeful and regularly reviewed so that provision remains challenging and supports progression rather than simply keeping children occupied.

7. Communication, Language and Vocabulary

Communication and language are central to our curriculum. Adults model high-quality spoken language, introduce and revisit ambitious vocabulary, listen carefully to children and create frequent opportunities for sustained conversation. Stories, rhymes, songs, role play and discussion are embedded throughout the day.

Where concerns about speech, language or communication arise, staff act promptly, discuss concerns with parents and the SENDCo, and seek or signpost specialist support where appropriate.

8. Early Reading, Phonics and Writing

Children are immersed in high-quality books, stories, rhymes and poems. Staff read aloud frequently and explicitly develop comprehension, vocabulary and enjoyment of reading. Reception children receive systematic synthetic phonics teaching in line with the school's chosen validated programme. Nursery provision builds the foundations for phonics through listening, speaking, sound discrimination, rhyme, rhythm and oral blending as developmentally appropriate.

Writing develops from talk, storytelling, mark-making, fine-motor development and meaningful opportunities to communicate. Adults model transcription and composition and support children to apply their developing phonics knowledge in writing.

9. Mathematics

Mathematics is taught through direct teaching, practical exploration, routines, stories, songs, games and continuous provision. We prioritise secure understanding of number, including subitising, composition, comparison and counting, alongside shape, space, measure and pattern. Adults use precise mathematical language and encourage children to explain their thinking and notice relationships.

10. Assessment and Record Keeping

Assessment is primarily formative and is based on practitioners' knowledge of children gained through everyday interactions, observation, conversation and children's work. Assessment should be proportionate, useful and focused on improving teaching. Staff do not generate excessive evidence or use Development Matters as a checklist.

On entry and ongoing assessment

Staff establish children's starting points through information from parents, previous settings and observation. Ongoing assessment informs planning, intervention and discussions with families. Where progress gives cause for concern, staff agree appropriate next steps and involve the SENDCo or other professionals as necessary.

Reception Baseline Assessment

Children in Reception complete the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment within the required national timescale, in accordance with current assessment arrangements.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

At the end of Reception, teachers complete the statutory EYFS Profile against the Early Learning Goals. Judgements are based on the teacher's professional knowledge of each child and are reported and transferred in accordance with statutory requirements. The Early Learning Goals are assessment endpoints and are not used as a curriculum for younger children.

11. Inclusion, SEND, Disadvantage and English as an Additional Language

We have high expectations for every child and make reasonable adjustments so that all children can access and participate in the curriculum. Staff work closely with the SENDCo and parents to identify needs early, plan appropriate provision and review its impact. Where specialist advice is required, the school works with relevant external agencies in line with the SEND Code of Practice.

Children learning English as an additional language are valued for their home language and cultural knowledge. Staff distinguish between language acquisition and possible SEND, provide rich models of English and support children to participate fully without lowering curriculum ambition.

The school uses available information and funding to reduce barriers for disadvantaged children. Provision may include targeted language work, support for attendance, access to enrichment, family support and carefully chosen resources or interventions.

12. Partnership with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are children's first and most enduring educators. We aim to build trusting, respectful relationships and to share information regularly about children's learning, wellbeing and development.

- welcome and induction arrangements, including opportunities to share information before entry;
- regular informal communication at drop-off and collection where appropriate;
- planned parent meetings and written reports;
- guidance on supporting reading, language, mathematics, independence and healthy development at home;
- timely discussion of any concerns about learning, development, attendance or wellbeing; and
- opportunities for parents to contribute information about children's interests, achievements, culture and experiences.

13. The Key Person and Relationships

Children in Nursery are supported through a key-person approach in accordance with EYFS requirements. The key person helps ensure that care is tailored to the child's individual needs, supports the child in becoming familiar with the setting, offers a settled relationship and builds a relationship with parents. In Reception, the class team ensures that every child is well known, supported and able to identify trusted adults.

14. Transition

Transitions are carefully planned because they are significant events for young children. Before children enter Nursery or Reception, staff gather relevant information from families and previous providers and arrange appropriate visits, meetings or transition activities. Additional arrangements are made for children with SEND, medical needs, safeguarding considerations or other vulnerabilities.

Transition from Reception to Year 1 includes professional dialogue, transfer of assessment and safeguarding information, opportunities for children to become familiar with new adults and environments, and curriculum continuity. Year 1 provision builds on what children know and can do rather than creating an abrupt change in expectations.

15. Safeguarding and Welfare

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The school follows its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education alongside the specific safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS. Staff must act immediately if they have concerns about a child and follow the school's reporting procedures. The Headteacher is the Designated Safeguarding Lead, supported by trained Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads.

Recruitment, suitability checks, supervision, allegations, disqualification and staff conduct are managed in accordance with statutory requirements and school procedures. From September 2026, the EYFS framework strengthens requirements relating to suitability and safeguarding, including DBS arrangements for volunteers and new employees and reporting allegations of harm where applicable.

Mobile phones, cameras and personal devices

Personal mobile phones and unauthorised personal devices are not used to photograph or record children. Staff follow the school's safeguarding, data protection and online safety procedures. School devices are used only for legitimate educational or safeguarding purposes and images are handled securely.

Screen use

The school has regard to current government guidance on screen use in early years settings. Digital technology is used only where it has a clear educational purpose and adds value to learning. Screen use does not replace active play, conversation, physical activity, books, creative experiences or interaction with adults and peers.

Safer sleep

Where a child sleeps while in the school's care, staff follow the safer sleep requirements and current guidance, taking account of the child's age and individual needs. Sleeping children are appropriately supervised and checked. Parents must share relevant sleep and health information with the school.

16. Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Children's health, safety and wellbeing are integral to our provision. Risk is managed proportionately so that children are protected while still learning to assess manageable risks for themselves.

Paediatric first aid

The school ensures that paediatric first-aid arrangements meet EYFS requirements, including the required availability of a person with a current paediatric first-aid certificate. First-aid qualifications are monitored and renewed as required.

Medicines, allergies and medical needs

Medicines are administered only in accordance with statutory requirements and school policy. Allergies and medical conditions are recorded, communicated to relevant staff and supported through individual healthcare or allergy plans where required. Staff follow the school's Allergy Safety Policy and emergency procedures.

Accidents and injuries

Accidents, injuries and first-aid treatment are recorded and parents are informed in accordance with EYFS and school procedures. Serious incidents and notifiable events are reported to the appropriate bodies where required.

Food, drink and safer eating

Children have access to fresh drinking water. Food and snacks take account of dietary requirements, allergies and cultural needs. Staff supervise eating appropriately, promote healthy choices and take reasonable steps to reduce choking risks. Children are supported to develop safe eating habits and increasing independence.

Oral health

The curriculum promotes good oral health through age-appropriate teaching about healthy food and drink and the importance of caring for teeth.

Intimate care and toileting

Children are treated with dignity, privacy and respect. Staff follow agreed intimate-care procedures and support children to become increasingly independent in toileting and personal care. No child is discriminated against because they are not yet fully toilet trained.

17. Attendance, Punctuality and Absence

Regular attendance and punctuality support children's learning, relationships and routines. The school works with families to establish good attendance habits from the Early Years. Statutory school attendance requirements apply to children once they reach compulsory school age; however, attendance concerns for younger children may also indicate unmet need or safeguarding concerns and will be followed up appropriately.

Parents should notify the school promptly of absence and provide relevant information. Unexplained or concerning absence is followed up in accordance with the school's Attendance and Safeguarding procedures.

18. Behaviour, Self-Regulation and Positive Relationships

We understand behaviour as communication and explicitly teach children how to recognise feelings, regulate emotions, cooperate, solve problems and repair relationships. Adults model calm, respectful behaviour and set clear, consistent and developmentally appropriate expectations. Physical punishment, humiliation, intimidation or any practice that compromises a child's dignity is never acceptable.

Where behaviour is persistent or presents a risk, staff work with parents, the SENDCo and other professionals as appropriate to understand underlying needs and plan support.

19. Learning Environment and Outdoor Provision

Indoor and outdoor spaces are safe, welcoming, accessible and organised to promote independence. Children have regular opportunities for outdoor learning, physical development, exploration and contact with the natural world. Staff assess the environment and activities dynamically and formally where appropriate, balancing safety with the benefits of challenge and exploration.

Resources reflect diversity positively and avoid stereotypes. Displays and learning spaces celebrate children's thinking, language, creativity, faith and achievements without creating unnecessary visual overload.

20. Staffing, Ratios, Qualifications and Supervision

The school meets the statutory staffing, qualification and staff-to-child ratio requirements applicable to its provision. Deployment is based not only on minimum ratios but also on the needs, safety and wellbeing of the children. Staff qualifications are checked against current Department for Education requirements where relevant.

Staff receive induction, safeguarding training, appropriate supervision and continuing professional development. Leaders promote a culture in which staff can discuss children, professional practice, workload and safeguarding concerns openly and seek support when needed.

21. Equality, Diversity and British Values

In keeping with our Catholic mission, we recognise the dignity and worth of every child and family. We promote equality of opportunity, challenge prejudice and discrimination and ensure that children encounter positive representations of the diverse world in which they live. The curriculum supports children's developing understanding of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance in age-appropriate ways, consistent with the school's Catholic character.

22. Monitoring, Evaluation and Governance

The Headteacher and Early Years Leader are responsible for the implementation and day-to-day monitoring of this policy. They evaluate curriculum quality, children's progress, safeguarding, inclusion, staff development and the quality of the learning environment. Governors provide strategic oversight, assure themselves that statutory requirements are met and hold leaders to account for the quality and impact of Early Years provision.

Monitoring may include learning walks, professional dialogue, scrutiny of planning and assessment, review of outcomes and groups, safeguarding checks, parent and pupil voice, moderation and review of the environment. Evaluation focuses on the quality of education and children's experiences rather than on unnecessary paperwork.

23. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if there are changes to statutory requirements, Department for Education guidance, safeguarding expectations or school provision. Operational procedures may be updated between formal policy reviews where necessary to remain compliant and safe.

24. Key References

- Department for Education, Early years foundation stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers (effective 1 September 2026).
- Department for Education, Development Matters: non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage.
- Department for Education, Early Years Foundation Stage Profile handbook (current version).
- Department for Education, Reception Baseline Assessment: current assessment and reporting arrangements.
- Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education (current version).
- Department for Education, SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Department for Education, Early years qualification requirements and standards (effective 1 September 2026).
- Department for Education, guidance on screen use in early years settings and safer sleep, as applicable.

Headteacher	Mrs Nicola Duggan
Chair of Governors	Remie Antao
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