



# St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Saffron Walden

## EYFS POLICY

No. STM-035

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## **1. Introduction**

St Thomas More Primary School is rooted in the teachings of Christ and the values of the Gospel. Our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision reflects our mission to nurture the whole child—spiritually, morally, socially and academically. We believe that every child is created in the image and likeness of God, unique and precious. Our EYFS environment fosters a sense of belonging, dignity, respect and compassion, ensuring that children experience a warm, inclusive start to their educational journey. Through our daily interactions, curriculum choices and relationships, we strive to embody our Catholic ethos so that children learn to love God, love one another and grow in faith as well as knowledge.

## **2. Aims**

At St Thomas More Primary School we adhere to the statutory guidance stated in The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage September 2025, and the four guiding principles that shape the practice in Early Years settings.

These include:

- Unique child – We recognise that every child is unique and is continually learning, resilient and capable, confident and self-assured.
- Positive Relationships – We recognise that children learn to be strong, secure and independent through positive relationships.
- Enabling Environments – Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners, parents and carers
- Learning and Development – Children develop and learn in different ways. The framework covers the education and care of all children in Early Years provision, including children with SEND.

We aim to create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent learners. We value the individual child and work alongside parents and others to meet their needs and help every child to reach their full potential. We aim to provide a structured, secure, caring and well-resourced learning environment both inside and out which meets all the individual developmental needs of ‘young learners’ and underpins all future learning.

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- Close partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

- That children are provided with opportunities for high quality learning through carefully structured experiences based on what the children already know and understand and upon which they can build;
- Promotion of children's confidence in themselves and in their abilities in order for them to work towards their full potential;
- Be prepared for 21st Century life by ensuring that each and every child is literate and numerate, as well as empathetic towards others, able to be resilient and ambitious to succeed in whatever they set out to achieve;
- That children are able to enjoy opportunities to experience success and feel proud of their achievements;
- That a positive attitude towards learning is fostered throughout;
- That we encourage and promote, curiosity, enthusiasm and an awareness of the world around them, promoting a respect for their environment;
- That children are provided with opportunities for social and emotional development in a secure and caring environment where all children feel valued;
- That children develop independence and individuality, whilst fostering respect and tolerance for others irrespective of ability, race, creed, gender or background;

### **3. Legislation**

This policy is based on requirements set out in the 2025 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

This document also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

### **4. Structure of the EYFS**

Children are admitted into Reception at the beginning of the academic year in which they turn five years old. Prospective parents and new children are invited to the school at the end of the Pentecost Term before joining the school to meet their Class Teacher, Learning Support Assistant/s, buddies and become familiar with their new setting. At the beginning of the Advent Term, children will then attend two full days with children who were born in the same term (summer, spring, autumn) with the youngest children within the cohort attending on the first two days. After their two-day settling in period all children will attend full time. The maximum intake number for Reception is 30.

## **5. Curriculum**

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2025 statutory framework of the EYFS.

We aim to follow 'Good Practice Guidelines' using the following principles;

- The curriculum is tailored to individual needs
- The Teacher and Learning Support Assistant/s try to capitalise on children's interests in order to achieve learning outcomes
  - Ensure that we are flexible and responsive so that plans could be changed or adapted to follow the interests of the children and respond to external events
- Always informed by on-going assessment;
- Grounded in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework.

The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 areas known as the prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The prime areas are:

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

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

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

The current curriculum map for EYFS can be found on the school website.

## **6. RE and Prayer and Liturgy**

Religious Education is a core part of our EYFS curriculum and is taught in accordance with the Religious Education Directory and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Children are introduced to stories from Scripture, the life of Jesus, the significance of prayer and the rhythms of the liturgical year through age-appropriate activities that inspire awe and wonder. Opportunities for prayer are woven naturally throughout the school day, allowing even our youngest children to develop a sense of stillness, gratitude and reflection. Children participate in simple class liturgies, collective worship and celebrations of the Church's seasons, helping them to understand they are part of a loving school and parish community. These early experiences form the foundations of their spiritual development and nurture a lifelong relationship with God.

## 7.Planning

The Early Years Curriculum is planned under 6 themes during the year. The EYFS Foundation Stage Framework and Birth to 5 Matters are used to ensure progression in learning

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests, and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve and exceed the Early Learning Goals. All seven areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which children explore, think creatively and are active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

We use the development statements in Birth to 5 Matters (2021) to identify next steps for each child to deepen, challenge and extend their learning. During planning sessions, discussion takes place to ensure activities allow for Characteristics of Effective Learning to be demonstrated and embedded.

Staff also take into account the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

Our pupils have personalised learning intentions for communication and language, personal and social development, physical development and understanding the world. Characteristics of Effective Learning ensures that we focus on the way in which our pupils learn and what motivates them so we can develop the essential behaviors that support learning. Play provision runs throughout the curriculum as it is the means by which children discover themselves, others and the world around them. Each term has a distinct and engaging theme, which forms the basis for that term's learning activities. This incorporates the children's interests and all those 'suitcase for life' experiences that childhood should contain.

The EYFS team work together to create long term and medium term plans using the EYFS based on a series of topics, each of which offers experiences in all seven areas. These plans are reviewed by the Headteacher. These plans then inform our short-term weekly planning, alongside our observations, which remains flexible for unplanned circumstances or children's responses. Regular assessment ensures that plans are reviewed and updated to accommodate individual and whole class needs.

### **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Reception practitioners plan activities within the classroom with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them.

The 3 characteristics are;

- **Playing and exploring** – children follow their own curiosity through investigation and experiencing new things, finding their own challenges and 'have a go.'
- **Active learning** – children are intrinsically motivated. They 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.

## 7.2 Teaching and Learning

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Practitioners respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive quality interactions.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year 1.

### **Continuous Provision**

At St. Thomas More we aim to ensure:

- A clearly defined learning environment designed to allow and encourage children to extend and deepen their understanding of the EYFS curriculum.
- An environment that facilitates independence, curiosity and hands on play-based learning.
- That continuous provision enables children to explore recent learning, practice new skills and follow their own interests.
- Staff enhance continuous provision throughout the year to keep it fresh and engaging for all children.
- Carefully chosen and organised high quality resources and experiences that are available for children to access independently across every area of their learning.

### **Outdoor Learning**

The environment, both indoors and outdoors, plays a key role in enabling and extending children's learning and development.

Children are encouraged to find and use equipment and resources independently and these are organised to allow all children including those with a disability and/or SEND to explore and learn in a secure and safe space. Free flow times enable children to move between indoor and outdoor areas whilst remaining in ratio following statutory guidance for the EYFS.

When planning for outdoor learning the school considers the following carefully;

- Free flow arrangements so children are encouraged to follow their own interests
- Extending the learning in the classroom – so that all curriculum areas are covered
- Health and wellbeing (PD, PSED) understanding nature and growing opportunities
- Opportunities for all

All children have opportunities to explore the outdoor learning environment. Focused teaching occurs outdoors and indoors and children have opportunities to interact with all members of staff. In line with the new split physical development which now focuses on gross and fine motor separately, each week there are two gross motor sessions within the outdoor area which will enable the children to develop the fundamental gross motor skills needed.

At St. Thomas More School, Catholic values underpin all teaching, learning and conduct, providing a context in which children's spiritual, moral and social development (SMSC) may take place. SMSC is integrated naturally within the planned learning outcomes throughout the Foundation Stage. In recognition of the Catholic nature of St. Thomas More School, we begin to teach the foundations of the Catholic faith and we

promote respect and love for others as we follow the Religious Education Directory. The children are taught simple prayers; respond to experiences and environments with wonder, curiosity and understanding.

## **8. Assessment**

On-going formative assessment is at the heart of our effective Early years practice. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers. We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of both formal and informal observations; staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning.

Observations within lessons are recorded on assessment sheets and play based (child initiated) observations are recorded in the children's individual 'Learning Journals' which can be accessed via the online site 'Tapestry'. Observations are used to inform the Early Years Outcomes Statements. At the end of the reception year the children's progress is recorded onto the EYFS Profile and each child's level of development is recorded against the 17 Early Learning Goals. We provide a written summary to parents, reporting their child's progress against the Early Learning Goals and the parents are given the opportunity to discuss these judgments with the teacher if they wish.

Tapestry is the online learning journal that captures the children's learning experiences through photographs and videos. It allows learning that takes place at school to be shared with parents, and is used as a way of showing a broader picture of a child's development. We use it with the following intentions;

- To gather information that informs our understanding of a child's development and next steps
- To ensure that our children have equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- To develop children's awareness of the learning process and to involve them in and be part of their own self-assessment
- To involve all significant people in a child's life
- To monitor the development and progress of every child
- To assist in the monitoring, evaluation and planning of the curriculum
- To share information with staff, parents/carers and other agencies

There are three points of statutory assessment which must be carried out during a child's time within the early years foundation stage (EYFS).

1. Progress review between the age of two and three
2. Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) upon entry to Reception
3. End of EYFS assessments against the Early Learning Goals

The EYFS Profile is the statutory assessment that takes place at the end of the EYFS, during the Pentecost term of the year in which the child reaches five, usually in the reception class. The EYFS profile summarises and describes children's attainment at the end of the EYFS.

At the end of the EYFS, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development (expected)
- Not yet reaching expected levels (emerging)

The profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are then shared with parents and/or carers.

## **9. Working with parents**

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.

Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development through Tapestry. The progress check and EYFS profile helps to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

Parents are also invited to attend a curriculum evening in September where they are informed about the content of the school day and are able to discuss the broad sheet or any other issues.

During the Advent term parents are also invited to a phonics meeting to learn about our phonics scheme 'Unlocking Letters and Sounds'. Parents are also invited to two parents' evenings to discuss their child's progress and development.

## **10. Transitions**

As part of the school's Early years setting there is a Montessori nursery on site. There are extremely strong links between the Reception Class and the Nursery to ensure a smooth transition for those children joining Reception at St. Thomas More. Transitions are carefully planned for and time given to ensure continuity of learning. At any transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings, including nurseries and childminders. Children attend introductory sessions to Nursery/Reception to develop familiarity with the setting and staff. In the Pentecost term the class teacher meets with the Parents to gather information about their child.

In the final term in Reception, the Year 1 teacher will meet with the Early Years staff and discuss each child's development against the Early Learning Goals in order to support a smooth transition to Year 1. This discussion helps the Year 1 teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children.

## **11. Safeguarding and welfare procedures**

Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy.

## **Safer Eating Procedures (EYFS Statutory Framework 2025)**

In accordance with the **EYFS Statutory Framework 2025**, the school adheres to the updated safer eating regulations, which state that children **must remain within both sight and hearing of a member of staff while eating**. In addition, all staff supervising children during mealtimes are required to hold a **Paediatric First Aid certificate**.

All members of staff at the school are fully compliant with this requirement and hold an up-to-date Paediatric First Aid qualification.

To ensure full alignment with the new safer eating guidance:

- **Reception children now consume their snack indoors**, seated on the carpet and facing the supervising adults, prior to going outside for breaktime.
- **All Reception children are supervised at the tables during lunchtime**, ensuring staff maintain continuous visual and auditory oversight throughout the meal period.

These measures support a safe and controlled eating environment and promote the welfare and wellbeing of all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

### **12. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed and approved by Mrs Stockdale, Headteacher and reviewed every 2 years.

At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

**Appendix 1. List of statutory policies and procedures for the EYFS**

Statutory policy or procedure for the EYFS	Where can it be found?
Safeguarding policy and procedures	See child protection and safeguarding policy
Procedure for responding to illness	See health and safety policy
Administering medicines policy	See supporting pupils with medical conditions policy
Emergency evacuation procedure	See health and safety policy
Procedure for checking the identity of visitors	See child protection and safeguarding policy
Procedures for a parent failing to collect a child and for missing children	See child protection and safeguarding policy
Procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints	See complaints policy