



ST. THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

MISSION STATEMENT

As a Catholic school, God is at the heart of all we do. We believe that each person is made in His image, deserving to be treated with respect and dignity.

Showing respect, love and care for everyone and everything, we aim to develop harmony between pupils, parents, carers, the school and Parish and grow as a Christian community.

Pupils will share in God's love, whilst receiving a broad and balanced education. We aim to enable each individual to realise their full potential, spiritually, academically, physically, socially and emotionally.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the following additional policies:

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Equal Opportunities

Inclusion

Teaching and Learning

Admissions

Behaviour

Date drafted: January 2025 by Stefannie Counsell

Date ratified by the Governing Body:

Date for review by Staff and Governors: January 2026

St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School

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1. Rationale

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five 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 together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up."

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DFE, November 2024

2. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School children can join the reception class in the year that they turn five. In partnership with parents and carers we enable the children to continue the process of becoming active learners for life.

'Where the magic begins and the adventures never stop'

Josiyah Martin

We endeavour to ensure that children start their school life with a positive and meaningful attitude to "learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe." We aim to support children in their learning through "teaching and experiences that gives children the broad range of skills that provide the right foundation for good progress through school and in life."

(Statutory Framework for the EYFS DFE November 2024)

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- **A unique child** – developing resilient, capable, confident and self-assured individuals.
- **Positive relationships** – supporting the children in becoming strong and independent.
- **Enabling environments** – where opportunities and experiences respond to the individual needs of the child by developing a strong partnership between practitioners, parents/carers and the child.
- **Learning and developing** – An acknowledgement that children learn in different ways and at different rates

A Unique Child

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning

are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration/ sharing assemblies and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

3. Inclusion/Special Educational Needs (SEND)

All children and their families are valued at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School. Children are treated as individuals and have equal access to all provisions available. All children are encouraged to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. Assessments take into account contributions from a range of perspectives to ensure that any child with potential special educational needs are identified at the earliest possible opportunity. Early identification of special needs is crucial to enable staff to support the development of each child. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage and the School's SENDCo (Mr Johnson) for further information and advice. Appropriate steps are taken in accordance with the School's Inclusion Policy.

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 wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate, engage 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 and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

4. Safeguarding & Welfare

It is important to us that all children in the school are safe. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits. We provide children with choices to help them develop important life skills. Children should be encouraged to take risks but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards to stay safe. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children.

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the latest Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage November 2024. We understand that we are required to:

- to provide an environment in which children and young people feel safe, secure, valued, and respected, and feel confident to approach adults if they are in difficulties.
- to provide a systematic means of monitoring the welfare and safeguarding of children.
- to develop a structured procedure within the school that will be followed by all members of the school community in cases of suspected abuse.
- 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.

5. Positive Relationships

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

6. Parents/Carers as Partners

We recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents/carers have played, and their future role, in educating children. We do this through:

- talking to parents/carers about their child before their child starts in our school;
- The children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school during several transfer, settle sessions;
- Offering weekly 'Welcoming Wednesday' stay and play opportunities for parents/carers and prospective children to become familiar with our school environment and staff:

- The children and parents/carers have the opportunity to meet their class teacher and teaching partner in their own home through a planned home visit. These are carried in the last few weeks of the summer term;
- Support children through the transition from pre-school to Reception with the children attending part time during the first few sessions. This is also to support staff and parents/carers in getting to know each other as well as the children;
- EYFS lead teacher to visit all Pre-school settings to build relationships and links to ensure smooth transitions.
- inviting all parents/carers to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school and curriculum workshops during the first half term of the child's Reception year in order to detail how we aim to work with their child particularly in relation to reading and phonics;
- Encouraging parents/carers to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. There is a formal meeting for parents/carers twice a year at which the teacher and the parent/carer discuss the child's progress together. Parents/carers receive reports on their child's attainment and progress mid-way through the year and at the end of each school year;
- arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents/carers: stay and play sessions, parent/carer 'Pop-in' sessions, school visits, experience days;
- providing parents/carers with an opportunity to celebrate their child's learning and development by providing feedback forms in their child's Learning Journeys or by commenting on observations on their Tapestry Online Learning Journey and Dojo accounts;
- by providing a quiet, welcoming, and confidential area where parents/carers can discuss any concerns.

7. Enabling Environments

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. The reception classroom is organised to allow children to feel comfortable and ready to explore and learn securely and safely.

We aim to create attractive and stimulating learning environments where children feel confident and secure and challenged. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discreet areas of learning with planned continuous provision. At St Thomas More we believe that the outdoors is the best place for children to learn therefore so much of our learning happens in the outdoor environment; investigating using our senses and exploring the wonders of the great outdoors daily.

'The best classroom and the richest classroom is roofed only by the sky'
Margaret McMillan.

Effective learning builds and extends upon prior learning and following children's interest. Effective planning is informed by observations of the children to ensure we follow their current interests and experiences. These observations are all captured on the children's individual Learning Journeys on Tapestry and through class floor books.

Play based learning is paramount and children direct their own learning from carefully planned opportunities provided by staff. Staff will enhance play and extend as needed to further individual learning.

8. Learning and Development

In Early Years, we believe that the child is at the centre of the learning process. Their interests and experiences should be valued and acknowledged as a starting point for learning.

'The child is the true curriculum.'

Sally Haughey

We will:

- deliver an Early Years Curriculum that deals with educating the whole child so that they are lifelong learners
- ensure that Early Years experiences build upon what children know and can already do
- create a happy purposeful atmosphere, based on children's interests and a spirit of co-operation between members of staff, children and parents
- explore the world through senses, feelings, and experiences, allowing young children to learn through well planned play activities
- provide challenging, active learning experiences, giving children opportunities to explore practical activities, make decisions independently, and develop problem-solving skills
- promote independence, confidence and a sense of responsibility
- provide a well organised, rich and stimulating learning environment both indoors and outdoors
- encourage children to explore, experiment, plan and make decisions for themselves
- ensure that we provide high quality care and education which enables children to achieve their endless potential for learning and development
- work together to ensure a shared understanding and consistent approach to developing children's learning
- ensure that we do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

9. The Curriculum

Our children follow a broad and balanced curriculum, underpinned by the latest EYFS curriculum which was effective from Sept 2021. There are seven areas of learning and development. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. EYFS Practitioners consider the individual needs, interests and stage of development of each child in their care in order to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These are known as the three **Prime areas** of learning:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)- here the children learn how to work and play, cooperate and function in a group, develop personal and moral values, understand themselves and others.

Communication and Language (CL) – here the children are encouraged to listen attentively in a range of situation's, giving attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity, allowing them to become competent talkers.

Physical Development (PD) – We aim to develop physical control, mobility, awareness of space, and manipulative skills. Established positive attitudes towards a healthy and active way of life.

These prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively and become ready for school. Practitioners working with the youngest children focus strongly on these prime areas, but it is expected that the balance will shift towards an equal focus on all areas of learning as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.

The four **Specific areas** are:

Literacy Development (Lit) – here we develop early literacy skills through reading, writing and phonics activities.

Mathematical Development (M)– here we develop mathematical understanding with a focus on practical mathematics and problem solving.

Understanding of the world (UW)– finding out about the world around them, other people, and features of the natural and man-made world. A foundation for History, Geography, Design technology and Science. We develop children's experiences of technology offering them a range of equipment and skills.

Expressive Arts and Design (EAD) – we aim to foster the children's creativity through exploring and using media and materials, developing, and using their imaginations and promoting dancing and singing.

These specific areas enable the prime areas to be strengthened and applied. Whilst we recognise that children learn and develop at different rates, there is an

expectation that the majority of children will attain a 'good level of development' by the end of their EYFS journey; this is defined as achieving the Early Learning Goals for all the Prime Areas and for the Specific Areas of Literacy and Mathematics.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect on the different ways that children learn and we reflect these constantly in our daily practice. The Characteristics of Effective Learning underpin the early years curriculum. These include:

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 to solve problems in their learning.

Learning through play

At St Thomas More, play in EYFS is an integral part of learning. We are committed to child-initiated learning and believe in learning through well considered play opportunities. Play is central to young children's learning; it is through play that children learn to make sense of the world around them. For young children there is no distinction between work and play. It is a serious pursuit, which enables them to develop concentration, explore ideas and expand their knowledge. Intrinsic learning thrives in an environment of low threat, high feedback and lots of fun, where many chances to learn are inherent.

We aim to encourage children to learn from the mistakes they make without facing the fear of failure. Effective play allows children to take charge over events and conquer fears. We also feel that it is particularly important as a tool for developing good social behaviours and prompting the use of critical and creative thinking. When planned effectively we believe that it helps to develop the whole person, motivation is intrinsic and children experience high levels of success. The types of play offered will be appropriate to the individual children's needs and include:

Child initiated – where the child has complete decision making and directional control of the play

Adult led – adult interacts with the play to extend and support children's learning

Adult initiated – where the child engages in activities set up by the adult

10. Teaching and learning in EYFS

Our curriculum is planned through a variety of different themes and texts, each of which offer experiences in all seven of the areas. Themes are planned with the children's current interests and abilities in mind, and vary in length depending on where the children take their learning journey. Children are encouraged to pursue their own interests daily, through child-initiated play, and are actively encouraged to share aspects of home life through our daily circle time sessions, 'Time to Talk' and class assemblies. We review our curriculum and environments in line with our new cohorts and any individual specific needs that a child has. We believe strongly that every child has the right to have access to the full curriculum.

Teaching methods in Early Years Foundation Stage will accommodate the different ways children learn and their various developmental stages by planning for the same learning objective in a range of different ways. These include:

- A multi-sensory practical approach as a starting point, building on the concrete rather than the abstract
- Praise and encouragement to establish an ethos in which individual achievements are valued
- A balance of groupings to include whole class, small collaborative groups, peer partner, individual, ability and mixed ability as appropriate
- A balance of child- initiated or freely chosen, adult- led activities and direct teaching, which includes modelling expectations delivered through indoor and outdoor play
- Provision of experiences which are appropriate to each child's stage of development towards the Early Learning Goals
- Teaching and learning meet the needs of all children including those working at a level that exceeds the requirements of the ELG's.

All EYFS staff are well informed about current EYFS policies, Curriculum changes and best practice. Staff are provided with opportunities to update and share knowledge and training. EYFS staff have time and opportunity to liaise with external agencies such as LA advisory staff, Advisory teachers, inspectors, educational psychologists, speech therapists, and occupational therapists in order to provide for individual children's learning needs.

11. Observation and assessment

Assessment is vital in ensuring that children are encouraged to follow their own interests and are supported at their individual stage of development. EYFS staff undertake sensitive observational assessment in order to plan to meet young children's individual needs. The EYFS Curriculum enables staff to observe children in a variety of situations and learning contexts so that we can learn about children's strengths and weaknesses, knowledge and understanding, interests and experiences, patterns of behaviour and stages of development.

Children are assessed throughout the year and against the 17 Early Learning Goals at the end of their reception year. All EYFS staff contribute to children's assessment profiles. We liaise with parents/carers and children's previous settings to build up a picture of what children already know and can do upon entry to school. We continue to liaise with parents throughout the year to build up a fuller picture of the child's learning and development and to share their children's achievements.

- Assessment takes many forms – photographs, written observations, anecdotal evidence, dated and annotated samples of children's work on tapestry
- On-going observations are made daily and inform planning and assessment
- Observation informs staff of what the child is doing, learning, and how involved they are in the learning process
- Profiles are moderated termly by EYFS staff to ensure consistency and we also partake in regular early years LWP cluster group moderations
- Pupil progress meetings are used as a tool to track children's learning and development and ensure that all staff and parents are aware of next steps to move learning on.
- RBA (Reception Baseline Assessment) and In-house baselines are completed in the first 6 weeks of every child starting school.

At the end of the year, each child is assessed against the 17 early learning goals and judged on whether they are on track or not on track in these areas. The Early Years Lead then collates the data and analyses the percentage of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in each of the prime areas and in Reading, Writing and Maths. This means that the children are working at or above the expected standards for their age in these areas. This is compared to Local and National data once released and a report is compiled to compare year on year trends and this is shared with the SLT and Governors.

Action plans are revised and written in line with trends for the following year. Parent's evenings take place in the autumn and spring terms. These give parents the opportunity to formally discuss their child's progress. An end of year written report is sent out in the summer term. This highlights the children's achievements in the seven areas of learning and comments on the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

12. Equal Opportunities

All members of the school are treated as individuals. We aim to meet the needs of all, taking account of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, age, special educational needs, disability, and social circumstances. All staff are aware of the need for the curriculum to reflect cultural diversity and the need to prepare pupils for life in a diverse and multi-faith society.

13. Health and Safety

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, there are clear procedures for assessing risk, which includes procedures for keeping children safe during outings and for any aspects of the environment or provision that may require a further risk assessment. Regular safety checks are conducted on the toys and equipment used across the EYFS and outdoor areas. Broken or damaged equipment is identified and fixed or disposed of as necessary.

In the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, there is detailed information and procedures to ensure the safety of the children.

In line with the EYFS statutory framework 2024, at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School we ensure;

- that there are systems in place so that medicines and the systems for obtaining information about a child's needs for medication are kept up to date. Medicines will not be administered unless they have been prescribed by a doctor, dentist, nurse, or pharmacist. Training is provided for staff where the administration of medicine requires medical or technical knowledge. Medicines (both prescription and non-prescription) are only administered to a child where written permission for that medicine has been obtained from the child's parent/carer." At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School a written record is kept each time a medicine is administered to a child and informs the child's parents/carers on the same day." (Statutory framework for EYFS 2024)
- Fresh drinking water is always available
- All children are always supervised when eating; snack time etc.
- Children's' dietary needs are recorded and acted upon when required
- Each classroom has a snack and sink area that can provide healthy snacks and drinks. The children are provided with fruit and milk every day.
- A first aid box is always accessible in the classroom and the First Aid room, and a record of accidents and injuries is kept. All EYFS staff are paediatric first aid trained.
- The Safety, Health and Environment policy and Procedures which cover identifying, reporting, and dealing with accidents, hazards and faulty equipment is in place.
- Fire and emergency evacuation procedure and policy is adhered to
- The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy states how mobile phones and cameras are to be used and stored securely whilst children are in the setting. Cameras that are used in school must not be used for staff own personal use. Staff are expected to wear clothing that supports them in getting to a child's level and playing and engaging with children at floor level.

Toileting

Children always have access to the toilets in EYFS. The toilets are accessed directly outside the classroom door. Should a child have additional needs and not be toilet trained, an "Intimate Care Plan" is produced with the parents/carers and two members of staff change the child discreetly in the school's disabled toilet.

14. Transition

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School we recognise that starting school has the potential to be an unsettling time for both children and parents/carers. From this we have established a strong procedure for transitions to ensure that our children and parents/carers are confident and secure throughout the process.

From Pre-school /Feeder settings

During the summer term prior to a child's entry into the reception year, the following procedures have been put into place to ensure successful transition:

- Parents/carers are invited to a meeting to ensure they know about school procedures and any concerns they may want to express.
- During the summer term parent/carers are encouraged to complete an "all about me" booklet. It is used during the Autumn term to support transition and to inform planning.
- Members of staff from St Thomas More Catholic Primary School make visits to feeder settings. And carry out home visits in the summer term to gather as much information as possible about the child in order to support the child's transition.
- Children from all Pre-School settings will be invited to visit school with their parents/carers through a series of 'Stay and Play' and Teddy Bear picnic visits.
- Children requiring extra support will have additional visits regardless of their setting. Often these children will have been identified as requiring additional support or may have recommendations from outside agencies.

From Reception Class to Key Stage 1

During the final term in Reception, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child. The Profile provides parents/carers, staff and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. The Profile includes on-going observation, all relevant records held by the setting, discussions with parent/carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution.

Each child's level of development is assessed against the Early Learning Goals. The profile indicates whether children are meeting expected levels of development (On Track), or if they are not yet reaching expected levels (Not on track). Year 1 teachers are given a copy of the Profile report together with a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities as part of a handover meeting.

The children also have transition sessions where they spend time in their new class with their class teacher throughout the summer term.