

EARLY YEARS POLICY

Version: 9

Name and Designation of Policy Author(s)	J McCormick, Assistant Headteacher	Is this a Statutory Document	Yes
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Version History

Date	Ver	Author Name and Designation	Summary of Main Changes
May 2015	1	Janet Hickman (EYFS Teacher) & Mandy Harris (Deputy Head Teacher)	Policy using new format (hence version 1)
Sept 2016	2	Jenny McCormick (Early Years Leader)	Changes made by new Early Years Leaders in line with advice from consultant to bring up to date with current practice.
Jan 2018	3	Jenny McCormick (Early Years Leader)	Updated with aims of EYFS. Minor changes to photographs/social media, keeping safe/health and safety, and 30 hours funding.
Jan 2019	4	Jenny McCormick (Early Years Leader)	Updates regarding Nursery provision, due to increased numbers.
Jan 2020	5	Jenny McCormick (Early Years Leader)	Updates regarding outdoor provision and Evidence Me.
Sept 2021	6	Jenny McCormick (Early Years Leader & Assistant Headteacher)	Updated for new EYFS framework and Reception Baseline.
Mar 2023	7	Jenny McCormick (Assistant Headteacher)	Updated with EYFS statement of intent, reorganisation of sections and DSL information.
Mar 2025	8	Jenny McCormick (Assistant Headteacher)	Updated with staffing changes and changes to Nursery finish times.
Sept 2026	9	J McCormick, Assistant Headteacher	Updated to reflect the EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers effective from 1 September 2026, including strengthened safeguarding and welfare requirements, children's screen-use requirements, safer

			recruitment/checking arrangements and related clarifications.
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Statement of Intent

At St. Catherine's R.C. Primary School, the EYFS curriculum is designed to encourage independent, curious and happy learners. We recognise children's different starting points and create a broad curriculum that maximises learning opportunities through cross-curricular links, which build secure foundations for their future learning and development as they move through the school.

St. Catherine's endeavours to create a Christian environment in which young people are encouraged to grow in faith and moral responsibility and to develop as whole persons striving to reach their potential through hard work and service to others in response to Gospel values. The Catholic Ethos and Values at St. Catherine's require that all children and adults engaged with this community are safeguarded from emotional or physical harm of any kind. This duty of care is shared by all in the manner appropriate to their needs and level of responsibility.

Our school vision plays an integral role in supporting the holistic development of each and every pupil: "Inspired by the Word of God, we continually strive to be the best Catholic School we can be. Within a stimulating and nurturing environment, we welcome and support one another; reach out within our community and beyond; and work together to live out the Gospel values in every aspect of our life at St. Catherine's."

This policy has been developed with the relevant guidance and legislation to ensure that each child has a happy and positive start to their school life, in which they can build a foundation for a love of learning. The school will meet the current EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective from 1 September 2026, alongside other applicable legislation and statutory guidance.

- Quality and consistency, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.
- A secure foundation through learning and development opportunities planned around the needs and interests of each child and assessed and reviewed regularly.
- Partnership working between practitioners and parents/carers.
- Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.
- A safe, healthy, welcoming and inclusive environment in which children can flourish.

Mission Statement & Vision

Our school community is rooted in the Gospel and the vision of St. Catherine of Siena. This inspires each of us 'To be who God wants us to be and so set the world on fire.'

- We are called to love one another as we seek to be the best in all that we learn and do.
- We celebrate and nurture the gifts, talents and skills of everyone.
- We commit ourselves to grow together in faith, love and service.

More specifically this means that we aim to:



Aims in the Early Years

- Provide a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging programme of learning and development for children as they begin their journey through school.
- Create an environment where children are encouraged to grow in faith and moral responsibility.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that establishes firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond, while enabling choice, decision-making, independence and self-confidence.
- Value what each child can do, assessing individual needs and providing appropriate support and challenge.
- Develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting children.
- Provide a caring and inclusive learning environment sensitive to the requirements of every child, including children with additional needs.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

The EYFS applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception Year. At St. Catherine's, our Nursery and Reception provision follows the EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers, which is effective from 1 September 2026. The framework sets requirements for learning and development, assessment, safeguarding and welfare.

- Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.

- Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them build learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents/carers.
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

To put these principles into practice, the school will build on what children already know and can do; ensure that no child is excluded or disadvantaged; provide a structure for learning that matches the needs of young children; offer opportunities indoors and outdoors; provide a rich and stimulating environment in which children feel safe and secure; and work in partnership with parents/carers.

The EYFS Curriculum

At St. Catherine's, Religious Education drives the whole curriculum. Lighting the Path is our RE framework and it gives children opportunities to learn more about themselves, other people and the world around them as they develop religious knowledge, skills and understanding. Organized into connected branches of learning per year, incorporating scripture, Catholic tradition, prayer, and Catholic Social Teaching. It also integrates the study of other world faiths.

Staff use Development Matters as non-statutory curriculum guidance to support the implementation of the EYFS statutory requirements. The statutory framework remains the source of the mandatory requirements.

The EYFS educational programmes comprise seven interconnected areas of learning and development. The three prime areas are Communication and Language, Physical Development, and Personal, Social and Emotional Development. The four specific areas are Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World, and Expressive Arts and Design.

Learning and Development

In partnership with parents/carers, the school promotes the learning and development of children so that they are ready for the next stage of education. Provision and practice are based on observation of children's needs, interests and stages of development. Learning is planned to reflect individual circumstances and provide challenging and enjoyable experiences.

All areas are delivered through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, practitioner modelling, guided learning, play, exploration and scaffolding. The curriculum is designed to support children to build knowledge and vocabulary, practise and embed learning, and apply what they know in different contexts.

Communication and Language

Listening, attention and understanding; Speaking

Spoken language underpins all seven areas. Staff provide rich back-and-forth interactions, frequent conversations, stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and model and extend vocabulary.

Physical Development

Gross motor skills; Fine motor skills

Children develop strength, co-ordination, balance, spatial awareness, agility and fine motor control through varied indoor and outdoor experiences, play, movement, small tools and creative activities.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Self-regulation; Managing self; Building relationships

Children are supported to understand and regulate feelings, develop a positive sense of self, become increasingly independent, care for their bodies, develop friendships and resolve conflicts peaceably.

Literacy

Comprehension; Word reading; Writing

The curriculum develops a love of reading, language comprehension, phonological and word-reading knowledge, and writing through transcription and composition.

Mathematics

Numbers; Numerical patterns

Children develop secure foundations in number, including deep understanding of numbers to 10, relationships and patterns, together with spatial reasoning and mathematical vocabulary.

Understanding the World

Past and present; People, culture and communities; The natural world

Children make sense of their physical and social world through first-hand experiences, stories, visits, community links and exploration of cultural, social, technological and ecological diversity.

Expressive Arts and Design

Creating with materials; Being imaginative and expressive

Children have regular opportunities to explore art, music, movement, role play and a wide range of media and materials, developing creativity, self-expression and cultural awareness.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

In organising and implementing educational programmes, the school has regard to the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning. They highlight children's attitudes to learning and their ability to play, explore, remain engaged and think critically.

- Playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, use what they know in their play and are willing to try new things.
- Active learning - children concentrate, keep trying when they encounter difficulties and enjoy their achievements.
- Creating and thinking critically - children develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and use what they already know to learn new things and develop strategies.

These characteristics inform teaching, observation, planning and discussion with parents/carers and are included in the Reception annual report where appropriate.

Planning

The EYFS curriculum provides the basis for planning throughout the Foundation Stage. Planning objectives are informed by Development Matters and the statutory educational programmes and Early Learning Goals. A two-year topic cycle is in place and a new topic is introduced each half term. These plans guide weekly planning in literacy, mathematics and phonics, while teachers adapt provision in response to children's needs, achievements, interests and starting points.

Planning is not intended to restrict children's experiences. Staff use professional judgement to ensure that the curriculum is responsive, ambitious and appropriately sequenced.

Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Practitioners observe children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning needs and use this knowledge to shape experiences and teaching. Assessment is proportionate and supports children's learning rather than creating unnecessary workload.

Evidence may include practitioner knowledge, observations, information from parents/carers and other relevant adults, and selected examples of children's learning. Recorded evidence is used where it is useful to understand or communicate learning; the EYFS Profile is based on teachers' knowledge and professional judgement and does not require a portfolio of recorded evidence for each Early Learning Goal.

The electronic system 'Evidence Me' by 2 Simple is used to collect and share selected evidence of children's learning journeys. Staff may make notes and link relevant learning. Observations can be shared with parents/carers, who may comment and contribute.

Other assessments include:

- Reception Baseline Assessment - completed within the statutory timescale at the start of Reception in accordance with national arrangements.
- EYFS Profile - completed at the end of Reception to provide a well-rounded picture of children's knowledge, understanding and abilities in relation to the Early Learning Goals and their readiness for Year 1.
- Where applicable, information from parents/carers, previous settings and other professionals is considered alongside practitioner knowledge.

Assessment is underpinned by reliable and accurate professional knowledge, responsible pedagogy, attention to what children can demonstrate consistently and independently, and a holistic view of each child's development.

Inclusion

All children will be valued as individuals irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. The Equality and Diversity Policy will support the school in meeting its duties under equality legislation.

The SEND Policy will ensure that children receive the support they need and are given the best learning experience possible. SEND in the EYFS is coordinated by the school's SENDCO. Provision

is adapted to meet individual needs, remove barriers and support children to learn at their own pace while maintaining high expectations.

The school has regard to the SEND Code of Practice and works with parents/carers, other professionals and relevant services where appropriate.

The Learning Environment and Outdoor Provision

The learning environment is organised so that children can explore and learn independently in a safe, secure and interactive environment, both indoors and outdoors. It consists of two Reception classrooms, a Nursery classroom and a shared outdoor learning environment. Areas are organised to support active, creative, quiet and collaborative learning.

Children have daily access to outdoor provision, subject to safety and circumstances. The outdoor area is treated as an extension of the classrooms and staff provide planned experiences alongside opportunities for children to make choices. The quality of teaching and learning is intended to be as high outdoors as indoors.

Children are encouraged to bring appropriate all-weather clothing, including wellingtons, coats and sunhats as appropriate. Outdoor provision includes bikes and scooters, a mud kitchen, stage, outdoor shelter, climbing equipment, bike track, literacy and mathematics resources and other resources selected to extend learning.

Toilet and changing facilities are hygienic, suitable and appropriately stocked. Children's privacy is balanced with safeguarding and support needs when toileting or changing. For further detail, see the Intimate Care Policy.

Safeguarding and Welfare

Safeguarding is central to the school's EYFS provision. The school follows the EYFS statutory framework effective from 1 September 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children, Keeping Children Safe in Education, Prevent duty guidance, local safeguarding procedures and the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The school maintains and implements safeguarding policies and procedures covering: action where there are concerns about a child; action where an allegation is made against a member of staff; use of mobile phones, cameras and other electronic devices with imaging/sharing capabilities; suitability checks for new recruits; and delivery of safeguarding training and support for staff to put learning into practice.

The DSL is the Headteacher and deputy DSLs are the Deputy and Assistant Headteachers, as well as our Pastoral Support and Family Liaison Leaders. All practitioners must be alert to safeguarding concerns and must report concerns immediately in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures. Where concerns about safety or welfare arise, the school will act without delay in line with local reporting procedures and relevant statutory guidance.

Where required, the school will notify Ofsted of allegations of harm or abuse by anyone living, working or looking after children at the premises, including where the alleged incident occurred elsewhere. The school will also notify Ofsted of the action taken, within the statutory timescale.

The school maintains whistleblowing arrangements so that staff, students and volunteers can raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice. Staff are expected to know how to access the school's whistleblowing procedure and to feel able to raise concerns without fear of reprisal.

Child absences are followed up in a timely manner. The school considers prolonged or unexplained absence, patterns of absence, vulnerability and home circumstances and follows the Attendance Policy and safeguarding procedures where concerns arise.

Health and Safety

All children must be safe in school. Staff help children understand boundaries, rules, limits and hazards while supporting appropriate, managed risk-taking. Health and safety checks are carried out regularly and daily checks are undertaken across indoor and outdoor learning environments.

There are designated first aid personnel and EYFS staff maintain appropriate paediatric first aid arrangements. Risk assessments cover the EYFS environment, extreme weather, outings and relevant activities. The school takes reasonable steps to ensure children and staff are not exposed to avoidable risks and can demonstrate how identified risks are managed, through a detailed risk assessment of the provision and environment.

The school promotes good health, including oral health, healthy eating, physical activity, hygiene and children's developing independence in personal care.

Safer Sleep

St Catherine's Nursery and Reception provision does not routinely provide sleeping arrangements for children. Where a child in EYFS needs to sleep, staff will follow the school's safer sleep arrangements and the statutory EYFS requirements. Children must be placed down to sleep safely, and any sleep provision must be appropriate to the child's age and needs.

The statutory safer-sleep requirements include use of a separate safe sleep space, a firm flat surface, appropriate bedding, keeping the child's head uncovered, avoiding overheating, frequent checks and ensuring children are within sight and hearing of staff. Staff will follow current NHS safer-sleep advice and the school's risk assessment and procedures.

Banned Dog Breeds

Banned dog breeds, including the XL Bully type, must not be kept or present on the premises at any time. This requirement applies regardless of whether the owner holds a certificate of exemption. The school will take reasonable steps to ensure that banned dogs are not present on premises used for EYFS provision.

Children's Screen Use

The school will have regard to the Department for Education's guidance on children's screen use in early years settings. Digital technology is used purposefully and in ways that support learning, communication and inclusion. Screen use will be balanced with active play, talk, physical activity, real-world experiences, books, creative activity and social interaction.

The Online Safety Policy and safeguarding procedures apply to the use of devices, cameras, image-sharing and digital communication. Staff will model safe and responsible use and will consider children's individual needs and developmental stages.

Medical Needs and Allergies

A detailed list of children with medical needs and allergies is kept up to date. Medication is stored safely and accessibly in accordance with the Supporting Children with Medical Needs Policy. Staff are made aware of individual needs and receive appropriate training, including relevant emergency medication training.

Parents/carers are asked to provide accurate information about allergies, medical conditions, dietary requirements and other relevant needs. Food and drink arrangements support children's health and safety and follow the school's relevant procedures.

Intimate Care

Teachers and teaching assistants employed in the EYFS support children with personal hygiene and intimate care in accordance with the Intimate Care Policy. Children's dignity and privacy are respected while ensuring safeguarding, appropriate supervision and the child's individual support needs are met. Parents are asked to sign an intimate care agreement upon their children starting in Nursery.

Staffing, Suitability and Safer Recruitment

All Nursery and Reception staff work closely as an effective EYFS team. Children have opportunities to work together during continuous provision while also receiving teaching and support within their class groups, key-person groups, small groups, pairs and individually.

Staff have a wide range of experience and expertise and are committed to continuing professional development. Induction and ongoing training cover safeguarding, child protection, health and safety, emergency evacuation, EYFS practice and other responsibilities relevant to the role.

Robust safer recruitment procedures are in place. The school verifies qualifications, references, identity and required criminal record checks before staff and volunteers work with children, in accordance with the EYFS statutory framework, DBS requirements and the school's recruitment procedures.

From 1 September 2026, the school will obtain the required enhanced criminal records and barred list checks for eligible persons aged 16 and over, including volunteers, in accordance with the statutory framework. New employees and volunteers will not begin working/volunteering where the statutory check is required until the relevant enhanced criminal records and barred list check has been received. No person whose suitability has not been checked will have unsupervised contact with children.

Staff and prospective staff are informed that they must disclose information which may affect their suitability to work with children, including relevant arrests, charges, convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings, subject to legal protections. The school records relevant

qualifications, identity checks, vetting, references and DBS information in accordance with statutory requirements and data protection law.

At least one written reference is obtained before recruitment in accordance with the statutory framework and the school's safer recruitment procedures. References are appropriately verified and safeguarding concerns are dealt with in line with statutory guidance.

Where a staff member is dismissed, or would have been dismissed had they not left, because they harmed a child or placed a child at risk of harm, the school will make any required referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Staff: Child Ratios and Qualifications

The school will meet the staffing ratios and qualification requirements in the EYFS statutory framework and the Early Years Qualification Requirements and Standards effective from 1 September 2026.

For children aged three and over in registered early years provision, where a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status or Early Years Teacher Status is working directly with children, the ratio is 1:13 with at least one other member of staff holding an approved Level 3 qualification or approved experience-based route status. Where an appropriately qualified teacher or equivalent is not working directly with children, the ratio is 1:8 with at least one other member of staff holding an approved Level 3 qualification or approved experience-based route status; the applicable Level 2 qualification requirements will also be met.

For Reception classes, class size and staffing arrangements will comply with the statutory framework and applicable school legislation. Reception class sizes will normally be limited to 30 pupils per school teacher, subject to the statutory exceptions and arrangements.

Only staff who meet the applicable qualification requirements will be counted towards the relevant ratios. The school will comply with the updated Level 2 English requirements effective from 1 September 2026.

Information and Records

Information is stored securely in line with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the school's Data Protection Policy. Staff understand the need to protect children's privacy and confidentiality.

The school maintains required information about children, including identifying information, parental responsibility, normal household arrangements and emergency contacts, as well as attendance, key-person and relevant safeguarding information.

Records are accessible to those with a professional need or legal right to access them. Parents/carers are provided with access to records about their child subject to applicable data protection exemptions.

Use of Photographs and Videos

Parents/carers are asked to provide appropriate consent for photographs and videos where consent is the lawful basis relied upon. Images may be used in the classroom, displays, the child's electronic learning journey and, where permission and other requirements are met, the school website or social media.

We ask that parents do not share private images shared by the school on social media to support the safeguarding of all children in our setting.

The Online Safety Policy governs the use of images, videos, text and electronic devices. Staff use only authorised equipment and follow safeguarding, data protection and image-sharing procedures. Children who are looked after, or whose parents/carers make an appropriate request, will not have their photograph used publicly where this is required by the school's procedures.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

The involvement of parents and carers is welcomed because partnership is crucial to children's learning and wellbeing. Engagement begins before children start Nursery or Reception through visits, information sharing and opportunities to meet staff.

Parent consultation meetings are held during the school year and parents/carers receive information about progress. Parents/carers can contribute to children's learning journeys through Evidence Me and can share observations, achievements, photographs and relevant information from home.

Teachers and teaching assistants are available at the beginning and end of the day for brief communication. More detailed concerns are addressed through an agreed appointment with the class teacher or EYFS Leader. Parents/carers are kept informed through newsletters, the website and appropriate school communication channels.

The school shares information about how the EYFS is delivered, the range and type of activities and experiences, daily routines, support for children with SEND, food and drink provision, relevant policies and procedures, staffing arrangements, the child's key person and emergency contact arrangements.

Provision

At St. Catherine's, full-time and part-time Nursery places are available:

- Full Time Nursery places: Monday to Friday 8.45-3:15pm.
- Part Time Nursery A: Monday 8.45am-3.15pm, Tuesday 8.45am-3.15pm and Wednesday 8.45am-12.00pm.
- Part Time Nursery B: Wednesday 12.00pm-3.15pm, Thursday 8.45am-3.15pm and Friday 8.45am-3.15pm.
- Two Reception Classes, up to 30 children in each, with full-time provision.

Full-time Nursery places have been offered in response to entitlement to funded hours. Parents have the option to rank their preferred choice of provision and are categorised according to the

school's Admissions Policy. Where applicable, parents may purchase additional hours directly from school. The maximum capacity in each session is 39 children. If spaces become available for children to move from part-time to full-time provision, the opportunity is offered in accordance with the Admissions Policy.

Transition

Starting Nursery

- During the summer term before starting Nursery, parents are invited to an information evening focusing on the EYFS curriculum, assessment, parental involvement and how they can support their child.
- Home visits form part of the transition process where appropriate, enabling staff to exchange information and get to know the child in a familiar environment.
- During the first few weeks of September, Nursery children have a phased entry, beginning with a stay-and-play session for a small group.
- Children then attend on a part-time basis for an initial settling period before moving to their full-time pattern.

Starting Reception

- Transition begins during the summer term before children start in September.
- Parents are invited to an information evening about the EYFS curriculum, assessment, parental involvement and preparing children for school.
- EYFS staff visit feeder settings as required to gather information and support transition.
- Feeder settings may complete a Setting to School document with information about attainment, characteristics of learning and the child.
- Children requiring additional support receive additional transition opportunities and, where appropriate, a gradual entry arrangement.
- Children visit their Reception classroom for a stay-and-play session.
- At the start of the new term, Reception children initially attend on a part-time basis for the first four days before all children attend together.

Moving into Key Stage 1

During the final term in Reception, teachers complete the EYFS Profile assessment against the Early Learning Goals. Parents/carers, staff and Year 1 teachers are provided with a well-rounded picture of each child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, progress against expected levels and readiness for Year 1. Information about the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning is also considered.

For children who have not met the expected standard at the end of Reception, appropriate planning and information are shared with Year 1 staff to support continuity. Tracking information in Reading, Writing and Mathematics may be used to identify learning priorities and additional provision. Children spend time in the Year 1 classroom and playground to prepare for their move to Key Stage 1. Parents/carers are invited to an information opportunity with the Year 1 team.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of all those working in EYFS to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Early Years Foundation Stage Leader, Assistant Headteacher and other senior staff will monitor EYFS provision as part of the whole-school monitoring system.

The policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there are changes to statutory requirements, safeguarding guidance, school provision or local procedures. The next scheduled review is Spring Term 2028.

Key statutory and guidance references

- Department for Education - Early years foundation stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective from 1 September 2026.
- Department for Education - Early Years Qualification Requirements and Standards, effective from 1 September 2026.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education - current edition.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children - current statutory guidance.
- Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales - current statutory guidance.
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Development Matters - non-statutory curriculum guidance.
- Department for Education guidance on children's screen use in early years settings.
- School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Attendance Policy, SEND Policy, Intimate Care Policy, Equality & Diversity Policy, Health & Safety Policy, Supporting Children with Medical Needs Policy, Online Safety Policy and Safer Recruitment procedures.

This policy should be read alongside the school's current safeguarding, health and safety, attendance, SEND, intimate care, medical needs, online safety, equality and safer recruitment policies. Where a statutory requirement changes, the statutory requirement takes precedence and this policy will be amended at the next available opportunity.