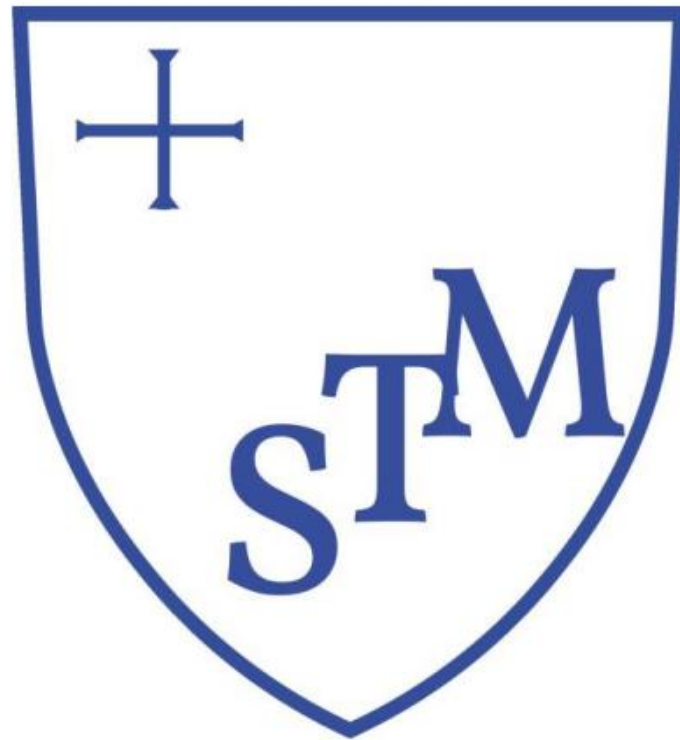


St Martin's C of E Primary School



Early Years Foundation Stage

April 2026

Principles and Ethos

St Martin's CE Primary School is a warm, welcoming and happy school. Our Nursery and Reception classes provide a secure learning environment where children are valued and where every child's unique learning potential is developed.

Warm and caring relationships are established and children are encouraged to develop their creativity and self-esteem. The children are taught in an environment which has high expectations for all aspects of behaviour and learning.

Aims and Intent

It is every child's right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and with economic well-being.

We offer a curriculum that is rich in wonder and memorable experiences and we work hard to provide a stimulating environment that provides exciting opportunities both indoors and outdoors.

It is our intent that all children are able to develop, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively, verbally and intellectually to his/her full potential. Each child is valued as an individual and teaching and learning is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates.

We understand that play is an integral part of learning and this is at the heart of our curriculum. We believe that the balance of adult directed and child-initiated play ensures the best outcomes for pupils.

We pride ourselves in building warm and positive relationships between staff and children, consistent routines and strong relationships with parents are key. We recognise the crucial role that early years' education has to play in providing firm foundations upon which the rest of a child's education is successfully based.

We aim to:

- provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child, including children with additional needs
- ensure that all children have trusted adults in the setting to enable them to feel safe and secure
- provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond
- provide opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development
- use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress
- ensure children make progress towards early learning goals by taking on different characteristics of effective learning
- enable choice and decision-making, fostering independence and self-confidence
- work in partnership with parents/ carers and value their contributions

- ensure that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development
- we are committed to equipping children with an inner moral compass based on Christian values

‘The values nurtured in the early years shape how children approach the wider world later in life’

Marion Dowling, 2014

Implementation

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. In our school, children join our nursery, as soon as possible after they are three. We offer both part time and full time nursery spaces, where children can attend a morning session, afternoon session, or stay all day. All children begin attending school full time at the beginning of the school year in which they are five.

We adhere and follow the expectations and welfare requirements laid down in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2024 and actively safeguard and promote the welfare of all of our children.

We also use the non - statutory guidance for the EYFS Development Matters 2023 to support planning and assessment of our curriculum and use ideas and principles from Birth to 5 Matters too.

We prioritise creating a rich language environment through the use of songs, nursery rhymes and high-quality texts. Through our use of CUSP structured story time, we deliberately enhance children’s language development and vocabulary, ensuring they are exposed to ambitious and meaningful language. We also provide time for high-quality interactions between adults and peers.

Trained staff ensure that these interactions are positive, purposeful and progressive, enabling children to flourish and acquire new vocabulary at pace, supporting them to become confident and effective communicators.

Children are encouraged to become early readers through enjoyment of books and systematic teaching of phonics. The children learn nursery rhymes and develop mathematical thinking through direct teaching and exploration. We want our children to become confident mathematicians who can apply what they have learnt to real life experiences.

Our learning environment is adaptable in order to reflect children’s interests and progression. The children are supported to learn to work together, manage their feelings and ask questions through skilled adult facilitated play.

The curriculum is taught through broad topics which are enriched responsively with enhancements directly from the children's interests. Trips and visitors are planned to explore and value our community and immerse children within real contextual learning experiences. Topics are supported by quality key texts. These are chosen carefully to encourage children's speech, language and communication development. All planning however, is flexible and responsive to children's needs so plans can be changed and adapted dependent on children's interests.

We value and understand the importance of parental engagement and believe that our parents have crucial role to play in their children's education, being their first and most enduring educators. We work hard to create strong partnerships between home and school. As part of the learning and teaching process, children are assessed termly in relation to their progress towards the Early Learning Goals. These judgements are made on the basis of accumulative observations in depth knowledge of the children acquired through ongoing formative assessment. These ongoing assessments are used to inform planning and next steps in teaching and learning for all children throughout the year.

The Principles of effective Early Years Teaching are:

- The Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

Unique Child

We pride ourselves in providing the best possible start to a child's education. All children within early years learn through play; exploring their surroundings and developing their characteristics for learning, with support from attentive and experienced adults.

Each child is considered 'unique' and their individual learning is catered for.

Positive Relationships

We believe it is vitally important to develop a partnership between all the adults involved with each child. By working together, we can provide knowledge of the 'whole child' to assist their future learning and needs.

Positive relationships are key to every child's education. We pride ourselves in developing excellent working relationships with parents, understanding their role as first and most enduring educators of their children.

Enabling Environments

We provide a stimulating 'enabling environment' both indoors and outdoors.

We provide a rich, multi-sensory learning environment where children can experiment and explore through first - hand experience, encouraging a sense of awe and wonder, whilst being able to ask questions and solve problems.

We provide a safe, welcoming and emotional environment where children are supported to achieve their full potential.

We develop children's independence, self-belief, confidence and a positive growth mindset.

Learning and Development

Staff plan activities and experiences that enable children to develop and learn effectively. In order to do this, practitioners working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime areas.

Staff also take in to account the individual needs, interests and stages of development of each child in their care and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience.

When a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking the relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

The seven features of Effective Practice

The best for every child

High-quality early education and care is inclusive. Children's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly. All children promptly receive any extra help they need, so they can progress well in their learning. Here at St Martin's we recognise that some children may come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and as a result could be up to 4 months (on average) behind their peers. First quality teaching and identification of the next steps, as well as seeking specialist support if necessary, is in place to narrow these gaps.

High quality care

At St Martin's we recognise that children do best when they are happy, safe and feel valued and cared for in their environment. All staff receive safeguard training and follow our EYFS feedback policy to ensure children are receiving the best quality care to enable them to make progress. When planning, the child's experience must always be central to the thinking of every practitioner, and these are catered for through teaching and learning opportunities within the classroom.

The curriculum- what we want the children to learn

The curriculum we provide our children is regularly revised and developed to meet the interests and promote awe and wonder amongst our youngest learners. The EYFS curriculum was developed using CUSP and structured story time books to redevelop the topics and make links to the wider world around them. This cross-curricular approach and ambitious vocabulary is designed to promote language development and builds towards Early Learning Goals using development matter statements to show progression.

Pedagogy- helping children to learn

Learning through play is a crucial part of early years development. Planning and teaching of new concepts is delivered through adult led activities and direction, with carefully planned activities and resources prepared for children to apply the taught skills through play with increasing independence.

Assessment- checking what children have learnt

Assessment takes place in many forms. Discussions with children allow adults to assess verbally what a child knows, and high quality dialogue and questioning allows the learning to move on and challenge children. Observations allow adults to know what a child can do, and what they need support with. Adults can then support the child during sessions to help them achieve.

Baseline assessments happen upon entry to our EYFS and half termly data is submitted to leaders to ensure all children are making good progress. Wellcomm data is assessed and children with a language gap are quickly identified so Wellcomm interventions can take place and narrow the language gap.

Self regulation and executive function

Language and play are a key part of supporting children to self regulate, think critically and develop their focus and attention. Adults use ambitious vocabulary to support children's dialogue, building upon children's comments. Play is supported through the use of carefully developed plans so children have opportunities to think, plan ahead and do.

Partnerships with parents

A holistic approach to teaching and learning within the early years helps every child develop and progress to their full potential. An open door policy upon entry and exit allows parents and staff to communicate any messages of what has happened that day that may affect the child. Parents evenings are an opportunity to share what the child is doing well in, and discuss what could be done as next steps. Regular play and stay sessions also give parents and staff a chance to discuss what is going well and identify any queries that may be preventing progress.

Application of the Principles of Early Years Education to develop good progress and development

Teaching

Each area of learning and development is implemented through a focus upon holistic enquiry, planned, purposeful play and a mix of adult led and child-initiated activities. As educators we look for creative ways to capture children's natural curiosity and shape their exploration in meaningful and purposeful contexts.

Practitioners are responsive to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their learning and development through warm, positive and focused interaction.

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.

Areas of Learning

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

Prime Areas:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication, Language and Literacy
- Physical Development

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

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other (although we understand that the prime areas are important in order for children to be successful in the specific areas). All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child - initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELG's) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

Characteristics of effective learning

There are three characteristics of effective learning; Play and Explore, Active Learners and Creating and Thinking Critically. We ensure children have the opportunity to engage in all of these types of learning as well as monitoring which of the characteristics they adopt during child - initiated time.

Children will **play and explore** their environment showing engagement by:

- finding out and exploring
- play with what they know
- be willing to 'have a go'

Children will be **active learners**, showing motivation by:

- being involved and concentrating
- keeping on trying
- enjoying achieving

Children will be **creators** and **think critically** by:

- having their own ideas
- making links
- choosing ways to do things

As adults we support our children by:

- fostering a desire to learn by nurturing active questioning and an awareness of the world around them.
- encouraging children to express their thoughts and ideas in a variety of situation.
- helping children to become competent speakers and listeners
- developing confidence by praising success and encouraging effort.
- Learning through play and experience learning first hand

The Learning Environment

The EYFS classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The classroom is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. The EYFS classes have their own enclosed outdoor area. This has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children an opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that help the children to develop in all 7 areas of learning.

Learning through Play

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. They have opportunity through their play to think creatively and critically, alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practice skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experiences at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them.

Values

Our Christian vision and values are apparent in every aspect of school life and begins in the EYFS. All that we do is underpinned by the modelling and promotion of five core values (FRESH). These values are:

Friendship
Respect
Empathy
Sharing
Humility

Through Values based learning in assemblies and taught sessions, children are given the means to use values to drive their thinking and behaviour. This supports pupils with beliefs about themselves, their actions, relationships and positive behaviour.

As a Christian based school, pupils have many experiences which are delivered using Christian values and this is a strong ethos within Early years teaching and learning which is reflected across the whole school.

Impact

Our curriculum and its delivery ensure that children, from their own starting points make excellent progress. We believe our high standards are due to our carefully planned environment, enriched play-based curriculum, quality first teaching and the rigour of assessment.

We teach every child as an individual and we are committed to the development of the 'whole child'. We want children to enter KS1 as happy, self - assured, independent learners with a thirst to learn and the confidence to know that they can do anything they want to do and that we will support them on their journey.

Baseline / Assessment

We make regular assessments of children's learning through a range of strategies. We gather a range of evidence about children's achievements using observations, sticky notes, adult led feedback and annotated photographs. Early Years Practitioners regularly discuss and moderate children's achievements and next steps with the team and these discussions are used to discuss gaps in learning. Interventions and changes to planning are immediately actioned and this enables children to have their learning personalised. We have a strong belief in using a range of Assessment for Learning strategies. This supports children in talking about their own and their friend's learning and enables them to lead their own learning.

On entry to Nursery and Reception the children's speech and language is assessed using Wellcomm. If there are any gaps in children's language skills they will access a Wellcomm Intervention and may be referred to the Speech and Language Therapist for a detailed assessment. Practitioners will then support the children to make good progress based around their personalised targets. We also use Early Talk Boost as a means to accelerating progress in language and communication and narrow the language gap between a child and their peers.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child starts reception, teachers will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

At the end of the EYFS, practitioners will complete the EYFS Profile for each child. Children are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals indicating whether they are:

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

The Profile reflects ongoing observations and professional discussions including discussions with parents/carers. The results of the Profile are then shared with parents/carers.

The Profile is moderated internally and in partnership with other local schools Teachers also moderate with other schools across Sandwell. EYFS Profile data is submitted to the Local authority.

Reporting

We use arbor to record progress throughout the year and make a judgement as to whether children are expected (or above or below expected). Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their progress against the assessment scales and the Characteristics of Effective Learning that the child demonstrates during play. We give a reasonable opportunity for the parents to discuss these judgements with the EYFS teacher.

Inclusion, SEN and Equal Opportunities

At St Martin's 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.

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

In our school we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the EYFS we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We meet the needs of all our pupils 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 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.

Please see our Inclusion and SEN policy.

Health and Safety and Safeguarding

It is important to us that all children in the school are ‘safe’. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological wellbeing of all children. (See Whole School Safeguarding Children Policy and EYFS risk assessment policy).

Welfare

“Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.”

We understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the revised Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2021. We understand that we are required to:

- Take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well
- Be alert to any issues for concern in the child’s life at home or elsewhere (in such situations the Child Protection policy will be referred to)
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- To ensure that any staff medication is kept in a location out of reach to children
- To ensure child to adult ratios are always accurate for age of children
- Promote the welfare of children.
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- To ensure all staff are aware of children’s health and dietary requirements
- To ensure fresh drinking water is constantly available and accessible at all times and healthy eating is promoted and snack preparation is completed by an individual with food hygiene certificate
- To ensure a first aid box is available at all times and any accidents or injuries are dealt with effectively, recorded and reported to parents on the same day
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children’s stage of development and individual needs.

- 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.
- Ensure at least one person who has a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate must be on the premises and available at all times when children are present, and must accompany children on outings.

It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal devices. Members of staff do however, use school cameras to take photographs for observations. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school's website.

We acknowledge that children will sometimes wet or soil themselves. We have a stock of clean clothes in school and change children in an open area outside the toilets. If the children have wet themselves, we will change their clothes as appropriate and inform parents at the end of the day. If children have soiled themselves we will encourage them to clean themselves as much as possible, parents will be phoned and informed.

We follow the St Martin's Health and Safety Policy in regards to administering medication in school and Sandwell's Management of Children with Medical Needs.

Parents as Partners

As parents and carers are the child's first educators, we believe that parents have an important role in encouraging children to develop positively. We hope that by parents/carers working together with staff, children will develop and sustain an eagerness to learn. We make it a priority to support parents in guiding their child's development at home. We ensure parents/carers are involved with the child's learning through:

- Invitations to 'play and stay' sessions with their children where they have the opportunity to play alongside them and discuss and queries or questions with Earl Year staff.
- Before children start Nursery, they will receive a home visit.
- We invite all parents to an induction meeting before their child starts school.
- Parent volunteers are involved in activities and purposeful play
- We ask parents / carers to be involved in contributing their child's interests to inform learning experiences tailored to the child.
- We encourage and provide resources for activities for children to do at home with their parents/carers.
- We provide workshops for parents to inform them how to support their child with phonics and so on.
- Children take home a 'Learning Log' which they are encouraged to complete with their parent / carer based on learning experiences that have happened during the week.
- Parents and carers are kept up to date about their child's progress.

All staff involved within the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. At our school the EYFS Teachers/LSP's act as a 'Key Person' to all children in EYFS, supported by our Learning Support Assistants.

Homework

We send homework on a weekly basis. This could be in the form of:

- Reading books
- Phonics
- Learning logs

Monitoring and review

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

The SLT and EYFS Phase Leader/ Subject Leaders will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.