

Excellence Together, Learning through Faith



St Mary's C of E Primary School

**Foundation Stage Brochure
2016-2017**

St Mary's School Foundation Stage Brochure 2015-16

The Foundation Stage unit comprises the Nursery and Reception classes who work closely, learning and playing together in the shared outdoor learning environment.

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Starting school

Starting school is an exciting time for both children and their parents or carers. All staff in the Foundation Stage have a clear understanding of the wide range of feelings you and your child experience during that time.

It is our aim in the Foundation Stage to make the transition between home, Nursery and Reception as smooth as possible.

There are two intakes into Nursery; September and January. Children going into their Reception year start in September.

During the half term before your children start Nursery they will be invited to come for two short visits in which they will be able to meet the Nursery staff and play with the other new children.

If your children have not attended Nursery at St Mary's and are joining the Reception class, they will be invited to come and spend a morning with the Reception staff and children during the half term before they will start school.

Wrap-around care

We work closely with St Mary's Pre-school who operate in the Foundation Stage unit. They provide a lunch club and afternoon sessions for children from the age of two and a half. Together, we provide wrap around care for children who are in Nursery. We share the indoor and outside learning environments and resources.

St Mary's also runs a breakfast club; this starts at 7:45am. Pupils are given a breakfast and have a calm, homely start to the day before being taken to their classrooms.

After school provision is provided by Pooh Corner and operates in the school hall until 6pm.

If you are interested in any wrap-around care it is advisable to contact the school office for more information, including costs and availability of spaces.

Parent partnership

Parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educators; we seek to work in partnership with you to support your children in their learning journey throughout the school. We have an open door policy and encourage communication between home and school. If you would like to chat to a member of staff, we advise you to either catch someone at the end of a session or make an appointment via the school office if you need more than a few minutes.

Children are given a home school link book when they start school. Please write anything you feel it would be helpful for us to know, however large or small. Sometimes children can be upset about something which may seem to be small to us, but can become large in the mind of a child. If we know in advance, we are better able to support your children should they seem withdrawn or upset.

Parent consultations, open classroom and open evening

We welcome parents into the school regularly to hear about and celebrate their children's learning.

There are two parent consultations a year. This is an opportunity for you to come and discuss your child's learning with the teacher/s.

In June, we have an open evening; this is an opportunity for you to look at the work your child has done throughout the year and to look at the other classes throughout the school.

Open classroom takes place once a month immediately after school or at the start of the given day in nursery and is an opportunity for your children to show you their ongoing work.

There are many other ways to get involved in the school such as the Parent Forum and School Association, please see the school prospectus or our website for more information.



The curriculum

We follow the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (EYFS), which provides guidance for all settings working with children from 0-5 years. There are 7 areas of learning, split into 3 prime areas and 4 specific areas

3 prime areas:

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

4 specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Art and design

Opportunities for the children to learn and develop in all these areas are provided mainly through child initiated learning with some adult led activities. Young children thrive in a rich and stimulating environment in which they can explore and discover things for themselves.



Personal, social and emotional development

This underpins all that we do in the Foundation Stage. Learning to share, take turns, resolve conflict and understand that some people have different views, cultures and beliefs to their's are key life skills which children start to learn at an early age.

Communication and language and literacy

Speaking and listening skills are developed in a wide variety of ways including; through role play, sharing information about home and family, playing, turn taking and sharing, adult led teaching times and stories. Phonics is taught throughout the Foundation Stage and is a key building block for the development of reading and writing. Language also supports all other areas of learning; the ability to communicate thoughts and ideas with clarity is an important skill. Once a week the children have the opportunity to borrow a book to enjoy at home. Take some time to talk about the book with your child, enjoy looking at the pictures, guess what might happen next in the story and remember what went before.

Mathematics

The children are given a wide variety of opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of number, shape, space and measures. Much of the work we do is play-based; the sand pit is an excellent place to develop all these concepts! We support and encourage the children to solve simple practical problems, for example how to sort out a coat which is inside out.



Understanding the world

All children love to explore and discover; the Foundation Stage garden is an ideal place for children to learn about the world around them. The digging area is always popular and provides many opportunities to learn about plants and mini beasts. It also encourages co-operative play, as they love to move the heavy logs from one place to another. Designing and making models involves learning how to use tools

and equipment, join materials together and test the finished product, children are naturally inventive and make some magnificent creations!

ICT is an important part of our lives. Both the Nursery and Reception classrooms have recently had new interactive touch boards installed. Children also have access to laptops and CD players. They are taught how to use and respect the ICT equipment. Also included in this area of learning are history, geography and communities, which include learning about diverse cultures and beliefs.

Physical development

The outdoor area offers a diverse range of opportunities for children to develop their gross and fine motor skills. All children are required to have a pair of Wellingtons and a waterproof coat at school at all times, ensuring that they can always learn and play outside whatever the weather. In the classroom, there is a wide range of tools and equipment to support fine motor skill development which the children learn how to use and to understand the importance of safety e.g. when using scissors. The children also have designated time in the hall.

Creative development

Developing the ability to express thoughts, ideas and feelings using a wide range of materials, role play and movement is an exciting journey. The children learn the skills to use materials for exploring different media and materials and to express themselves through music and dance. Role-play is an important part of young children's lives and helps them to make sense of the world in which they live and to prepare them to make a positive contribution to society as adults.

Child Initiated Learning (Learning through play)

Play underpins all development and learning for young children. Most children play spontaneously, although some may need adult support, and it is through play that they develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally

We provide a rich and carefully planned learning environment in which the children can play, explore and discover, with the support of adults, throughout the day. Through observation of play and assessment of adult led sessions, we record the learning of each child. Observations, photographs and some pieces of work are collected in a Learning Journal. You will be invited to look at this and share it with your child regularly throughout the year.

Supporting your children with their learning at home

Each week the children are given the opportunity to borrow a book to share at home. Enjoy reading this with them, asking questions and having fun. In Reception, reading books will be chosen by the teacher to reflect the needs of the individual children, we also send home a homework book regularly with a short, fun activity for you to share and learn from together. Reading books, homework and link books should be carried in a named, blue school book bag which should be brought into school every day.

Please see the Homework Policy for more information

Learning Journals

A learning journal is a record of your children's learning and progress during their time in Nursery/Reception. It includes pieces of work (chosen by adults or children themselves), annotated observations, some with and some without photos and contributions from home.

You will notice that the entries in the learning journal are annotated by practitioners. This is to help us identify what the children have been learning and how they have been learning. We do this by deciding which of the seven areas of learning and which of the characteristics of learning we have seen the child demonstrating. This helps practitioners identify any next steps that need to be planned for. The Characteristics of Learning describe the ways a child learns.

They are:

Playing and Exploring – engagement

Active Learning – motivation

Creating and Thinking Critically – thinking

Once we have finished with your child's journal we will send it home to you. It provides a wonderful way of preserving your child's memories and time spent in St Mary's Foundation Stage.

How we teach Phonics and Reading in the Foundation Stage

We teach reading using the *Read Write Inc.* programme from Reception. Nursery start with the government's *Letters and Sounds* scheme.

Learning to read is one of the most important things your child will learn. Everything else depends on it, so we put as much energy as we possibly can into making sure that every single child learns to read as quickly as possible.

We want your children to love reading – and to want to read for themselves. This is why we put our efforts into making sure they develop a love of books as well as simply learning to read.

How will my child be taught to read?

We start by teaching phonics to the children in the Nursery class where they focus on one letter sound per week alongside other *Letter and Sounds* activities. This prepares them well for the Reception year. In Reception they learn how to ‘read’ the sounds in words and how those sounds can be written down. This is essential for reading, but it also helps children learn to spell well. We teach the children simple ways of remembering these sounds and letters. Ask them to show you what these are.

The children also practise reading (and spelling) what we call ‘tricky words’, such as ‘once’, ‘have’, ‘said’ and ‘where’.

The teachers read to the children too, so the children get to know all sorts of stories, poetry and information books. They learn many more words this way and it also helps their writing.

How will I know how well my child is doing?

We will always let you know how well your child is doing.

We use various ways to find out how the children are getting on in reading. We use the information to decide what reading group they should be in. Your child will work with children who are at the same reading level as him or her. Children will move to a different group if they are making faster progress than the others. Your child will have one-to-one support if we think he or she needs some extra help to keep up.

How long will it take to learn to read well?

By the end of Year 2, your child should be able to read aloud books that are at the right level for his or her age.

How do I know the teaching will be good?

All the staff have been trained to teach reading in the way we do it in this school. We believe that it is very important that all the teachers and teaching assistants work in the same way. Senior teachers watch other teachers teaching to make sure that the children are learning how we want them to learn.

What can I do to help? Is there anything that I shouldn't do?

You will be invited to a Phonics meeting so that we can explain how we teach reading. Please come and support your child. We would very much like you to know how to help.

Your children will bring different sorts of books home from school. It helps if you know whether this is a book that your children can read on their own or whether this is a book that you should read *to* them. The teacher will have explained which is which. *Please* trust your child's teacher to choose the book(s) that will help your child the most.

Help your child to sound out the letters in words and then to 'push' the sounds together to make a whole word. Try not to refer to the letters by their names. Help your child to focus on the sounds. You can hear how to say the sounds correctly by searching on YouTube for Read Write Inc. Phonemes Pronunciation Guide or going to the following website for more information:

<http://www.ruthmiskintraining.com/teacher-support/17/index.html>

Sometimes your child might bring home a picture book that they know well. Please don't say, 'This is too easy'. Instead, encourage your child to tell you the story out loud; ask them questions about things that happen or what they think about some of the characters in the story.

We know parents and carers are very busy people, but if you can find time to read to your child as much as possible, it helps him or her to learn about books and stories. Children also learn new words and what they mean. Show that you are interested in reading yourself and talk about reading as a family.

Does it matter if my child misses a lesson or two?

It matters a lot if your child misses school. The way we teach children to read is very well organised, so even one missed lesson means that your child has not learnt something that he or she needs to know to be a good reader.

What if he or she finds it difficult to learn to read?

We want children to learn to read, however long it takes us to teach them. We will find out very quickly if your child is finding reading difficult. First, we move children to a different group, so that we can make sure that they have learnt what they need to know. If they still struggle, we give them extra time with an adult, on their own. The adults are specially trained to support these children. Your child will still be in the same group with the other children and won't miss out on any of the class lessons.

If we have any serious worries about your child's reading, we will talk to you about this.

Some children take a bit longer to learn to put sounds together to read a word, e.g. c-a-t to make the word cat. At our meeting, we will explain how you can help your child to do this.

Beginning and end of session drop off and collection

The gate is opened at 8:45 a.m. and closed at 8:55 a.m. If you arrive after that time, please drop your child off at the main reception front door with a member of staff. There is always a member of staff at the gate to the Foundation Stage garden to greet the children and answer any questions. After a few days we recommend that Reception parents/carers say goodbye to children at the gate and allow them to come into school by themselves, promoting independence.

At the end of the session, please wait to collect your child in the Foundation Stage garden. The staff will open the classroom door and let the children go when they can see their parent or carer.

Please note that, for your child's safety, we are not able to let your child go home with another adult unless we have instructions from you, either by writing in the link book or by phoning the school office and leaving a message.

The daily routine

The children self-register when they come into the classroom. There are activities set out for them to play with, which focus on developing their fine motor skills for writing.

After a short meeting and greeting time, they have an adult-led learning session followed by a time when they can choose how to take their learning forward. Carefully planned resources are set out each day to promote independent learning, enquiry and discovery.

A fruit snack is provided during the morning. The children can either drink milk; free for all children on completion of a form from the office, or water. We ask that all children have a named and freshly filled water bottle at school every day.

The children have another adult-led learning session towards the end of the morning. At the end of the morning the children have a time of reflection and prayer.

Nursery children finish at 11:45 a.m.

Reception children go to lunch at 11:50 a.m.

Their afternoon in Reception follows a similar pattern to the morning with a mix of adult led and child initiated learning.

We finish with a story and prayer and the children go home at 3:20 p.m.



The First week

In order to ensure a smooth transition for pupils we operate a staggered start in both Nursery and Reception. Towards the end of the Summer Term children will be given a start date. Each pupil in Reception will do a morning finishing at 12:00, then morning and a lunch finishing at 1:30 and then a whole day finishing at 3:20.

Celebrating in the Foundation Stage

In the Foundation Stage we believe in celebration! We celebrate birthdays, good behaviour, learning and achievements, kindness and anything else that seems appropriate at the time! Positive affirmation and encouragement are key contributors to raising self-esteem and confidence. (Please see Positive Behaviour Policy for more information).

We attend Church services along with the rest of the school. Please check the school diary dates for times. Nursery children attend services that take place in the morning.

General information

Detailed general information is available from the school prospectus on the school website www.stmarys916.herts.sch.uk

Uniform

All children in the Foundation Stage should wear school uniform (list in prospectus and on website www.stmarys916.herts.sch.uk) It has been designed to be practical and easy to put on and take off. In the weeks leading up to your children starting school, we suggest that you help them to be as independent as possible with dressing and managing their clothes when using the toilet. Although staff are available to help, we encourage them to do as much as they can on their own.

Please label all items of clothing and footwear clearly and check these labels frequently. It is very difficult to identify whose socks are who's without a label!. Children can become quite upset if they cannot find their clothes after a PE session. We recommend woven name tapes, as written labels fade quickly.

Please also ensure that they have appropriate outdoor wear. We learn outside every day, whatever the weather! Either coats or hats and sun-cream depending on the season and great British weather! All children require a pair of wellies.

Please provide a complete change of named clothes in case your child has a toilet accident, gets wet or muddy. These do not have to be school uniform and should be kept in a named bag on their peg. Please also provide a plastic bag for the return of wet or muddy clothes.

The school policy clearly states that jewellery and nail polish is not to be worn. If your children have pierced ears they may wear stud earrings which must be taped for PE. Only Reception pupils require a PE kit.

Kit list:

Full school uniform

Appropriate outdoor clothing for weather

Wellies

Change of clothes- named

Draw-string bag

Book bag

Lunch

Reception children receive free lunches. The menu for school dinners is sent to parents in advance so that you can help them to choose what they would like to eat each day.

Alternatively, you can supply your child with a packed lunch from home. If you decide this is the option for you, please provide containers and drinks cartons that your child can open independently.

Please give one week's notice if you would like to change whether your child has a packed or school lunch.

There are a number of children in the school who have a severe nut allergy. Please ensure your child's packed lunch is completely nut free.

Key person

Each child in the Foundation Stage has a key worker who will lead them in adult-led learning sessions and will build a special relationship with them. This helps the children to settle into school and feel safe and secure.

Home/School Agreement

When your child starts school you will be given a home school agreement. Please talk about the points with your child; he or she can then colour the smiley face and/or sign his or her name. This is a three-way agreement between you, your child and the school.

You will also be given two permission slips to sign; one giving permission for your child to use the internet within the Hertfordshire Protected Grid at school and the other giving permission for us to include photographs of your child on our school web site and in newspaper articles.

Illness and medication

If your child is ill and unable to come to school, please phone the office before 9:00 to let us know the reason for your child's absence. We also need a written note for our records when your child returns to school.

If your children have a stomach upset they must stay at home for at least 48 hours after the symptoms subside.

If your child is well enough to come to school but needs medication, please inform us in writing, label the medication with your child's name and fill in a permission slip from the office.

Monies

Please bring all monies to the school office on Monday morning, or Tuesday, if that is the first day of the school week. The School Secretary pays money into the bank on these days; we do not have the facility to securely store money in school.

Parking and holidays

When dropping or collecting your child, please do not drive into the school grounds as we do not have space for parents to park on the school premises.

In line with the other schools in Berkhamsted, we do not authorise absence during school term time for family holidays or days out except in exceptional circumstances. Please see the Attendance Policy on the school website for more information.