Review date – October 2027

God shines within our hearts.

Jesus walks by our side.

The Holy Spirit gives us strength.

EYFS Policy 2026

'All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years 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 provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential.' (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage)

Inclusion

We value all of our children as individuals at St Mary's Catholic Primary School, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. In our school we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve the best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

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 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 advanced, ensuring their unique potential is fully nurtured

Teaching and Learning

We recognise that young children learn best through a balance of structured, adult-led activities and purposeful, child-initiated play. We create a stimulating indoor and outdoor environment that encourages exploration, critical thinking, and active learning.

Review date – October 2027

The Prime and Specific Areas of Learning

Our curriculum is built around the seven areas of learning and development outlined in the EYFS Statutory Framework. All areas are interconnected and delivered through practical, hands-on experiences:

Prime Areas (Fundamental for all learning):

- **Communication and Language:** Developing listening, attention, vocabulary, and speaking skills through storytelling, role-play, and high-quality interactions.
- **Physical Development:** Enhancing gross motor skills (running, climbing) and fine motor skills (writing, using tools) to promote coordination, health, and well-being.
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development:** Helping children understand their feelings, form positive relationships, build self-regulation, and develop a strong sense of self-worth.

Specific Areas (Through which the prime areas are strengthened and applied):

- **Literacy:** Developing a love for reading through phonics (linking sounds to letters), shared reading, and early writing exploration.
- **Mathematics:** Building a deep understanding of numbers, counting, patterns, shapes, and spatial reasoning.
- **Understanding the World:** Guiding children to make sense of their physical surroundings, their community, and the wider world through exploration and observation.
- **Expressive Arts and Design:** Nurturing creativity through art, music, dance, imagination, and design technology.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

When planning and guiding children's activities, our practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn. We focus on the three characteristics of effective learning:

- **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 for doing things

Assessment, Tracking, and Reporting

Assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. It is used to monitor children's progress, identify any learning needs, and shape future planning to ensure every child achieves their full potential.

Formative Assessment (Day-to-Day Observations)

Assessment in the EYFS is primarily carried out through ongoing, day-to-day observations of the children in a wide range of situations.

- **Observation Practice:** Practitioners observe children during child-initiated play, outdoor learning, and adult-led activities to capture their true skills and understanding.

- **Purposeful Documentation:** Observations are used directly to inform next steps in learning. We ensure that documentation is purposeful and does not take staff away from interacting and playing with the children.

- **Phonics Tracking:** Regular, focused checks are carried out to monitor early reading and phonic sound acquisition, allowing for immediate intervention if a child falls behind.

Summative Assessment

We measure progress against developmental milestones at key points throughout the year:

- **Baseline Assessment:** Within the first six weeks of entering Reception, children complete the statutory **Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)**. This provides a snapshot of their starting points in mathematics, literacy, communication, and language.

- **Termly Tracking:** Internal school data is updated termly to track progress across the seven areas of learning, ensuring that targeted support is given to individuals or groups who need it.

The EYFS Profile (End of Foundation Stage)

In the final term of the reception year, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child.

- **Early Learning Goals (ELGs):** Each child is assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals. Practitioners determine whether the child is meeting the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS (**Expected**), or is not yet reaching this level (**Emerging**).

- **Good Level of Development (GLD):** A child achieves a Good Level of Development if they meet the expected standard in the Prime areas (Communication and Language; Physical Development; and Personal, Social, and Emotional Development) as well as the Specific areas of Literacy and Mathematics.

Reporting to Parents and Carers

We value parents and carers as partners in their child's education.

- **Regular Dialogues:** Parents are kept informed of their child's progress through parents' evenings and informal updates.

- **End-of-Year Report:** Parents receive a written summary of their child's achievements at the end of the year, detailing their progress against the ELGs and a commentary on their individual Characteristics of Effective Learning.

Health, Safety, and Wellbeing: Safer Eating and Sleeping

The physical safety and welfare of our children are paramount. We strictly implement the statutory safeguarding and health requirements regarding safer eating and safe sleep environments.

Safer Eating and Choking Prevention

Mealtimes are closely managed to minimise the risk of choking, manage allergies, and ensure proper hygiene.

- **Supervision:** Children are constantly supervised while eating. Staff are vigilant during lunch and snack times to ensure they face the children and maintain clear lines of sight.

- **First Aid Qualifications:** At least one staff member who holds a current **Paediatric First Aid (PFA) certificate** is physically present in the room at all times while children are eating. All staff have received anaphylactic training.
- **Dietary and Allergy Management:** Comprehensive details regarding individual food allergies, dietary restrictions, and medical requirements are gathered from parents as child starts at the school. Highly visible, up-to-date **Allergy Plans** are maintained, and all staff interacting with children are trained to verify safe food delivery.
- **Food Preparation:** In line with DfE Food Safety Guidelines, high-risk foods are carefully prepared.

Safer Sleeping Arrangements

- For children in our EYFS setting who require rest or sleep during the school day, we adhere strictly to national safety standards to eliminate sudden infant death risks.

Safeguarding, Welfare, and Health

We take our statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all our children seriously. We strictly align our daily practices with the latest national guidance to ensure a safe, secure learning environment.

Accidents, Illness, and Medicine Administration

We maintain clear protocols for managing medical issues swiftly and effectively.

- **Medication Administration:** Prescription medicines will only be administered if they have been prescribed by a doctor, dentist, nurse, or pharmacist, and only after written parental consent is obtained.
- **Illness Exclusions:** Children who are unwell with communicable conditions (e.g., vomiting, diarrhoea, high temperatures) must follow our strict exclusion periods (48 hours clear for sickness) to safeguard the rest of the school cohort.
- **Accident Reporting:** All accidents, head bumps, or injuries sustained at school are recorded formally. Parents are notified immediately of any head injuries, and all minor injuries are communicated via written slips at the end of the day

Dogs on Site

Under the statutory framework, registered childcare cannot be delivered from any premises where a banned dog breed is kept or present.

- Zero-Tolerance Rule: In line with Section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, no banned breeds (including but not limited to XL Bullies, Pit Bull Terriers, Japanese Tosas, Dogo Argentinos, and Fila Brasileiros) are permitted on school property under any circumstances. Childcare operations will immediately cease if a banned breed is found to be present.
- Parent Dogs: Parents, carers, and visitors are strictly prohibited from bringing family pets onto the school grounds during drop-off, pick-up, or any other school event. This applies whether the dog is on a lead, loose, or being carried.

Passive Digital Screen Time Restrictions

In strict alignment with current EYFS framework rules regarding digital device usage for children aged 2 to 5, we ensure technology is used solely as an active learning catalyst.

- **No Passive Viewing:** Digital screens, televisions, and tablets are never used for passive entertainment, background noise or behaviour management.

- **Intentional Learning Only:** Screen use is strictly limited, pre-planned, and directly integrated into the learning curriculum (e.g., interactive phonics games, modeling a digital drawing tool, or viewing a short educational clip to enhance understanding of a topic).
- **Interactive Co-Viewing:** When screens are utilised, staff interactively co-view with the children, asking questions and encouraging dialogue to scaffold vocabulary and communication.

Safer Recruitment and Vetting

We ensure that all adults who come into regular contact with our children are fully vetted and suitable to work with young children.

- **Enhanced Disclosure:** All employees, regular volunteers, and governors undergo an **Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** check with a barred list check before commencing work.
- **Disqualification Requirements:** Staff are required to declare any changes to their health or personal circumstances—including any criminal convictions or cautions—that may affect their suitability to work with children

Partnership with Parents and Carers

We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educators. We value a close, collaborative relationship to ensure each child feels secure, happy, and ready to learn.

- **Open-Door Policy:** We maintain an open-door policy where parents can speak informally with staff at the beginning or end of the school day to share information or discuss concerns.
- **Home Learning Links:** We share regular curriculum updates via class dojo and practical ideas so parents can confidently support their child's early reading, phonics, and math skills at home.
- **Parent Consultations:** Formal parent-teacher meetings are held to discuss progress, celebrate achievements, and collaboratively set next steps for development.