ENGLISH MARTYRS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Early Years Foundation Policy

Date of Approval	**19.05.26**
Date of Next Review	**19.05.2028**
Review led by	**Headteacher**
Approved by	**FGB**
This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:	
Notes	

School Mission Statement

Our Mission statement demonstrates our commitment to inclusion at English Martyrs school:

To accept each individual as they are and to enable them to develop their full potential within a Christ-centred, worshipping community in a spirit of love, happiness and understanding

Early Years Policy March 2026

Our Vision

In Early Years we want the children to be happy, safe and excited about learning. We want them to make the best possible start to their school life and to feel part of the spiritual family of English Martyrs Catholic Primary School. We want to enable them to develop their full potential within a Christ-centred, worshipping community in a spirit of love, happiness and understanding.

Our school values of Community, Respect, Inspire and Belief are reflected in everything that we do. Early Years is about showing the children what an important part of our community they are (e.g., shared experiences with Year 6 buddies and working with Parish Priests), showing them how we respect them and how they can demonstrate respect to others. We aim to inspire them with our environment and provide opportunities for curiosity, exploration and challenge. We show belief in them and support them to believe in themselves and take risks in their learning.

"All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life…" (EYFS Statutory Framework, 2023)

At English Martyrs, the staff work collaborative so that all children secure strong foundations in early literacy, language, mathematics and social development so that they are well prepared for Key Stage 1 and beyond.

Aims and Principles

The EYFS is based on four guiding principles:

A Unique Child

Every child is a competent learner who develops in individual ways. Children's attitudes to learning are shaped by the feedback they receive.

We ensure that children have equitable access to the foundational knowledge which will be essential to later learning, particularly vocabulary, phonological awareness and number sense.

Positive Relationships

We build caring, respectful relationships with children and parents and work in partnership to support each child's development.

Enabling Environments

We recognise the environment as central to learning. It reflects children's interests, provides challenge, and promotes independence.

Our environment is intentionally structured so that children repeatedly meet key concepts in meaningful contexts, supporting cumulative knowledge-building.

Learning and Development

Children learn in different ways and at different rates, and all learning areas are interconnected.

Our curriculum is coherently sequenced, ensuring that essential pre-skills—such as early listening, attention, fine-motor control, phonological awareness, and subitising—are secured before more complex learning is introduced.

Transition into school

We support transition by:

- Providing clear information to families
- Visiting feeder settings
- Holding stay-and-play sessions
- Sending welcome letters
- Conducting home visits
- Gradually introducing routines
- Running settling-in meetings

We also ensure that transition includes sharing knowledge of children's existing foundational skills across early literacy, numeracy and communication. We also prioritise knowing which of our children have existing barriers to learning, for example, through being disadvantaged or having Special Educational Needs, so that we are able to prioritise these children immediately when they join our school.

Our learning environment

We use Common Play Behaviours to structure our learning environment.

Our environment:

- Reflects children's interests
- Uses diverse materials that reflect community and world
- Is organised for independence
- Provides opportunities for risk-taking and deep play
- Avoids stereotypes and bias
- Draws on the local environment for real experiences

We ensure resources enhance learning by prioritising materials that support foundational knowledge, repeated practice and conceptual understanding.

Teaching & learning

At English Martyrs, we:

- Follow the EYFS curriculum
- Build learning from children's ideas and interests
- Use high-quality interactions to deepen thinking
- Provide rich continuous provision and focused activities
- Celebrate effort and normalise mistakes
- Work in partnership with families via Tapestry

Adults provide precise modelling of language, thinking and vocabulary. We avoid curriculum overload and focus on key knowledge and skills that make the greatest difference to children's progress.

We prioritise spoken language, early reading behaviours, phonological awareness, number sense, and repeated practice of essential content to secure fluency.

Behaviour (including relational development)

At English Martyrs, we:

• Celebrate positive behaviour
• Communicate with parents about behaviour
• Model polite and respectful interactions
• Provide clear and consistent expectations
• Support children to make good choices
• Use Individual Behaviour Plans where needed
• Follow whole-school behaviour and anti-bullying policies

We understand that young children are still developing key social and emotional skills when they enter school, and that this does not always progress in a linear fashion, particularly for our children who have barriers to learning. Social development progresses through key stages (such as parallel play, associative play, and cooperative play) during Early Years and beyond into Key Stage 1. It is developmentally normal for young children to communicate emotions physically before they acquire the vocabulary and self-regulation to express themselves verbally. We recognise that physical actions such as pushing or hitting often reflect emotional overwhelm rather than intent.

Equally, at English Martyrs we recognise that having disagreements with peers is a natural part of social learning. We explicitly teach children how to repair relationships through co-regulation, supported conversations and adult-modelled empathy.

Our approach is relational: we model, explicitly teach and reinforce behaviour expectations rather than assume prior knowledge.

Observation & assessment

Assessment includes:

- Reception Baseline Assessment
- Termly assessments of progress towards meeting the Early Learning Goals
- Ongoing observations
- Termly progress meetings
- EYFS Profile
- Internal and external moderation

Our assessment focuses on identifying gaps in foundational knowledge—early language, vocabulary, phonological awareness, number concepts—and guides responsive teaching. We also recognise the significance of children's Personal, Social and Emotional Development in Early Years as a key indicator for future attainment, and ensure that we carefully monitor children's development in this aspect of their learning and identify where additional support may be needed.

We ensure that when children move on from Early Years into the next stage of their learning, there is careful transition and discussion between staff. Not only do the next teachers know outcomes in terms of Early Learning Goals, but there is also a clear understanding of which aspects of key foundational knowledge the child has secured and which need further teaching and / or practice.

SEN & Inclusion

At English Martyrs we:

- Value all children
- Adapt planning for diverse needs
- Partner with parents
- Identify potential SEND early
- Follow an assess–plan–do–review cycle

Children who begin with lower starting points receive targeted support and structured practice to secure essential knowledge before moving on.

Safeguarding & Welfare

We prioritise children's safety and comply with statutory guidance. Daily safety checks include:

- Boundaries
- Water hazards
- Equipment safety
- Hygiene
- Fire safety

- Safe storage

We also recognise that a predictable, safe environment supports children's emotional regulation and social confidence. We teach children the routines that they need to feel comfortable and secure, and ensure that they know that adults are there to support them with any problems – in or outside of school – and what they can do if they need help. We log any concerns for our children on CPOMS and work closely with our DSLs to access external support as needed.