

Welcome to St. Mary's C of E Primary School

A very warm welcome to St. Mary's C of E (Aided) Primary School. Thank you for choosing our school to support your child on the first steps of their learning journey. We look forward to working with you to ensure your child feels both happy and safe and also thrives developmentally and academically.

Our School Aims for Pupils

At St. Mary's School we aim to provide a secure, inclusive and purposeful environment in which we can all learn. All our pupils, staff and visitors should feel valued, cared for, listened to and encouraged to challenge themselves to be the best that they can be. We aim to identify and remove barriers to success for all those in our school community and visitors to the school with disabilities.

School Aims at St. Mary's are that all pupils will:

- Develop into happy and confident individuals with a secure foundation in learning that will last throughout their lives.
- Be happy, healthy and feel safe and valued in school.
- Develop lively and enquiring minds gaining knowledge with understanding.
- Develop tolerance and have respect for the rights and views of others.
- Establish a command of the subjects contained in the National Curriculum to enable them to achieve to their potential.
- Appreciate each other's achievements and aspirations.
- Understand and value the religious and moral beliefs from their own and other cultures.
- Develop knowledge, skills and attributes to enable them to become caring and responsible members of a diverse society.

Preparing Your Child for School: A Guide for Parents and Guardians

The period before a child starts school for the first time can be an anxious time for parents. We have put together the following information as a simple guide to how you can best prepare your child for this exciting time in their lives!

Promoting Independence

Your child will really benefit from being as independent as possible when they start school. Of course teaching staff will always be on hand to help, but children feel a real sense of achievement when they can accomplish things by themselves! Examples include being able to dress and undress independently, as this will really help with PE sessions. Learning to tie shoelaces can be tricky, so provide opportunities to practise this skill and also explore different types of fastenings, for example Velcro. Children in Reception will also have access to an outdoor space throughout the day, so being able to put their coat on and zip it up independently will really help them - as will being able to put on a pair of shoes or taking off their jumper when they get hot. It also means that they can get straight to their playing and learning without having to stop and ask an adult for help!

Another important part of being independent at school is being able to use the toilet independently, including washing and drying their hands. It will also be helpful if they are able to blow their nose on a tissue and put it in the bin. Having lunch independently may also be new to your child. If they will be having hot dinners, practise using a knife, fork and spoon. If they are taking a packed lunch, practise opening the packets and containers of food they will be taking.

Your child will also really benefit from having experienced being away from you for short periods of time, such as going to a friend's house to play. This will really develop their confidence and independence and stand them in good stead when it comes to saying goodbye on that first morning at school.

Social Skills

Being able to interact appropriately with other children and share resources is a key skill that will help your child when they start school. Play dates with other children will help to promote these skills and you could arrange these with future classmates if possible. During the play date, you can model useful social phrases such as 'my turn please' or 'let's share' and join in with pretend play to start the game off and then fade out as children get into character.

Communication and Language

Many parents worry if their child will be able to tell the teacher if they need something or if they will make friends. Good communication skills underpin these abilities. Your child may be starting school with identified communication difficulties, or you may have concerns that have not yet been addressed. We know that parents can have a huge impact on their child's talking and listening development and the summer is a perfect time for trying out simple language boosting activities. Please speak to us if you have any concerns.

Listening and Attention skills

Your child will be given many spoken instructions throughout the school day and will need to be able to shift their attention from what they are doing to listening to what the teacher is saying. A lovely activity to promote this is to go on a 'listening walk' where your child listens for all the sounds around them in the park or town centre. You could also jot down all the sounds your child notices and talk about these back at home to retell the journey based on the sounds they heard.

Vocabulary Development

At school, children will be expected to start extending their vocabulary, so it is a good idea to encourage your child to learn and use new words. You could play sorting games when packing a suitcase, as this is a great way to help word categorisation, which is important for vocabulary learning. Items can be sorted into different piles, such as clothing, toys and things for washing ourselves. Outdoor 'treasure hunts' work well too. Collecting objects found on walks in the park or on the beach helps to introduce new types of vocabulary, such as describing words. Treasure can also then be used to create feely bags, where objects have to be described by the way they feel before revealing what the object is.

Teachers do not expect children to know their alphabet or be able to write sentences when they start school. A good foundation in sound awareness skills such as rhyming and identifying what sound a word begins with would be helpful. Sharing songs and books is a really good way to support this. You could also say the sounds that letters make, along with their names as you come across them day-to-day. Encourage your child to develop an interest in books and other forms of text, for example comics, postcards, labels and posters. You could visit your local library and encourage your child to choose books they would like to listen to and look at. Read with your child and discuss what you have read, for example, ask what they liked about it. Consider reading books about 'starting school' with your child. Use these to discuss all the fun activities they will be doing at school.

Mathematical Development

Counting Verbally and One to One.

Being able to count verbally to at least 20 will be of great benefit to a child starting school. Practise counting up to 20, and backwards too. One to one counting can also be done incidentally throughout the day, for example counting steps as your child climbs the stairs. You can count anything, for instance how many lampposts are on the street, how many houses have a red door, how many pieces of fruit are in the bowl (and how many did we have yesterday), how many pencils fit in the pencil case, etc. You can also do this when giving things out, for example: "an ice cream for you, an ice cream for Susie and one for me - 1,2,3 ice creams!" Encourage reliable one to one counting by showing your child how to point to each item as they count, or to move the items as they count so they do not count each item more than once. This will help your child understand what numbers mean. Ask them to find the same amount of different items. For example, find 3 spoons, 3 hats or 3 socks. You can also sing counting songs.

Shape, Size and Quantity

You could go on a shape hunt to see how many circles, squares, rectangles and triangles your child can find, for example square windows, circular plates, and rectangular posters. You could

look for patterns too. Talk about the shape and size of objects, e.g. big car, little car, round ball, square table, rectangular book and ask your child questions such as 'Can you pass me the biggest box?', or 'Which one is the smallest shoe?'. Play with blocks and encourage your child to think about size, colour and shape. Also play with containers and ask, 'How many socks can you fit in the box?', 'Which container holds the most, or the least, sand/water?', etc.

Number Recognition

A number hunt is a fun way to look for numerals on doors, on clocks, buses, cars, signs, at home, at the shops or on TV. You could also play 'I spy' but with numbers.

Other Things to Bear in Mind:

- Use every day experiences as learning opportunities, for example take your child with you to the shops.

They can learn about:

- reading and writing as you write and follow a shopping list;
- practise their listening and memory skills and extend their vocabulary by helping you to collect named items;
- learn about numbers, counting and money when helping you to pay for items;
- learn about their local environment on the way to and from the shops, etc.
- Encourage your child to help you with simple jobs around the home, for example gardening, tidying up, baking and cooking. This will help them to develop coordination and listening skills as well as independence and self-confidence.

Early Years Curriculum

The daily curriculum on offer is tailored and planned to promote our children's enthusiasm, curiosity, love of learning and personal development. The children are provided with a range of purposeful adult-led and independent learning opportunities through structured play and direct teaching.

The curriculum is planned around the following areas:

Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment. This will develop their confidence and communication skills.

Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive. The children will develop their fine and gross motor skills. We help children to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves and others. They learn to form positive relationships with their peers and develop respect for others. In this area, the children also learn about boundaries and expected behaviour.

Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children are given access to a wide range of reading materials to ignite their interest. Writing opportunities are also integrated into other areas of the curriculum.

Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their basic skills in counting and understand number as well as gaining a knowledge of different shapes. Mathematics is practical and is planned for in the children's play.

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community around them through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

Expressive arts and design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

Special Educational Needs

The needs of each and every child will be met by the Early Years Foundation Stage as much as they can. However, if our staff identify anything which concerns them, they have a duty of care to inform you and discuss this in further detail privately. Your child may then be supported via interventions or via encouraging external agencies to support where needed.

Assessment

Your child's daily achievements will be recorded in a 'Learning Journal'. This is a collection of both adult-led and independent work/activities that your child completes in each area of the

curriculum.

We also use an online assessment tool called '2 Simple'. This allows us to observe and take photographs of the children and link them to the curriculum strands they are secure in. You will be informed of your child's progress through reports, play and stay sessions and parents' evenings

Communication

We believe effective home-school communication is essential for your child's happiness and development. We can only solve issues of which we are made aware. There are a number of ways we can keep in touch on a daily basis—in person with the member of staff, through notes in your child's reading log , via email or telephone.

We hope you find this guide useful. Please contact us if you have any concerns.

The Foundation Stage Team

