



English Martyrs Catholic Primary School
"where everyone is special"

EYFS Curriculum Policy 2022

Mission Statement With Christ at the heart of our Catholic community, our mission is to:

- ☒ nurture the potential in each individual,
- ☒ celebrate achievement,
- ☒ and develop an awareness of service to God and each other

Date initial Policies Written: March 2022

Policy Reviewed: March 2023

R Jones



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ABOUT US

English Martyrs Catholic Primary school is a one form entry school located in Hillmorton, Rugby. It serves the parish of English Martyrs Church, Rugby in the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

Children also come to our school from many other surrounding parishes and areas of Rugby and further afield including other local authorities. The majority of children in our school are Catholic and we also welcome children from other faith and non-faith communities. We pride ourselves on being an inclusive school, and respect diversity; with a very strong Catholic ethos and values.

At English Martyrs, we aim to provide motivating first-hand experiences and purposeful play in a child centred environment. We hope that these experiences are memorable whilst encouraging children to build resilience, ambition and a lifelong love of learning. We value that each child is special and unique and we actively seek to support children to develop effective learning characteristics and to explore learning with increasing independence. We ensure children are ‘noticed’, listened to and valued as we observe their interests to follow lines of enquiry that motivate and enthuse.

We aim to build on the wealth of knowledge and skills each individual child already has when they join us and take them on a learning journey that they build upon in KS1 and beyond.

Curious – we strive to learn

We recognise that all children are unique, celebrating and welcoming differences within our school community. We encourage children to ask questions and enquire about the world and themselves.



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Aspirational – we want to grow

Our curriculum is child centred following the interests and fascinations of the children in the current year group so that each child can grow to be the best that they can be.

Engaged- we love to learn

We are passionate about children leading and being engrossed and enjoying their learning. We aim to embed language based on the characteristics of effective learning

The Curriculum

We have developed a bespoke curriculum in response to fulfilling the educational programs for each of the seven areas of learning identified within the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021 alongside the needs and interests of each child.

To support the EYFS 2021 requirements, assessment guidance documents have also been produced by Early Education specialists in the form of Birth to 5 matters and Development Matters 2. These documents outline what children may be expected to be able to do in relation to developmental progression and from these supportive materials we have developed milestones so that we are clear about what learning and progression look like within our setting and what we want for each child, summaries are referenced in this document for your information. Our overall aim is that all children can reach the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave Reception in the Summer Term.

In the EYFS statutory requirements we are reminded that assessment must include *how* children learn as well as *what* and that these *characteristics of learning* are also of key importance within the Early Years Foundation Stage and beyond as they recognise learning styles and preferences.



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We aim to:

- Provide a curriculum that offers children a wide range of opportunities ensuring that we do not expect children to aspire to things they have never encountered. We will work on broadening their experiences providing opportunities to try new things and encouraging them to relish a new challenge without fear.
- Provide high expectations encouraging them to develop perseverance and self-belief so that they can problem solve and achieve far more than they expected.
- Provide a learning environment that helps children achieve their potential and support those who need additional help in order to maximise their chances of achieving the Early Learning Goals.
- Provide children opportunities to develop their sense of wellbeing and ability to regulate their feelings so that they feel confident in our community and are equipped with all the tools they need to transition to Year 1 effectively.
- Develop the skills and expertise of staff working in EYFS through regular and comprehensive professional development either run by the EYFS Lead or attending courses run by other providers

At English Martyrs **what children learn** is very carefully planned in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance, to include experiences and opportunities that address all seven aspects of learning:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Expressive Arts and Design
- Understanding the World.



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We plan the environment with ‘opportunities for learning’ and then carefully observe each child’s interaction and response, noticing the way they encounter the resources, environment and each other. This then leads to a series of professional questions about how we may extend the interests of the children and develop their skills as ‘communicators’. Our careful observations of each child, support us to gain an understanding of their skills, intentions and interests. This knowledge of each child can then be linked back to the EYFS guidance materials and our work on milestones so that we may make a professional judgement about each child’s skills, capabilities and progression. We change our environment based on what is needed for the children at that time of their learning and regularly audit what we have and what we might need.

We have three main learning environments: the classroom, practical area and the outdoor area. Each area is carefully planned with adult led, enhanced and continuous provision activities. The aim is to build upon what the children already know and to build upon what has been taught in whole class and small group sessions. Resources are used to help challenge the children and encourage them to try new things. We aim to make all activities accessible to all children. The activities encourage children to work alone or collaborate as part of a group. We encourage children to live out their own experiences and to imagine and create imaginary worlds. We encourage and support them to learn and explore other people’s experiences and beliefs whilst respecting others and their feelings.

In addition to these three main learning environments, we use the Forest School area with a trained Forest School leader. Here the children can learn about the natural environment whilst developing self-confidence, resilience, self-regulation, sense of achievement, problem solving skills and perseverance.

In all environments, we encourage children by supporting and modelling the play and language and give the children many opportunities to use new vocabulary taught and modelled. We praise and model good behaviour and have high expectations. We also reward and encourage our values of: being engaged, curious and aspirational as well as kindness and also the Catholic ethos and beliefs.



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How Children Learn

Key Characteristics of Effective Learning

When we are planning and guiding what children learn, we reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and plan and guide accordingly. We think about the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning. We recognise to learn well, children must approach opportunities with curiosity, energy and enthusiasm. Effective learning must be meaningful to a child, so that they are able to use what they have learned and apply it in new situations. These abilities and attitudes of strong learners will support them to learn well and make good progress in all the Areas of Learning and Development.

- Playing and Exploring:

Play and exploring is about how the child engages in learning.

This characteristic of learning focuses on a children’s engagement – with the resources they use, the environment they are in, and the people around them. It emphasises the importance of children having opportunities to actively construct their own knowledge and understanding of the world through the many different experiences they have.

We make sure we have opportunities for exploring; have open-ended, hands-on experiences which arise from children’s innate curiosity. From these experiences, children have opportunities to build concepts, test their ideas, and find things out.

We observe and find out how they play. Using what they know in their play, highlights the importance of play as the context where children bring together their current understandings and combine, refine, and explore their ideas in imaginative ways.



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We observe, encourage and support our children to see if they are ‘willing to have a go’ as this reinforces the role of play in enabling children to follow their interests and initiate activities. Through their play, children can seek challenges, develop a ‘can do’ attitude, be open to taking risks in new experiences, and develop an attitude that views failures not as setbacks, but as learning opportunities

- **Active Learning**

This focuses upon children being able to become involved in play, sustaining and maintaining activities for appropriate periods of time. They may demonstrate a particular interest or bounce back after experiencing difficulties.

We also notice and celebrate when children are proud of accomplishing their goals and when they look for praise or enjoy meeting challenge for its own sake.

- **Creating and Thinking Critically**

As children engage in all the different activities which take place in the early years setting, they actively think about the meaning of what they are doing. Over time they will begin to become more aware of their own thinking – we call this metacognition.

We observe ways in which children approach a task. We want them to be inventive and creative, so children can find new challenges or problems to solve and can come up with their own unique ways of solving these.

We observe how they build links between ideas often building on schemas. They begin to finding meaning in sequence, in cause and effect, and in the intentions of others. We notice if they are planning what to do, and being able to change their approach if necessary. We observe and encourage them to explain errors as we know that this seems to lead to more lasting learning than explaining why something is correct. This suggests that understanding the processes of how problems are solved is more important than simply getting the right answer. Therefore we encourage problem solving.



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What is our Intent for young children:

Our Curriculum Goals

	Intent: what do we want?	What does that look like?
PSED	A sense of our feelings and links with others and behaving accordingly	Play and interact successfully forming good relationships, developing an understanding of how they and other people feel, set goals and regulate their behavior accordingly.
Communication & Language	Listening to and communicating with others	Listen attentively responding to what they hear. Hold conversations and comment on what they have heard asking relevant questions engaging in back and forth exchanges with a range of people
Physical development	Physical and neurological ability to follow our intentions safely and accurately	Move confidently, energetically and safely so they become physically able to achieve what they set out to do (including use of writing implements, tools and self-care) with consideration for others
Literacy Reading & Writing	Understand, anticipate and be understood.	Interpret, create, anticipate and communicate meaning through sharing language, writing and reading in different media.
Mathematics	A spatial and numerical way to make sense of the world around us	Develop mathematical concepts in relation to everyday experiences and physical participation. Having a deep understanding of numbers to 10 and beyond
Understanding The World	A sense of self, their immediate environment and the world around us	Develop a sense of self and others and the world around them both in the present and in the past and how they link to it. Understand some important processes
Expressive art & design	Feeling free and safe to express ourselves in response to what we see, hear and feel	Explore different media and materials and respond personally with ideas and feelings sharing their creations and the processes used.



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What Children Learn in relation to aspects of learning.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Who we are (personal), how we get along with others (social) and how we feel (emotional) are foundations that form the bedrock of our lives. As we move through life, we are continually developing our sense of self as we weave a web of relationships with self, others and with the world.

PSED is fundamental to all other aspects of life-long development and learning, and is key to children's well-being and resilience. For babies and young children to flourish, we need to pay attention to how they understand and feel about themselves, and how secure they feel in close relationships: in so doing they develop their capacities to make sense of how they and other people experience the world. Children's self-image, their emotional understanding and the quality of their relationships affect their self-confidence, their potential to experience joy, to be curious, to wonder, and to face problems, and their ability to think and learn.

A holistic, relational approach creates an environment that enables trusting relationships, so that children can do things independently and with others, forming friendships. Early years practitioners meet the emotional needs of children by drawing on their own emotional insight, and by working in partnership with families to form mutually respectful, warm, accepting relationships with each of their key children. (Birth to 5 matters)

Throughout Reception, we give priority to personal, social and emotional development, which is critical for very young children and gives them the best opportunity for success in all other areas of learning. This permeates the whole school atmosphere and environment and leads to children feeling good about themselves, respecting others, social competence and having a positive disposition to learn. We develop emotional literacy skills so that children may express their thoughts and feelings particularly with regard to learning. We support children in valuing social learning opportunities working in small groups so that they may also learn from each other. Social communication is promoted and modelled by staff through out play and activities are planned that actively build social confidence and in which children can express their own thoughts and feelings.



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Physical Development

Physicality, the foundation of human development, underpins all other areas of a child’s development and learning. It establishes the neurological, sensory and motor foundations necessary for healthy, happy and successful lives. It is intricately interwoven with emotional, social, cognitive and language development.

The connection between the brain, body, and movement must be understood. When they are viewed as one system the impact of active, physical play, health and self-care are observed and the effect of adverse childhood experience including malnutrition, illness or neglect on a child’s early brain development and mental health is recognised. Health, wellbeing and self-care are integral to physical development, providing the foundations for self-regulation and self- management.

Each child’s journey relies on whole-body physical experiences. While biologically programmed, the unfolding of this complex, interconnected system requires repeated movement experiences that are self-initiated and wide-ranging. Fine and gross motor control must develop together in an integrated way, so that the child can achieve what they set out to do. We must ensure that children have movement-rich lives, indoors and outdoors, from birth. This includes the role of the adult’s body as an enabling environment itself, embedding movement into everything, and encouraging each child’s own motivations for being active and interactive with others. (Birth to 5 Matters)

As well as improving skills of co-ordination, control, manipulation and movement, physical development helps children gain confidence, and feel the positive benefits of being healthy and active. We have an outdoor area with sufficient space for children to have opportunities to develop balancing, climbing and jumping skills. The area also has spaces to develop large scale music and dance. On top of this, we have a large field with a climbing frame that we can access and the Forest School area. We use the school hall for physical development too to give the children a wider range of activities.

We also provide a range of opportunities for practicing fine motor skills and to develop effective grips for using tools and mark making equipment. We support children to develop skills they need to manage the school day.



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Communication and Language

Children are born ready and willing to communicate. They depend on interactions with others to become confident and effective communicators and language users. Within the first three years of life children have laid the foundations of communication and language proficiency. Language also begins to guide and support their thinking and emotional development and underpins their emerging literacy.

From birth to five their skills develop through a series of identifiable stages which can be looked at in three strands – Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking. Not all children will follow the exact same sequence or progress at the same rate, but it is important to identify children at risk of language delay or disorder as these can have an ongoing impact on wellbeing and learning across the curriculum. (Birth to 5 Matters description)

Communication is the foundation of learning, through the opportunities for carefully considered and responsive interactions verbal and non-verbal, speaking and listening and increasing our vocabulary we develop effective communication skills. We support development of these through:

- *Time to talk and the valuing of back and forth conversations
- *Time to listen, make comments and ask questions
- * Time to express their ideas and feelings
- *Noticing and listening to children.
- *Supporting children to develop shared focus and attention.
- *Offering children experiences and provocations to engage and enthuse
- *Valuing what children say and always responding;
- *Adults modelling spoken thoughts and naming feelings
- *Working beside the child and enriching language during enquiry and play



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Literacy

Literacy is about understanding and being understood. Early literacy skills are rooted in children’s enjoyable experiences from birth of gesturing, talking, singing, playing, reading and writing. Learning about literacy means developing the ability to interpret, create and communicate meaning through writing and reading in different media, such as picture books, logos, environmental print and digital technologies. It involves observing and joining in the diverse ways that different people and communities use literacy for different purposes. Most importantly, literacy is fun and creative.

Developing literacy competence and skills is a demanding and time-consuming journey that requires high-quality pedagogical activities to enhance learning. Young children need playful opportunities to enjoy:

*being included and involved in the literacy practices of their home, early years setting, and community environments

*creating and sharing a range of texts in a variety of ways, with different media and materials, with adults and peers, both indoors and outdoors

*being listened to by attentive adults who recognise and value children’s choices

*learning about using different signs and symbols, exploring sound and developing alphabetic and phonetic skills. (Birth to 5 Matters)

We ensure the environment is print rich and always provide a range of texts to inspire children to share books. We have a range of books supporting different stages in early reading with focus ranging from picture books and interest boxes, lift the flap interactive books to rhyming pattern books and eventually longer stories with multiple characters and events. Books are shared with children daily at group time and throughout sessions and reading is dialogical so much discussion takes place about the book, narrative, characters, sequencing etc.

We have worked to support our team to understand the foundations of early reading and writing and begin with work on shared focus and attention, noticing, listening and responding and the development of the application of young children’s natural curiosity.



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We also seek to:

- *develop narrative story telling with props and storylines
- *offer interactive and dramatic action response to stories. Often linked to music and dance.
- * use story language and vocabulary from books throughout the day
- *encourage early writing using marks, symbols and then letters and celebrate children's early mark making;
- *scribe narrative stories for young children modelling the process of story writing
- *provide opportunities to make motivational marks using a range of media on a range of scales.
- * teach handwriting so that children can write simple phrases and sentences
- * teach daily phonic sessions
- *teach reading linked to the phonic ability of each child
- * extend vocabulary
- *developing an awareness of the link between the spoken and written word



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Mathematics

Mathematics for young children involves developing their own understanding of number, quantity, shape and space. Babies and young children have a natural interest in quantities and spatial relations – they are problem-solvers, pattern-spotters and sense-makers from birth. This curiosity and enjoyment should be nurtured through their interactions with people and the world around them, drawing on their personal and cultural knowledge. Children should freely explore how they represent their mathematical thinking through gesture, talk, manipulation of objects and their graphical signs and representations. Every young child is entitled to a strong mathematical foundation which is built through playful exploration, apprenticeship and meaning-making.

Effective early mathematics education requires practitioners who:

- *observe, listen to, value and build on children's mathematical ideas and experiences (including with families);
- *include mathematics in interactions with children, drawing attention to mathematics in children's everyday lives;
- *help children seek patterns, make connections and recognise relationships;
- *support children of all ages in creating and solving mathematical problems;
- *ensure provision includes a rich blend of practical activities, stories, songs, rhymes, games and imaginative play as well as graphic tools; with plenty of time for children to revisit, develop and make sense for themselves;
- *maintain children's enthusiasm so children develop positive self-esteem as learners of mathematics and feel confident to express their ideas. (Birth to 5 Matters)

Maths skills and concepts of number, shape, space measurement and data handling are experienced and developed in all areas of our learning environment. There are daily opportunities to hear, recite and recognise numerals through play and rhymes. Maths is developed in almost every situation both inside and out including:

- *block, sand and water play;
- *imaginative play;
- *specific maths equipment and maths games;
- *rhymes;



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*daily school routine such as lining up, register

* focussed daily maths sessions and mastering number sessions

Above all we make maths integral to activities and fun. There also are opportunities for the exploration of spatial reasoning and thinking in the planned environment. Staff understand that progressively these skills are needed to support the foundations of number work.

Expressive Arts and Design

Children and adults have the right to participate in arts and culture. Expression conveys both thinking (ideas) and feeling (emotion). Children are multi-modal, using a variety of ways to express and communicate. Creative thinking involves original responses, not just copying or imitating existing artworks. Expressive Arts and Design fosters imagination, curiosity, creativity, cognition, critical thinking and experimentation; provides opportunities to improvise, collaborate, interact and engage in sustained shared thinking; and requires time, space and opportunities to re-visit and reflect on experiences. Multi- sensorial, first-hand experiences help us connect and enquire about the world. Appreciating diversity and multiple perspectives enriches ways of thinking, being, and understanding. Skills are learned in the process of meaning-making, not in isolation. (Birth to 5 matters)

Through the expressive arts, children make sense of the world around them, expressing what they see and feel through:

*the use of a range of media, working with pencil, pen, pastel, paint, collage, etc, to gain experience of colour, texture and form;

* creating collaboratively, sharing ideas, resources and skills

*music working both indoors and out musical instruments to develop rhythm, beat and pitch with opportunities for different types and styles of music and dance.

*drama; working from stories and imagination.



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*exploration and articulation of materials in the atelier spaces.

Understanding the World

Understanding the World provides a powerful, meaningful context for learning across the curriculum. It supports children to make sense of their expanding world and their place within it through nurturing their wonderment, curiosity, agency and exploratory drive.

This development requires regular and direct contact with the natural, built and virtual environments around the child and engaging children in collaborative activities which promote inquiry, problem-solving and shared decision making. Active involvement in local community life helps children to develop a sense of civic responsibility, a duty to care, a respect for diversity and the need to work for peaceful co-existence.

In addition, first-hand involvement in caring for wildlife and the natural world provides children with an appreciation of ecological balance, environmental care and the need to live sustainable lives. Rich play, virtual and real world experiences support learning about our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world and how to stay safe within it. They also cultivate shared meanings and lay the foundation for equitable understandings of our interconnectedness and interdependence. (Birth to 5 Matters)

Young children constantly seek explanations about the world in which they live. We encourage and build on this behaviour by actively encouraging questions, experimenting with and observing. Hands on experience and opportunities to explore and make links include:

- *growth/change
- *our senses
- *forces
- *the environment
- *weather/seasonal changes
- *cooking
- *growing vegetables
- *investigating the properties of ice, magnets, materials and light, floating and sinking

We also encourage children to think of themselves as members of the school community and the wider community.



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Making Learning Visible

Learning Journals

Learning Journeys are personal records of each child's significant experiences in which they have demonstrated particular interest or learning skills. The observations are generally based upon a child- initiated activity where they can demonstrate their interests and understanding. They are put onto 'Tapestry' where parents can see, add comments and also add their own pictures.

Observation and Assessment

"Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then if you have understood well, teaching will be different from before" (Loris Malaguzzi).

During the time children are in Reception, they will be observed and assessed working against developmental milestones across all aspects of the EYFS. Throughout the experiences their learning will be 'documented' so that it can be remembered and shared. Children's effective learning skills will also help staff to identify their particular learning style and support them to develop skills for learning. These observations and assessments form an individual record to ensure progress is taking place and so that each child has opportunities to reach their full potential

Our intention is to develop a system which honours children and childhood in which we plan time to observe children without fixed agendas to better understand them. We build in time for quality reflection about children's learning as a team.

The focus on telling the story of the children and observing to understand them links strongly to our ethos in which 'where everyone is special'. Our aim is for Practitioners to have the maximum amount of time to be involved with and co-construct learning and experiences with our young children.



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We also know and value the importance and benefits of parent partnership in the early years. We understand that parents **know their child best** and that they are co-responsible for their learning in the early years and beyond. Our system ensures that parents are part of the process throughout, working in close collaboration through conversations about their child’s learning, collecting vital information about their knowledge, skills and emotional well-being on entry so that we understand their interests and starting points. This work supports our development of curriculum and enables us to plan responsively to the interests and needs of the children.

The impact of a well planned and resourced EYFS curriculum leads to happy children with the tools to access the year 1 curriculum. They will have the self-regulation, language and communication skills to transition into year 1 and beyond. They will be able to use the values of: being curious, engaged and aspirational to access the KS1 curriculum, but also to develop as an individual both in school and in the community having social, emotional and academic skills that will be built upon throughout their lives at English Martyrs and beyond.