Marksbury C of E primary School

Jesus said 'I have come that you may have life, life in all its fullness' (John 10:10)

Early Years Policy

This document has been prepared to set out the Spirituality Policy of Marksbury CE Primary School. The document shall be reviewed every two years and approved by the School Leadership Team.

Document Control

Version	Revisions	Revised By	Approved By	date
1.0			SLT & Governors	June 2026

Document Information

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1. Introduction

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and should receive appropriate support to reach their full potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. When parents choose to use early years services they want to know the provision will keep their children safe and help them to thrive. The Early Years Foundation Stage is the framework that provides that assurance. The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. In our school, all children join us, if they are ready and able, full time, from the very first day of the school year. Where parents and/ or early years settings feel that isn't appropriate, we will explore this with them to ensure an excellent start to school for all pupils.

The statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage DfE

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for the provision of Early Years at Marksbury C of E Primary School.

'*When we give every child the best start in their early years, we give them what they need today. We also set them up with every chance of success tomorrow.'* Development Matters July 2021

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Marksbury we greatly value the importance that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

School vision

At Marksbury CE Primary School, we believe every child deserves a joyful, nurturing and inspiring start to their learning journey. Through a safe, inclusive and stimulating environment, we encourage children to be curious explorers, confident communicators and resilient learners who develop a lifelong love of learning.
Rooted in our Christian values and strong sense of community, we recognise every child as a unique individual and celebrate their strengths, interests and potential. We provide rich first-hand experiences, purposeful play and meaningful opportunities that develop children's independence, creativity and confidence whilst supporting their social, emotional, physical and academic development.

As a small school, relationships are at the heart of everything we do. We believe that our youngest learners thrive when they feel connected to the wider school community. EYFS is not an isolated stage of education but an integral part of our whole-school family. We actively foster relationships across year groups, enabling children to learn alongside, look up to and feel valued by older pupils, while developing a strong sense of belonging from their very first day.

Through exploration, collaboration and opportunities to engage with our local community and the wider world, children develop the skills, knowledge and character needed to flourish. We empower them to ask questions, take risks, solve problems and embrace challenges with confidence and resilience.
Together, we create a happy, ambitious and caring environment where every child feels known, valued and inspired to become the very best version of themselves, laying strong foundations for future learning and life. By building meaningful relationships across the school community, our children begin their educational journey with a strong sense of identity, belonging and responsibility, knowing that they are valued members of the Marksbury family.

2. Aims and objectives

This policy aims to ensure:

- That every child has a happy, secure and positive start to school life
- That we foster a lifelong love of learning through curiosity, exploration and play
- That we develop confident, independent and resilient learners
- That every child develops strong communication and language skills
- That we create opportunities for children to learn through meaningful first-hand experiences
- That all staff foster positive relationships across the whole school community
- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice
- Close partnership working between practitioners and with parents and carers
- That we prepare children for future learning and successful transition into Key stage One.

3. Curriculum

Our Early Years team follow the curriculum as outlined in the latest version of the EYFS statutory framework that applies from September 2021. The EYFS is based upon 4 overarching principles.

A Unique Child ~ We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others and we use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Children develop at different rates and bring a wide range of experiences, interests and strengths to school.
We seek to:

- Value every child as an individual
- Promote children's wellbeing and self-esteem
- Encourage independence and resilience
- Recognise and celebrate achievement
- Support children to become confident and motivated learners.

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We know that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by their school and home environments and from the start we nurture positive relationships and links with families. We observe how each child learns to gain an understanding of the characteristics they develop to become effective learners. We use questioning, praise and encouragement to develop a positive attitude to learning and high self-esteem. During their first year at school, the children are introduced to the Marksbury Learning Gems
They are taught the skills of:

- Resilience
- Determination
- Collaboration
- Problem solving
- Resourcefulness
- Persistence

- Connection Making
- Challenge

Positive Relationships ~ We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and our aim is to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families. We endeavour to ensure that both children and parents feel secure and communication between home and school is strong.

We build strong relationships by:

- Developing secure attachments between children and adults
- Working closely with families
- Promoting mutual respect and kindness
- Creating opportunities for collaboration and teamwork
- Encouraging relationships across all year groups.

As a small village school, we place great importance on ensuring that Reception children feel part of the wider school community from the outset.

Learning and Development ~ Through observations we assess the children's interests, stages of development as well as their learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.

Our curriculum balances:

- Child-initiated learning
- Adult-directed teaching
- Structured learning opportunities
- Responsive planning based on children's interests and needs

Enabling Environments ~ We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development. Our Foundation Stage has three large classrooms and a large outdoor area which is shared. There are areas where children can be active as well as spaces for quiet, reflection time. Children are able to locate equipment and resources independently and safely.

Our environment:

- Promotes curiosity and exploration
- Supports independence and decision-making
- Includes high-quality indoor and outdoor learning opportunities
- Reflects children's interests and achievements
- Encourages collaboration, creativity and problem-solving

Children have regular access to outdoor learning experiences which are viewed as an integral part of the curriculum rather than an additional provision.

The framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and are inter-connected. However, 3 areas are known as the prime areas and are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building capacity to learn and for forming and sustaining relationships.

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas.

Prime Areas of Learning		
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Physical Development	Communication and Language
• Self-regulation • Managing self • Building relationships	• Gross motor skills • Fine motor skills	• Listening, Attention and Understanding • Speaking

Specific Areas of Learning			
Literacy	Mathematics	Understanding the World	Expressive Arts and Design
• Comprehension • Word reading • Writing	• Number • Numerical Patterns	• Past and Present • People Culture and Communities • The Natural World	• Creating with materials • Being Imaginative and Expressive

At Marksbury, all areas of learning are delivered through a well-planned play-based curriculum with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Throughout the Foundation Stage our planning ensures that each child has the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in every area at the appropriate developmental level. Our long-term planning ensures coverage so that all children have opportunities to work towards and achieve the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS. We follow a termly project-based approach which allows flexibility to ensure that both children's needs and their interests are considered.

Teachers plan activities with the characteristics of effective teaching and learning in mind. These characteristics highlight the importance of a child's attitude towards learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them. The 3 characteristics are;

- **Playing and Exploring** ~ children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'

- **Active Learning** ~ children concentrate, keep on trying if they encounter difficulties and enjoy their achievements

- **Creating and Thinking Critically** ~ Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which they can explore, think creatively and be active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, strong communication skills and promote physical development.

4. Play

Learning through play underpins our approach to teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage. We embrace the fact that young children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them to learn. In doing so, we can provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and

develop their learning and to help them make sense of the world. Children have opportunities through their play to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experiences at their own level and pace.
Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests, inspire those around them and consolidate their understanding and skills. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. Our adults take an active role in child-initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating, teaching and extending play, skills and language.

Curriculum Intent
At Marksbury CE Primary School, our EYFS curriculum is designed to provide children with the knowledge, skills and experiences they need to thrive both now and in the future.

We provide a curriculum that is:

- Ambitious and inclusive.
- Broad and balanced.
- Vocabulary-rich.
- Rooted in meaningful experiences.
- Responsive to children's interests.
- Connected to our local community.
- Aligned with the National Curriculum to support smooth progression into Key Stage One.

Learning is organised through the seasons and months of the year; they learn about key events in real time. It is also organised through quality texts, first-hand experiences, educational visits and opportunities to explore the natural world.

Particular emphasis is placed on developing:

- Communication and Language
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Early Reading
- Early Mathematics
- Independence and self-regulation

5. Assessment

Assessment plays an important role in helping the school to recognise children's progress, plan appropriate activities and assess the need for additional support. During the first term of Reception, assessments are made for each child using a national baseline screener. This enables patterns of attainment within the cohort to be identified, in order to adjust the teaching program for individual pupils and groups of children. As part of our daily practice, we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform our future plans. We record our observations in a variety of ways, including what the child has said and done and also by using photographic evidence. Significant observations of children's achievements are collected and collated using an individual pupil learning journal. Should there be a concern regarding a child's progress, class teachers discuss this with the child's parents. A strategy of support will be agreed and consideration will be taken as to whether the child may have a special education need or disability which requires further investigation or intervention from a specialist.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child starts reception, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). At the end of the year, teachers use the exemplification documents and their knowledge of the child to make an assessment in accordance with the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) as to whether the child is working at the expected level or emerging (not yet meeting the expected level).

Information is stored in line with GDPR and the school's Data Protection Policy.

6. Partnerships with Parents

We strive to create and maintain close working partnerships with parents and carers as we recognise that together we can have a significant impact on a child's learning. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate confidently in their child's education and promote parental support and engagement in numerous ways.
These ways include but are not exclusive to:

- The school website ~ This aims to share much information with parents, including statutory information
- Email ~ Parents are welcome to email the school office with any questions
- Telephone calls ~ Phone calls to parents may be made on occasion by staff
- Face-to face communication when children are dropped off in the morning and collected at the end of the day
- Dojo ~ This is used to share information about the daily life of the class/school and is also a quick way of communication between families and the class teacher
- Regular parents' meetings throughout the year
- MyCas ~ Email and text alerts

Parents are very much encouraged to approach staff should they ever have any queries or concerns.

7. Inclusion

Our whole school ethos, as well as that of the Foundation Stage, embraces inclusion. We recognise and respect the abilities and strengths of our children at all levels of development and the wealth of knowledge and experience that they bring from their differing backgrounds and cultures.

We strive to give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning and we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of individual children, so that they are able to reach their full potential.

We achieve this by planning carefully to meet the needs of all our children and providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued and resources reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.

As a staff team, we regularly reflect on how we provide a curriculum which supports

- Pupils identified as having a special educational need
- More able pupils
- Children from all social and cultural backgrounds
- Children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds
- Different genders
- Pupils identified as the least advantaged pupils

8. Induction and Transition

Transition is planned carefully to ensure that it is as smooth as possible for each child and enables them to settle into Marksbury quickly and happily. Prior to children starting school, the EYFS lead and team contacts pre-school providers, child minders and nursery settings to discuss the needs of individual children. Written

information from these settings is sent to the school. During the summer term prior to a child starting school, Marksbury staff visit settings to meet children and talk to keyworkers about concerns and pupil interests.

Parents are invited to attend an induction meeting in the summer term before their child starts school. This is an opportunity for parents to:

- Meet Key Staff
- Learn about the EYFS curriculum and the school day
- Complete necessary paperwork
- Understand the process of school absence
- Complete forms regarding Free School Meals and milk
- Meet other parents

Towards the end of the summer term, children and parents are invited to stay and play sessions followed by a story time hosted (where possible) by the EYFS teacher and staff within the setting. Parents are invited to stay for the session to meet the teachers and other parents. In addition, the children are invited to sports day, moving up morning and summer fair.

Our induction program generally follows the guidelines below:

- Staff visit pre-school settings to talk to keyworks and read stories to children.
- Children attend school for a moving up morning to play with current Reception cohort and become familiar with the class/school setting and staff.
- From September, children attend school from 8.50am until 3.15pm.

For children identified as having additional needs, during the summer term before school entry, a meeting is held between school, parents and relevant agencies. A School transition plan is agreed which enables the starting school timetable to be adjusted to meet the needs of the pupil as well as other children within the setting.

9. Transition from Early Years to Year 1

During the summer term all children across the school will experience Moving Up Morning; a morning with their new teacher to support the transition from one year group to the next. The move from Reception to Year 1 can feel very different for Reception children and parents. In Reception children will play and explore, often initiating their play themselves with some adult direction. Adult directed tasks are planned in line with class projects. Daily phonic and maths teaching will happen but the rest of the day is open for the children to explore all the wonderful play-based activities on offer. When the children move to Year 1 they are taught from the National Curriculum and the day is much more structured with tasks being led by adults. Before a child starts their year in Year 1 their Reception teacher will complete a written end of year report which assesses the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs) as either emerging or expected. Teachers will have the opportunity to 'hand over' vital information about each individual child to the child's new class teacher.

10. Safeguarding and Welfare

All necessary steps are taken to keep the children at Marksbury safe and well. Any safeguarding or welfare issues will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, and all members of staff in the EYFS are required to read this policy as part of their induction training. Staff receive regular safeguarding training that enables them to understand the safeguarding policy and procedures, have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, and recognise signs of potential abuse and neglect.

11. Staffing

A robust recruitment process is in place, which aims to ensure that staff employed in the EYFS are suitable.
Upon employment, all EYFS staff receive induction training to ensure that they understand their roles and responsibilities, including information about emergency evacuation procedures, safeguarding, child protection

and health and safety. Staff are supported to undertake the appropriate training and professional development to ensure children receive the best quality learning experience. All members of staff who have contact with children and families will be under the supervision of the EYFS lead. The supervision will provide opportunities for staff to:

- Discuss any issues, particularly concerning the development or wellbeing of children, including any child protection concerns
- Identify solutions to address issues
- Receive coaching to improve their effectiveness

16. Health and Safety

There will be at least one member of staff on the school premises at all times who has a current Paediatric First Aid certificate. The school has a room dedicated to the administration of First Aid and all classrooms have a First Aid kit. Only medicine prescribed to a child by a doctor, dentist, nurse or pharmacist will be administered as outlined in the school's Administration of Medicine Policy.

The class teacher or teaching assistant will report any accident or injury involving a child to their parents on the day it occurs, and any first-aid treatment administered to a child will also be reported to their parents. Accidents and injuries will be recorded in an accident book, located in the school office.

The school has a Fire Evacuation Plan in place.

Information about any dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies and any special health requirements a child has will be recorded and all relevant staff informed.

Children are asked to bring in their own boots and cycle helmets to enable full participation in the curriculum. The school has generic equipment for children whose parents wish to make use of this.

The Health and Safety Policy outlines the full health and safety policies and procedures.

17.Links with other Policies

This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (last updated September 2024 and any updates thereafter)
- Equal Opportunity Policy
- Administering Medication Policy
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People 2019 (and any updates thereto)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy