Original Date Written	Latest Review	Date for next Review
September 2016	September 2026	September 2028

Marlborough St Mary's CE Primary School

Early Years Policy

Together we believe, learn and achieve

MARLBOROUGH ST MARY'S CE VC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Early Years Policy

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This policy is based on requirements set out in the 2024 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and ongoing research and pedagogy.

It focuses on the ethos, environment, principles and values of our Early Years provision.
We have a written and spoken series of aims and objectives which are shared by all participants- children, parents, teachers, teaching assistants, Head Teacher and governors.

1. Aims

We do not underestimate the enormous leaps children make when they enter school. We aim to make transitions into Reception and then onto Year 1 as positive as possible.
We commit ourselves to:

- Taking our children on a learning journey, which will support them to become successful, responsible and confident learners.
- The development, inclusion, safety, health and well-being of every child, recognising that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.
- Forging partnerships with parents and valuing the information they give us.
- Using careful observation, assessment and planning to establish an effective learning environment.
- Providing a challenging and stimulating curriculum to help children to help themselves.
- **"Quality First" teaching.**

POLICY

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. In our school, all children join us full time after a short period of staggered entry in the first term.
The Early Years Foundation Stage is based upon four key principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

This policy explains how our practice is underpinned by these four themes.



2. A Unique Child



At Marlborough St Mary's Primary School 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, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

We value the diversity of individuals within the school. In our school we believe that all of our children matter. We give them 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 next steps.

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. Children from our Complex Needs Resource Base (CNRB) are, usually in the afternoons, fully included in the classroom lessons and activities if this is appropriate and in the best interest of that individual child. They are considered members of the class and are able to access experiences at their own level, according to age and stage.

Safeguarding and Welfare

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

"Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them."
DfE Statutory Framework for EYFS

At Marlborough St Mary's Primary School we:

- Promote the welfare of children.
- Promote good health and hygiene, in particular oral and dental hygiene through visitors, lessons and provision.
- Invite health professionals into school to give advice and carry out standard audio and visual health checks and vaccinations
- Preventing the spread of infection and take appropriate action when children are ill.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.

- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.



3.Positive Relationships

The role of the adult

Deep adult engagement is not just a string of shepherding or organisational comments. It requires skilful judgement to decide when adult intervention in child- initiated play is most appropriate.

We aim to promote high quality interactions between children and with adults by:

- Planning and resourcing a challenging environment.
- Ensuring the environment is safe and teaching the children to use equipment safely.
- Teach the children how to access and return the resources they need.
- Creating a learning environment where children are able to make proper decisions and real choices.
- Encourage creativity and sustained thinking by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas. Get the children to explain what they are planning, doing or thinking.
- Remembering to give adequate thinking time and use this type of open-ended questions:

    - What might happen if?
    - I wonder?
    - Design a new way to…
    - How can we make it better?
    - What is good about it?
    - Will that happen if you do it again?
    - Can you tell me more about it?

- When discussing ideas adults should value all contributions and withhold judgements. Sometimes adults can challenge thinking by posing an alternative point of view.
- Involving “wanderers” who find it difficult to access sustained engagement.
- Acting as facilitators- we want the children to know they can bring anything within reason into their play, including adults.
- Making observations of child- initiated play, in particular recognising that some boisterous play is often serious drama not just noisy mischief.
- Encouraging collaborative play. Keep an element of challenge; too much scaffolding can result in learned helplessness. Don’t always define the outcome too closely.
- Helping children manage occasional failures- explain “you didn’t make a mistake you need to think about it again.” Promoting resilience in children’s approaches to tasks and experiences.
- Sometimes children think we only value the product so try to document the children’s thinking processes too.

- Aiming for Curriculum Richness- try to use real life problems.
- Encouraging the children to add language to doing- get them to describe what they are doing as they are doing it.
- Valuing children interests and basing interactions and planning around these.
- Using digital photographic documentation to make immediate displays available to the children to encourage group discussions and decision making.

At Marlborough St Mary's Primary School we recognise that children learn to be strong, confident and independent from being in secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families. We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education through:

- Meeting families at the pre-schools before induction and communicate with them through, presentations, curriculum workshops, newsletters, reports and telephone calls.
- Home visits: Where possible we visit the homes of all children starting school or joining part way through the year. These visits allow the children and adults to meet with staff informally, in their own surroundings. They are a crucial starting point for building a relationship with families; a time to exchange information and gain a better understanding of the children's interests.
- Induction 'Stay and Play' sessions
- Use the 'All about me' section on Tapestry for parents and children to share their likes, dislikes and family/cultural experiences.
- Operating an open-door policy for parents with any queries.
- Sharing the children's learning and experiences with parents via Tapestry and Class Dojo and valuing the on-going contributions to these from parents.
- Offering two parent/teacher consultation evenings per year.
- Developing opportunities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents:
- Providing regular, accessible information on next steps and progress and give clear advice on how to support learning at home.
- Termly letters home to parents informing them of the term's planning and learning intentions, with support and advice on ways of enhancing the children's learning at home.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. We have very strong links with various feeder pre-schools and child minders and take an active role in the local preschool and children's centre network. The Foundation Stage staff meet with providers to discuss each individual child and their transition process into school. We attend cluster meetings and invite St Mary's under 5's pre-school and various community groups to our assemblies and celebrations. Children's necessary skills are promoted at these sessions and parents supported to make a seamless and secure move up.

Opportunities are provided for parents to provide regular feedback to us on their children's learning. We document their comments during planned teacher/parent meetings and record spontaneous comments too. We encourage parents to contribute to their children's learning through our Tapestry app.

Behaviour to promote learning

Our school ethos signals an expectation of good behaviour and high achievement. We have a proactive behaviour policy which reinforces desired behaviour. The whole school uses a Restorative Practice approach to behaviour management whereby children's conflicts are discussed in a rational and calm way and children are encouraged to generate their own solutions. This begins with a supported approach in Reception, using the language of Restorative practice.

Desired behaviour such as active looking and listening is clearly taught and all adults model appropriate values. Our school Mission Statement is "Together we believe, learn and achieve'. We explain clear, consistent boundaries, limits and expectations to the children to help them understand why rules exist. However, we know that good behaviour does not always mean children are learning- it could be just passive conformity.

If tracking reveals poor pupil progress or behaviour it is our responsibility to examine our learning curriculum and learning environment. We may discern a pattern of particular activities or times of the day which an individual finds challenging. Guidance and support will need to be given to help children cope with strong feelings such as frustration, anger and anxiety. We need to follow up inappropriate behaviour by supporting children in rationalising and talking through conflicts. We condemn the action not the child; we do not say "you naughty boy" or refer to a "naughty bench."
A "quiet chair" can be used for short periods of time out for children to sit and reflect quietly.

Sometimes we have a pupil with very challenging behaviour. It is important that the whole staff take collective responsibility for such children so that the class teacher does not feel isolated. All staff must be aware of such a child's support or behaviour plans and necessary interventions, sanctions and rewards.



4.Enabling Environments

At Marlborough St Mary's Primary School we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences.

The Learning Environment – Continuous Provision

We believe that genuine opportunities to independently access resources and regular times to become involved in sustained periods of exploratory play-based learning dramatically impact children's motivation and learning experiences.

Classrooms are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely, enabling them to revisit and direct their own learning. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet, creative etc. Reception has its own outdoor classroom area. The free flow between the inside and the outside has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors.

In Reception we aim to provide resources at the children's level allowing them to searchlight the room and self- select, providing genuine independent learning at varying times of the day. We recognise that children are more engaged and confident if they have chosen a resource themselves. Through regular observation we are then able to ascertain their current level of skill and understanding and scaffold appropriately, building in new language and extended resources to further extend their learning.

Displays reflect the importance of the process in all areas of learning; they contain questions and prompts to highlight key learning points, objectives for learning and direct quotes for children about their work and achievements. These achievements can mean an end product or their ability to persevere and demonstrate

competences and progress in new or recently acquired skills. The children are encouraged to contribute to their own displaying of work by displaying models and creations alongside a self- written name label.

We are fortunate to have a large, secure outside area with different surfaces and spaces for physically challenging activities such as building, running, chasing games, scooting, riding and climbing. There are also zones for creative play; drama, painting, clay, weaving etc. In addition, space for more messy or malleable play using sand, water and mud kitchens. Fences offer possibilities for weaving and displaying work. We have waterproof clothing and boots to allow access in all weathers. The outdoor area is resourced and planned as our outside classroom. All areas of learning can be targeted through outdoor play, but the outdoor area will complement rather than duplicate indoor provision. Naturally we want the outside area to look attractive, but we cannot always equate aesthetically pleasing with stimulating. We provide regular information to parents about the activities their children undertake in the garden; we can do this through curriculum newsletters and photographic narrative documentation via ClassDojo.

Our recently built Forest School area is ideally located to provide our EYFS children with easily accessible enhanced provision that is truly inspiring! Children can enjoy learning a range of Forest School activities including den building, wood whittling, vegetable planting and even cooking over an open fire.

It is intended that all children will have access to the outside classroom for a reasonable period every day and we will be flexible in our organisation; we know that children need time to settle into an activity and that longer periods of outside play can lead to creative and more complex co-operative play. The children will need to have agreed boundaries and behavioural expectations. The outdoor area must be treated respectfully and it is essential that the children can access and return their resources. They are involved in the setting up and tidying up of the area every day.

Outside play also offers added dimensions:

- It allows activities to take place on a larger scale e.g. den building, which is big, manipulative collaborative play.
- It allows children to experience the natural world.
- It enables children to learn through using their senses- experiencing changes in seasons and weather.



5. Learning and Development

Observation, Assessment and Planning

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in Early Years settings.
All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.
Prime Areas:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Specific Areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Creative development

The Planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are taken from the Educational programmes supported by the non-statutory guidance of Development Matters and Birth to Five Years. Planning is structured around our own school context and particular cohort for that year. We are flexible in our approach and strive to meet the individual and group needs of our children.

On entry children are observed through the National Baseline Assessment

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-baseline-assessment-framework

In the first six weeks of school children are observed in their play and interactions based on The Leuven scales of Wellbeing and Involvement. Once settled and happy we are able to more accurately assess children's learning needs through informal observation of their knowledge and understanding in play situations. At the end of their foundation year in school the children's progress is recorded on to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Each child's level of development is recorded against the 17 Early Learning Goals and children will be assigned a level of emerging or expected.
Assessment through observation is at the heart of the EYFS. We recognise the importance of taking time to observe the children at their own work. In order to collect evidence, we make observations of children's child initiated and adult led activities, providing quality interactions and having meaningful conversations.

Observations can provide insight into children's schemas e.g. they can reveal that the seemingly noisy, rough "superhero" play typical of very young boys is often in fact complex drama with rich rhythms and images. The filling of containers, climbing into boxes or throwing of resources can often be revealed as an enveloping or trajectory schema in progress.

Observations include:

- Spontaneous snapshot moments.
- Discussion with parents.
- Examples of recorded work.
- Annotated photographs.

These are then shared with Parents through our online ClassDojo tool and discussions with families.

Observations of play can show children's strengths and counteract teacher's possible prejudices and assumptions. We must remember that young children's development can be very uneven with fine motor skills lagging behind oral competency.

Our planning has to ensure inclusion, curriculum coverage, relevance, continuity and progression. Our planning must be flexible enough to be sensitive to the changing needs and interests of our children. We use observations and assessments to identify learning priorities and plan relevant and motivating learning experiences and next steps for each child. There is a balance of adult led and child-initiated play. Some child-initiated play is adult referenced. We know that good cognitive achievement is associated with adult involvement in child-initiated activities, children's own interests, sustained periods of shared thinking and open-ended questioning.

We believe in the importance of child-initiated learning, giving children the opportunities to practise and rehearse what has been taught in adult led time. We recognise the activities the children have chosen themselves are those in which they become most engaged, motivated and promote more critical thinking skills. We encourage and discuss the language of learning, where children are encouraged to be more resilient and responsible for their learning journey.

Fostering of the children's interests develops a high level of motivation for the children's learning. The staff use the children's interests to plan for themes for which the staff draw up medium term plans. In addition to this the children contribute to planning through their own input of interests and ideas on a day to day basis. Plans are then annotated accordingly.

Our Curriculum

We aim to provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum which reflects the context of Marlborough St Mary's. Our curriculum is regularly evaluated through staff dialogue and reflection. Our planning ensures inclusion, curriculum coverage, relevance, continuity and progression. We aim to make learning vivid and real by grounding it in actual experience. We view social and cognitive activities as complementary.

We believe that good learning outcomes for children are linked to:

- Practitioners having good curriculum knowledge as well as knowledge and understanding of child development.
- A combination of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. The child-initiated activities are often adult referenced- the adults provide a range of instructive learning environments and show sustained interest in the children's ideas.
- Shared educational aims with parents.
- Strategic deployment of all adults to maximise achievement.
- Effective use of observation and assessment to inform and direct teaching and learning.
- Flexible timings of different parts of lessons to fit specific purposes.
- Adult- child interactions that involve "sustained shared thinking" and open-ended questioning to extend children's thinking
- Positive behaviour policies.
- Precise, diagnostic feedback both oral and written to children as often as possible.
- Enough age appropriate resources.
- Enough time for children to complete activities.
- Clear, manageable records that can track progress and also be analysed to evaluate the impact of our provision.

Learning Styles and Characteristics of Learning

At Marlborough St Mary's we acknowledge that children have differing emotional responses and diverse learning preferences but also realise that during their lives children will have to adapt to learn in a variety of circumstances and in different ways. We aim to provide a variety of learning situations in order to foster and facilitate for the development of effective early childhood learning characteristics. Our curriculum and environment allow for the facilitation of exploration and play, encouraging children to adopt a level of independence which they can assimilate for life, becoming responsible citizens. We know that when children are active learners, they are motivated to learn and more likely to persevere and take ownership for their learning. We hope that with such a rich variety of experiences we offer they will in-turn become more creative and critical thinkers.

We strive for our children to develop effective characteristics of learning which will enable them to become learners for life.

Children will play and explore their environment showing engagement by:
• finding out and exploring
• play with what they know
• be willing to 'have a go'

Children will be active learners, showing motivation by:
• being involved and concentrating
• keeping on trying
• enjoying achieving what they set out to do
Children will be creators and think critically by:
• having their own ideas
• making links
• choosing ways to do things

We know that schools can favour learners who are predominantly visual and auditory and must make provision for learners who are intuitive or kinaesthetic. Equally we are aware that the preferred learning style of a teacher is likely to influence the way they teach. We aim to provide a choice of learning activity to accommodate different learning styles.

We use a range of interactive strategies:

- Questioning and discussing
- Response partners {child to child}
- Children demonstrating to the class e.g. on the Smart Board
- Show me activities
- Joint classes
- Links with older classes
- Pausing and asking the children to predict what comes next
- Handling artefacts.

Feedback

- Children need praise and recognition for their efforts and achievement, but staff need to be aware of how often they use phrases such as "good boy" "well done" and "lovely" without any explanation or detail about what they are praising. We aim to be specific in our feedback, address the learning intention and give clear advice for moving forward.
- Kindness, effort and achievement are rewarded with recognition and affirmation. This can be in the form of a thumbs up, a star of the day award, a high five, a handshake, a pat on the back, displaying work, sharing good news with parents and caregivers or a Head Teachers' certificate. Successes are celebrated with individuals, groups, classes, parents, the Head teacher and the whole school in celebration Assemblies. Class Dojo and Tapestry are key tools for keeping the channels of communication open with parents and points can be added to on an individual or group basis

Communication and Language

Having the confidence to speak openly and express ones feelings is underpinned by language development and a sense of self, whether it is spoken language or via other means of communication. We understand that providing a communication friendly and language rich environment is central to all areas of learning

across the curriculum. We strive to make the time and space to talk with children at their level, about their interests, while building on new vocabulary to enhance their communication skills and feed into their writing. Through exposure to stories, story tellers, rhyme, drama, puppets, real life experiences, adult interactions and sustained play-based learning we are able to move children into a space where they are confident to talk. Through interactions with both adults and peers about their wants, needs, feelings, imaginations and experiences they are able to forge new relationships both at home and at school, laying down the foundations for the future. Play spaces which can be quiet and secluded from the everyday chatter of the classroom can mean everything to the quieter child. Spaces where children can retell stories in their own words or act their own experiences are vital in building dialogue and expressing emotions that might not otherwise be explored. In contrast, providing outdoor spaces where children can express themselves in a more boisterous and open way allows others to let off steam in a safe environment where their contributions will be recognised and valued.

Through whole class discussions, small group activities and 1:1 support we aim to bring out the best in each child. Our continuous provision is enhanced with props and changing spaces to motivate children. We are fortunate enough to have our own radio station in school which focuses the children's talk and gives them not only meaning but true excitement at the prospect of being on air.

Literacy

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing). (Educational programme – EYFS statutory framework 2024)

'Reading and Writing float on a sea of talk' – James Britton

We recognise the key importance of speaking and listening skills as a priority in their own right and for paving the way to make a good start on reading and writing. We use exciting provocations, visually rich picture books with imaginative text and information books to capture the children's interests. Adults read to the children every day. We ensure that children have opportunities to read and write in all areas across both the inside and outside classrooms. Through daily, whole class and group shared reading children build up a good bank of known texts. There are lots of opportunities to hear, sing and discuss rhymes across all curriculum areas. The books in our class book boxes and book corners are of good quality and quantity and variety- fiction, non-fiction and rhymes, representative of a range of cultures. Big Books, favourite books, new books and phonic games are available for independent use and to take home on a weekly basis.

We recognise the importance of rhyme and alliteration, listening games and activities as pre-reading skills and encourage local pre-schools to include these in their daily play, particularly towards the summer term. Pre-school staff are invited down at the beginning of the year to observe phonics sessions and Reception staff visit pre-schools to model good phonics practise. This aims to ease transition and develop a unified, seamless approach towards phonics teaching. We believe that it is important for children to view themselves as readers and feel the success of this. Decodable books are important here for children to be able to use the skills taught in class. We expect an ongoing dialogue and partnership with parents, inviting them into class to share reading books and attend 'stay and learn' sessions.
Adults explicitly model the behaviours of an effective reader or writer. Sessions are interactive, with a balance of contributions from teacher and children. Adults model writing daily, demonstrating its purpose. We build on writing our names, labels, lists, captions, messages and stories. Children are encouraged to

make their own attempts at words using their phonic knowledge, building in trickier words which cannot be sounded out. Word banks are available in the environment, relevant to current learning.

PHONICS

We follow the Ruth Miskin – Read Write Inc. (RWI) scheme. Daily, discrete phonic sessions are taught in active, participatory and multisensory ways at a brisk pace; the children are not regularly expected to fill in worksheets but begin by using white boards and pens and then their own phonics book to practise letter formation and early writing. Children are taught set 1 sounds including 'special friends' ch, sh, th, ng, nk and qu and then set 2 sounds; the long vowel sounds ay, ee, igh, ow, oo, *oo*. They learn to orally blend and segment sounds into words and use 'Fred talk' and 'Fred fingers' when beginning to blend words together for writing. Through the use of a variety of resources such as magnetic letters, green word cards, ditty sheets and books children soon become confident enough to be able to take books home to read with other adults. We regularly demonstrate the application of these taught phonic skills across all areas of the curriculum. Regular assessments are made against the RWI assessments by the Phonics champion in school. These assessments will inform differentiation which will mean teachers and teaching assistants will work with groups of children of similar ability to maximise achievement. Any child identified as making insufficient progress will receive additional adult support so they do not fall behind the rest of the class.

Handwriting

Early handwriting begins as mark making, using a variety of different mark making tools and surfaces both inside and out. We provide a range of resources to strengthen both gross and fine motor skills and can do this through different artistic media, PE lessons and continuous provision. When ready and where appropriate children begin to develop a comfortable tripod grip. We teach the formation of each letter through the RWI scheme, each sound having its own rhyme.

Mathematics

*Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes. (***Educational programme - EYFS Statutory Framework 2024)**

Our Maths curriculum has its foundation in the above statement. We fulfil these legal requirements through daily whole class input into maths and regular, intentional, adult led focused input in small groups. Children then have opportunities across the week to work alongside an adult or their peers in enhanced continuous provision in an environment where adults can further revisit and extend children's knowledge. Learning and understanding of number develops from early experiences into comparison, counting, cardinality and composition. Teaching and learning based on children's own interests and fascinations leads to a greater motivation and deeper understanding of these.

Mathematical ideas are difficult because they are abstract, and children need time to fully understand them. Our curriculum is based around the principles of:

1. The one to one principle {correspondence}

2. The stable order principle-knowing the list of words used must be in a consistent order-1,2,3
3. The cardinal principle- when a child realises that the final word has special significance- it represents how many are in the array.
4. The abstraction principle- anything can be counted.
5. The order irrelevance principle.

At Marlborough St Marys we recognise the importance of high-quality play and a maths rich environment. Varied, open ended resources enable children to become immersed in real-life, problem-solving explorations. Children experience mathematical concepts through role play, dice/track games, cooking, construction, labelled resources, songs, rhymes and puzzles. Embedded in our daily routines are the register, counting numbers of children, days of the week and months, counting and pricing of snacks, timings etc.

Immersing children in a number rich environment is vital. Counting and pattern is the basis of our Early Years numeracy curriculum. Counting can often be a largely imitative social practice- the recitation of numbers in a certain order e.g. "1, 2, buckle my shoe." We need to make the purposes of counting explicit for the children – "it is to find out how many" while making it purposeful, relevant and more importantly fun.
We use practical apparatus such as unifix "staircases", number lines and Numicon plates to help the children construct mental images of numbers. We use 'Number blocks' programmes to sometimes introduce and also reinforce learning. Dice and dominoes also help to fix visual patterns. Through learning to subitise – seeing an amount and knowing how many in that arrangement without having to count, children begin to see these patterns, for example the pattern of 4 as two two's or 6 as two three's. Being able to describe an arrangement of spots and using language structures such as, 'I have noticed', 'I know because', 'it is the same/different because' helps children to see that although the arrangement is different, the amount stays the same. We work through numbers systematically through pattern work, use of frames, collections of objects and practical understanding of parts and whole. We ensure that children understand the language of maths for instance, if a child does not understand the language of a 'part' for instance as part of an animal, flower or object they will not then understand this as a part or whole of a number.

Vocabulary: *more, add, make altogether, total, take away, how many are left, 1 more, 1 less, sum, is the same as, difference between, how many more than, count out, group, share out, left over.*

We recognise the importance of developing children's spatial thinking and awareness and believe that shape and space and the ability to visualise spatially helps children's numerical abilities, body awareness and mental mapping e.g. on a number line, diagrams, models, graphs and maps.
We incorporate Shape, space and measure across our continuous provision through weekly challenges and both in indoor and outdoor provision; linking areas of learning together.
Block play and construction provide opportunities for using the language and vocabulary of shape, positions and directions. Obstacle courses, treasure hunts, scooting, bikes and climbing all contribute to children's spatial understanding. Sand, water-play and mud kitchens offer endless possibilities for weight and capacity and our regular outdoor learning and forest school activities lend themselves to all areas including length, weight, pattern making and recognising and number.

Physical Development

We recognise the importance of regular physical activity for young children and place physical development at the forefront of our curriculum. With a strong core, coordinated pivot points at the shoulders, elbows and wrists and developed gross and fine motor movements children have strong foundations for the physical process of writing. We believe that physical development links to all areas of the curriculum and that by building it into our lessons with a cross curricular approach we can teach Maths actively and build strong resilient learners, unafraid to take risks in their approach to heir learning.

At Marlborough St Mary's, Reception children take part in regular PE and dance lessons, where the focus is on improving fundamental skills of agility, balance and coordination, through this they will acquire stamina, perseverance, and specific skills using balls, bats and a wide variety of other equipment. We use both the indoor and outdoor space providing a range of equipment whereby children can develop their core strength, move over, under and through apparatus and lift and carry equipment to build with. Children's physical skills are also developed through:

- Manipulating paintbrushes, pencils, and tools
- Riding bikes, balancing, and handling equipment

Creativity

Creativity means what you do with what you have.

Creativity cannot come from nothing; children need to be taught skills otherwise their creativity will be very restricted. In class we have to teach specific skills such as phonic knowledge and correct letter formation but also transferable skills such as the ability to think through problems and communicate our ideas. Being creative often involves doing something one has never done before. This requires self-confidence and we must set challenges which are within the children's scope of competence.
We can offer scaffolding for children's learning, giving them a secure structure to work within by demonstrating techniques and skills or initiating ideas. However, we do not need to scaffold too much learning for the children or give them materials which are too representational.

If children are given too rigid a framework and little choice in the materials they use, the opportunity to be creative is limited. Creativity is quashed when adults impose their own ideas and preoccupations e.g. rabbits need not have whiskers made of drinking straws. We are not focused on end products and believe that the process in arts activities is important. This will avoid the "screwed up tissue paper syndrome".

Adults can promote creativity by introducing new materials, words, stories, movement and music and building stimulating environments and display.
Semi- structured environments can suggest alternative possibilities to children. The materials which most lend themselves to imaginative play tend to be the most basic- logs, planks and blankets. We will invest in low cost, versatile open-ended resources and encourage the children to make their own resources on an always available art/technology table.

IMAGINATIVE PLAY ZONE

Much of the equipment associated with this play is also relevant to the building area. Just as indoors, we would change the focus of an imaginative area sometimes we must do this outdoors and set up themes such as a café or spaceship. But the children need to know they can set up their own imaginative scene.

Possible theme areas could include- garden centre, boat, pirate ship, post office, shop, castle, garage, fire station, police station, camping.

We will provide these versatile resources:

Crates, A frames, planks, boxes, drapes, carpets, large umbrellas, chairs, tables, soft play.
Blankets and rugs.
Musical instruments
Table, chairs, steering wheel
A trolley with props, bags, hats, belts, sunglasses, hard hats, suitcases, baskets, backpacks.
Tools, paint brushes, shovels, spades, old cameras, telephones, binoculars, pegs, ropes, brushes.
Cooking utensils, picnic food, dolls, prams and bedding.
Ropes, string, masking tape.
Clipboards with attached paper and pencil.
Number plates, cones and road signs can be used on the playground.

Not all this equipment should be put out all at once, but the children need to know that if they want a particular piece of equipment, it can be made available.

CONSTRUCTION ZONE
Water area- trays, guttering, buckets, hoses, pumps, sprays, rollers, paint brushes.
Natural materials- stones, twigs, bark, wood, pebbles and gravel.
Pulleys, ropes, different bricks, crates, tunnels, steps, ramps,

GARDENING AREA
This zone needs a boundary, so it is not used for play purposes.
Plant daffodils, potatoes.
Pots, spades, trowels, forks, hoes, watering cans, hoses, canes, wheelbarrows.

SCIENCE ZONE
Old logs, inspection pots, magnifying glasses, clipboards.
Bird boxes, reference photos and books.
Windmills, rain gauge,
Signs and symbols from the environment.

MUD KITCHEN
In this area children can explore all areas of the curriculum and experiment with mixtures of solids, liquids and tools.

LITERACY ZONE
Table, chairs, cushions, graphics area, drawing and writing materials.
Laminated alphabet frieze
Chalks, whiteboards
Weaving ribbons
Outdoor book box
Clipboards, writing trolley

NUMERACY ZONE
Number washing line and pegs, dice, number bean bags
Skittles, scoreboards
Programmable toys
Number books

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
A-frames, steps, soft play, climbing equipment
Planks, ladders, barrels, tunnels, slides, cardboard boxes

Clay, dough,
Bikes, scooters

Appendix: School Based Nursery Update August 2026

1. Context & Scope This addendum complements the main Marlborough St Mary's Early Years Policy and tailors our approach to the developmental needs of 2-, 3-, and 4-year-olds in our school-based Nursery setting. It operates under the principles of the 2024 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), recognizing that children learn and develop in individual ways and at varying rates.

2. Principles & Pedagogy Our Nursery provision is underpinned by the four key themes of the EYFS:

- **A Unique Child:** Every child is recognized as a capable, resilient, and confident learner. We value the diversity of all individuals and adapt our planning to meet individual developmental needs and life experiences.
- **Positive Relationships:** Staff foster warm, caring, and professional relationships. We partner with parents and carers as children's primary educators, keeping channels of communication open via Tapestry, ClassDojo, and daily informal feedback.
- **Enabling Environments:** The Nursery provides a safe, rich, play-based environment inside and outdoors, allowing children extended periods to explore, self-select resources, and direct their own learning.
- **Learning & Development:** All seven areas of learning are delivered flexibly through a balance of child-initiated play and intentional adult interaction.

3. Curriculum & Provision for 2 to 4 Year Olds

- **Focus on Prime Areas:** Priority is given to igniting curiosity and capacity for learning through the three prime areas: *Personal, Social and Emotional Development*, *Communication and Language*, and *Physical Development*.
- **Communication & Language:** Staff build a language-rich environment using stories, rhymes, songs, and sustained shared thinking to build vocabulary and confidence in talk.
- **Early Literacy & Mathematics:** Children develop pre-reading and mark-making skills through active, sensory play and exposure to quality texts. Early mathematical concepts—such as counting, cardinality, spatial awareness, and pattern—are explored using physical manipulatives, real-life problem solving, and open-ended continuous provision.
- **Physical & Creative Play:** Both indoor and outdoor spaces are used daily to build gross and fine motor strength. Open-ended materials (such as mud kitchens, block play, and natural items) promote creative problem-solving and critical thinking.

4. Behaviour & Welfare

- **Positive Behaviour & Restorative Practice:** Staff set clear, age-appropriate boundaries and model desired behaviours. We use supportive Restorative Practice prompts adapted to early years to help children understand feelings, resolve conflicts, and build emotional resilience.

- **Safeguarding & Health:** We maintain strict statutory welfare standards to keep children safe and healthy, promoting oral hygiene, handwashing, and safe risk-taking in supervised environments.