

What Learning is Like at St. Mary's Catholic Primary School...

In our Two Year Old, Nursery, Reception and Year 1 classes, our staff carefully and creatively set up the rooms and outdoor spaces to provide high quality learning experiences that continually cover all aspects of the curriculum and meet our pupils' developing interests. Each age group has their own designated outdoor space, and for most of the day, children can free-flow between their classes and outside area- this reduces in Year 1 as the formal teaching sessions develop. Children have a lot of independence in the choices they make about their learning. Much of what they do is play-based, as play is the natural way to learn. The benefits of play include:

- **Social and Emotional Development:** Play involves learning about collaborating, compromising, communicating, competing well, resolving disputes and caring for friends. It is a key way in which children develop self-regulation and social skills.
- **Well-being:** Great play is enormously absorbing and fun.
- **Learning:** Play is a laboratory of life, in which children practice and explore the wider world. They embed learning, develop understanding and discover personal interests, talents and identities.
- **Creativity:** Play is an intrinsically creative activity, which stretches learners' imaginations.
- **Rights:** Play is a right under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our skilled staff actively engage with our children's play throughout the day, seeking opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in personalised ways. It is the combination of a highly engaging, creative and provoking environment, alongside well-timed interventions from staff, which grows pupils' understanding and challenges their thinking. You can find out more about play-based learning [here](#).

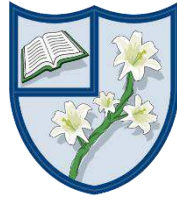
As children develop through our Nursery, Reception and Year 1 classes, we gradually introduce more whole-class teaching and teacher-led, group activities, to ensure pupils master the full curriculum. Key to our EYFS and Year 1 practice is the ongoing relationship we foster with parents. We seek to actively engage you in your child's learning.

We see these as essential learning attitudes if children are going to meet challenge and enjoy how that feels. Without resilience for example you will not be prepared to take on any learning that might result in mistakes being made. Without the ability to take risk and accept mistakes as part of the learning process you are unlikely to make the progress you might otherwise do. The ability to reflect on your learning and see that it could be better requires resilience and your awareness of relationships needs to be strong if you are to accept feedback and give feedback to others. Children need to be resourceful also, the ability to get what you need for your learning or try something else with different equipment or a different approach is vital if children are going to make the steady journey to becoming truly independent, lifelong learners.

Our core purpose

Everything we do must ensure that children achieve really well and progress. Therefore, the teaching that takes place every day is always focused upon this core purpose.

To help children on their learning journey, we ensure high levels of consistency in approach and organisation so that there are no artificial blocks put in place to stop children from progressing.



The place of planning & assessment

To enable work to be pitched at the right level, so that each child is faced with an achievable challenge in all their work, accurate on-going (formative) assessment is vital. Before any lessons can be planned, the class teacher must have a firm grasp of the child's current individual skills, knowledge and understanding. From this, sharply focused planning (both weekly and daily) can occur that leads to lessons being delivered that are appropriately pitched and with high (but achievable) levels of challenge.

The effectiveness of teachers planning upon the work that children produce, forms part of each term's review of teaching and learning.

Professional collaboration

High quality teaching and learning is developing across the whole school because professional collaboration has become embedded into our whole school culture. Teachers and support staff work alongside colleagues in different classes and year groups so that skills, approaches and expertise are shared and ideas and innovations are developed.

This approach also helps to ensure high levels of consistency across the whole school.

It is important that the continuing drive for greater collaboration comes from individual teacher's professional enthusiasm and therefore requires all teaching staff to be proactive. Testing out ideas that have been derived from research, both nationally and internationally, is now a key feature of our work and a strong indicator of continuing developing professional practice and professional culture.

What does high quality teaching and learning look like?

As a school, we have identified key aspects of effective teaching and learning by what you can observe as normal daily practice within classrooms. The following are some of these key attributes:

- Active teaching – driving the learning forward with passion
- Engagement by pupils – fully involved in their learning in the classroom, through discussion, challenging activities etc. not passive
- Pace – lessons have a momentum that makes it apparent that learning goals will be met
- Good pitch to the lesson – the lesson is pitched to the national curriculum and at a level that challenges all children
- Well differentiated activities and lessons
- Children able to articulate what they need to do to move forward to the next step in their learning due to an on-going dialogue with their teacher and through highly effective feedback
- Well organised and vibrant classrooms with high quality children's work on display
- Children demonstrating the skills of independent learning – able to use and take care of a range of resources, able to organise themselves, able to manage time effectively within lessons
- Good behaviour and clear behaviour management systems that are clearly understood and used by children
- The work every child is given is challenging yet achievable and the children demonstrate pride in this work by presenting it well and taking care of it in all its produced forms

This is not an exhaustive list but provides some key examples of effective practice that can be observed in all year groups, every day.