



St Michael's
C.E. Primary School

EYFS Curriculum Rationale



"Courage to Flourish in the Love of God"

Intent

At St Michael's C.E. Primary School, our Early Years curriculum is designed to give every child the strong foundations they need to flourish. Rooted in our Christian vision, "Courage to Flourish in the Love of God," we want children to feel safe, valued, confident and ready to learn.

Our curriculum reflects the needs of our school community, where children begin their Early Years journey with varied starting points and experiences. We therefore prioritise language development, secure relationships, independence, self-care, confidence and meaningful first-hand experiences from the very beginning.

We aim for children to leave the Early Years as curious, independent and resilient learners who can communicate their ideas, build positive relationships, manage their feelings and personal needs, and engage confidently with the world around them.

Our curriculum prioritises the foundational knowledge, vocabulary, skills and learning behaviours children need for future success. In Nursery, this begins with secure relationships, communication and language, PSED, physical development, independence and self-care. In Reception, these foundations are built upon through early reading, writing, mathematics and wider curriculum knowledge, preparing children for Year 1 and beyond.

We are ambitious for all children, regardless of their starting points, backgrounds or needs. Our intent is that every child develops the confidence, language, knowledge, skills and sense of belonging they need to thrive in EYFS and continue to flourish throughout their education.

Implementation

Our EYFS curriculum is organised through half-termly big questions, themes, vehicle texts, enrichment texts, vocabulary, rhymes, songs, visits and first-hand experiences. These provide meaningful contexts for learning and support progression from Nursery, through Reception and into Year 1.

The curriculum is designed to secure strong foundations over time. Key knowledge and skills are taught, revisited and embedded through continuous provision, enhanced provision, directed activities and high-quality interactions. These foundations are built upon throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, supporting children to access the wider curriculum with confidence.

The St Michael's Securing Strong Foundations progression document identifies the essential foundational knowledge, skills and learning behaviours children need to develop and embed from Nursery to Year 1. It supports staff to plan precisely, identify gaps and ensure children are ready for the next stage of learning.

The sections below explain how these approaches are enacted through our pedagogy, provision, teaching, assessment and curriculum adaptations.

Overarching Principles

The four overarching principles of the EYFS underpin our practice at St Michael's. They reflect our belief that every child is unique, develops in different ways and needs secure relationships, enabling environments and meaningful learning experiences in order to flourish. These principles support our curriculum aim of securing strong foundations for all children from Nursery, through Reception and into Year 1.

The Unique Child

At the heart of our Christian vision is the belief that every child is known, valued and able to flourish. Children join our EYFS with different starting points, experiences, interests and needs. We use what we know about each child to support their communication, confidence, independence, relationships and learning behaviours. We are ambitious for all children, including those with SEND, disadvantaged children, EAL learners and those with lower starting points.

Positive Relationships

Warm, consistent relationships help children feel safe, settled and ready to learn. Adults build strong relationships with children and families so that children develop trust, confidence and a sense of belonging. High-quality interactions are central to our practice: adults listen, model language, extend thinking, scaffold learning and support children to manage emotions, relationships and routines.

Enabling Environments

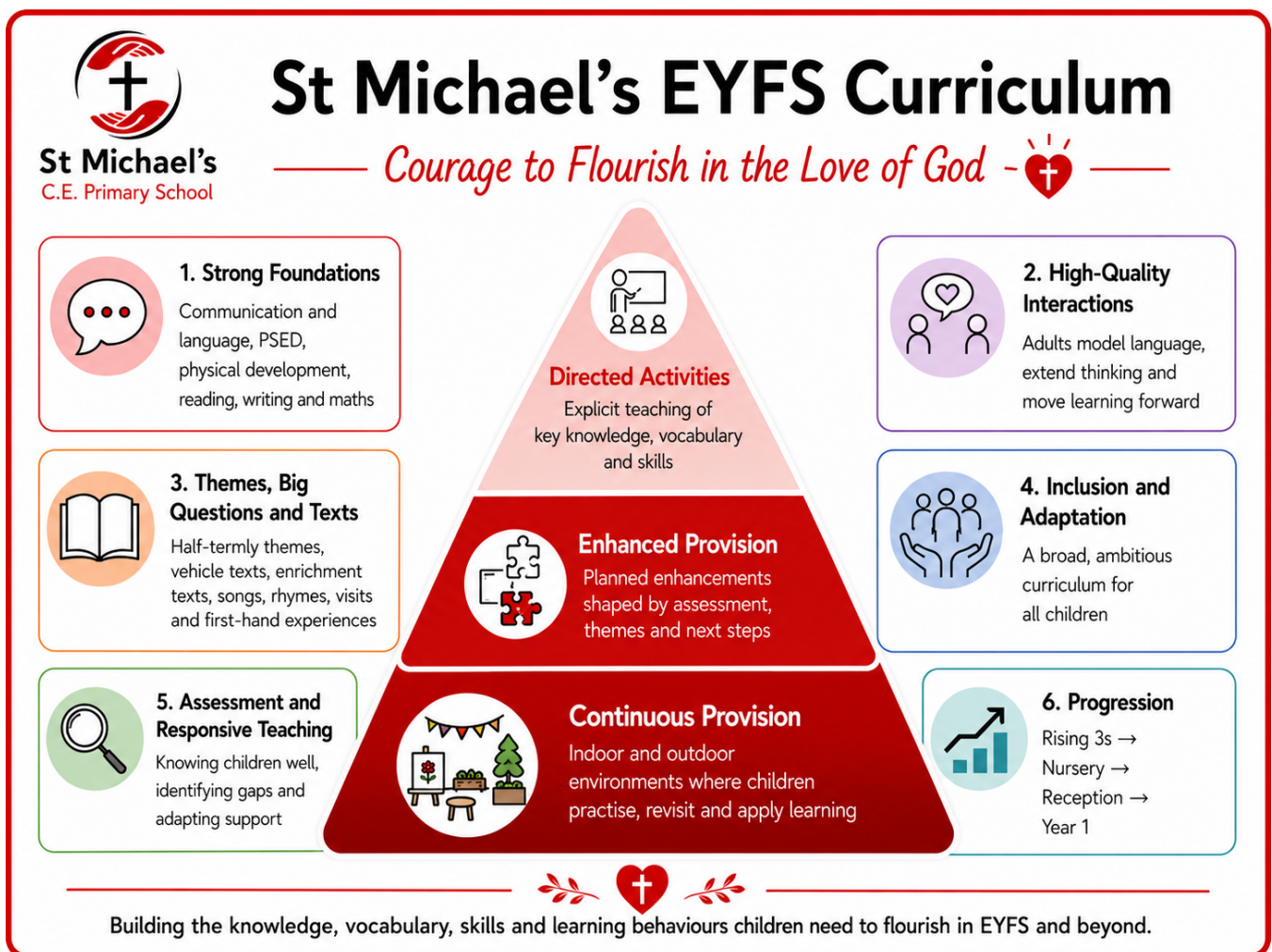
Our indoor and outdoor environments are carefully planned to support play, exploration, independence and repeated practice. Continuous provision allows children to revisit and apply taught knowledge and skills in meaningful contexts. Resources, routines and adult support are

adapted to meet children’s needs and to ensure that all children can access a broad, ambitious and developmentally appropriate curriculum.

Learning and Development

Our curriculum supports children to develop the foundational knowledge, vocabulary, skills and learning behaviours they need for future success. In Nursery, this begins with the prime areas, self-care, independence and communication. In Reception, these foundations are built upon through more explicit teaching of reading, writing, mathematics and wider curriculum knowledge. Learning is carefully sequenced, revisited and built upon so that children are ready for the next stage of education.

Pedagogy



Our early years pedagogy is based upon the Early Excellence Curriculum Development Model. The curriculum and learning environment are carefully planned to support learning through play, purposeful provision and high-quality adult interaction.

This is enacted through our three-layer curriculum model: continuous provision, enhanced provision and directed activities. These layers work together to ensure that children are taught important knowledge and skills, given time to practise and revisit them, and supported to apply their learning in meaningful contexts.

This approach sits within our wider school curriculum model, which aims for pupils to know more, remember more and do more. In EYFS, this means children build on prior experiences, revisit key learning, develop secure foundations and apply their knowledge and skills through play, adult-led learning, provision and real-life experiences.

Adults play a crucial role in moving learning forward. Through modelling, questioning, scaffolding, vocabulary development and responsive interaction, staff support children to deepen their thinking, build independence and make progress from their individual starting points.

Our Curriculum Model

Our EYFS curriculum is delivered through three connected layers: continuous provision, enhanced provision and directed activities. These layers work together to ensure that children are explicitly taught important knowledge and skills, given time to practise and revisit learning, and supported to apply what they know in meaningful contexts. This model helps children secure strong foundations, build independence and develop the confidence to access the wider curriculum.

Layer 1: Continuous Provision



Continuous provision is the foundation of our EYFS curriculum. It includes the core areas, resources and routines that are available to children every day in the indoor and outdoor

environment. These areas are carefully planned to meet the age, stage and needs of the children, and to support play, exploration, independence, communication and repeated practice.

Children are taught how to use the provision safely and purposefully. Over time, they revisit and apply taught knowledge and skills through play, helping them to remember more, do more and deepen their understanding. Resources are progressive from Nursery to Reception so that children can build on previous learning and develop increasing confidence, creativity and independence.

Adults use high-quality interactions within continuous provision to model language, extend thinking, scaffold learning, address misconceptions and support children's next steps.

Layer 2: Enhanced Provision



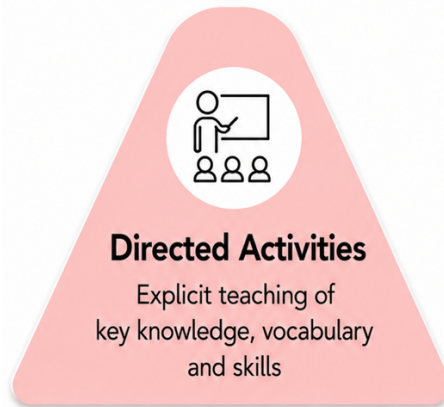
Enhanced provision is layered on top of continuous provision. It adds carefully chosen resources, experiences, prompts, books, artefacts or challenges for a fixed period of time to extend, deepen or revisit learning.

Enhancements are planned in response to:

- observations of children's play and needs
- assessment information and professional knowledge
- gaps identified through teaching, provision or curriculum checkpoints
- key vocabulary, stories, big questions and current curriculum themes
- seasonal changes, local events, visits or first-hand experiences
- opportunities to provide additional practice, support or challenge

Enhanced provision is used purposefully to help children practise and apply key knowledge and skills. It may be used to plug gaps, revisit prior learning, deepen understanding, introduce new vocabulary or provide challenge for children who are secure. Adults introduce enhancements, model how to use them, observe how children respond and use high-quality interactions to move learning forward.

Layer 3: Directed Activities



Directed activities are planned adult-led learning opportunities. These may take place as whole-class teaching, small-group work or individual support, depending on the needs of the children.

Directed activities are used to teach specific knowledge, skills and vocabulary. In Nursery, these often focus on communication and language, PSED, physical development, early literacy, early mathematics and wider curriculum experiences. In Reception, directed activities include more explicit teaching of phonics, reading, writing, mathematics and wider curriculum knowledge.

During directed activities, adults check understanding, model new learning, address misconceptions, provide feedback and adapt teaching in response to what children need. Directed activities may also be used for targeted support, keep-up, intervention or challenge so that all children can make progress from their starting points.

Learning Environment

Our EYFS environment has been developed in partnership with Early Excellence. As an Early Excellence Partner School, we have worked with Early Excellence to strengthen the quality of our indoor and outdoor provision so that it supports purposeful play, independence, language development, exploration and progression from Nursery to Reception.

Our learning environment is carefully planned to support children's learning, independence, communication and confidence. We view the indoor and outdoor environment as an important part of our curriculum because it enables children to practise, revisit and apply taught knowledge and skills through play and exploration.

Continuous provision is organised into clear areas which are familiar, accessible and purposeful. Resources are carefully selected to support the age, stage and needs of the children and are progressive from Nursery to Reception. This helps children build on previous learning, develop independence and deepen their play over time.

The environment is reviewed and adapted throughout the year in response to assessment, observations, children's needs, cohort priorities and curriculum priorities. Adults consider how each area supports:

- communication and language
- independence and self-care
- physical development
- early reading, writing and mathematics
- creativity, curiosity and problem-solving
- collaboration and social development
- wider curriculum knowledge and vocabulary

The outdoor area is organised into clear zones for continuous provision, mirroring the principles of the indoor environment while making best use of the larger space. These zones provide opportunities for large-scale movement, construction, imaginative play, sensory exploration, mark making, investigation, collaboration and learning linked to the natural world. This ensures that outdoor learning is purposeful, progressive and supports children to practise and apply taught knowledge and skills in meaningful contexts.

Teaching and Learning

Our curriculum is based on the Educational Programmes within the EYFS Statutory Framework and is supported by Birth to 5 Matters and Development Matters. Learning is planned across the prime and specific areas, with careful consideration of children's starting points, needs, prior experiences and next steps.

Teaching takes place through continuous provision, enhanced provision and directed activities. Adults teach key knowledge, vocabulary and skills explicitly where needed, while also giving children time to practise, revisit and apply their learning through play and meaningful first-hand experiences.

Communication and language underpins the whole curriculum. Stories, rhymes, songs, role play, discussion and real experiences are used to develop children's vocabulary, confidence and understanding. Adults model language, introduce new words and support children to use vocabulary across different contexts.

Our Christian vision and school values are woven through the curriculum. Children learn about courage, hope, thankfulness, love and forgiveness, trust and community through stories, worship, relationships, routines, discussion, play and everyday experiences.

Teaching is responsive. Adults use what they know about each child to adapt support, provide challenge, address gaps and ensure that all children can access the curriculum successfully.

Adult Interactions

High-quality adult interactions are central to our EYFS practice. Every interaction is a teaching opportunity. Adults observe, listen, respond and support children in the moment so that learning is moved forward in a way that is matched to the individual child.

Adults use interactions to secure strong foundations, especially in communication and language, PSED, physical development, early literacy and mathematics. Through carefully timed support, adults help children to develop vocabulary, sentence structure, confidence, independence, self-regulation, problem-solving and deeper thinking.

Adults use high-quality interactions to:

- follow the child's lead and respond to their communication
- model and extend language
- introduce, repeat and revisit vocabulary
- scaffold learning and thinking
- narrate play and actions
- ask purposeful questions
- encourage children to explain, reason and make links
- support problem-solving and independence
- address misconceptions in the moment
- model social language, turn-taking and emotional vocabulary
- build sustained back-and-forth conversations
- provide challenge or additional support where needed

We use Little Wandle Foundations for Language interaction techniques to support children's vocabulary, sentence development, turn-taking and confidence as communicators. Adults use strategies such as tuning in, waiting, listening, commenting, repeating, extending and wondering so that children have time to think, respond and develop their ideas.

High-quality interactions also support assessment and responsive teaching. Adults use what they notice during play, routines, directed activities and provision to identify next steps, adapt support, plan enhancements and address gaps. This ensures that teaching is responsive, inclusive and ambitious for all children.

<p>Tune in Watch, wait, wonder</p> <p>"I can see you are ..."</p>	<p>Pause more Think before you speak</p> <p>"I can see you are ..."</p>	<p>Running commentary Narrate the activity</p> <p>"I can see you are ..."</p>	<p>Make links Connect to what they know</p> <p>"That is like when ..."</p>	<p>Give choices Model language</p> <p>"Would you like ... or ... ?"</p>
<p>Recast and extend Build on language</p> <p>"That's right, a bus" (recast) "A big, red bus like the one in our book" (extend)</p>	<p>Name Point and label</p> <p>"That's called a ... or 'That's a ..."</p>	<p>Ask open questions Find out more</p> <p>"Tell me (more) about ..."</p>	<p>Prompt thinking Think, suggest, wonder</p> <p>"I think ..."</p>	<p>Comment Tell, don't ask</p> <p>"You are ..."</p>

Themes and Big Questions

Each half term, children explore a carefully chosen theme and big question. These themes are based on children's starting points, our school context and the knowledge, vocabulary and experiences we want children to build over time. They are not stand-alone topics; they are carefully sequenced from Nursery to Reception so that children revisit and deepen key concepts as they move through EYFS.

The big question provides a clear focus for learning across the half term. It supports children to make links between texts, vocabulary, provision, visits, first-hand experiences and wider curriculum learning. Adults return to the big question regularly so that children can revisit key ideas, remember prior learning and apply new vocabulary.

Each EYFS classroom has a display linked to the half-termly theme and big question. Children contribute knowledge, vocabulary, photographs, drawings and examples of learning to the display over time. This helps children reflect on what they have learned and supports adults in identifying what has been remembered, understood and needs to be revisited.

Texts, Reading and Language

Reading is at the heart of our EYFS curriculum. Each half term, carefully chosen vehicle texts and enrichment texts are linked to the theme and big question. These texts drive learning, teaching and provision by introducing key ideas, vocabulary, story language, themes and opportunities for discussion.

Vehicle texts provide a shared starting point for learning across the curriculum. Enrichment texts broaden children's knowledge and expose them to a range of stories, cultures, families, places, experiences and perspectives. Texts are selected to support progression from Nursery to Reception and to prepare children for future learning.

In Nursery, children develop early reading foundations through Little Wandle Foundations, Little Wandle Love of Reading texts, songs, rhymes, stories, book handling, sound awareness, oral language and mark making. Love of Reading texts are used to build vocabulary, develop comprehension, support repeated story language and nurture enjoyment of books.

In Reception, children build on these foundations through Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, reading practice sessions, decoding, prosody, comprehension and a rich reading curriculum. Children read books that are closely matched to their secure phonics knowledge so they can apply learning successfully.

Inclusion and Adaptation

All children access a broad and ambitious EYFS curriculum. Adults adapt teaching, provision, resources, language, routines and adult support so that children with SEND, disadvantaged children, EAL learners and those with lower starting points can participate successfully. Adaptations may include visual support, repetition, pre-teaching vocabulary, sensory support, simplified language, small-group work, targeted adult interaction, keep-up support and additional practice.

Adaptations support access without lowering ambition. Staff use assessment, professional knowledge and partnership with families and external professionals to identify what children need and to remove barriers to learning.

Evidence, Assessment and Responsive Teaching

Assessment in EYFS is purposeful and manageable. Adults prioritise knowing children well, responding in the moment and adapting teaching, rather than collecting excessive evidence.

Evidence is gathered selectively and where it supports teaching and learning. This may include professional knowledge of the child, observations, child voice, floor books, photographs, children's books and examples of learning. Evidence is not collected for its own sake; it is used to help adults understand what children know, what they can do, what they need to practise further and what support or challenge is needed next.

We use a clear and thorough tracking system to monitor children's progress and identify gaps in learning. Staff use professional knowledge, high-quality interactions, observations, Birth to 5 Matters, BDMAT writing TAFs, and our curriculum progression documents to inform judgements and plan next steps.

Assessment information is used to adapt teaching, plan enhancements, identify interventions, provide keep-up support and respond to children's daily needs. Where gaps are identified, adults plan additional modelling, practice, scaffolding or targeted support so that children can continue to access the curriculum successfully.

Teachers use assessment information and pupil progress discussions to identify target children who need additional support, practice or challenge. These children are not viewed as fixed groups; they are reviewed regularly as children make progress and new needs emerge. Staff know which children require targeted support and use this knowledge to plug gaps through planned enhancements, directed activities, adult interactions, keep-up support and interventions. This ensures that support is timely, purposeful and responsive to children's needs.

In Nursery, floor books help capture shared experiences, vocabulary, children's thinking and curriculum learning over time. In Reception, floor books, maths books and literacy books support children in revisiting and remembering key learning. Staff also use observations, interactions, discussions and scheme-specific assessments to inform next steps.

Assessment supports all children, including those with SEND, disadvantaged children, EAL learners and children with lower starting points, to access the curriculum successfully. Adaptations are made without lowering ambition.

Curriculum Offer for Nursery

Universal 15-Hour Offer

All Nursery children access a high-quality EYFS curriculum rooted in the seven areas of learning. Children receive the full Nursery curriculum entitlement, whether they attend for 15 hours or 30 hours.

Our universal offer includes:

- high-quality adult interaction and responsive teaching
- well-planned continuous provision indoors and outdoors
- daily opportunities to develop communication and language
- stories, songs, rhymes and language-rich experiences
- early mathematical experiences through play, routines and adult-led teaching
- mark making, fine motor and early writing opportunities
- PSED through routines, relationships and supported play
- physical development indoors and outdoors
- opportunities to explore, create, investigate and solve problems
- purposeful assessment that informs next steps and provision

This ensures that every child receives a broad, balanced and ambitious Nursery curriculum.

Additional 30-Hour Offer

Children accessing 30 hours receive the same core curriculum entitlement, with additional time to revisit, practise, deepen and apply learning.

The additional hours provide:

- longer periods of sustained play and deeper involvement
- more opportunities for high-quality conversation and interaction
- additional time to revisit and consolidate taught knowledge and skills
- further story, rhyme, communication and language experiences
- more time to develop independence, self-care and confidence
- extended opportunities to build relationships and cooperate with others
- additional personalised support, keep-up or intervention where appropriate
- wider enrichment opportunities such as cooking, gardening, music, seasonal activities and hands-on experiences

The 30-hour offer provides additional time and breadth, helping children embed learning more securely across a wider range of contexts.

Nursery Two-Year Rolling Programme

Our Nursery curriculum runs on a two-year rolling programme because some children join as our Rising 3s and spend longer than one academic year in Nursery. Cycle A and Cycle B ensure that children revisit key themes and concepts without repeating the same vehicle texts.

This approach allows children to deepen vocabulary, knowledge and skills over time. Children revisit familiar ideas at a more secure and confident stage of development, enabling them to build stronger foundations and prepare successfully for Reception.

Curriculum Adaptations for Our Rising 3s

Our Rising 3s are children who join Nursery during the Spring/Summer term shortly after turning three. They are part of our Nursery provision and access the Nursery curriculum through developmentally appropriate adaptations.

For our Rising 3s, adults prioritise settling, secure relationships, routines, communication and language, PSED, physical development, self-care and confidence. These foundations help children feel safe, valued and ready to access the wider Nursery curriculum over time.

Adults adapt language, routines, provision, expectations and support so that learning matches children's age, stage and starting points. The focus is not formal coverage of the full Nursery curriculum, but helping children build the early foundations needed for successful progression through Nursery and into Reception.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

The Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning describe how children learn. They are woven through our curriculum, provision, routines and adult interactions.

At St Michael's, children are supported to:

- play and explore by investigating, making choices, using their imagination and having a go;
- actively learn by becoming involved, concentrating, keeping on trying and developing resilience;
- create and think critically by making links, solving problems, developing ideas and reflecting on what they are learning.

These characteristics support children to become confident, curious, resilient and independent learners. They help children develop the learning behaviours needed to flourish in EYFS, transition successfully into Year 1 and continue to build strong foundations for future learning.

Impact

The impact of our EYFS curriculum is seen in children who feel safe, valued and ready to learn. We want children to leave EYFS as confident, curious and independent learners who can communicate their ideas, build positive relationships, manage their feelings and personal needs, and access the next stage of learning successfully.

Children develop strong foundations in communication and language, PSED, physical development, reading, writing, mathematics and wider curriculum knowledge. They build

vocabulary, knowledge, skills and learning behaviours that prepare them for Key Stage 1 and beyond.

We measure impact through professional knowledge of the child, observations, interactions, children's work, floor books, assessment information, pupil progress discussions and transition information. Staff use this information to identify strengths, gaps and next steps.

We are ambitious for all children. Children with SEND, disadvantaged children, EAL learners and those with lower starting points are supported through adaptations, scaffolding, keep-up and targeted support so that they can access the curriculum and make progress.

By the end of Reception, children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals. However, we recognise that the EYFS curriculum is broader than the ELGs. Our aim is that children leave EYFS with the knowledge, confidence, independence and strong foundations they need to flourish in Year 1 and throughout their education.