

Early Years Foundation Stage

6. Phonics, Reading & Writing

Phonics is recommended as the first strategy that children should be taught in helping them learn to read. It runs alongside other teaching methods such as Guided Reading and Shared Reading to help children develop all the other vital reading skills and hopefully give them a real love of reading. At St. Mary's C of E Academy we use Sounds Write as our phonics programme. Sounds-Write is acknowledged by the DfE as meeting ALL its criteria for an effective phonics teaching programme. It is a very highly structured, multi-sensory, incremental and code-oriented, instructional approach to teaching children to read and spell.



So what is phonics?

Words are made up from small units of sound called phonemes. Phonics teaches children to be able to listen carefully and identify the phonemes that make up each word. This helps children to learn to read words and to spell words. At the start of the programme, simple, one sound/one spelling, one-syllable, CVC (consonant vowel consonant) words only are introduced. As the programme progresses, the complexity of one-syllable words is increased to four-, five- and six-sound words of the structure CVCC, CCVC, CCVCC/CCCVCC, before introducing the most common consonant digraphs.

The Sounds-Write programme teaches pupils to understand the way the alphabet code works. Very often, in the early stages of learning to read and spell, because of the complexity of the code, pupils will not be able to spell some sounds by using the correct spellings. However, pupils taught using Sounds-Write will be able to write almost anything they want to write by using plausible (phonetic) spellings for sounds.

GPCs

This stands for grapheme phoneme correspondences. This simply means that they are taught all the phonemes in the English language and ways of writing them down. These sounds are taught in a particular order. The first sounds to be taught are s, a, t, p. This is code knowledge that is built upon year on year throughout their time in primary as new spelling patterns are identified.



Blending

Children are taught to be able to blend. This is when children say the sounds that make up a word and are able to merge the sounds together until they can hear what the word is. This skill is vital in learning to read.

Segmenting

Children are also taught to segment. This is the opposite of blending. Children are able to say a word and then break it up into the phonemes that make it up. This skill is vital in being able to spell words.

Phonics lesson structure

Revisit	Teach	Practice	Apply
In this stage children recall something previously taught such as key word spelling, previously taught phoneme, usually with games and songs.	This is when new learning takes place. It could be a new phoneme / grapheme, a class investigation, teacher modelling or use of letters.	Activities in this part of the lesson enable the children to practice their new learning, this could be writing, spelling, blending, reading and games	This is where skills are applied independently. It may be within continuous provision or using games with groups.

At St Mary's we believe that the key to success in reading is communication. Research clearly shows that the level of development in language and communication is the greatest predictor of success in later life. Within the EYFS communication and language is a prime area of learning. At school, children use language to build strong relationships, communicate their ideas and feelings, think creatively and critically, as a tool for learning, to become confident with writing. The development of a young child's communication and language comes primarily from tuning into conversations that are meaningful to the child. The preparation for all aspects of writing language develops through one to one conversation with a responsive adult. Alongside quality interaction, rich and varied experiences ensure language provides the foundation of thinking and learning.

St Mary's EYFS is an Every Child a Talker accredited setting with 4 practitioners trained in ELKLAN.

Improving young children's vocabulary is paramount. Exploring and extending pupils' vocabulary is part of everyday teaching. Lessons are planned to enrich vocabulary and incidental opportunities are exploited. Vocabulary is discussed with the intention of building background knowledge so pupils can comprehend the context of a text.

Our EYFS classroom uses floor books to embed key knowledge and vocabulary. These floor books are created with the children and frequently revisited so that sticky knowledge stays.



Shared Reading

Texts are shared as a whole class daily. Shared reading is a recognised strategy for teaching reading in which pupils and teachers read a text together with a focus on a specific aspect. Through experiencing a variety of texts, fiction and nonfiction, children will become aware of the range of strategies required when reading for different purposes.

The million-word gap

Young children who have read 5 books a day by the age of 5 have heard about 1.4 million more words than children who were never read to.

At St Marys, children are read to at least 3 times a day at school in addition to books provided for home reading and books available on the bug club app.

We share books for many reasons: enjoying stories together, linking with personal experiences, vocabulary building, developing imagination and language, learning about books, phonics learning. Listening to stories being read and re-read helps children to gain insights into meaning and story structure.

Writing

Mark making and speech provide children with powerful tools for thinking, reasoning and problem solving. Time, space and attention is given to children's mark making, mathematical graphics, drawing and writing experiences. Throughout each day, children have opportunities for spontaneous mark making, drawing and writing in both the indoor and outdoor environment. Resources are carefully chosen, well organised and attractively presented, so that the children can decide independently how they want to represent their ideas and which medium would best suit their purpose. High value is placed upon imagination, ideas and self-expression demonstrated by the children, these are reflected by the adults and used as a starting point for planning.

Story Scribing

Capturing a child's story idea is an essential part of becoming a writer. Children have an innate desire to dictate a story and all adults are always on hand to listen and record their ideas. Inspired by the work of Vivian Gussin Paley children are encouraged to act out their stories during shared carpet times. Each story is valued and precious.

On entry to Reception children will often require much support in recording their story ideas. Anna Ephgrave (2011) details the process of story scribing as follows:

1. Adults are dictated to by the child, the adult says each word as it is written, pointing out gaps and punctuation. Re-reading and scanning and checking writing.



2. The children realise that groups of letters make up a word and a group of words make sentences. The children then begin to write the initial sounds of a word or a CVC word and the adult continues to write the other parts of the story.
3. Next more phonetically correct words are written by the child along with common words, such as 'the'.
4. Gradually children take the pen more and more, until eventually they are writing complete phrases.

Talk for Writing Shared Writing Time

A fun and creative approach developed by author, Pie Corbett to teach writing. Talk for Writing is split into 3 distinct learning parts. Starting with the 'imitate' stage and the enjoyment of sharing stories. A pictorial story map is created, and the children learn to retell the story by heart using the story map, expression and actions for support. Next the children 'innovate' the story, make it their own e.g changing the character or the setting. Finally, the children rewrite the story in the 'invention' stage writing their own version independently.

Handwriting

Handwriting development in Reception includes a wide variety of activities planned to develop the fine motor skills required for the correct pencil grip. 'Funky Fingers' activities may include threading, using tweezers, dough gym, spiders in jeppy and cardboard weaving. The list is endless!

From entering Reception, children are taught a pre-cursive script with entry and exit stroke.



7. Maths Mastery

There is more to maths than counting!

Children learn about maths through play and their daily experience. The more meaningful it is to them and the more hands on it is, the better.

Our setting is full of mathematical opportunities for children to explore, sort, compare, count, calculate and describe. Providing a safe environment to be creative, critical thinkers, problem solvers and to have a go.

Mastery of mathematical concepts in the EYFS takes the following approach:

Concrete - children use concrete objects and manipulatives to help them understand what they are doing.

Pictorial - children build on this concrete approach by using pictorial representations. These representations can then be used to reason and problem solve.

Abstract - with the foundations firmly laid, children move to abstract approaches using numbers and key concepts with confidence.

There are [six key areas of early mathematics learning](#), which collectively provide a platform for everything children will encounter as they progress through their maths learning at primary school, and beyond:

- Cardinality and Counting
- Comparison
- Composition
- Pattern
- Shape and Space
- Measure.

These areas form the fundamental mathematical basis of a CBeebies series of five-minute animated programmes called Numberblocks. We use these and the NCETM materials to draw out and build on the maths embedded in the stories contained in each episode.



A guide to maths mastery.

At St Mary's C of E Academy EYFS, we see teaching for mastery in maths as allowing the pupils to gain a deep understanding of maths, allowing them to acquire a secure and long term understanding of maths that allows them to make continual progress to move onto more complex topics. We believe that everyone can do maths and there's no such thing as a maths person. Maths is a subject that everyone can and should be able to perform confidently and competently. We choose to teach by breaking down maths objectives into the smallest steps, so that every pupil is secure in every new concept before moving on. We focus upon teaching for fluency, reasoning and problem solving.

How Do We Teach Maths Mastery in Reception?

Fluency

In Reception, we teach so that children have a deep understanding of number. Representing Numbers We want to develop children's number sense so that they understand the number rather than just recognising the numeral. Children need to understand that numbers can be represented in many ways, not just as a written numeral. We use many different objects and pictures to show that numbers can be represented in lots of ways. Some ways to represent five 5 Children sometimes need lots of practise to recognise numbers in different forms. We play matching games and encourage children to recognise and make different amounts in our indoor and outdoor areas.



Counting

When counting, children need to understand that

- That we need to say one number for each object counted (touch counting).
- The final number we say is how many altogether. Some children continue to count after they have reached the final object as they don't connect the numbers they are saying to the objects in front of them.
- That we can count objects in any order and the total stays the same.

Reasoning

Reasoning in maths helps children to be able to explain their thinking, therefore making it easier for them to understand what is happening in the maths they are doing. It helps them to think about how to solve a problem, explain how they solved it and to think about what they could do differently. In Reception, some examples of reasoning are:

- true and false statements eg adding one to a number always makes it smaller
- spotting incorrect maths eg 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10
- explaining how we know something or how we worked it out

Problem Solving

Problem solving in maths allows children to use their maths skills in lots of contexts and in situations that are new to them. It allows them to seek solutions, spot patterns and think about the best way to do things rather than blindly following maths procedures. In Reception, problem solving might include:

- spotting, following and creating patterns
- estimating amounts of objects
- predicting how many times they can do something in a minute
- sharing objects between different groups – particularly when the amount of groups change and the amount of objects stays the same
- finding different ways to split numbers e.g. 5 could be $5+0$, $4+1$, $3+2$ etc.

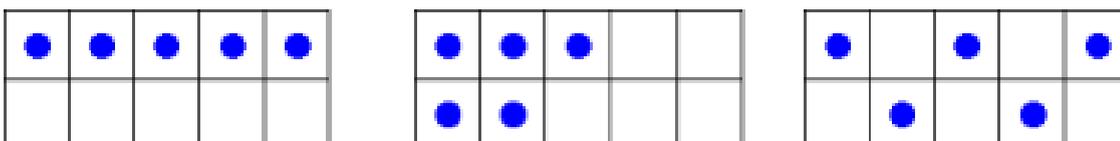
Recognising amounts



Another skill that is very important is recognising small amounts without the need to count them. Initially this should be by using concrete objects such as those shown above but as children progress, allowing them to see groups of dots in different arrangements helps them to mentally 'see' how many objects are there without needing to count. This is a very important skill when children begin to add and subtract. Using dice is a good way to practise this skill before moving onto objects in different arrangements. Understanding that the total stays the same even when the objects move

Understanding that the total stays the same even when the objects move

When children first start to use numbers, they often do not understand that if we move objects into another arrangement the total stays the same. We practise this with many different types of objects but a useful tool is using a tens frame to be able to move counters around.



Early Learning Goals in Reception

There are two Early Learning Goals for Maths under the new framework. This is what most children in Reception are expected to be able to do by the end of their first year at school. Children at the expected level of development will:

Number: Have a deep understanding of number to 10, including the composition of each number. Subitise (recognise quantities without counting) up to 5. Automatically recall (without reference to rhymes, counting or other aids) number bonds up to 5 (including subtraction facts) and some number bonds to 10, including double facts.

Numerical Patterns: Verbally count beyond 20, recognising the pattern of the counting system. Compare quantities up to 10 in different contexts, recognising when one quantity is greater than, less than or the same as the other quantity. Explore and represent patterns within numbers up to 10, including evens and odds, double facts and how quantities can be distributed equally.



How can I help at home?

- Count - steps up the stairs, money into a money box etc
 - Ask children to say how many without counting (5 or fewer)
 - Play games using a dice and encourage child to say how many spots without counting
 - Ask children to set the table with enough knives, forks and plates for everyone
 - Spot numbers in the environment – on phones, microwaves, clocks, registration plates, doors.
 - Ask children to think of their own representations for numbers eg one of them, two hands, three bears, four wheels on a car, five toes, six sides on a dice, seven dwarves, eight legs on an octopus etc
 - Deliberately make mistakes. Children need to understand mistakes are normal and everyone makes them eg get mixed up when counting, muddle two numbers when ordering them
 - Watch Numberblocks on Cbeebies. This programme is written by maths specialists to model maths concepts and represents numbers brilliantly.
- Also, Numberjacks is excellent for solving problems.
- Hide numbers around the house or garden for children to find.



- Play outdoor maths games like hopscotch and skittles. Even better, let children make up their own games and decide how to score points
- Read books with maths concepts e.g. The Very Hungry Caterpillar, One is a snail, ten is a crab, What's the time, Mr Wolf?
- Draw attention to more and less
- Ask questions such as "How many more?", "How many altogether?", "How many would I have if..."

8. Parent Engagement

Parents are the first and most important influence on their child's development and future outcomes.

Children have two main educators in their lives - parents and teachers. Therefore, the school and the parents have crucial roles to play. The impact on a child's education is greater if parents and school work in partnership. At St. Mary's EYFS, parents are invited to be involved in every step of a child's journey in education. Beginning with a pre-starting school meeting, followed up with a home visit and invitation for their child to attend a transition stay and play session before the autumn term commences.

Throughout the year families are invited to events including trips to the church, trips to the Forest and outings. We pride ourselves on building positive relationships with the families of St. Mary's creating a triangle of trust between children, parents and practitioners. We understand that when parents relinquish part of the care and teaching of their child to the staff in our setting it is a big step.

Tapestry is the main way that we will communicate with you during the day, please make sure that your account is activated and email the team email address if there are any problems.

We will have 2 formal parent meetings a year where we will talk to you about your child's progress and development. However if at any point you have any concerns please email the team and we can arrange a phone call or a face to face appointment.

9. Forest School

The **forest school** approach embraces the outdoors as a learning environment for children to explore. It first originated in Denmark and was introduced to the UK in the 1950's. This approach is important as it helps to raise a child's self-esteem, confidence and also enable problem solving. A key element to our approach to teaching and learning is for children to explore and experience nature alongside parents and carers who join our sessions. During the summer term and at other points throughout the year, our



learning is taken to the woods, where our trained practitioners nurture learner-led exploration and discovery, nurturing meaningful experiences in nature. Campfires and den building, whittling wood and making hammocks, the woodland experience is quite simply magical and we can't wait to share it with you.

Photos coming soon