KINTBURY ST. MARY'S
CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Our caring ethos is based on our Christian values of hope, friendship and respect. These, together with our rich and diverse curriculum underpin our belief that everyone in our school community can develop a sense of self and understanding of their place in our world in order to achieve and flourish throughout life.

'Love thy neighbour as thyself' Luke 10:25-37

Early Years Policy

Approved by: The Governing Body

Date: 21.9.26

Last Review date: Autumn 2025

Next Review date: Autumn 2027

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential"

(DfE, 2021).

This policy applies to children within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Kintbury St Mary's School. Our EYFS provision includes The Burrow, a mixed-age FS1/FS2 class where children learn together within the EYFS framework. Provision is carefully planned and differentiated to meet individual developmental needs, supporting all children to make progress from their own starting points through high-quality play-based learning and positive relationships. Our Early Years environment is secure, nurturing and stimulating, promoting independence, curiosity, resilience and a love of learning, rooted in our Christian values of Hope, Friendship and Respect.

Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them a secure foundation for learning, development and good progress through school and life
- Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress
- A close working partnership between staff and parents, carers and other agencies
- Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

Legislation

This policy is based on the requirements set out in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), effective from 1 September 2025, and is informed by current research and best practice in early years pedagogy. It outlines the ethos, environment, principles and values that underpin our Early Years provision.

Class Structure

Kintbury St Mary's Primary School provides education for children from 3 – 11 years old.

Foundation Stage 1 (3-4 year olds) Foundation Stage 2 (Reception)	The Burrow
Year 1/ Year 2	Squirrels
Year 3/4	Hares
Year 5/6	Foxes

Principles

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

A Unique Child	Positive Relationships
We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning.	We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.
Enabling Environments	**Learning and Development**
We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.	The Early Years is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. The learning environment is set up in learning areas where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

Early Years at Kintbury St Mary's

Early childhood is the Early Years on which children build the rest of their lives. At Kintbury St Mary's School, we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure Early Years for future learning and development. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

The EYFS for children is from birth to five years of age. All children begin school with a wide variety of experiences and learning and it is the privilege of the adults working in the Early Years stage to accept the task of building upon that prior learning experience. This is done through a holistic approach to learning ensuring that parents and guardians, support staff and the Early Years Stage team work effectively together to support the learning and development of the children in their charge.

At Kintbury St Mary's School, we aim to:

- Provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child including children with additional needs.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Work in partnership with parents and guardians and value their contributions ensuring that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability.
- Provide opportunities whereby children experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development.
- Provide experiences for all children, whatever their needs, which are inclusive rather than parallel.

Curriculum

Learning and development within the EYFS are categorised into three prime areas and four specific areas. The prime areas focus on the essential skills and development that form the foundation for children's learning and wellbeing, particularly in the early years, including communication and language, physical development, and personal, social and emotional development. The specific areas build on and strengthen these foundations, supporting children to develop knowledge and skills in literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design as they grow and develop.

Prime Areas		
Communication and Language.	Physical Development.	Personal, Social and Emotional Development.
Specific areas		
Literacy	Mathematics	Understanding the World	Expressive Arts & Design

Learning within the EYFS forms an integral part of our whole-school curriculum, with language, communication and literacy at its heart. During the Autumn Term, children engage in Drawing Club to develop their communication, vocabulary and early literacy skills before transitioning to Jane Considine's The Write Stuff approach in the Spring Term. White Rose Mathematics supports the teaching of mathematical concepts and fluency, while ODBE enhances Religious Education and SCARF provides a structured approach to PSHE. Twinkl Phonics is used throughout the school, offering a systematic, interactive and engaging programme for the teaching of early reading and phonics.

Planning

In The Burrow (FS1/FS2), a balance of adult-directed and free-choice activities is carefully planned to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum across the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children experience both child-initiated and adult-

led learning, with provision thoughtfully differentiated to meet the developmental needs of both FS1 and FS2 pupils and to support their gradual readiness for the transition to Key Stage 1.

Effective planning within The Burrow is essential to ensure learning is purposeful, engaging, varied and progressive. Planning builds on what children already know and can do, extending learning through high-quality interactions and experiences. It reflects the principles of the EYFS and is informed by regular observation and assessment of children's interests, development and learning needs. All staff working within The Burrow contribute to this process.

At times, planning is shaped by children's interests, recognising the importance of involvement and motivation in learning. Weekly plans provide a flexible framework and may be adapted in response to the changing needs of the children. This responsive approach supports high levels of engagement and promotes confident, enthusiastic learners within The Burrow.

Learning through Play

At Kintbury St Mary's School, we do not make a distinction between work and play. Children learn through planned play activities and child-initiated activities that support or make way for adult-led activities to provide the most effective learning opportunities

Observation and Assessment

As part of our everyday practice, we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform future planning. All staff are encouraged to contribute, and regular discussions take place to share insights and ensure a consistent approach.

Learning Snapshots

For children in FS1, a Learning Snapshot is a formal assessment that provides an overview of a child's progress and identifies next steps in their developmental journey. Each child receives two Learning Snapshots per academic year. The timing of these is linked to the child's birthday, typically taking place during their birthday month and again six months later. When a Learning Snapshot is completed, practitioners make a judgement of 'Met', 'On Track' or 'Not Yet' against each relevant developmental milestone. These judgements are supported by a written narrative that highlights the child's strengths, interests and areas for development, alongside the strategies that will be used to support their continued progress. Parents and carers are invited to meet with their child's key person to discuss each Learning Snapshot, celebrate achievements and work together to support their child's next steps in learning and development.

FS2 Learning Journals

For children in FS2, learning is documented through individual physical learning journals and a whole-class learning scrapbook. These provide a meaningful record of each child's experiences, achievements and progress throughout the Reception year. Learning journals include observations, photographs, examples of children's work and significant milestones across all areas of learning, celebrating both adult-led and child-initiated activities. The whole-class scrapbook captures shared experiences, special events, visits, celebrations and group learning opportunities, helping children to reflect on their learning journey and fostering a sense of belonging within the class community. Learning journals are shared regularly with parents and carers, encouraging strong partnerships between home and school and providing opportunities to celebrate children's successes together.

The Learning Environment

The Early Years classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, quiet, creative etc. making their own choices. The classroom has defined learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. The Foundation Stage has enclosed outdoor areas, and children are able to free-flow between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Being outdoors offers the children opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. They are able to explore, use their senses, develop their language skills and be physically active. We plan activities and resources both inside and outside enabling the children to develop in all the areas of learning.

The Outdoor Environment

Learning outside the classroom supports the development of healthy and active lifestyles by providing children with regular opportunities for physical activity, freedom of movement and risk-taking, all of which promote physical

development and emotional wellbeing. Outdoor learning enables children to connect with the natural world and experience learning opportunities unique to the outdoors, such as direct contact with the weather, seasons and natural materials.

Outdoor play supports children's problem solving skills, creativity and imagination, while nurturing inventiveness, resilience and resourcefulness. The outdoor environment offers greater space than indoor classrooms and is therefore particularly beneficial for children who learn best through active, physical movement.

As an OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) School, we are committed to providing high-quality, sustainable outdoor play opportunities that are inclusive, child-led and developmentally appropriate. Outdoor provision is viewed as a vital part of our curriculum and supports learning across all areas of development.

Children regularly take part in Forest School activities. These sessions enable children to develop confidence, independence and resilience, while supporting learning in other curriculum areas. Through Forest School and OPAL-informed practice, children are encouraged to take managed risks, challenge themselves and develop a lifelong love of learning outdoors.

Home Visits

Home visits are offered to all children joining FS2 and form a key part of the transition process. Prior to starting school, two members of the Early Years team will visit each child and their family at home. These visits support the development of positive relationships between home and school, help staff gain a deeper understanding of each child within their family context, and promote children's emotional wellbeing and confidence as they prepare to start school.

Transition into Reception

For children joining Reception, families are invited to attend a meeting in the summer term prior to their child starting school. This meeting provides parents and carers with essential information about the transition into school-based Early Years Foundation Stage provision, including routines, expectations and how children's learning and development will be supported in Reception.

To ensure continuity of learning between pre-school EYFS settings and Reception, the Reception class teacher will visit each child in their current early years provision, such as a nursery or pre-school. These visits allow staff to meet children in a familiar environment and to work alongside key workers to gain a clear understanding of each child's learning, development, interests and needs in line with the EYFS.

Children and their parent/carers will also be invited to attend Stay and Play sessions at Kintbury St Mary's Primary School. These sessions provide opportunities for children to explore the Reception learning environment, build relationships with school staff and begin to feel secure and confident within the setting.

Screen Use

At Kintbury St Mary's School, we recognise that young children learn best through first-hand experiences, active play, exploration and meaningful interactions with adults and their peers. Technology is used thoughtfully and in moderation to enhance learning where appropriate, rather than replace real-life experiences. Any screen-based activities are carefully selected, age-appropriate and always supervised by an adult. We ensure that the majority of children's learning takes place through play, investigation, outdoor learning, creativity and social interaction. We also work in partnership with families to promote safe, healthy and balanced approaches to screen use both at school and at home.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educators, and we are committed to working in close partnership with families throughout the Early Years. This partnership has a significant positive impact on children's learning and development and relies on open, two-way communication between home and school. Our shared expectations are set out in the Home–School Agreement, which outlines the responsibilities of the school, parents and carers, and pupils in relation to learning, behaviour, attendance and communication, ensuring a consistent and supportive approach for all children.

To support this partnership:

- We operate an open-door policy, allowing parents and carers to discuss concerns and developments informally; similarly, staff will contact parents promptly if there are concerns about a child's progress or wellbeing.
- We offer workshops for parents and carers to support understanding of teaching approaches and how learning can be supported at home.
- We hold two Learning Partnership meetings during the Autumn and Spring terms to formally discuss children's progress.
- FS1 children receive two Learning Snapshots per academic year, linked to their birthday, providing meaningful updates on their development and next steps.
- FS2 children's learning is documented within their individual physical learning journals, as well as in the whole-class learning scrapbook, celebrating their achievements, experiences and progress throughout the year.
- Parents and carers are invited to Family Learning sessions, enabling them to engage directly in their child's learning experiences.