2026-2027
School Prospectus

www.st-marys-bicester.oxon.sch.uk

The School

St Mary's is a Catholic School which aims to give the best possible education to all the children who attend it within an open, friendly and welcoming community. On the 1st January 2024, the school will merge with the Pope Francis Multi Academy Company to form a county wide academy of twelve Oxfordshire Catholic schools.

The school is built in the market town of Bicester, to the north of Oxfordshire. It was founded by Rev. Fr. Philip Sweeny in 1883. The first classrooms on the current site in Queen's Avenue were opened in 1958 and the school slowly transitioned into the new buildings.

Our mission statement 'A doorway to a life of love and learning in the light of Christ' forms the basis of our school aims and objectives and it is underpinned by our School Charter **LIGHT** where God guides us to:

L*ook to Jesus*
I*nvolve yourself in the community*
G*ive it your best*
H*ave high Expectations*
T*each others by example*

The school is situated just off Queen's Avenue in Bicester. The school has large hard surface play areas surrounded by playing fields, a nature area and our Prayer Garden. An outdoor 'trim trail' for the children is available to use, with activity equipment added to provide more physical activity and fun.

There are 229 children aged four to eleven on roll. Up to 45 children are admitted each September to the Reception Class. Children aged four years on August 31st are eligible for admission during the

Autumn Term. Reception children are invited to spend some time in the school prior to commencing full-time attendance. This normally takes place during the Summer Term. At the beginning of July, a meeting is organised for their parents so that the school's aims and objectives can be discussed. Parents of intending pupils are always invited to visit the school before a child is admitted. The school is organised into eight mixed ability classes; Reception Class, three classes at Key Stage 1 and four at Key Stage 2. All children are in year groups and within each class; teaching is adapted to the age and ability of the child.

School Mission Statement

A doorway to a life of love and learning in the light of Christ.

Aims of the School

Our school, which looks to Christ for the basis of its existence, aims to show concern for all connected with the school. We see ourselves as vital to the life and worship of the parish.

Our school is distinguished by the quality of care, support and respect shown between its members.

- Our school aims to make worship in all forms central to the life of the school and aims to promote the spiritual growth of all its members.
- We aim to ensure that our whole curriculum, including the National Curriculum, is delivered within a Catholic environment in which pupils can grow and acquire concepts, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in preparation for future life.
- Our school acknowledges that each person is unique and we should strive for the fullest development of every pupil and all those who work in the school, promoting equal opportunity and respect for all.
- Our school aims to promote justice and understanding in our world by forging positive links with the community, other schools, other faiths and the world of work.

In declaring these aims, the term 'school' encompasses all the staff, pupils, parents, Academy Committee, clergy and everybody concerned in the organisation and running of the school. The aims are not listed in any order of priority.

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Governing Body

Fr. Craig Davies	Chair (Foundation)
Mrs O Farmer	(Foundation)
Mrs T Mansfield	(Foundation)
Mrs K Riley	(Foundation)
Mrs P Akin-Olugbade	(Parent)
Mr J Thornton	(Parent)
Mr D O'Connor	(Ex-officio /Headteacher)
Mrs S Horton	(Staff)

Teaching Staff

Headteacher: Mr D O'Connor

Teaching Staff: Mrs V Williams, Mrs M Brookes, Mrs L Gaffney, Mrs E Griffin, Mrs S Horton, Mrs C Jeffrey, Mrs E Kennedy, Mr N Litten, Miss S O'Connor, Miss R Staniland, Mr C West

SENCo

Mrs K Driver

Teaching Assistants and Lunchtime Supervisors

Mrs A Brown, Mr K Brown, Mrs S Forsyth, Mrs E Hill, Mrs M Pindel, Mrs L Law, Mrs S Lawrence, Mrs A Meeks, Mrs E Parker, Mrs C Silva, Miss N Swain

Non-teaching staff

Mrs L Hall	(School Business Manager)
Mrs K Gore	(Office Manager)

Breakfast Club Staff

Miss N Swain

Mrs M Pindel

After School Club (High Flyers) staff

Mrs A Brown

Mrs M Pindel

Support Staff

Mrs J Chatterton	Cleaning services
Mrs A Powell	Cleaning services
Miss N Swain	Cleaning services

St Mary's Catholic Primary school

Admission Arrangements for the academic year 2026/2027

The admissions process for St Mary's Catholic Primary School is part of the Oxfordshire Local Authority co-ordinated admissions scheme. To apply for a place at St Mary's Catholic Primary School in the normal admissions round, an application must be made using the school admission application process of the local authority in which you live naming St Mary's Catholic Primary School on the application form. Applications need to be made by 15th January 2025. A Supplementary Information Form (SIF) must also be completed and returned directly to the school by the same date (see Note 2).

All applications which are submitted on time will be considered at the same time, after the closing date.

You will be advised of the outcome of your application on 16th April 2025, or the next working day, by the local authority on behalf of the school.

Please note that throughout this policy, the term parent means all natural parents, any person who is not a parent but has parental responsibility for a child and any person who has care of a child.

The ethos of this school is Catholic. The school was founded by the Catholic Church to provide education for children of Catholic families. Whenever there are more applications than places available, priority will be given to Catholic children in accordance with the oversubscription criteria listed below. The school is conducted by its governing body as part of the Catholic Church in accordance with its Trust Deed and Instrument of Government and seeks at all times to be a witness to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

As a Catholic school, we aim to provide a Catholic education for all our pupils. At a Catholic school, Catholic doctrine and practice permeate every aspect of the school's activity. It is essential that the Catholic character of the school's education be fully supported by all families in the school. We therefore hope that all parents will give their full, unreserved and positive support for the aims and ethos of the school. This does not affect the right of an applicant who is not Catholic to apply for and be admitted to a place at the school in accordance with the admission arrangements.

The governing body is the admissions authority and has responsibility for admissions to this school. The governing body has set its admission number at 45 pupils to be admitted to the Reception class in the school year which begins in September 2024. (See Note 1 below)

Where there are more applications for places than the number of places available, places will be offered according to the following order of priority. If there is oversubscription within a category, the Governing Body will give priority to children living closest to the school determined by the shortest distance (see Note 5).

For the purposes of this policy, parish boundaries are as shown on the Archdiocese of Birmingham parish boundary map which can be accessed at https://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/boundary-map and will be applied to the admission arrangements for the academic year 2024/2025.

Oversubscription Criteria

1. Baptised Catholic children (see Note 2 below) who are looked after or previously looked after (See Note 3 below).

2. Baptised Catholic children (see Note 2 below) living in the parish of St Edmund Campion who have a brother or sister (see Note 4 below) attending St Mary's Catholic Primary School at the time of admission.

3. Baptised Catholic children (see Note 2 below) living in the parish of St Edmund Campion.

4. Other Baptised Catholic children (see Note 2 below) who have a brother or sister (see Note 4 below) attending St Mary's Catholic Primary School at the time of admission.

5. Other Baptised Catholic children (see note 2 below).

6. Non-Catholic children who are looked after or previously looked after (See Note 3 below).

7. Non-Catholic children who have a brother or sister (see Note 4 below) attending St Mary's Catholic Primary School at the time of admission.

8. Non-Catholic children.

Note 1
Children with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan that names the school **MUST** be admitted. This will reduce the number of places available to applicants. This is not an oversubscription criteria.

Note 2
In all categories, for a child to be considered as Catholic, evidence of Catholic Baptism or Reception into the Church will be required. For a definition of a Baptised Catholic, see the Appendix. Those who face difficulties in producing written evidence of Catholic Baptism or Reception into the Church should contact their Parish Priest.
Parents making an application for a Catholic child should also complete a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) **which should be returned directly to the school**. If you do not provide the information required in the Supplementary Information Form and return it by the closing date, together with all supporting documentation, this is likely to affect the criteria that your child is placed into, which is likely to affect your child's chance of being offered a place at this school.
For the purposes of this policy, a looked after child living with a family where at least one of the carers is Catholic will be considered as Catholic. The carer must forward a copy of their own Catholic Baptismal or Reception certificate directly to the school in order for this priority to be given to the child as failure to do so will result in the looked after child being ranked as a non-Catholic.

Note 3
A "looked after child" has the same meaning as in section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989, and means any child who is (a) in the care of the local authority or (b) being provided with accommodation by them in the exercise of their social services functions (eg children with foster parents) at the time of making the application to the school. A "previously looked after child" is a child was looked after, but ceased to be so because he or she was adopted or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order and includes those children who appear (to the governing body) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state case as a result of being adopted.

For the purposes of this policy, a looked after child living with a family where at least one of the carers is Catholic will be considered as Catholic. The carer must forward a copy of their own Catholic Baptismal or Reception certificate directly to the school in order for this priority to be given to the child as failure to do so will result in the looked after child being ranked as a non-Catholic.

Note 4
For all applicants the definition of a brother or sister is:

- A brother or sister sharing the same parents
- A half-brother or half-sister, where two children share one common parent
- A step-brother or step-sister, where two children are related by a parents' marriage or civil partnership, or where they are unrelated but their parents are living as partners.
- Adopted or fostered children

Note 5
Distances are calculated on the basis of the shortest designated routed from the "seed point" of the child's home address and the front pedestrian gate of the school. The Local Authority uses a computerised system, which measures all distances in metres and the measurement is then converted into miles. Ordnance Survey supplies the co-ordinates that are used to plot a child's home address and the address of the school. A full explanation of the process of measuring distances from home to school is detailed in Annex C of the Determined Schedule of Co-Ordination for Admission available on Oxfordshire County Council's School Admissions website.

In a very small number of cases, where the school is oversubscribed, it may not be possible to decide between the applications of those pupils who are the final qualifiers for a place when applying the published admission criteria.
For example, this may occur when children in the same year group live at the same address, or if the distance between the home and the school is exactly the same, for example, blocks of flats. If there is no other way of separating the application according to the admissions criteria and to admit both, or all, of the children would cause the Published Admission Number for the child's year group to be exceeded, the Local Authority, on behalf of the Governing Body, will use a computerised system to randomly select the child to be offered the final place.

The governing body will, where possible, admit twins and all siblings from multiple births where one of the children is the last child ranked within the school's published admission number.

A child's home address refers to the address where the child usually lives with a parent or carer and will be the address provided in the Local Authority's Common Application Form.
Where parents have shared responsibility for a child, and the child lives for part of the week with each parent, the home address will be the address provided in the Local Authority's Common Application Form, provided that the child resides at that address for any part of the school week.
Parents may be requested to supply documentary evidence to satisfy the Governing Body that the child lives at the address put forward by the parents.

If a place in the school is offered on the basis of an address that is subsequently found to be different from a child's normal and permanent home address, then that place is liable to be withdrawn.

SCHOOL ENTRY
Parents must, by law, ensure that their child is receiving suitable full time education from the beginning of the term following the child's fifth birthday, when they will have begun to be of compulsory school age.

Where a place is offered in the school, the pupil will be entitled to take up that place, on a full-time basis in the September following their fourth birthday.

A child's parents may defer the date at which their child, below compulsory school age, is admitted to the school, until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age and not beyond the first day of the summer term 2025.
A child may take up a part-time place until later in the school year, but not beyond the point at which the child reached compulsory school age.
Upon receipt of the offer of a place a parent should notify the school, as soon as possible, that they wish to either defer their child's entry to the school or take up a part-time place.

The parent of a child whose fifth birthday falls during the summer term who wishes to defer their child's admission until the beginning of the following academic year (when the child will have begun to be of compulsory school age) will therefore need to make a separate in-year application for a place in Year 1 at the school. Any reception class place offered following an application made for the 2024/2025 admission round will be withdrawn if the child does not take up that place by the first day of the summer term 2025.

APPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN TO BE ADMITTED INTO A CLASS OUTSIDE OF THEIR NORMAL AGE GROUP

Parents have the right to request, but not insist, that their child be considered for admission to a class outside of their normal age group. This could be the case, for example, if a child is gifted and talented, has experienced problems such as ill health, or that the child is summer born, ie a child born between 1st April and 31st August. Parents who wish for their child to be considered for admission to a class outside of their normal age group must make an application for the normal age group in the first instance. Parents must then submit a formal request to the Governing Body for the child to be considered for a different age group class instead. This request should be in the form of a written letter of application outlining the reasons why they wish for their child to be considered to be admitted into a class outside of their normal age group and enclosing any supportive evidence and documentation that they wish to be taken into account as part of that request.

The Governing Body will consider requests submitted for a child to be admitted into a class outside of their normal age group and advise parents of the outcome of that request before national offer day, having taken into account the information provided by the parents, the child's best interests and the views of the Head Teacher.

If the request is refused, the original application for the normal age group class will progress through the Local Authority co-ordinated admissions scheme, be considered by the Governing Body and the parents advised of the outcome.

If the request is agreed and the year group for which the parents have requested a place is a current year group in the school, then the application will be considered by the Governing Body and the parents advised of the outcome.

If the request is agreed and the year group for which the parents have requested a place is for a future year group, ie Reception in September 2026, then the original application is withdrawn and the parents must submit a fresh application for Reception 2026 when applications open in the autumn term of 2026. Please note that parents only have the right to re-apply for a place. Where the Governing Body agrees to consider an application for Reception the following year, that application is considered alongside all other applications received and parents will be advised of the outcome of that application on national offer day. No place is reserved or held for the child in advance.

If parents are considering submitting an application for their child to be admitted into a class outside of their normal age group, it is strongly recommended that they also read the DFE guidance which can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summer-born-children-school-admission

APPEALS
Parents who wish to appeal against the decision of the Governing Body to refuse their child a place in the school should make that appeal request in writing to the Chair of Governors at the school address. Appeals will be heard by an independent panel.

Please note that parents do not have the right to appeal if their request for their children to be admitted to a class outside of their normal year group has been refused, but the Governing Body have offered a place in the normal age group instead.

REPEAT APPLICATIONS
Any parent can apply for a place for their child at any time outside of the normal admissions round. Parents do not have the right to a second appeal in respect of the same school for the same academic year unless, in exceptional circumstances, the Governing Body has accepted a second application from the parent because of a significant and material change in the circumstances of the parent, child or school, but have still refused admission.

LATE APPLICATIONS
Late applications will be dealt with in accordance with the Local Authority's co-ordinated admissions scheme. This states that on-time applications will be considered before late applications, except:

- If the late application can clearly be shown as being the responsibility of an admitting authority (ie, the school in this case) or the local authority; or
- If there are extenuating circumstances, for example when a sudden illness prevents the parent from submitting the application on time. Extenuating circumstances cannot be taken into account once the iterative process has begun.

Parents who need a school place for their child and have not made an on-time application, will be asked by the local authority to complete a paper form. Parents will still be required to return a Supplementary Information Form (see note 2 above) and return it directly to the school.
You are encouraged to ensure that your application is received on time.

CHANGE IN PREFERENCE
Once parents have submitted their preference, they will not be allowed to change them without an exceptional change in their circumstances, for example, if the family has recently moved address or an older sibling has changed schools. All requests to change preferences should be made in writing to the Local Authority to whom the parents submitted the original application. Where a change of preference is submitted for an oversubscribed school, without an exceptional change in circumstances, then the application will be refused.

WAITING LIST
In addition to their right to appeal, children who have not been offered a place at St Mary's Catholic Primary School but were offered a school that was ranked as a lower preference on their application form will be added to a waiting list.

The waiting list will be maintained until 31st December 2026 and will then be discarded. If parents wish for their child's name to be kept on the waiting list beyond 31st December 2026, they will need to advise

the LA in writing by 31st December 2025. Any waiting list held beyond 31st December 2026 will be discarded on the last day of the summer term 2027.

A child's position on a waiting list is not fixed. When a new child joins the waiting list, all applicants on that waiting list will be re-ranked to ensure that the list is always maintained in oversubscription criteria order. This means that a child's position on the waiting list could go up or down during the time that it is on the list. Any late applications accepted will be added to the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria.

Inclusion on the waiting list does not mean that a place will eventually become available. It may be that those already offered places may accept them, thereby filling all available places.

Children who are the subject of a direction by the Local Authority to admit or who are allocated to a school in accordance with the Fair Access Protocol take precedence over those on a waiting list.

IN YEAR FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOL

The Governing Body of St Mary's Catholic Primary School is committed to taking its fair share of children who are vulnerable and/or hard to place, as set out in locally agreed protocols. Accordingly, outside the normal admission round the governing body is empowered to give absolute priority to a child where admission is requested under any locally agreed protocol. The Governing Body has this power, even when admitting the child would mean exceeding the published admission number subject to the infant class size exceptions.

APPLICATIONS OTHER THAN THE NORMAL INTAKE TO RECEPTION CLASS (IN-YEAR ADMISSIONS)

An application can be made for a place for a child at any time outside the normal admission round and the child will be admitted where there are places available. Further information regarding instructions on how to apply for a place in the school at any other time other than the normal intake is available on the school's website at
https://st-marys-bicester.oxon.sch.uk/information/school-information/admissions/

To apply for a place in the school in-year, parents will need to complete the school's own application form which is available on our website at In-Year Application Form and return it directly to the school ensuring that any required supplementary information is attached.

If there are no places available, the child will be added to the waiting list (see above).

Parents will be advised of the outcome of their application in writing and, where the Governor's decision is to refuse their child a place, have the right to appeal to an independent appeal panel.

There is no charge or cost related to the admission of a child to this school.

APPENDIX

DEFINITION OF A "BAPTISED CATHOLIC"

A "Baptised Catholic" is one who:

- Has been baptised into full communion (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 837*) with the Catholic Church by the Rites of Baptism of one of the various ritual Churches in communion with the See of Rome. Written evidence of this baptism can be obtained by recourse to the Baptismal Registers of the church in which the baptism took place (Cf. *Code of Canon Law, 877 & 878*).

Or

- Has been validly baptised in a separated ecclesial community and subsequently received into full communion with the Catholic Church by the *Rite of Reception of Baptised Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church.* Written evidence of their baptism and reception into full communion with the Catholic Church can be obtained by recourse to the Register of Receptions, or in some cases, a sub-section of the Baptismal Registers of the church in which the *Rite of Reception* took place (Cf. *Rite of Christian Initiation, 399*).

WRITTEN EVIDENCE OF BAPTISM

The Governing bodies of Catholic schools and Boards of Directors of Catholic Academies will require written evidence in the form of a Certificate of Baptism or Certificate of Reception before applications for school places can be considered for categories of "Baptised Catholics". A Certificate of Baptism or Reception is to include: the full name, date of birth, date of Baptism or Reception, and parent(s) name(s). The certificate must also show that it is copied from the records kept by the place of Baptism or Reception.

Those who would have difficulty obtaining written evidence of Catholic Baptism/Reception for a good reason, may still be considered as Baptised Catholics but only after they have been referred to their parish priest who, after consulting the Vicar General, will decide how the question of Baptism/Reception is to be resolved and how written evidence is to be produced in accordance with the law of the Church.

Those who would be considered to have good reason for not obtaining written evidence would include those who cannot contact the place of Baptism/Reception due to persecution or fear, the destruction of the church and the original records, or where Baptism/Reception was administered validly but not in the Parish church where records are kept.

Governors and Boards of Directors may request extra supporting evidence when the written documents that are produced do not clarify the fact that a person was baptised or received into the Catholic Church, (i.e. where the name and address of the Church is not on the certificate or where the name of the Church does not state whether it is a Catholic Church or not.)

For the purposes of this policy, a looked after child (see Note 3) living with a family where at least one of the parents/carers is Catholic will be considered as Catholic.

	St Mary's Catholic Primary School Admission Arrangements for the academic year 2026/2027	

Supplementary Information Form

The ethos of this school is Catholic. The school was founded by the Catholic Church to provide education for children of Catholic families. Whenever there are more applications than places available, priority will be given to Catholic children in accordance with the oversubscription criteria listed in the school's published admission policy. The school is conducted by its governing body as part of the Catholic Church in accordance with its Trust Deed and Instrument of Government and seeks at all times to be a witness to Our Lord Jesus Christ. As a Catholic school, we aim to provide a Catholic education for all our pupils. At a Catholic school, Catholic doctrine and practice permeate every aspect of the school's activity. It is essential that the Catholic character of the school's education be fully supported by all families in the school. We therefore hope that all parents will give their full, unreserved and positive support for the aims and ethos of the school. This does not affect the right of an application who is not Catholic to apply for and be admitted to a place at the school in accordance with the admission arrangements.

Child's Surname:	
Child's First Name(s):	
Address:	
Contact number:	

Please tick the appropriate boxes below:

Is the above named child a Baptised Catholic or have they been received into the Catholic Church?	Yes*		No	
Is the certificate of Catholic Baptism or Reception into the Catholic Church attached?	Yes		No*	

*A Certificate of Catholic Baptism or Reception into the Catholic Church is required in order for the Governing Body to give the correct priority to an application.
Failure to provide evidence of Catholic Baptism or Reception in the Church may affect the oversubscription criterion that the child's name is placed in.

Please note that as well as completing this Supplementary Information Form, **parents must also complete the Local Authority's Common Application Form** in order for the application to be complete. This Supplementary Information Form is only for school use and is, in conjunction with the Local Authority's Common Application Form, to enable the Governing Body to rank applicants using the published oversubscription criteria:

This Supplementary Information Form must be returned directly to St Mary's Catholic Primary School at Queen's Avenue, Bicester, OX26 2NX by 15th January 2027.

Please note that this is NOT the local authority's Common Application Form. As well as completing this Supplementary Information Form and returning it directly to the school, you MUST also complete the local authority's Common Application Form otherwise your application will be deemed incomplete and therefore invalid.

In compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, we wish to ensure that you are aware of the purpose for which we collect and process the data we have asked for on this form.

1. We are St Mary's Catholic Primary School at Queen's Avenue, Bicester, OX26 2NX

2. Being a Catholic education provider, we work closely with the School's Diocesan Authority, the School's Trustees, the Local Authority, the Birmingham Diocesan Education Service and the Department for Education and may share the information you provide on this application form if we consider it necessary in order to fulfil our functions.

3. The person responsible for data protection within our school is Mr O'Connor and you can contact them with questions relating to our handling of the data. You can contact them by head.3824@st-marys-bicester.oxon.sch.uk.

4. We require the information we have requested for reasons relating to our functions as the admission authority of the school.

5. It is necessary for us to process personal data for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller (Article 6(1)(e) of the GDPR).

6. To the extent that you have shared any special categories of data this will not be shared with any third parties except as detailed in paragraph 2 above, unless a legal obligation should arise.

7. It is necessary for us to process special category data for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller (Article 6(1)(e) of the GDPR). Additionally processing is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest on the basis of Union or Member State law which is proportionate to the aim pursued and which contains appropriate safeguards (Article 9(2)(g) of the GDPR).

8. If the application is successful, the information you have provided on this will be migrated to the school's enrolment system, and the data will be retained and processed on the basis of the school's fair processing notice and data protection policies which apply to that data.

9. If the application is unsuccessful, the application form and any documents submitted in support of the application will be destroyed after a period of 12 months. The school may keep a simple record of all applications and their outcome as part of their permanent archives in accordance with the school's data retention policy.

10. To read about your individual rights you can refer to the school's fair processing notice and data protection policies.

11. If you wish to complain about how we have collected and processed the information you have provided on this form, you can make a complaint to our organisation by firstly communicating with the Headteacher, or, if complaint not resolved, to the Chair of Governors. If you are unhappy with how your complaint has been handled, you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office via their website at ico.org.uk

I confirm that I have read the Admissions Policy of the school and that the information I have provided is correct. I understand that I must notify the school immediately if there is any change to these details and that, should any information I have given prove to be inaccurate, the governing body may withdraw any offer of a place even if the child has already started school.

Signed …… Date……

Print Name …….

Curriculum

At St Mary's, our curriculum brings our mission to life: **"A Doorway to a Life of Love and Learning in the Light of Christ."** We help children build secure knowledge, develop their talents and grow into confident, curious learners. Through engaging lessons, practical experiences and opportunities beyond the classroom, children learn to think deeply, communicate clearly and care for the world around them.

Religious Education

LIGHT is at the core of everything we do. There is a strong Catholic ethos within the school, which is to be found not just within R.E. lessons but throughout all the activities which take place.

Through our faith in God we are guided to his light:

Look to Jesus

Involve yourself in the community

Give it your best

Have high Expectations

Teach others by example

Our Catholic faith is at the heart of school life. Through **Discerning Disciples**, our new Religious Education curriculum, children explore Scripture, deepen their understanding of Catholic beliefs and traditions, and reflect on how faith shapes our lives. Prayer, liturgy and links with our parish enrich this learning. Children also learn about other faiths, developing respect and understanding. Catholic Social Teaching encourages them to put faith into action through kindness, service and care for creation.

Children in Year 3 can opt to prepare for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist working alongside the Parish of St Edmund Campion. A Reconciliation Service is normally held for the Key Stage 2 children during Advent and Lent. The children also attend additional sacramental preparation sessions at the Parish of the Immaculate Conception to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in Year 6. Parents who send their child to a Catholic school would wish their child to be fully involved in the life of the school, taking part in all the educational opportunities provided, including Religious Education and Collective Worship. We strongly encourage all families to participate in weekend Mass at one of our parishes.

The National Curriculum

Children's year in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) marks the last year of the EYFS in education, a stage for children from the age of three. 'Areas of learning and development' consists of **three prime areas** and **four specific areas**. The prime areas cover the knowledge and skills which are the foundations for children's school readiness and future progress, and which are applied and reinforced by the specific areas.

How will my child be learning?

The EYFS Framework explains how and what your child will be learning to support their healthy development. Your child will be learning skills, acquiring new knowledge and demonstrating their understanding through **7 areas of learning and development**.

Children should mostly develop the **3 prime areas** first.

These are:

- Communication and language;
- Physical development; and
- Personal, social and emotional development.

These prime areas are those most essential for your child's healthy development and future learning. As children grow, the prime areas will help them to develop skills in **4 specific areas**. These are:

- Literacy;
- Mathematics;
- Understanding the world; and
- Expressive arts and design.

These 7 areas are used to plan your child's learning and activities. The professionals teaching and supporting your child will make sure that the activities are suited to your child's unique needs. This is a little bit like a curriculum in primary and secondary schools, but it's suitable for very young children, and it's designed to be really flexible so that staff can follow your child's unique needs and interests.

Children in the EYFS learn by playing and exploring, being active, and through creative and critical thinking which takes place both indoors and outside in our wonderful setting.

All classes throughout the school follow the new National Curriculum guidelines. The guiding principle throughout is that each child is entitled to a broad, balanced education which is appropriate to his/her needs regardless of ethnicity, gender or ability. The National Curriculum comprises:

Core subjects	**Other Foundation subjects**
Religious Education	Art & Design*
Mathematics	Physical Education
English	Geography*
Science	Design and Technology*
	History*
	Music*
	French
	Computing*

* These subjects are mostly taught in a creative cross-curricular way.

More information about our curriculum, 'Lumen Christi', and how it is structured can be found on our website: www.st-marys-bicester.oxon.sch.uk

In the EYFS Class, a basic sight vocabulary and phonic knowledge is established using the Rocket Phonics scheme. Each day the children experience new phonemes, digraphs and trigraphs which they are taught to use in their reading and writing. Weekly guided reading sessions use phonic books, which support the teaching of discrete phonics. These are followed by the Rocket Phonics book bag books which form the core of the reading material and whose levels are used to classify other supplementary books. Children are encouraged to develop a love of books and there is a well-stocked Library.

Strong emphasis is placed on developing skills in English. Rocket Phonics ensures a cohesive approach to the teaching of reading, writing, incorporating spelling and handwriting. The Pathways to Write approach also enables children to read and write independently for a variety of audiences and purposes within different subjects. Mathematics is taught mainly as a discrete subject with core skills developed in other areas of the curriculum. A practical approach is encouraged and there is a wide variety of resources.

Other Foundation National curriculum subjects are mostly taught through the 'Cornerstones' thematic based approach. Each topic promotes excellence and enjoyment of learning experiences and includes structured skills based teaching and learning.

Information and Communication Technology is used to enhance teaching and learning. There are a range of extracurricular clubs, including sport and choir.

Physical Education

Physical Education (P.E) is part of the National Curriculum and compulsory for all pupils. Key Stage 2 pupils currently access swimming lessons at Bicester Leisure Centre. The school values the contributions that these areas make to children's all-round development through non-competitive and competitive participation. Pupils also access a variety of sport delivered by specialist teachers and coaches on a weekly basis. Children will normally only be excused from physical education for a genuine medical reason. The Annual Sports' Day is held onsite during the summer term.

Relationships and Sex Education

At the heart of our aims is our Mission Statement. As a Catholic school we believe that all teaching should have as its overriding aim, the moral, spiritual and social development of each individual, in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church.

We recognise that the prime responsibility for relationships and sex education must rest with the parents and we believe that any teaching should not be in isolation but rather be complementary and supportive to the role of parents.

St Mary's has implemented a new scheme of work called 'Life to the Full' in line with new Diocesan guidelines. For more information please visit the following:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education-faqs

Special Educational Needs/ Inclusion

We recognise that every child has individual strengths and needs. Our inclusive approach combines high expectations with carefully adapted teaching and support, helping children with special educational needs and disabilities participate fully in school life. Teachers, our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and support staff work closely with families and, where appropriate, external professionals. Together, we identify needs, review progress and promote each child's confidence, independence and sense of belonging.

The school works within the framework of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice and the Disability Rights Code of Practice.

The School's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator is Mrs Driver and she can be contacted at office.3824@st-marys-bicester.oxon.sch.uk.

Children are identified as having special educational needs from the end of their time in Reception class (or earlier if appropriate) and this is discussed with parents during the summer term. Subsequently, the level of need is assessed using the Code of Practice. Each child's needs are met by the class teacher with support from the Inclusion Leader and external agencies, as appropriate. Parental involvement is very important at all stages and this is strengthened by the Code. Children's progress is monitored, reviewed and recorded regularly and as a result, teaching is adapted as appropriate. Every effort is made to meet the needs of children with a wide range of abilities and disabilities with or without statements.

Admission to the school is strictly in accordance with the Governor Committee's Admissions Criteria. In keeping with our inclusive ethos and Equal Opportunities Policy, all children regardless of ability participate in a broad, balanced appropriately differentiated curriculum, as is their entitlement. The school has continued to monitor provision for children with specific needs and where necessary and where possible, modifications have been made. The school has an accessible toilet.

Educational Visits

When appropriate, external agencies are bought in to supplement and enrich what is offered in school. Visits are made to museums, school farms, and other places of interest and educational worth. This year, our residential visits to Alton Castle (Year 5) and Rockley Watersports in Poole (Year 6) provided valuable opportunities for adventure, teamwork and personal growth, helping children develop resilience, independence and confidence.

Visits organised by the school, can only proceed where they have parental support in terms of voluntary contributions to cover the cost involved. Parents are kept well informed, in advance, and are given all the relevant information and details about any proposed visit. Therefore, all parents are expected to contribute towards the visit unless there is financial hardship. The school follows the guidelines set out in the school's policy for Educational visits.

Homework

It is our view that school based work is only one facet of the education of your child. Each child's educational development can be enhanced if they are encouraged to take up personal interests.

Joining clubs and learning new sports will help to broaden your child's experience. Children should also be encouraged to use the local library on a regular basis and to visit museums and places of interest. However,

homework is also an important part of your child's education. Children make better progress if the work that is done in school is supported at home. Therefore, all children are expected to work at home. Homework is not normally set during school holidays but children are encouraged to read widely and parents are asked to make the most of family holiday activities to enhance their children's learning. The best possible support that parents can give is to set time aside so that work can be done in a quiet relaxed atmosphere free from distractions. This helps children to produce work of the same high standard in terms of quality and presentation, as that produced at school. It is vital that parents read with their children throughout their Primary school years and listen to them read every evening. All children should take a 'Reading Scheme' book or library book home every night.

Suggestions, as to how parents can help, are sent home in a termly newsletter. These suggestions are supported by the Homework Policy.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care of children is exercised by all the teaching staff and is based on Christian values. Throughout the school, great emphasis is placed on the fact that each child should be encouraged and given every opportunity to learn and develop a genuine sense of responsibility and self-discipline. Respect for oneself as

well as for others is a very integral part of this approach and parental support is seen as being crucial to the success of our efforts. Children are praised and encouraged verbally or in writing for all good work, effort, honesty, helpfulness, success, and other good qualities. A system of rewards is used to reinforce good patterns of behaviour and good work. EYFS, Key Stage 1 and 2 children who do something commendable either in work or socially are given a special Headteacher's Award.

Key Stage 1 and 2 children belong to 'Houses' and they can gain House Points for their House by completing work or deeds which are praiseworthy. Points for each week are announced in Congratulations Assembly. At the end of each half term a prize is awarded to the winning House. There are times when children may need some form of correction to deter antisocial or inappropriate behaviour. More information can be found in the school's Behaviour Policy. We believe our school to be a caring, Catholic community where there is respect, courtesy and concern for others regardless of ethnicity, gender and ability/disability. Our behaviour and relationship policies are available on the school website or on request.

Safeguarding

Our first priority is your child's welfare and therefore there may be occasions when our concern about your child means that we have to consult other agencies. The procedures we follow have been set by Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board. If you want to know more about this procedure, please speak to the Headteacher. Further information and a copy of our Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy are also available on the school website.

Procedures for dealing with concerns

Any concerns that may arise regarding any aspect of school life, should in the first instance, be addressed to the class teacher. If the matter is not resolved it should then be taken up with the Headteacher. If parents are still not satisfied, complaints may be made in writing to the Chair of Governors c/o the school address. Parents who want to make a formal complaint must follow the school's complaints procedure (a copy of which is available on the school's website).

Home School Liaison

At present we provide two parent consultation opportunities a year. The first takes place in the Autumn Term. This is essentially an introductory meeting when parents can meet their child's class teacher and discuss informally how well their child has settled down to work and whether there is anything that the class teacher should know about. The second consultation, during the Spring Term, provides parents with the opportunity

to see their child's work and also to discuss progress in detail with the class teacher. Written reports are sent out towards the end of the summer term.

Meetings are held on aspects of the curriculum and assessment as needed. Parents are always welcome to contact the Headteacher or class teacher at other times to discuss any queries, though it is recommended, that for matters which are not urgent, an appointment should be made in order to ensure that the person concerned is available. An Open Day is also held during the Autumn Term and all parents are invited to visit the school while the pupils are all working in class.

Parking

We ask that parents who bring their children to school by car **should never** use the car park to the school front entrance**,** as this is an access point for emergency services, delivery vans and staff working on the premises. **Parents are asked to park in the Leisure Centre car park with care and consideration for children, other parents and local residents.**

Attendance/Absence

Excellent attendance and punctuality are expected. It is essential that you contact the school before 8.30am on each day that your child is absent. The school operates a 'First-Day-Calling-System' to ensure that parents/carers and school coordinate any absences. A member of our office staff will call you if your child is absent and we do not know the reason.

To help with the smooth running of the system, please ensure you follow the school's procedure:

- Inform the school if your child is going to be absent from school by phone call, email or letter;
- Provide a doctor's certificate if the illness is prolonged and/or the school requests a copy;
- Advise the school if your child is going to be late for any reason.

If a child is ill during the school day, he/she will be cared for by a member of staff. A decision will be made as to whether to contact parents/carers for early collection.

Please inform the school if your child contracts an infectious disease such as chicken pox, mumps, or German measles (rubella), which can have serious implications for other children and staff.

Guidance from NHS UK: **Vomiting and diarrhoea**. Children with diarrhoea and/or vomiting must be kept off school until at least 48 hours after their symptoms have gone. Most cases of diarrhoea and vomiting in children get better without treatment, however if symptoms persist consult your GP.

Family holidays should always be taken during the school holidays. Holidays during term time are unauthorised and may lead to further action being taken by Oxfordshire County Council. Experience shows that children who miss the start of the new school year, find it difficult to settle and in May there are statutory and non-statutory assessments of children. **Holidays in term time are bound to have a detrimental effect on your child's progress.**

Where possible, routine medical treatment should be arranged outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, evidence of the medical appointments will be required. This also applies if it is necessary for a child to be collected during the school day, for any other reason.

Every day a child misses school, a total of five hours of learning is lost and whilst we understand that illness can't always be avoided, just a few days of absence can have a huge impact on a child's attendance figure and their education as a whole.

Contact Forms

It is essential that the school is able to contact a parent, relative or friend in an emergency. For that reason, we require all parents to complete, and keep up to date, an emergency contact form giving an address and telephone number.

Accidents/Illness

The Class Teacher will normally inform an appropriate adult at home-time of any minor illness or accident which has occurred during the day or a school note will be sent home explaining the incident. If it is thought necessary, the parent is contacted to collect the child. **PARENTS ARE REMINDED THAT CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BE SENT TO SCHOOL WHEN UNWELL.** In the event of a serious accident, every effort will be made to contact parents. If this is not possible the child will be taken to hospital for treatment and the parents will be contacted as soon as possible.

Medicines

Only preventive medicine can be accepted into school e.g. asthma inhalers. Any requests for the use of other medicines should be made in writing via a form from the school office. If a child does require a medication to be administered during school time, a responsible adult may come to school to administer the dose or a parent can make a written request for the school to do this by completing a school form. The container must be clearly labelled with the contents, child's name and the required dosage. Medicine must not be brought to school by a child, it must be handed in by an adult to the school office. Parents are responsible for replenishing their child's supply of medicine, to keep 'spacers' clean and to ensure that medicines are not out of date.

Communication to Parents

Letters	Letters are normally sent home by email, via Arbor. Copies of letters are available to view on the school website, or a paper copy can be collected from the school office. **Please note, to comply with our safeguarding policy, we do not publish trip and visit letters on our website.**
Text Message	Messages and reminders maybe sent by text message. Please inform the school if you change your mobile number.
Emails	Letters, messages and reminders are sent by email. Please inform the school if you change your email address.
Newsletter	The Newsletter is produced half-termly and a copy is sent by email as well as being available to view on the school website.
Reading Record	This keeps parents/carers informed of reading progress and also enables two-way communication between home and school.
Curriculum Topics	These are sent via email each term to parents and are published on the school's website and show the outline for learning.
Website	The school website holds a host of information. The website address is www.st-marys-bicester.oxon.sch.uk

Parents/carers can write to the school at office.3824@st-marys-bicester.oxon.sch.uk. Correspondence will then be forwarded to the staff member concerned.

Emergency Communication

Emergency messages, for example during bad weather, will be posted on our school website, on our social media pages and text messages and/or email communications will be sent out.

We will also inform Oxfordshire County Council to update their website.

The School Day

8.40am	Classroom doors open for morning starter activities
8.50am	Registration
10.50am	Break time
12.00pm	Lunch time
1.00pm	Lessons begin
3.15pm	End of school

The morning session begins at 8.50 am. Please ensure that your child is brought to school punctually as it can be upsetting for a child to be late, as well as being disruptive to teaching and learning. The children are invited to enter the building from 8.40 am when the gates and doors open, but parents should be aware that the school cannot be responsible for pupils on the premises before this time. Pupils are allowed entry into the school from 8.40 a.m onwards. School closes at 3.15 pm. Children should be met by a known adult. Please inform the school in writing if a different person is collecting your child. If there is an unavoidable delay in collecting a child, please telephone the school. For safety reasons, the entrance gates to the school are normally locked between 8.50 am to 3.05 pm.

School Dinners

The school has a kitchen on site and we outsource our catering to a company called Fresh Start. Further information on the company can be found on their website, https://freshstartcatering.uk/. A choice of a meat or vegetarian option, tomato pasta or jacket potato is available every day, with menus for the autumn, spring and summer terms.

Children in Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 are eligible for free school meals under the Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) programme. Parents still need to order meals for their children, albeit that they will not be asked to pay for these.

If you do not want your child to have a hot meal at lunch time and/or if you do not think they will eat what is on offer, please provide a healthy lunch box which should be brought into school at the start of the day.
In line with Department of Education guidelines on healthy eating, we ask that parents avoid drinks with added sugar, crisps, chocolate or sweets.

Fruit and Vegetable Scheme

The school takes part in the 'National Fruit and Vegetable Scheme', which enables each child in Year R to the end of Year 2 to receive a free piece of fruit or vegetable for snack time each day.

Years 3 to 6 may bring in a piece of fruit each day for their snack.

Free Milk Scheme

The school takes part in the free school milk scheme, 'Cool Milk'. Milk is available free of charge to all children up to the age of 5.

After a child's 5th birthday, milk is still available at a small cost. Information leaflets are available in this pack with details of the ordering procedure.

Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

The PTFA raise money to help fund school activities and projects, as well as purchasing items which make the children's learning environment more fun and attractive. As an added bonus PTFA events give everyone the chance to have a great time while raising money!

The Friends Committee
The Friends Committee meets once a term to plan upcoming events and come up with ideas for new events. We are always looking for new members with fresh fundraising ideas. The Friends work with teachers, pupils and parents to decide what to purchase with the money raised.

Here are some examples of fundraising events The Friends have run in the past:

- School Discos
- Film nights
- Bingo
- Summer, Christmas and Easter fetes
- Cake sales
- Second hand school uniform sales

How we spend the money we raise?
The money raised is used to fund 'extras' for the children and also to pay for items that will enhance our children's education.

In the past, we've funded:

- Lighthouse Radio
- School sound system
- Play equipment
- Year 6 end of school treats
- Teachers' Requests

How can you get involved?
We would like to invite all parents to become involved and support us in some way. We are always looking for help so if you could offer the PTFA some of your time, however small, we would like to hear from you! And of course come along to our events!

Here are some examples of how you could help:
- Attend committee meetings
- Sell tickets for events
- Help set up events
- Attend events to manage stalls

How to get in touch
Email us at ptfacommittee@stmarysptfa.org.uk

Second hand school uniform sales at uniformsales@stmarysptfa.org.uk.

Like our Facebook Page at https://www.facebook.com/StMarysCatholicPrimarySchoolPtfa

School Uniform

The wearing of school uniform is expected as it helps the child to identify more closely with the 'school family' and generally assists in promoting the public image of the school. Smart appearance is encouraged including acceptable haircuts and accessories. Uniform will also be worn on occasions when children are representing the school, including during off-site visits.

Parents and carers are asked to co-operate fully by providing the uniform and ensuring children wear it correctly at all times. Some items are only obtainable from the school office.

Please ensure that all articles of clothing and other items brought into school are marked clearly with your child's name. The items listed below with ** are only available from the school office. All other items can be obtained from any high street store.

Boys	Girls
• Charcoal grey trousers • Blue polo shirt with logo ** • Blue jumper with logo ** • Grey, black or white socks • Black shoes (Velcro for EYFS children) • Named water bottle From Easter until October half term (summer months): • As above and/or • shorts	• Charcoal grey skirt or trousers • Blue polo shirt with logo ** • Blue jumper or cardigan with logo ** • Grey, black or white socks or grey tights • Black shoes (Velcro for EYFS children) • Named water bottle From Easter until October half term (summer months): • As above or • Light blue checked summer dress

PE Kits
• Blue t-shirt with logo ** • Plain black shorts • Trainers • Plain blue jumper • Plain black jogging bottoms • All PE kit should be named and brought into school in a named PE bag. • Full school PE kit must be worn for PE and after school sports clubs.

Outerwear

In winter, children need a warm waterproof school coat.

In summer an anorak, cagoule or similar should be brought to school when the weather is unsettled.

Book Bags

Book Bags with the St Mary's school logo are available from the school office and should be used by children in Reception to Year 2. Children in Year 3 onwards may bring their own rucksacks. Please label all bags with your child's name.

Hair and Jewellery

Long hair should be tied back for hygiene reasons and especially during P.E., for safety reasons. Hair accessories should be simple and follow school colours. 'Fashion' haircuts (e.g. tramlines / patterns) are not appropriate for school for boys or girls. Boys' hair should be cut no shorter than a number 2. Children are asked not to wear jewellery for safety reasons. If pupils have pierced ears, one small plain discrete stud may be worn in each ear lobe. For health and safety reasons pupils will be expected to remove studs for PE/swimming. No other body piercing of any kind will be acceptable.

Children are responsible for their own possessions in school and for this reason are asked not to bring toys or valuables as their loss or breakage can cause distress.

Before and After School Club

The Breakfast Club is open to all children attending St Mary's School. The club operates on school premises in a safe environment led by Miss Swain and Mrs Pindel whose purpose is to make sure the children have the very best wraparound care.

The Breakfast Club provides a variety of free and structured play with a broad range of activities and freedom for children to choose their own activities. The Club runs each morning from 7.30am and costs £4.50 per session (or £5.50 if no advance booking is made for that day). A healthy breakfast is provided as part of the charge. Children are taken to their classrooms, ready to start school at 8.40am.

Please contact the school office to book Breakfast Club.

Our After School provision starts from 3.15pm. Children are collected from their classrooms and taken to High Flyers where they can engage in a variety of activities including arts and crafts, puzzles, reading, construction toys, board games, books and ICT facilities. Outdoor play is available every evening dependent on weather conditions. Children will be encouraged to take part in all activities, indoors and outdoors but are free to choose.

Please contact High Flyers

07766 290242

highflyersclub@hotmail.co.uk

www.highflyers.org.uk

Pupil Premium

Pupil Premium Grant funding is allocated to schools by the Department of Education to increase social mobility and reduce the gap in performance between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. Where applicable, its purpose is to raise attainment, accelerate progress and fulfil the achievement potential of all children. Schools receive funding for each eligible child and can use the funding flexibly. It is up to the school to decide how to spend the Pupil Premium Grant funding because staff are best placed to assess what additional education provision should be put in place to ensure maximum progress for all children in their care.

Pupil Premium at St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Pupil Premium Grant funding at St Mary's Catholic Primary School accelerates the progress of eligible children through the planning and delivery of a range of enhanced and personalised learning interventions and experiences such as:

- Additional education support
- Interventions
- 1:1 and small-group support
- Personal, social and emotional support.

We review regularly our Pupil Premium Grant initiatives to ensure they are having a positive impact. Each year we plan priorities for this year's expenditure based on the cohort of eligible children.

Accessing the Pupil Premium at St Mary's Catholic Primary School

- Children who are looked after by a local authority are eligible for Pupil Premium Grant funding.
- Children who have a parent/parents in the Services are eligible for Service Pupil Premium Grant funding.

If you think your child qualifies under either of the above-mentioned two categories, please contact Mrs Gore in the School Office as we are keen that everyone eligible benefits from this additional funding.

- From April 2014, children adopted from care are also entitled to Pupil Premium Grant funding.

If your child has been adopted from care, please notify Mr O'Connor (Headteacher), in confidence by email:- office.3824@st-marys-bicester.oxon.sch.uk (as soon as possible). We will need supporting evidence such as an adoption order.

In order to qualify for Pupil Premium Grant funding **with the additional entitlement to free school meals, free milk and free trips and visits**, you will need to meet one of the following criteria or be in receipt of one of the following benefits. This will need to be verified by Oxfordshire County Council.

- Universal Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee element of Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for the four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Child Tax Credit (with no Working Tax Credit)

If you are currently receiving any of the above-mentioned, please complete a Pupil Premium Grant application form available from the School Office. All information will be kept confidential.

In 2026/2027 Pupil Premium Grant funding will continue to be used to support educational achievement. The school must publish how this funding is used each year - please note that we do not mention children's names in this report. Please look on our website for last year's report.

Please do not hesitate to contact the office if you require any further information

All details are accurate at the time of printing, however, some changes may be necessary and parents will be informed of any such changes.