



ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Whole-School Inclusion Strategy

Supporting every child to belong, participate, learn and flourish

“Love God, love others and love ourselves.”

Our mission calls us to recognise the dignity, gifts and potential of every child, and to remove barriers so that all pupils can participate fully in the life of our school.

1. Purpose and vision

At St Mary's, inclusion is not an add-on or the responsibility of one person. It is the way we organise teaching, relationships, routines, support and opportunity so that every child can access the best possible education and feel that they belong.

This strategy is informed by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) guidance on Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools. The guidance emphasises that pupils with SEND have the greatest need for excellent teaching, that support should be woven into everyday classroom practice, and that schools should be “inclusive by design” rather than relying on separate programmes as an afterthought.

Our core principle

The key question is not simply “What diagnosis does this child have?” but “What does this individual child need in order to thrive?” Support follows need. A diagnosis, SEN Support or an EHCP may inform provision, but a child does not need a diagnosis before sensible, proportionate support can begin.

2. Who this strategy is for

This is a whole-school strategy for all pupils. It is particularly important for children who:

- have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), whether on SEN Support or with an EHCP;
- are attaining below age-related expectations or have gaps in foundational knowledge;
- are learning English as an additional language (EAL);
- have emerging needs or are being monitored but do not yet have a diagnosis;

- experience social, emotional, communication, sensory, physical, medical or attendance-related barriers;
- are disadvantaged or face other barriers to participation, wellbeing or learning.

The strategy is designed to help staff respond to pupils as individuals, rather than assuming that all children with the same label, attainment level or background need the same provision.

3. Our Catholic approach to inclusion

Our Catholic identity strengthens our commitment to inclusion. Every child is made in the image and likeness of God and has inherent dignity. We therefore seek to know each child well, value their strengths, listen to their voice and provide the support they need to participate meaningfully in school life.

- Dignity — every child is valued and treated with respect.
- Belonging — pupils should be part of the class and wider school community, not unnecessarily separated from it.
- High expectations — support should enable achievement and independence, not lower ambition.
- Solidarity — adults work together with pupils, families and professionals to remove barriers.
- Subsidiarity and participation — children and parents are listened to and included in decisions about support.
- Preferential option for those in need — resources are directed thoughtfully where barriers are greatest.

4. The St Mary's graduated model of support

We use a tiered approach in which support becomes increasingly targeted and specialist as need increases. The starting point is always the quality of the classroom experience.

Level	What it means	Examples at St Mary's	Key principle
Universal	High-quality inclusive teaching for every child	Clear explanations, modelling, retrieval, checks for understanding, scaffolds, vocabulary teaching, flexible grouping, accessible resources and positive routines.	Teacher-led; available to all.

Level	What it means	Examples at St Mary's	Key principle
Targeted	Additional support for an identified barrier	Short, focused small-group or 1:1 support in phonics, reading, language, maths, writing, emotional regulation or other defined areas.	Time-limited, purposeful and linked to class learning.
Specialist	Specialist assessment or provision where needs are more complex or persistent	SENCo-led planning, SALT, Educational Psychology, occupational/physiotherapy, sensory advice, specialist teacher input or EHCP provision where appropriate.	Specialist support supplements, not replaces, classroom teaching.

Important

Additional support should never become a substitute for high-quality teaching. Pupils who need the most support should still have regular access to their class teacher, peers and the full curriculum wherever possible.

5. High-quality inclusive teaching: our universal entitlement

The EEF identifies five classroom approaches with relatively strong evidence for supporting pupils with SEND. At St Mary's these form part of our everyday teaching repertoire for all pupils, adapted flexibly to individual need.

Evidence-informed approach	What this looks like at St Mary's
Flexible grouping	Group pupils for a clear, temporary purpose based on current need, not a fixed label. Regroup as pupils progress. Avoid permanent low-attaining groups that can limit access and expectations.
Explicit instruction	Teach in small steps; model clearly; use worked examples and non-examples; anticipate misconceptions; provide guided practice before independent practice; use precise, unambiguous language.

Evidence-informed approach	What this looks like at St Mary's
Cognitive and metacognitive strategies	Teach pupils how to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning. Model thinking aloud, use retrieval practice, graphic organisers and structured reflection so pupils become increasingly independent.
Scaffolding	Provide temporary visual, verbal or written support—such as task checklists, sentence stems, word banks, worked examples or chunked instructions—and gradually remove it when it is no longer needed.
Technology where it removes a barrier	Use technology purposefully, for example text-to-speech, speech-to-text, enlarged text, note-taking tools, visual supports or communication aids when these improve access and independence.

6. Reasonable adjustments and adaptations

A reasonable adjustment is a change that removes or reduces a barrier so a pupil can access learning, participation or school life more successfully. Adjustments should be proportionate, purposeful and reviewed for impact. They are not a lowering of expectations.

Pupil need/barrier	Possible reasonable adjustments and adaptations
Low attainers / pupils with gaps	Pre-teaching essential vocabulary; shorter chunks of instruction; additional modelling; worked examples; manipulatives and representations; repeated guided practice; retrieval of prerequisite knowledge; reduced copying; structured writing frames; carefully chosen extra practice; extra processing time where appropriate.
EAL	Assess English proficiency rather than assuming low cognitive ability; model language and concepts visually; explicitly teach subject vocabulary; pair spoken language with images/actions/examples; give structured opportunities to rehearse talk with peers; repeat and rephrase key language; use

Pupil need/barrier	Possible reasonable adjustments and adaptations
	home-language knowledge where helpful; teach systematic synthetic phonics where required.
Emerging need / no diagnosis	Respond to the observed barrier now: adjust seating, instruction, task length, language, visual support, sensory demands, transitions or recording method; gather information from the child and family; record what has been tried and the impact; involve the SENCo when needs persist or intensify.
Communication and interaction	Clear and literal language; visual timetable; advance warning of change; supported turn-taking; reduced language load; check understanding rather than asking “Do you understand?”; provide alternative ways to respond; predictable routines.
Social, emotional or regulation needs	Consistent routines; calm, proactive behaviour support; clear expectations; planned regulation breaks where needed; safe adult/check-in; task chunking; emotion vocabulary; consider what behaviour may be communicating; maintain high expectations with appropriate support.
Sensory / physical / visual / hearing needs	Thoughtful seating and positioning; clear sightline to teacher/board; reduced glare/noise where possible; enlarged or adapted resources; movement or sensory breaks if advised; accessible equipment; specialist recommendations implemented consistently.

A diagnosis is not required before support begins

The EEF guidance is clear that not all pupils with SEND will have a formal diagnosis and that diagnostic labels do not provide the full picture for day-to-day teaching. We respond to the educational need and barrier that we can see, while seeking specialist advice when appropriate.

7. The Assess – Plan – Do – Review cycle

The graduated approach is the framework we use whenever a pupil needs support beyond ordinary classroom adjustments. It is a continuous cycle rather than a one-off form-filling exercise.

ASSESS

Build a holistic picture. What is the pupil finding difficult? What are their strengths, interests and aspirations? What does assessment show? What do the pupil, parents, teacher, SENCo and, where relevant, specialists tell us? Consider attendance, language, wellbeing and environmental factors as well as attainment.

PLAN

Agree a small number of precise outcomes and decide what support is most likely to help. Identify who will do what, how often, for how long, what success will look like and when the provision will be reviewed. Choose strategies that are evidence-informed and matched to the actual barrier.

DO

Implement the agreed support consistently. The class teacher remains responsible for the pupil's progress and for connecting any intervention to everyday classroom learning. Teaching assistants and specialists add value but do not replace the teacher.

REVIEW

Ask: did the support work? Compare the pupil's response with the intended outcome. Include pupil and parent views. Continue, adapt, intensify, reduce or stop support according to evidence. A non-response is useful information and

should refine our understanding of the pupil's needs.

8. How we decide whether targeted intervention is needed

Targeted intervention is used when classroom teaching and reasonable adjustments are not sufficient on their own to secure the desired progress or access. Before starting an intervention, staff should be able to answer:

- What specific barrier or gap are we trying to address?
- What is the baseline or starting point?
- Why is this intervention a good match for this pupil?
- What will the pupil miss while taking part, and is the benefit likely to outweigh this?
- How will learning from the intervention connect back to the classroom?
- Who is trained and best placed to deliver it?
- What is the intended outcome and review date?
- How will we know when to adapt, stop or fade the intervention?

Interventions should be carefully selected, structured and time-limited. They should not become a permanent timetable that unnecessarily removes pupils from high-quality whole-class teaching, valued curriculum subjects or peer relationships.

9. The role of teaching assistants

Teaching assistants are an important part of our inclusion strategy. Their role is to add value to the teacher's work and help pupils become increasingly independent.

- Teachers remain responsible and accountable for the progress and development of every pupil in their class.
- TAs should supplement, not replace, teacher instruction.
- TAs should not become the default "primary educator" for pupils with SEND or low attainment.
- Where possible, pupils with the greatest needs should still receive direct teaching and interaction from the class teacher.
- TAs should use prompts, scaffolds and questioning that encourage thinking and independence rather than completing work for pupils.
- Structured interventions should be delivered by appropriately prepared staff and linked explicitly to classroom learning.
- Teachers and TAs need planned opportunities to communicate about pupils' learning, provision and response to support.

10. Working with pupils and parents

We recognise parents and carers as experts in their child and pupils as active participants in decisions about their own learning. Information gathering should begin with listening, not with assumptions.

- Hold early, purposeful conversations about strengths, difficulties, concerns and desired outcomes.
- Listen to differences between home and school experiences without dismissing either perspective.
- Share positive information as well as concerns.
- Agree strategies together and be clear about the responsibilities of school, pupil and family.
- For pupils receiving SEN Support, review outcomes and provision regularly with parents.
- Seek pupil voice in an age-appropriate way: what helps, what gets in the way, and what would make school easier to access?
- Plan transitions carefully and pass on practical information about successful support.

11. When specialist support may be needed

If a pupil continues to make less than expected progress despite well-matched, evidence-informed support, the SENCo and class teacher should consider whether specialist advice is required. This may include speech and language therapy, educational psychology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, sensory impairment services, mental health services or other relevant professionals.

Specialist advice should be translated into practical classroom provision, implemented consistently, and reviewed through the same Assess–Plan–Do–Review cycle. Where a pupil's needs are significant and require provision beyond SEN Support, an Education, Health and Care needs assessment may be considered in line with statutory guidance.

12. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility within this strategy
Class teacher	Provides high-quality inclusive teaching; knows pupils' needs and starting points; makes and reviews reasonable adjustments; remains responsible for progress; works with parents, SENCo and TAs; implements agreed provision.

Role	Responsibility within this strategy
SENCo	Leads whole-school SEND improvement; supports identification and assessment; advises on provision and APDR; coordinates specialist involvement; supports staff development; monitors the quality and impact of provision.
Teaching assistants	Support access, practice and independence; deliver agreed interventions when trained; provide useful feedback to teachers; do not replace teacher instruction or lower the level of challenge.
Subject/phase leaders	Ensure curriculum planning anticipates barriers and remains ambitious; support teachers to adapt within subjects; monitor whether pupils with barriers participate and learn well across the curriculum.
Headteacher/SLT	Creates an inclusive culture; ensures high expectations; allocates staff and resources strategically; monitors implementation and impact; ensures staff training and statutory duties are met.
Governors	Provide strategic oversight and challenge; ensure statutory duties and published information are met; ask how leaders know that provision improves participation, progress, wellbeing and independence.
Pupils and parents	Contribute knowledge, aspirations and feedback; help shape outcomes and review whether support is working.

13. Monitoring impact

We judge the success of inclusion by the difference support makes to pupils—not by the amount of provision recorded. Leaders will monitor both quantitative and qualitative evidence, including:

- progress from individual starting points and closing gaps in foundational knowledge;
- access to and participation in the full curriculum;
- independence and reduced reliance on adult prompting where appropriate;
- attendance, behaviour, engagement and readiness to learn;
- pupil voice, belonging, confidence and wellbeing;
- parent feedback and confidence in the support provided;

- the quality and consistency of classroom adjustments;
- the impact and cost-effectiveness of targeted interventions;
- successful transitions between classes, phases and settings.

What good inclusion should feel like

A child should experience belonging, ambition and access. They should receive the support they need without being unnecessarily separated from their teacher, peers or curriculum. Over time, support should build competence, confidence and independence.

14. St Mary's staff decision-making checklist

When a child is not thriving, staff should work through the following questions before assuming that a diagnosis or separate programme is required:

- ☐ What exactly is the barrier to learning, participation or wellbeing?
- ☐ What does the child already do well?
- ☐ What does assessment and classroom observation tell us?
- ☐ Have I maximised the quality and accessibility of my classroom teaching?
- ☐ What reasonable adjustment could remove the barrier?
- ☐ Have I spoken with the pupil and parent/carer?
- ☐ Does the pupil need targeted additional practice or intervention?
- ☐ Is the intervention specific, time-limited and linked to classroom learning?
- ☐ Do I need advice from the SENCo or another professional?
- ☐ When will we review this, and what evidence will tell us whether it worked?

15. Strategy summary

	Principle	What it means
1	Know the child	Start with strengths, needs, barriers, pupil voice and family knowledge.
2	Strengthen teaching	Ensure the child has full access to high-quality, inclusive classroom teaching.
3	Adjust intelligently	Make proportionate reasonable adjustments based on need, not diagnosis.

	Principle	What it means
4	Target precisely	Add focused intervention only when a clearly identified need requires it.
5	Review relentlessly	Use Assess–Plan–Do–Review to test impact and adapt provision.
6	Seek specialist help when needed	Escalate expertise and intensity when evidence shows that universal and targeted support are insufficient.
7	Protect belonging and independence	Keep pupils connected to their teacher, peers, curriculum and school community while building independence over time.

16. Source and review

This strategy is informed principally by the Education Endowment Foundation guidance report *Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*, including its five recommendations on inclusive culture, understanding pupils’ needs, high-quality teaching, targeted interventions and effective use of teaching assistants. It should be read alongside the school’s SEND Information Report, Accessibility Plan, Behaviour Policy, Teaching and Learning guidance and relevant statutory SEND duties.

The strategy will be reviewed annually, and sooner if national guidance or the needs of the school community change.