



Admission and Entry

All children start school in the September of the school year in which they are 5. St Martin's School has three reception classes and the following criteria are considered carefully before placing a child in a class:

- age of the child
- pre-school setting attended
- siblings already at school
- gender

Links with pre-school settings

St. Martin's school has close links with the three main feeder playgroups:

1. St. Martin's Playgroup
2. Smarties Playgroup
3. Acorn House pre-school

The playgroup leaders are invited to bring the September intake children into school for a visit during the Summer term, and the teachers and assistants visit these playgroups to observe the children and learn relevant information about them.

Pre-school visits

Every prospective Reception child has two pre-school visits in June. Each session lasts one hour, and every child experiences an afternoon session and a morning one. Parents are encouraged to leave their children and the teachers select some of their existing class to play with the young children. We acknowledge the fact that many parents are anxious about this important step in a child's life and do our best to reassure them.

Pre- school library

The pre- school library is held once a week in the Reception Department of the school. The teachers and their assistants take turns to host the library so that the young children become familiar with all the practitioners and the learning environment. Parents enjoy an informal chat and refreshments while the children have a story time session with a reception teacher.

Meeting for parents of Pre-school children

Parents are addressed by the teacher with responsibility for the Foundation Stage at a special meeting usually held in July. She talks about school policies, uniform, staggered start etc. and parents are invited to look at the school. A pre-school package is given to each family and a letter detailing the individual part-time arrangements.

The folder includes :

- *A school prospectus,*
- *'Getting ready' booklet* (Ideas on how to prepare children for reading, writing and maths, including the language for letter formation.)
- *'Parents' guide to the teaching of reading'.* (guidance on the school's approach to the teaching of reading at different stages of a child's development)
- *Explanatory notes on the Foundation stage* (What are the six areas of learning?)
- *What do I do if?* (Common questions asked by parents)
- *Golden Rules*

All children will be part-time for the first 7 weeks of term while they are assessed. It is very important to encourage a positive attitude between the home and school. We see the parents' knowledge of their children as a very important element of the development of this partnership. Parents are partners in children's learning. We value their opinions and the information they can give us, and involve them whenever we can.

A valuable interview with each child's parents provides the start of the important partnership between the school and the home. The parents are given a questionnaire entitled *'Introducing'* which is looked at and discussed with the teacher prior to the child starting school. These are very special meetings and any concerns that the parents may have can usually be sorted out then. Specific problems that a child may have are discussed and the parents have the opportunity to inform the teachers about their children's medical conditions eg. allergies.

Practice

Each class of reception children will have two practitioners:

- a. The Class Teacher
- b. The Teaching Assistant

By planning and working together, we, the practitioners, try hard to provide a learning environment, indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning through rich and stimulating experiences and by ensuring each child feels included.

We aim to use materials, equipment and displays that reflect the community the children come from and the wider world.

We encourage children to make choices and develop independence by having equipment and materials readily available and well organised.

We try to provide resources that inspire children and encourage them to initiate their own learning.

We interact and support children in a way that positively affects their attitude to learning.

The learning environment

The three reception classrooms are situated around a large 'Work area'. The children have immediate access to the work area and to the toilets and cloakroom.

Every effort is made to organise the classrooms in such a way as to encourage independent learning.

Where possible, furniture is arranged to provide the following areas:

1. A quiet reading corner
2. A pre-writing area
3. A craft area
4. A role play area
5. Creative floor space
6. Formal working areas

In order to encourage independent learning, young children should be able to make choices and plan their activities without being dependent on adults. It is therefore important to organise an environment that maximises the opportunities for self motivated, creative learning.

Storage boxes, trays etc. are be clearly labelled and every piece of equipment has a home. Each child in the reception year has his own named tray in which to put his personal possessions.

The work area provides space allowing more freedom of movement. Here, the children can choose from a range of structured play activities and craft work, as well as completing more formal work with the teacher or classroom assistant.

The outer work area is mainly used for sand and water play and the construction of models.

Outdoor Resources

At St. Martin's School, we try to make good use of outdoor space so that children are enabled to learn by working on a larger, more active scale than is possible indoors.

We firmly believe that, except in severe weather, young children should spend a small part of every day outside and this should be acknowledged as part of the classroom.

Directly outside the work area is a safe, tarmaced , fenced area for outdoor play.

The children have a furnished house plus a variety of sit and ride toys and equipment designed to teach road safety rules. When the weather is fine, we put out sand, water etc in an attempt to provide a stimulating environment!

The outdoor area is securely fenced and provides a safe place where children can develop their physical skills and learn to share with others in structured, informal play.

As well as our outdoor play area, we are fortunate to have been designated a small plot of land for each class to grow flowers and vegetables.

The curriculum

The curriculum describes everything children do, see, hear and feel in the setting, both planned and unplanned.

The planned curriculum is based on the six areas of learning as outlined in the **Q.C.A. Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage**. These areas of learning provide an essential link between the pre-statutory curriculum and the KS1 programme of study.

Areas of learning

1. **Personal, social and emotional development**
2. **Communication, language and literacy**
3. **Mathematical development**
4. **Knowledge and understanding of the world**
5. **Physical development**
6. **Creative development**

The QCA Curriculum Guidance is intended to help practitioners plan to meet the diverse needs of all children so that most will achieve and some, where appropriate, will go beyond the early learning goals by the end of the **Foundation Stage**.

The **Stepping stones** are used to identify the developing skills, knowledge and attitudes children need in order to achieve the **Early learning goals** by the end of the reception year.

Our curriculum is planned through a series of themes and topics which offer experiences in all six areas. We recognise the importance of play and we try to provide opportunities and space for the children to explore their ideas in an enjoyable way.

Planning the curriculum

When planning a curriculum for four / five year olds it is important to remember that young children are:

1. Physically active
2. Mentally active
3. Socially immature

The Foundation stage curriculum is broad and balanced, taking into account the individual needs of the children. Its content is differentiated to allow for the different stages and rates of development.

Planning meetings involving **all** practitioners are held on a weekly basis, although staff meet and review plans daily on a more informal basis.

We try to keep our planning attainable and realistic with activities based on the needs and interests of the children.

Parents are kept informed about planning through the termly year group letters and the weekly note in the home / school book.

Assessment and recording

At the Foundation Stage **observation** should be the nucleus of assessment as it provides a foundation on which educational objectives can be built and charted. Observation can influence planning progression and continuity, and provides vital information in all aspects of the child's development.

The Foundation Stage Profile is the child's first formal assessment and the information learned from this provides a guide for future teaching and learning.

Methods of recording information are various and can include:

- Observations (planned and unplanned)
- Examples of early written work and drawings (general portfolio showing work that is '**above**', '**meeting**' or '**below**' expectations.)
- Reading records
- Home / school contact books
- Phonic checks
- Early Literacy Support assessment

The teaching assistants continually observe the children in the classroom and in the work area and share their information with the rest of the team.

Each child has a **Portfolio** which is passed on to the next teacher.
A portfolio at the end of the Foundation Stage should include:

1. FSP
2. Special book
3. Reading record
4. Copy of school report
5. SENCO reports

Parents are invited to discuss their child's progress on three occasions :

1. Term 1 to discuss their FS form and any concerns they may have about their child starting school.
2. Term 1 for teachers to talk about the early stages of the FSP and the arrangements / plans made for the children.
3. Term 2 to allow parents an opportunity to look at work books, displays and to discuss the progress of the child in all six areas of the curriculum.

Naturally we are very happy to see a parent with a problem at any reasonable time.

In the Summer term all parents receive a written report.

G. Spoelstra (2008)