



Resilience

Children can be incredibly good at bouncing back from the hard knocks they may face in life. Their youthful optimism and day-to-day approach can allow them to carry on in the face of scraped knees, broken toys, friendship issues and difficult school work.

Challenges can test their tenacity and how they deal with them is dependent on how much they've built up their resilience.

The good news is that **all** children can develop resilience. All it takes is the right influence and careful support from those around them.

Why is Resilience Important for Children?

It is during our childhood that we're most actively influenced by the people around us and the situations we encounter. As children, we begin to develop our identity and place in the world, but in turn we are vulnerable to difficulties that we may not know how to handle, and that may leave a significant impact on us.

A Resilient Child

A resilient child is one who responds well to difficulties in life and will often have the following characteristics:

- A strong sense of independence, autonomy, and self-confidence.
- Ability to communicate well with others and express themselves.
- Good problem-solving skills.
- Strong empathy and respect for others.
- Active interest in school activities.
- Happy to respond to instructions and guidance.
- Knows how to ask for support.
- Open to trying new things.

While no two children are alike, the above are good indicators that a child is resilient. Oppositely, children who have not fully developed their resilience may avoid problem-solving and may not feel confident in themselves or in communicating. They may also resist guidance and support and try to avoid new experiences.

At St Mary's we aim to support children to develop their resilience. These are some of the methods we adopt to help children be resilient learners.

We encourage healthy risk taking.

Many people make the mistake of preventing children from taking risks, or they jump in too soon to solve a child's problems. It comes from a well-meaning place, and in many cases it can be necessary to protect the child. But it could prevent them from developing their self-sufficiency.

So, if we see that a child in class is doing something that may not go the way they want, and the risk of harm is low, we will resist the temptation to pre-emptively intervene. We will let them face the challenge and attempt to problem-solve on their own. Of course, we will offer help if they really do need it.

We will show acceptance of mistakes and losses.

It's important that we create an environment where children feel safe enough to make mistakes. Doing so demonstrates that mistakes are not the end of the world and we shouldn't avoid trying new things due to fear of failure. What's important is reflecting on mistakes and learning from them. This helps children to develop a growth mind-set and encourages them to look for solutions, rather than focusing on unhelpful blaming or self-criticism.

We ask questions to encourage independent thinking.

Whenever children face problems, it can be tempting to simply tell them the answer. But doing this prevents them from practising self-sufficiency. This is why we actively ask questions if children come to us with an issue. It allows them to think for themselves and gain valuable problem-solving experience.

We praise accomplishments in the right way.

Praise and recognition are critical for building a child's self-confidence. But excessively and exclusively praising accomplishments and talents, while failing to praise effort, can send the wrong message to children. It may lead to them thinking that they must succeed at everything and be talented to be valued. It can make them afraid of failure and generate feelings of inadequacy, which in turn can lead to poor resilience when they face challenges.

This is why it's crucial to praise children when they do their best and make an effort, even if they don't achieve the results they wanted. These qualities are what will help them truly succeed in life and deal with difficulties, not an unrealistic belief that they are gifted and incapable of failing.

We define and discuss emotions.

Children need to learn how to identify and talk about their emotions. It will help them to develop the emotional intelligence they need to handle how they're feeling when things get tough. Otherwise, confusion and frustration can stop them from carrying on. Resilience involves recognising and controlling our emotions, but not permanently eliminating them, as this isn't realistic.

In school, we take every opportunity that arises to talk about our emotions and allow our children to express theirs.

We promote optimism and positive thinking.

We do this by showing rather than telling, as children often learn from the example of others. If we have a positive attitude and respond optimistically to difficulties, observant children will notice and will most likely start adopting this behaviour themselves.

We encourage interaction with others.

A key characteristic of resilience is being able to draw strength from friends and family. This is why it's important that children learn how to develop relationships. While some are natural social butterflies, some may need an extra push. So, where possible, we try to create the opportunity for children to practice their social skills.

This can involve paired or grouped work and team-based games during PE.

We show that it's okay to ask for help.

As stated earlier we encourage children to take healthy risks and to think through problems on their own. But there has to be a balance here too, as we don't want to imply that they shouldn't ever ask others for help. Otherwise, they may feel that they shouldn't bother others with their problems.

In situations where pupils are working through a challenge independently, we also make it clear that we are still there to help them.

We also ask them for help with things around the classroom. Actively offering and asking for support demonstrates that no one needs to work in complete isolation, not even authority figures. People are always available and willing to help one another, whether it's everyday tasks or in times of need.

We have also explained to the children that a resilient person is like a bouncy ball, no matter how hard it is pushed down to the ground it bounces back up again. We

also shared with them the story of Gerald the Giraffe who couldn't dance. In the story other make him believe he is no good at dancing but with the help from a good friend and his own resilience he goes on to be an amazing dancer. His story can be found on Youtube using the following link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZjsLK5vwNU&safe=active>