

BALLYKEEL PRIMARY SCHOOL



LEARNING AND TEACHING POLICY

Updated March 2015

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We, the staff of Ballykeel Primary School, believe in the concept of lifelong learners and that learning should be a rewarding and enjoyable experience. Through our teaching we equip the pupils with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to make informed choices about their lives. We believe that appropriate teaching and learning experiences help our pupils to lead happy and rewarding lives.

This policy aims to ensure that the pupils at our school are provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to a consistently high level of pupil achievement.

Pupils learn through their total school experience. This policy guides what pupils do, what teachers do, how time is managed, the organisation of the classroom and what the school as a learning organisation does to create an effective and well-managed learning environment, in which the individual needs of each pupil can be met.

Aims

- To help each child develop his or her individual potential to the full through acquisition of the skills of literacy and numeracy through high quality teaching provided by an enthusiastic, highly motivated and reflective staff.
- To provide a safe, stimulating learning environment for all pupils and teachers.
- To set high expectations for all pupils in order to raise their aspirations.
- To raise standards of both learning and teaching.
- To provide a positive school atmosphere in which each pupil is not only preparing for the next stage in his/her education, but is enjoying to the full the one through he/she is passing.
- To offer a curriculum that is balanced and broadly based and which is designed to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at the school and thereby of society.
- To help pupils acquire knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and employment in a fast-changing world.
- To ensure that the highest standards of pastoral care and child protection are in place.
- To encourage each child to take account of the feelings, views and needs of others, respect diversity and develop in each child the social skills required as a member of the community, both in and out of school and to foster, value and encourage partnership between school, parents, families and the community.
- To help develop personal qualities such as self-confidence, independence and self-discipline through praise and positive reinforcement.
- To develop each child's confidence, ability and maturity in using ICT across all aspects of the curriculum and at home.
- To enable children to appreciate their environment and to show consideration to others.

Learning and The Learner's Role

- Pupils have a vital role to play in the learning process and are encouraged to set personal goals and targets.
- Pupils behave in a manner that enables everyone to learn.
- Pupils are willing to work and play co-operatively.
- Pupils bring to school the materials needed.
- Pupils seek information independently using a range of resources including ICT.

- Pupils are aware of and employ their own learning styles.
- Pupils are motivated and interested in their work. They are supportive of each other, enjoy their work and persevere and stay focused on tasks.
- Pupils evaluate their own work and make realistic judgements about it.
- Pupils engage in a range of group activities to share ideas, to work co-operatively, to contribute effectively and to respect and listen to each other's views and opinions.
- Pupils engage in a range of individual activities to help develop independence, take responsibility for their own learning and are encouraged to reflect on what they have learnt.
- Pupils' individual learning needs are met through differentiated, yet challenging experiences.
- Pupils know what to do when they need help.
- Pupils feel they are valued by their teachers and that their achievements are being recognised.
- All teachers are also learners and should be striving to evaluate and improve their practice.

Teaching and The Teacher's Role

- Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and of the learning process and keep up to date with curriculum developments and current educational trends.
- Teachers' planning and teaching takes account of the pupils' different stages of development, abilities and attainments, to ensure that their individual needs are met.
- Teachers provide a variety of teaching approaches suited to children's learning styles.
- Teachers plan lessons which have clear learning intentions and are communicated effectively to children.
- Teachers create a purposeful, supportive and safe environment for learning where all provision is inclusive.
- The school supports a climate where children feel happy, safe and secure, where they are nurtured and cherished and where their contribution is valued.
- Teachers use a range of teaching styles and ensure that there is an appropriate balance of individual, group and whole-class tasks.
- Teachers use a range of questioning.
- Teachers encourage pupils to ask questions, take risks, knowing that mistakes and failures are acknowledged as part of the learning process.
- Teachers have positive attitudes, know their pupils well and establish good relationships with their pupils who feel confident and secure in asking their teacher for advice and support.
- Teachers use praise and positive reinforcement to foster self-esteem, motivation and confidence in pupils.
- Teachers self evaluate and are involved in continuous professional development.
- Teachers are good role models and promote the school ethos.
- Teachers liaise with all adults involved in the children's learning.
- Teachers communicate with parents through meetings, letters, reports etc.
- Teachers act on concerns and inform parents promptly.
- Teachers build links with the local community and make use of local and human resources.

The Role of Parents

- Facilitating their child's regular and punctual attendance and avoiding taking extended holidays in term time.
- Ensuring children arrive in school in a fit and ready state to learn.
- Informing teachers of anything relevant and responding appropriately to communications from school.
- Accepting the responsibility of supporting and promoting the school's ethos and expectations.
- Encouraging children to take responsibility for their actions.
- Working with teachers and other professionals to meet their child's needs.
- Being realistic about their child's abilities and offering the child positive support, praise and encouragement.
- Being prepared to work with the child at home.

Quality Learning and Teaching

Quality Learning is:

- When pupils are captivated and enthused by what they are learning.
- An active process – a product of doing rather than receiving.
- Linked to prior knowledge.
- Supported by both the teacher and other pupils, and takes the form of interaction, collaboration and teacher intervention.
- Collaborative through co-operation, dialogue and creating knowledge with others.
- Centred on the learners' responsibility for their own learning. They are able to exercise choice, develop goals, plan their approach and work independently.
- Reflective and enables learners to monitor and review the learning.
- Where learners make considerably better progress than may be expected.
- When pupils display a strong desire to contribute the effort and concentration required to match that of the teachers.

Quality Teaching:

- Provides carefully structured activities matched sensitively to pupil needs.
- Gives pupils some responsibility for their work and independence.
- Develops well planned, prepared and paced lessons that maintain high levels of interaction with the class.
- Provides ample, challenging work stemming from knowledge of the curriculum, including how to teach it and how pupils learn.
- Maintains high levels of pupil involvement in tasks.
- Creates a positive atmosphere in the classroom through excellent relationships.
- Incorporates high levels of praise and encouragement.
- Uses a variety of approaches; well selected strategies and techniques and productive use of time.
- Uses homework effectively; particularly to reinforce and extend what is learned in school.

Learning and Teaching Strategies

We acknowledge that pupils learn in many different ways and we recognise the need to develop strategies that allow them to learn in ways that best suit them. We offer opportunities for pupils to learn in different ways. These include:

- Whole class work
- Group work
- Paired Work
- Independent Work
- Sharing Learning Intentions and developing success criteria in conjunction with the pupils
- Circle Time
- Use of ICT
- Reflection on what has been learnt
- Open-ended, thought –provoking and challenging questions
- Decision Making
- Investigation and problem solving
- Creative Activities
- Participation in Physical Activity
- Designing and making things
- Discussions, debates, role plays and presentation
- Good balance of practical, written and oral work.

Elements of Good Practice

Lessons should contain the following elements listed below in some shape or form. They are the strategies formulated with staff as being most important to enable us to consistently deliver high quality lessons.

I. Learning Objectives are Identified and Shared

This needs to be a two step approach in which pupils are told not only the purpose of the lesson but also what the teacher expects in terms of outcomes from the activity. There is a need to communicate why they are doing what they are doing and how it fits into the bigger picture of the subject or their wider learning across the curriculum.

This might be achieved through:

- The learning objectives being outlined to the pupils at or near to the beginning of the lesson.
- The pupils being clear about the learning objectives in terms of what they are expected to learn. Objectives may be phrased as:

We are learning to: ('WALT')

- a. **know that** (for knowledge – factual information such as names of people or equipment, places, symbols, formulae etc).
- b. **understand how/why...** (for understanding – concepts, reasons, effects, principles, processes etc).

- c. **develop/be able to ...** (for skills – using knowledge, applying techniques, analysing information etc).
 - d. **develop/be aware of ...** (for attitudes and values – empathy, caring, sensitivity towards social issues, feelings, moral issues etc).
 - e. **explore and refine strategies for ...** (creating, designing, hypothesising, exploring alternatives).
- The pupils understanding desired learning outcomes. You want to tell pupils what you expect from them and how they will be assessed on the work they are to do, create or produce. Outcomes may be phrased as:

‘What I am looking for...: (‘WILF’)

- a. from everyone is...
- b. you to be successful is...
- c. to achieve level 5 is ...

2. Review Learning to Link and Consolidate

Review helps create links with previous learning. This helps build secure foundations for subsequent learning, so that learners can progressively develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values contained in the curriculum.

This might be achieved through:

- Previous learning being recapped by the teacher.
- Pupils being involved in the recap of previous learning.
- Recap of learning being done throughout the lesson in relation to learning objectives. Establishing what learners know, understand, can do, are aware of or have explored, correcting existing misconceptions where necessary.
- Review of learning done towards the end of the lesson to consolidate learning and its retention (plenary).
- Providing time for reviewing and reflecting upon the learning that has taken place, as well as how and why they have learned.

3. Variety of Learning Activity

Lessons should stimulate learning through matching teaching techniques and strategies to the range of learning styles and needs within your class, such as visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learners. Positive behaviour management and encouragement should be adopted by all. We should provide opportunities for pupils to show and develop their skills and abilities to work independently and collaboratively.

This might be achieved through:

- Being confident, flexible, open-minded, willing to experiment and embrace change in terms of your own teaching style, and adapt appropriately.

- Planning and delivering a range of varied activities that match the maturity of the learners and the material to be learned, reflect different learning preferences and involve thinking time.
- Using creativity and imagination, and the resources offered by new technology, to engage, enthuse, challenge and support learners, and reward their effort and achievement.
- Engaging in a dialogue with pupils that centres on effective learning and how they can improve.
- The pupils being aware of the timing in the lesson and of the longer-term deadlines.
- Assessment having informed which activities are selected and how the students are grouped for them.
- Pupils being involved in planning, developing and evaluating their own activity and learning experiences.
- Tasks which allow for appropriate variation in the pace of learning, and the level of challenge.

4. Differentiation to Enable all Learners to Succeed

Differentiation can be seen as an on-going process that is accommodating the needs of individual pupils in our school. It ensures that teaching allows most learners to make at least their expected progress in relation to their capability. Differentiation is best achieved when based upon an informed review of the pupil's learning, through a diagnostic and formative assessment procedure.

To facilitate differentiation, modifications, adjustments and alterations can be made in the following areas:-

- Learning tasks and activities
- Teaching and learning methodologies.

These modifications are made at the SHORT TERM PLANNING stage where the decisions about differentiation are informed by assessment.

This might be achieved:

- by TASK:**
A range of tasks spanning the spectrum of abilities can be an effective way of differentiating.
- by RESOURCE:**
Changing the resources by which pupils learn to meet their individual needs.
- by RESPONSE:**
The response of the teacher/adult/fellow pupil is a form by which differentiation can be achieved. This is essential in cases where differentiation by outcome is planned as the teacher's written or spoken response will vary from pupil to pupil.
- by OUTCOME:**

Pupils working on a common un-differentiated task will inevitably produce different outcomes to the task set.

e. **by GROUP:**

Differentiation by group is an important way to allow purposeful use of resources (including the other pupils in the group). Pupils could belong to semi-permanent groups within the larger teaching groups.

f. **by SUPPORT:**

Differing pupil needs will inevitably mean that some pupils need greater support than others. There are a number of strategies that can provide that support, e.g. Teaching Assistants.

These strategies adapt teaching to the potential and needs of each individual, from the gifted and talented to those with special educational needs, and as a result create a culture of respect for others and their learning, whatever their gender, social background or ethnic group. We expect to see a number of these different forms of differentiation over a period of time.

Assessment Strategies

The key focus of assessment in learning and teaching must be to enable students to be continually aware of where they are now in their learning, where they can or need to get to, and most importantly how best to get there.

- Assessment is an integral part of planning, learning and teaching and helps pupils know how to improve.
- Teachers employ a wide range of assessment strategies, including observations, discussions with pupils, marking and written tests.
- All assessment tasks have clearly identified purposes which are understood by the pupils.
- Assessment criteria are shared with the pupils, so that the pupils have a clear sense of what the teacher expects of them.
- The pupils' work is marked regularly and highlights strengths and areas for development.
- Pupils understand that the teacher's marking is linked to learning intentions and success criteria.
- Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their current performance and what they need to do next to improve so that they are actively involved in the learning process.
- Pupils are given time to make improvements to their work.
- Encouragement is given to promote improvement and praise is given regularly to encourage pupils. It recognises progress from pupil's previous best.
- Responses from pupils are welcome.
- Teachers encourage self-assessment strategies, thus encouraging pupils to become more responsible for their own learning.
- Summative assessments are carried out annually and the pupil data is used to identify progress or under-achievement.

Assessment is of prime importance to staff to inform their future planning and classroom practice. We must recognise equally that it has a profound influence on pupil motivation and self-esteem. Therefore it must show consideration and be both constructive and sensitive. Also our ability to share this information with parents effectively is key to pupils being supported as well as possible at home.

Learning Environment

Climate, Relationships and Resources

- Challenging stimulating, colourful.
- Peaceful, calm and comfortable.
- Happy caring and supportive.
- Contributions by the children are valued and respected by teachers and other pupils.
- Children's work is on display in the corridors and classrooms.
- These displays support pupils' learning and are changed regularly.
- They create an attractive and stimulating environment.
- They include work on different aspects of the curriculum.
- They reflect the individual child's efforts as well as ability.
- 'Wow' Boards in each classroom.
- Children understand teachers' expectations for work, behaviour etc.
- Suitable reward system in place
- Teachers encourage high levels of self-esteem
- Children make use of water bottles
- Classroom rules and routines well established –clearly understood, fair and consistent, realistic and positive.

Physical Organisation

Furniture

All classrooms should have tables arranged for:

- Ease of working
- Flexibility
- Purposeful discussion
- Large working surfaces

Chairs should normally:

- Be sufficient in number for the activities in the classroom
- Leave enough room for children and teachers to move easily around the room

Resources

Materials in all areas should be well organised, be of good quality, be clean, tidy, attractive, and well labelled. Stocks should be checked and replenished regularly (budget dependent). Children should be taught and shown, by example, that resources are finite and that we all have a duty to care for equipment and not misuse, damage or waste it. Relevant textbooks should be available in each classroom or resource area.

Monitoring and Review

- The Principal and curriculum leaders monitor and review the implementation of the curriculum.
- Clear focus on monitoring and evaluation, linked to SDP/PRSD.
- Information gathered is used to inform future developments.
- Strengths and weaknesses are highlighted.