Teaching and Learning Policy

INTRODUCTION

At Howard Primary School the entire staff work together to maintain a shared approach to all curricular and extra-curricular activities. This Teaching and Learning Policy reflects our classroom practice, our school ethos and vision.

We also ascribe to the notion of 'lifelong learning - preparation for life' and the idea that both teachers and pupils learn new concepts and ideas everyday. To this end we passionately believe that learning should be a rewarding and fulfilling experience for all involved. Through our teaching we hope to equip children with the ability to 'learn how to learn' and to develop the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to be able to make the best decisions in all aspects of their present and future lives.

As a school we also celebrate individuality recognising that everyone learns in a variety of ways. To this end we know that we need to continuously develop strategies that allow children and adults to learn in the way that best suits their learning style.

TEACHING APPROACHES

A variety of teaching strategies are currently being used to deliver the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Our teaching and learning approaches aim to match abilities, preferred learning styles, interest and experience of our pupils, to develop knowledge, concepts, skills and positive dispositions to learning.

Whole class, small groups and one to one teaching form the key elements of our teaching approach. We employ a range of strategies to encourage active rather than passive learning.

Consistency and progression are crucial elements to create high standards of teaching and learning. We also celebrate and value individual teaching styles and expertise and are cognisant of the essential phases of delivering an effective lesson and use this knowledge when planning:

PHASE 1 - OVERVIEW

During this phase the emphasis is on –

- Creating an appropriate and conducive working atmosphere
- Linking the lesson to prior knowledge
- Providing an overview
- Sharing the learning intentions with the children and what is expected. This will be clearly articulated to the children through a combination of the following means: (We are learning to-WALT, What I am looking for-WILF and What a child knows (K), What a child wants to know (W) and What a child has learned (L) –KWL).
- Stimulating curiosity, generating interest and setting the challenge

PHASE 2- NEW INFORMATION

During this phase the emphasis is on –

- Providing children with new information

PHASE 3 - PROCESSING

- Developing understanding
- Demonstrating understanding
- Assessing understanding

PHASE 4 – REVIEW/PLENARY

- Reviewing what has been learned
- Reflecting on how it was learned

All lessons have clear learning intentions and outcomes. These outcomes are based on or drawn from the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Our planning contains information about the tasks to be set, resources required, appropriate assessments, differentiation and links to WAU, PDMU, ICT and TS/PC. Teachers also evaluate the learning taking place in their lessons with a view to modifying and improving future teaching and learning opportunities.

Joint teacher/key stage planning sessions take place regularly. Where appropriate; teachers and classroom assistants meet weekly to plan for forthcoming learning activities. The agreed planners are forwarded to the Principal and relevant coordinators on agreed dates.

All teachers reflect on their professional practice, strengths and areas for future development through our PRSD process and plan their professional development accordingly. We endeavour to support our teaching and non-teaching staff in developing their skills to continually improve their practise.

SCHOOL ETHOS AND OUR LEARNING ENVIRIOMENT

At Howard Primary School we believe that children learn best when:

They feel happy, secure, confident and valued - *there will be evidence in the classroom of:*
- A familiar routine
- Visual timetables

- Praise

- Respect for others

- Talking and listening to adults and each other

- Increasing independence and responsibility

- Increasing levels of responsibility delegated to children

- A caring attitude

- Ambitious yet achievable, differentiated tasks

- A positive 'Have a go' risk taking ethos

- Development of the "Growth mindset"

Their surroundings are lively, interesting and stimulating- *there will be evidence in the classroom of:*
- Stimulating displays reflecting a range of curriculum areas

- Children's work being valued and celebrated

- Interactive displays

- Development of imaginative play

- Wide variety of activities

- Giving time to talk about their own interests

- Up to date and accessible materials and resources

- Debates, role-plays and oral presentations

- Use of ICT in the most appropriate and creative form

- Research and finding out

They have access to a range of appropriate resources - *there will be evidence in the classroom of:*
- Resources used in effective progression throughout the school

- Well organised resources so children know where things are

- Labelling appropriate to age group e.g. font size and type
- Clearly marked learning areas e.g. writing tables etc.
- Children taking responsibility for the care of all resources
- Opportunity for experimentation and investigation
- Ease of access to frequently used resources

They experience access to the NI Curriculum, irrespective of ability or disability (subject to reasonable adjustments), social background, culture, religion or gender - *there will be evidence in the classroom of:*

- Teaching and learning adapted for multi-sensory learning (Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic -VAK)
- An understanding and valuing of multiple intelligences (i.e. Gardner's 7 main areas of intelligence: linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, kinaesthetic, musical, intrapersonal/reflective, interpersonal/group work.)
- Challenges for more able children e.g. problem solving, extension activities
- Appropriate support and tasks for less able children
- Equipment/resources adapted to meet the needs of children with disabilities
- Effective use of classroom assistants to support children with specific learning/emotional needs
- Opportunities and resources which challenge gender, racial and cultural stereotypes e.g. PDMU and Shared Education

They have time to reflect and talk about their experiences - *there will be evidence in the classroom of:*

- Time for relevant talk and discussion

- Talk being valued, through children and adults listening and responding to each other
- Children discussing and completing tasks in pairs and groups e.g. use of talk partners
- Development of active listening skills
- Opportunities for reflection and concentration
- Each child enjoying quality teacher time
- The use of effective open-ended questioning (See appendix for examples).
- Children encouraged to formulate their own questions

They know they are making progress and are given opportunities to celebrate their achievements - *there will be evidence in the classroom of:*
- Praise and encouragement e.g. assembly certificates- new whole school targets set each week
- Systems of reward e.g. Golden Time,
- Children's work displayed with care e.g. wall displays, writer of the month etc
- Staff and children engaging in purposeful analysis, marking and feedback of their work – See Marking and Feedback Policy.
- Children's assessment of their own work and others
- Children setting personal targets in Year 4-7
- Sharing work with other year groups e.g. reading of stories across the year groups
- Sharing work with other teachers, children and the Principal

They have opportunities for practical, relevant exploration of ideas - *there will be evidence in the classroom of:*
- First hand experiences

- Children learning through play (Play Based Learning -Year 1 and 2 and Activity Based Learning Year 3)
- Investigations e.g. Science and Technology practical work
- Problem solving e.g. Maths – process based challenges
- Opportunities for practical activities reflected across the curriculum
- A variety of teaching and learning strategies
- Modelled and shared activities across the curriculum
- Staff encouragement of 'risk taking' and the value of a 'trial and error' approach and learning from mistakes

They are able to work collaboratively as well as independently - *there will be evidence in the classroom of:*
- Individual and collaborative work
- Time allowed for children to consolidate and extend their own learning
- Where appropriate flexible groupings related to the task in hand – mixed, set ability, peer grouping, preferred learning style

They know what is expected of them - *there will be evidence in the classroom of:*
- Clear instructions and focussed learning objectives being shared with the children at the beginning of the lessons (WALT/WILF/KWL)
- Teachers checking children's understanding
- Boundaries for behaviour
- High expectations
- Well structured plenary sessions

They are given carefully differentiated tasks which are matched to their individual needs - *there will be evidence in the classroom of:*

- Work planned for different abilities and learning styles including extension activities that provide additional challenge e.g. applying knowledge/skill in problem solving
- Planning linked to targets on Education Plans for those children with special educational needs (See SEN Policy for more detail)
- Continuous assessment
- A range of appropriate resources
- Children working on task
- Children feeling secure, confident and valued (Ref. Worry Boxes, Quality Circle Time)
- Questioning that assists children consolidate and extend thinking ref. Effective Questioning Strategies.

They are able to see how their learning is connected and meaningful in their everyday lives - *there will be evidence in the classroom of:*
- Visitors representing different sectors of the community
- Visits to places outside and within the local community
- Topic work related to global issues
- The teaching of life skills and social skills

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

Assessment exists to help the teacher to help the child. It ensures more effective teaching by providing the evidence for closer matching of tasks to the child's needs. It assists the children by providing them with an indication of what stage they have reached in the learning process. It helps to identify future planning and teaching strategies. It also helps us to recognise and move on from success.

By promoting assessment for learning we believe that we are making children partners in their learning.

We know from the research of Charles Desforges that other key levers for achievement include:

- Learning how to think
- Learning how to think about how you think (Meta-cognition)
- The centrality of talk
- The involvement of parents
- Effective lesson design
- Cross-curricular learning

As a school we agree that Assessment for Learning is:

- part of effective planning
- focuses on how students learn
- is central to classroom practice
- is a key professional skill
- has an emotional impact by promoting self-esteem
- affects learner motivation
- promotes commitment to learning objectives and assessment criteria
- helps learners know how to improve
- encourages self-assessment
- recognises progress from child's previous best

In turn we use these strategies to link them to better teaching and learning by:
- Evaluation of one week's planning informing next week's planner
- Use of data from formal assessment to inform planning and setting of work e.g. class based assessment, check up tests
- Improvement time: children are given back work with suggestions as to how part of it might be improved, then allowed planned improvement time

- Use of 'educative feedback' e.g. targeted oral feedback, stampers, stickers, 2 Stars and 1 Wish, creating an on-going dialogue with the child about their learning
- Assessment tasks, e.g. literacy, numeracy, WAU: results used to inform future planning
- Peer assessment/Self-assessment/Gallery sessions where age and context appropriate

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND STANARDISED TESTS

In addition to an array of class based assessments e.g. weekly spelling, and summer tests, children also participate in a number of other forms of assessment.

During the Summer Term children complete a range of standardised tests to ascertain progress in English, Maths and Reading. To establish an approximate 'ability score' the Year 4 pupils complete a Cognitive Ability Test and to assess the pupils personal views on school and self, Year 4-7 complete the PASS test. Please find below a summary of standardised assessments carried out.

Year	Form of Assessment/Standardised Test
Nursery	Daily observations and checklists completed
1	Year 1 teachers complete regular observation and checklists throughout the year Identified children screened using Wellcomm Tool KIt
2	MIST,
3	Progress Test Maths and English, GL Reading Test, SWST, Mental Maths
4	Progress Test Maths and English, GL Reading Test, CAT(Cognitive Ability Test) PASS (Pupil Attitude to School and Self, SWST, Mental Maths
5	Progress Test Maths and English, GL Reading Test, PASS, SWST,

	Mental Maths
6	Progress Test Maths and English, GL Reading Test, PASS, SWST, Mental Maths. , CAT(Cognitive Ability Test)
7	Progress Test Maths and English, GL Reading Test, PASS, SWST, Mental Maths,

MANAGING TRANSITIONS

It should be noted that at the end of each academic year class teachers provide detailed contextual information for the new receiving teacher. This information includes parent/teacher meeting notes, reading attainment, relevant pastoral care information and samples of pupil's work placed in their Record of Achievement Folder.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

We believe that parents have a fundamental role to play in helping their children to learn. We work hard to inform and support parents in how they can help further their children's learning and confidence at school.

We inform parents about what and how their children are learning by:

- Holding open evenings for new Nursery and Year 1 parents to explain school approaches and methods of teaching literacy, numeracy and the wider curriculum.

- Holding Parents' consultation meetings with teachers to discuss progress and strategies for further improvement in October and February.

- Providing information to parents at the start of each school year on how parents can support and assist their children and on class routines.

- Parents receive a detailed school report in June each year. This outlines the child's achievements during the year, how they are achieving relative to expected levels and how they can improve and develop in the future. Parents may discuss any concerns they have with teachers.

- Sending weekly spelling and table tests/ half term assessments home for parental information and review. We would ask parents to sign these books to acknowledge their perusal.

We also believe that parents have a responsibility to support their children and the school in implementing school policies.

We would like parents to:

- Ensure that their child comes to school feeling confident and positive
- Ensure that their child has the best attendance record possible
- Ensure that their child is equipped for school with the correct uniform and PE kit
- Do their best to support the school in their promotion of healthy eating and fitness as a lifestyle choice (Ref. Healthy Eating Policy)
- Inform the school if there are matters outside of school that are likely to affect their child's performance or behaviour at school
- Promote a positive attitude towards school and learning in general
- Fulfil the requirements set out in the homework policy
- Support their child by attending Parent/Teacher Meetings and other meetings organised by the school
- Support their child, the class teacher, and the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) by becoming actively involved in the operation of Individual Education Plans, the Annual Review Process and any other SEN intervention
- Ensure that all contact addresses and telephone numbers are up to date and correct
- Attend all medical and health interviews when invited by the school nurse
- Respond to letters sent home from school

- Support extra-curricular activities, concerts, class assemblies and PTA events where possible.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNORS

Our governors determine, support, monitor and review the school's policies on teaching and learning. In particular they:

- Support the use of appropriate teaching strategies by allocating resources effectively;
- Ensure that the school buildings and premises are effective in supporting successful teaching and learning;
- Monitor how effective teaching and learning strategies are in terms of raising pupil attainment
- Ensure that staff development and performance management policies promote good quality teaching;
- Monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning policies through the school self-evaluation processes. These include the Principal's reports to governors regarding end of Key Stage test results and progress in the School Development Plan.
- Literacy/Numeracy/ICT and SEN Action Plans shared with Governors at the beginning of the academic year and progress reviewed at the end of the school year.
- An individual Governor linked to particular areas of learning.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This policy is a working document and as such we regularly review and adjust our teaching and learning strategies. This is particularly relevant when we consider new initiatives, changes in the curriculum, developments in technology or changes to the physical environment of the school.

We will conduct a full review of our Teaching and Learning Policy in May 2019

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX

EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

Good questioning encourages pupils to think more deeply and to share their thoughts and ideas with others. Teaching ensures that pupils are given access to a range of questions.

Type of questions	Example
Open	What do you think…? Why do you think…? How do you know…? Do you feel…? Find different ways of…? Can you try different ways of…?
Closed	What is…? What are…? When did…? How many…? Where is…? Where would you find…?
Recalling facts	Asks pupils to name an event, process or fact. Asks pupils to recall some information but not apply it.
Observing	Asks pupils to describe what they see, using appropriate vocabulary.

Hypothesising, predicting or speculating	Asks pupils to estimate, suggest why something happens and suggest what will happen as a result of doing something; to ponder, guess or draw an inference.
Concluding	Asks pupils to draw different threads together or follow a logical route to arrive at a solution.
Personal responses	Asks pupils to express personal feelings, thoughts and ideas.
Discriminating	Prompts pupils to consider advantages or disadvantages, to look at something from different points of view.
Designing and comparing procedures	Asks pupils to plan and prepare a process for tackling a problem. Asking pupils to analyse before or after an activity which process will be/was the most effective.
Interpreting results	Asks pupils to draw conclusions from data or information, particularly where they are expected to understand a trend, identify what might happen next.
Applying reason or what they know	Asks pupils to provide more than one solution to a problem. Asks pupils to apply one or more aspects of their learning in order to explain what has happened or might happen next.