



Learning & Teaching Policy

This policy supports the main aims of the school.

In St. Mary's Primary School we believe that learning is the core business of our school. The purpose of this policy is to give guidance to all members of our school community about the way we carry out this work. The policy is an explanation of the experiences we provide for our pupils and a summary of our working practices. It has been a focus of our school development work and is the culmination of many hours of discussion and reflection by all staff, based on our aims and beliefs.

As with all our school policies it is not intended that the Learning and Teaching Policy be used in isolation, it should be considered in context with our other curriculum policies.

The Policy for Learning and Teaching also works in conjunction with our range of Pastoral Care documents.

LEARNING

We believe that all children have a desire to learn and the ability to do so. We recognise that the best learning takes place when learners:

- Are interested and motivated,
- Are enjoying their work,
- Are engaged in a range of different activities which reflect different learning styles and individual needs,
- Understand the purpose of what they are doing,
- Enjoy a satisfying level of success,
- Understand that taking risks and make mistakes as part of the learning process,
- Know when and where to seek help,
- Are supportive of and supported by their peers,
- Have a sense of responsibility for their own learning,
- Reflect on the quality of their work, what they have learned and how they can use this in other contexts,
- Are involved in setting goals for future achievement,
- Feel that their efforts are valued and that their achievements are being recognised.

We also hold as a truth that learning is a lifelong process and therefore it is vital that all members of our school community continue to learn, adapt and reflect on their work.

TEACHING

High quality learning can only happen where there is high quality teaching. We consider the best teaching to take place when:

- Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the N. Ireland Curriculum and of the learning process,
- Teachers' planning is based on sound knowledge of the abilities and stages of achievement of their individual pupils and begins with clear and appropriate learning objectives,
- There is a connection to previous learning,
- Learning objectives and success criteria are shared with the pupils,
- Learning activities are suitable for purpose in achieving the learning objectives and are differentiated to suit the needs of individual pupils,
- Teachers use a range of teaching styles and ensure that there is a balance of individual, paired, group and whole class tasks,
- There is a variety of activities to interest and motivate different learning styles,
- There is high quality dialogue between the teacher and the pupils to increase learning,
- The teacher creates a secure, happy and purposeful learning environment where pupils feel valued and able to ask questions, take risks and make mistakes as part of the learning process,
- The teacher encourages the pupils to take some responsibility and make some choices in their own learning,
- Praise and positive reinforcement are used by the teacher to foster self-esteem, motivation, perseverance and confidence,
- There is a continual process of assessment of learning as a basis for future planning,
- Teachers constantly evaluate their own work and seek to continually improve,
- Teachers are supportive of and are supported by their colleagues.

THE ROLE OF THE LEARNER

In St. Mary's Primary School we encourage our pupils to increasingly accept their responsibility to:

- Co-operate with their teachers and peers,
- Take pride in their work,
- Know when and how to seek help,
- Be motivated and persistent,
- Be supportive and respectful of each other in their learning, • Evaluate their own work and set personal goals and targets,
- Seek information independently using a range of sources including ICT.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

It is the responsibility of each teacher to:

- Be enthusiastic about their work,
- Have a secure knowledge of the curriculum and of the learning process,

- Establish good working relationships with their pupils, based on shared purpose and mutual respect,
- Have a sound knowledge of each of their individual pupils,
- Plan lessons which are appropriate to the learning objectives, interesting and challenging and which match the different needs of their pupils,
- Clearly define roles and support for learning in planning,
- Work with other class-based staff to jointly plan and evaluate learning activities,
- Use a variety of teaching approaches to support different learning styles,
- Encourage quality learning and celebrate successes with pupils,
- Assess learning and use this to plan future lessons,
- Provide quality feedback, written or oral as appropriate, to pupils,
- Evaluate their own work and reflect on practice,
- Keep up to date with current developments in education,
- Be supportive of and supported by colleagues to ensure best practice.

STRATEGIES

A combination of whole class, group, paired and individual work is used. A mixture of practical, investigational and problem-solving activities together with the practice and consolidation of fundamental skills and knowledge is used.

We employ a range of teaching strategies as appropriate:

- Shared, modelled and guided teaching,
- Sharing learning intentions and success criteria,
- Differentiation by task, intervention or by outcome,
- Reflection on learning in plenary sessions at the end of a lesson or unit of work,
- Self-evaluation,
- Peer evaluation,
- Open-ended and challenging questions,
- Independent research,
- Creative activities,
- Cross-curricular themes,
- Physical activities,
- Use of ICT to support learning, • Field-work and educational visits,
- Visitors to the school.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In St. Mary's Primary the whole school and grounds are seen as a learning environment. We aim to provide a space that is clean, safe, attractive and supportive by:

- Providing well planned classrooms with furniture suitable to the needs of the class,
- Ensuring that the arrangement of furniture is suitable for the activity,
- Providing suitable and good quality learning resources which children can access when needed,
- Encouraging pupils to be tidy and respectful of their environment,

- Encouraging recycling of resources where possible,
- Providing a balance of areas for physical and quiet activities in the playground,
- Using the school grounds and garden as a learning environment such as growing things or weather and wildlife studies,
- Ensuring that pupils are always supervised well throughout the day.

We consider the learning environment to be not only the physical space but also the ethos created by relationships within the school. To this end we:

- Set class charters with our pupils at the start of each school year,
- Use displays to support learning and celebrate achievement,
- Share planned learning and achievements with parents through Home/School Reading Diaries, homework activities, Parent /Teacher meetings and newsletters,
- Encourage pupils to be involved in decisions about the school through class discussion.

ASSESSMENT

We see that central to the process of assessment is the need to progress the child's learning. It is important that the teacher knows what has been remembered, what skills have been acquired and what concepts have been understood. This enables teachers to reflect on what children are doing and informs their future planning. We believe that the outcomes of assessments will help children become involved in raising their own expectations, celebrating their own achievement and increasing their self-motivation. To this end we use assessment to:

- evaluate levels of learning and provide information on which to base future curriculum planning and resource decisions,
- identify strengths and weaknesses for individual children including children with special educational needs at both ends of the ability spectrum,
- involve pupils in their own learning and target-setting,
- provide each child, the teacher and parents with an indication of achievement and progress in relation to ability,
- benchmark performance and achievement across the school in comparison to national standards,
- set targets for future achievement,
- provide information to ensure continuity when a child changes class or school, • provide relevant information to other agencies who work with the child,
- fulfil statutory requirements relating to assessment.

PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

In St. Mary's Primary School we acknowledge that our pupils are all individuals with differing needs. We also understand that these needs may be temporary or more long-term and that they can be either learning or pastoral needs. We strongly believe that, as a small school, we are in an ideal situation to ensure that those needs are recognised and met by all staff. To this purpose we employ the following strategies:

- Continuing assessment and diagnosis,
- Use of assessment data to highlight need,
- Maintaining good relationships with the families of our pupils to ensure that we know of events or circumstances which affect our pupils,
- Use of Personal Learning Plans where necessary,
- Teachers planning and working with classroom assistants to provide specific support,
- Working with support agencies where appropriate.

Where a pupil is identified as having a Special Educational Need the Principal, acting as SENCO, supports staff by ensuring that the correct procedures and interventions are followed and by liaising with appropriate agencies.

THE ROLE OF SUPPORT STAFF

In St. Mary's Primary our pupils and teachers receive a high level of support from our classroom assistants and supervisory staff. We consider ourselves a team, working for the common good of the pupils and place high value on the work of support staff. For this reason, although the policy refers to teachers throughout, we consider that this includes all classroom-based staff.

In order to ensure that all members of staff fully understand their role in the education of our pupils we take part in joint staff development days. Teachers also have time each week to consult with support staff who work in their classroom on planned activities and on assessment of pupils in their care.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

We strongly believe that parents have a fundamental role in helping their children to learn. We work to make the relationship between the school and family mutually supportive. In order to do this we provide information to parents through:

- Newsletters,
- Copies of key school policies,
- Parent notice board in the entrance of the school,
- Casual meetings at drop-off and pick-up times where information can be exchanged or further contact requested,
- Teacher emails available to parents,
- Individual parent-teacher meetings in the Autumn term,
- Homework activities to keep parents informed and to them support learning,
- Annual written reports to parents in the Summer term,
- Reviews of Personal Learning Plans for pupils with Special Educational Needs.

We ask that our parents support the work of the school by:

- Reading information sent home,
- Attending meetings,

- Supporting homework,
- Supporting school policies,
- Discussing concerns with teachers,
- Showing a positive attitude to their children about learning and about our school.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Teachers keep up to date with current educational developments and initiatives. We base our staff development on a combination of individual needs and the needs of the school outlined in the School Development Plan. Staff development is through a combination of school-based and centrally organised sessions.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The principal monitors the effectiveness of the learning and teaching in our school.

It is the responsibility of the Principal to:

- Foster a culture among all school staff of quality learning and teaching and high expectations of pupil achievement,
- Ensure that staff are given adequate time to carry out their role,
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy as part of the annual review process,
- Ensure that each member of staff receives the necessary training and support to enable them to carry out their responsibilities at induction and as part of ongoing INSET.

This Learning and Teaching Policy has been prepared in consultation with the full school staff.

Adopted by the Board of Governors of St. Mary's Primary School at a meeting held on

11th January 2022

Reviewed in January 2024

Signed (Chairperson)

Reviewed in February 2026

Signed..... (Chairperson)