

Our Lady's P.S.



Learning and Teaching Policy

'Learning through Friendship'

Date ratified by Board of Governors: _____

Date of Review: _____

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1. Ethos Statement:

Our Lady's Primary school is a focal point for the community. We want our school to be a caring environment which effectively develops the academic, personal, social and spiritual potential of each child.

We are a Catholic school and as such we have a distinct ethos, but we welcome children from all faiths and none.

Catholic Education takes place in communities inspired by the spirit of Christ. Christ's commandment to love God and neighbour inspires a caring ethos which is expressed in relationships within and beyond Catholic schools.

The education in our school is person centred. It promotes the dignity, self-esteem and full development of each person who is made in God's image and uniquely loved by God.

Catholic Education is inclusive. It is respectful of, and engages with people of all beliefs; it encourages the religious development of all in their own faith.

Catholic Education is rooted in the gospel values of respect for life, solidarity, truth and justice; it aims to harmonise faith and culture, build a better society and pursue the common good.

Together we aim to provide high quality rounded education for all our children so that they develop their full uniqueness and potential.

In our school the person and message of Christ find expression in:

- Communities of Faith, Service, Prayer and Worship;
- The development of each person's full potential in a climate of joy, freedom, respect, challenge, co-operation and celebration;
- The enrichment of pupil life-intellectual, physical, spiritual, moral, social and emotional;
- The promotion of a spirit of charity, social justice, global awareness and concern for others leading to practical outreach and partnerships;
- A cultural of tolerance where people of diverse identities are recognised welcomed respected and cherished;
- Listening, mutual understanding, trust, reconciliation, healing and peace;
- The preparation of pupils to lead fulfilling and purposeful lives which will contribute to the common good;
- Promotion of family life.

2. Purpose of Learning and Teaching Policy

This policy is designed to facilitate high quality learning for all children, ensuring each one makes the best possible progress in their learning during their time at Our Lady's PS, through provision of consistently high quality learning experiences.

3. Aims - our aims for every child to achieve success

At Our Lady's PS our aim is for all children to:

- achieve in line with their ability
- develop as confident, independent learners, utilising their sense of curiosity
- become confident and fluent communicators, using an increasingly sophisticated range of language to discuss their approaches and share their ideas with each other
- take responsibility for their own learning
- think for themselves
- have high expectations for themselves as learners
- develop a positive mind-set towards their ability to learn and to develop knowledge, skills and understanding across all areas
- apply their learning across different areas of the curriculum and in real life contexts
- be resilient, resourceful, responsible and respectful of others

4. High Quality Learning and Teaching

We have agreed to implement the following aspects of high quality learning and teaching:

a. Develop a positive learning environment in our classrooms and across the whole school:

We believe a positive learning environment is one where every person feels comfortable, has a sense of rapport with their teachers and peers and believes they can be successful. For further details on how we ensure positive relationships for learning, please see our Anti-Bullying and Promoting Positive Behaviour Policies.

i. Relationships for learning – child: teacher/assistant; child: child

We will:

- Set a positive start to each day, greeting each child with a friendly welcome
- Develop a positive relationship with each child, getting to know their individual preferences, needs and concerns
- Ensure each child feels valued and respected in a safe and secure environment, listening with full attention and positive body language when in conversation with children
- Create a supportive structure to the day, using consistent routines to establish a purposeful learning atmosphere where children are on-task and learning effectively
- Encourage all children to develop a positive image of themselves as successful learners, giving positive feedback on their individual progress and achievements to develop a Growth Mindset
- Model respectful, positive talking and listening skills at all times, encouraging children to develop these skills themselves
- Facilitate children to work co-operatively in pairs and small groups, developing the effectiveness of their groupwork skills
- Promote a culture of inclusion, where children ensure no-one feels left out

ii. Physical environment

We will:

- Provide a well-organised, stimulating, child-friendly and clutter-free physical environment in each classroom and throughout the school building and grounds to facilitate a purposeful, positive approach to learning
- Celebrate children's achievements and highlight the development of their independent skills and knowledge across the curriculum through imaginative and attractive displays of children's work
- Make effective use of organisational charts in classrooms to develop children's independence and sense of responsibility
- Ensure learning resources are accessible and identifiable to children to develop their independence and ability to select the most appropriate resources for different learning activities
- Set tables and furniture to facilitate flexible group working
- Provide designated calm areas in each classroom to give children the opportunity to develop responsibility for managing their own emotions and feelings
- Create specific learning areas within classrooms to develop a purposeful, learning-orientated environment
- Make effective use of the school's outdoor spaces to develop children's collaboration, communication, independence, creative and problem-solving skills
- Use learning areas outside classrooms to facilitate children working independently as well as adult-led withdrawal groups

b. Make the learning visible – share and agree Learning Intentions and Success Criteria

We believe that children learn most effectively, and become more independent learners, when they know what they are supposed to be learning (Learning Intentions), and when they are involved in the process of identifying what they need to do within any activity in order to achieve that learning (Success Criteria).

We will:

- Share the Learning Intention using the acronym W.A.L.T (We Are Learning To....) with children when new learning is being introduced in core learning areas
- In conjunction with children, develop and share the Success Criteria using the acronym W.I.L.F. (What I'm Looking For...) when setting the expectations for children's independent work
- Ensure that the Learning Intentions and Success Criteria provide appropriate challenge for all children, taking into account their age and ability
- Refer to the Learning Intentions and Success Criteria when providing feedback to the children on their work and how it could be improved further
- Make use of a planned Plenary Session within the lesson to re-focus on the Learning Intentions and Success Criteria and allow children to self-assess their work and their learning using these

c. Build on children's prior learning – ensure all children make the best possible progress

We believe that children make the best possible progress, and achieve a deeper understanding of key concepts, when their learning activities are designed to take each child to the next step along their learning pathway, using their previous learning as a secure foundation from which to proceed.

We will:

- Meet at end of each school year to share our evaluations of children's strengths, areas for improvement, understanding of key concepts, preferred ways of working and interests to assist each teacher in planning suitable starting points for learning
- Plan activities carefully to assess each child's prior knowledge and understanding at the beginning of each school year, and when introducing new topics within each curricular area
- Ensure medium and short term planning takes into account the agreed long term learning progressions which we have produced for each key curriculum area
- Use a range of assessment tools, including:
 - in class observations
 - discussion with children in plenary sessions
 - completion of running records (reading)
 - tracking assessments
 - standardised assessments
 - evaluation of children's written classwork and homework
 - peer and self-assessment strategies

to evaluate children's learning and plan next steps

- Begin lessons with a re-cap of prior learning before moving on
- Identify and support specific groups of children, e.g. underachievers, gifted and talented, children with special educational needs, to make the best possible progress

d. Provide well-paced and suitably challenging learning activities, effectively differentiated

We believe that children are motivated to engage with their learning activities when those activities are part of a well-paced lesson, with children neither overwhelmed with too much new learning required, nor bored with too little new learning required.

We will:

- Plan and prepare effectively for children's learning activities to ensure learning time for children is maximised
- Make children aware of:
 - the requirements for each learning activity and that ensure that these are clearly understood by all
 - the teacher's high expectations – everyone is expected to produce their best work
- Ensure that all available time is devoted to learning - organise starting activities before teacher speaks to each group at the beginning of each lesson; ensure all resources needed are ready to go
- Dedicate time for Teacher and classroom assistant(s) to meet to plan how they will work together during children's learning activities so that roles and expectations are clear
- Ensure teacher and classroom assistants are actively involved as the children work through their learning activities, ensuring children are on-task and providing extra support or challenge as required
- Have clear routines for early finishers (after reviewing their work and making any necessary improvements) – know what their options are; ensure that children 's extension work is designed to stretch and challenge, within the planned learning intention
- Plan to meet the needs of the different ability groups within each class through differentiating the:
 - complexity of the learning activity
 - level of support and amount of adult guidance given
 - nature of any practical support resources provided
 - language used
 - level of questioning strategies used
 - expected outcome - as shown by the success criteria for the activity
 - use of ICT to support and challenge all learners appropriately
- Identify and support specific groups of children, e.g. underachievers, gifted and talented, children with special educational needs within the lesson

e. Provide opportunities for children to apply learning across the curriculum and in real-life contexts

We believe that children are motivated by meaningful activities which relate to their own interests and experiences. Furthermore we believe that learning can only be considered effective when the learner is able to transfer that learning across a range of contexts.

We will:

- Use a Topic approach to provide meaningful and motivating contexts for learning activities – number and duration of topics to be agreed within each Key Stage, with input from children to ensure that their interests are taken into account
 - F/S – Learning through Play
 - KS1 – Activity Based Learning
 - KS2 – Topic approach, with Literacy and Numeracy statutory content initially taught as discrete learning areas
- Facilitate children’s input into what they want to learn within a topic – e.g. KWL grid
- Discuss with children about how their learning can be used in real life
- Plan learning activities to allow application of cross-curricular skills (Communication, Using Mathematics, Using ICT) – across all areas of the curriculum, including through use of CCEA Cross Curricular ICT Tasks
- Provide children with opportunities to apply knowledge and skills in a wide variety of real-life contexts e.g. planning events in local chapel, application of numeracy skills in local environment, invites to outside agencies to work with children
- Utilise incidental situations to practise application of skills and knowledge in real-life contexts – e.g. Work out their own change for dinner money, How long left until break/dinner time
- Enable children to organise and participate independently in whole school and class based initiatives which allow them to apply literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful real-life contexts – e.g. mini businesses – pancake making, Christmas present and decoration making, school book fair, School Council surveys

f. Use effective questioning to extend children's thinking

We believe that children should be asked to consider questions which require significant thinking and invite explanations (open questions), as well as those which assess their knowledge (closed questions). Open questions give the children the opportunity to think carefully, perhaps in pairs or small groups as well as individually, and improve the thoughtfulness of their answers. The children's answers to these questions also provide valuable feedback to the teacher regarding the depth of their understanding of key concepts.

We will:

- Use our whole school questioning framework to plan questions to spark and sustain children's curiosity – teachers' planning contains sample questions
- Use a combination of closed and open questions based on agreed question types: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyse, Evaluate, Create
- Display key questions as prompts for children during learning activities
- Carefully consider the children's responses and use these as evidence to assess their knowledge and understanding of key concepts
- Provide thinking time for open questions, enabling children to collaborate, to discuss their responses, to think more deeply and to be able to justify their answers
- Give opportunities for children to ask each other questions e.g. during news sessions, in role plays, general conversations
- Make children aware of different types of questions; when appropriate use the terminology, open/closed- encourage children to think up their own "thoughtful" open questions
- Develop children's ability to participate in focused discussion – e.g. defend their own answers – why?..... because.....
- Use Active Learning activities as contexts for questions e.g. Hot Seat, Role-Play, Conscience Alley, Walking Debate
- Use differentiated / progressive questioning – to give all children an appropriate level of challenge and to extend their thinking
- Use Guided Reading sessions as contexts for open questions - look for cues from pictures and text to develop children's ability to infer meaning e.g. what season is it? how do you know?

g. Provide opportunities for children to develop their own thinking skills and personal capabilities

We believe that thinking skills are the tools which we can help children develop to go beyond mere acquisition of knowledge towards those life skills of constructing their own understanding, applying their own ideas, analysing patterns and relationships, being creative in their thinking and problem-solving and evaluating their own performance & progress. We believe that the personal capabilities of self-management and the ability to interact effectively with others are also key life skills, which need to be developed in all children as they progress through our school.

We will:

- Implement consistently our whole school progression for Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities (TSPC), ensuring children are made aware of the skills and language at their particular stage of the progression
- Carefully plan learning activities to provide opportunities for children to utilise and practise TSPC, e.g. Self-Management: self-registration, marking code, task boards, writing checklist ; Working with Others: paired and small group work –children encouraged to select their role within the group
- Identify TSPC linked to specific learning activities designed to develop these skills in teachers' planning
- Give children opportunities to decide how they approach a task, providing teacher direction only as required e.g. using RUCSAC strategies in numeracy problem solving activities
- Use incidental opportunities to help children develop these TSPC – ask children how to solve problems as they arise in the classroom – e.g. develop independent strategies to find out correct spelling of unfamiliar words, take responsibility for lunch boxes, coats, school bags
- Evaluate children's achievement of TSPC e.g. through use of Quality Learning Instrument
- Use TSPC as well as quality of content for Success Criteria for teacher assessment of learning and for children's self and peer assessment – e.g. "How well did you work together as a group? Give some examples."
- Provide children with regular open-ended problem-solving activities e.g. mathematical investigations, challenges in play-based learning

h. Evaluate children's learning in order to:

i. Provide meaningful feedback to children on how to improve

We believe that children's learning is more effectively supported when the feedback they receive focuses on highlighting successes and clearly showing how improvements can be made, rather than just measuring performance. The emphasis on effort rather than ability in the feedback comments builds children's confidence and send a clear message that everyone can improve.

We will:

- Use a range of strategies to evaluate children's learning against agreed learning intentions (WALT) and success criteria (WILF)
- Select an appropriate strategy or strategies dependent on each child's level of development and the nature of the learning activity, to include: observation, participation in discussions, verbal responses to teacher's and peer's questions, application of Quality Learning Instrument, analysis of children's work – practical, written, pictorial and/or ICT-based
- Use this evaluation to provide feedback to children, based on agreed success criteria (WILF), which is understandable to them and identifies successes whilst also giving clear guidance on where and how improvements can be made
- Feedback may be verbal, given during the lesson or written, given after the lesson
- Give children the opportunity to revisit aspects of their work in order to make any necessary improvements and to demonstrate improved learning

(For further detail please refer to our Learner Feedback Policy)

ii. Inform our next planning to ensure all children make best possible progress

We believe that in order for all children to make the best possible progress their learning experiences should always provide opportunities for new learning based on moving on from the secure foundation of their previous learning. For this to happen consistently it is vital that the level every child's understanding is assessed to evaluate whether there is that secure foundation on which new learning can be constructed.

We will:

- Evaluate the quality of children's learning as described above
- Record any lack of understanding or non-achievement of learning intentions, for groups and individual children, both as annotations on short term plans and more formally at the end of each 6-Week Plan
- Use these notes to carefully plan follow-up activities, interventions or discussions with children as appropriate in order to address the identified learning issues
- Provide opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their learning as required, and to demonstrate resulting success

i. Enable children to reflect on their learning, identify successes and areas for further development

We believe that children become effective independent learners when they are able to review and evaluate their own (and others) work, set their own targets for improvement and understand what they need to do in order to achieve those targets.

We will:

- Plan plenary sessions at the end of lessons to give children the chance to feedback to the teacher on how successfully they have achieved the learning intentions and success criteria
- Encourage children to use the agreed success criteria to assess their own and each other's work (Self and Peer Assessment) to identify successes and areas for improvement
- Provide opportunities for children to further develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in the identified areas, and to demonstrate resulting improvements

(For further detail please refer to our Learner Feedback Policy)

5. Assessment

a. Formative (day to day assessment)

Formative assessment is an essential element of effective teaching and learning which is based on Assessment for Learning in Our Lady's Primary School. Staff use a variety of strategies to regularly assess children learning with observations forming the basis for all assessments. Verbal feedback and marking children's work provides the children with feedback which should enhance their learning. Effective questioning, observations, running records and class quizzes also form part of our formative assessment arrangements with weekly assessments completed in Literacy and Numeracy. All these forms of formative assessments assist us to review children's learning, track progress and plan forward steps.

b. Summative (including Standardised Assessments)

Summative assessment occurs periodically during the school year. Half-term and end of term assessments are scheduled in each class with end of year standardised assessments completed in Primary 3-Primary 7 during term 3. Primary 7 complete the new CCEA digital assessments at the end of term one.

6. Target Setting

a. Individual

Individual targets are set for each child at the beginning of the school year. Targets are established for children on the SEN register twice a year via IEPs/PLPs. Individual target areas are communicated and agreed with parents during Parent Teacher Meetings (Term One) and 'Keeping in Touch' calls in Term Two.

b. Group

Groups are established within classes based on data, teacher judgement and observations in Literacy: spelling, reading, writing and areas of Numeracy. Targets are set based on children's level of ability which determines targets established for each group. Sensory Motor Groups are identified in each class and Target Groups in Primary 3-7 classes with remediation work focusing on specific themes such as gross/fine motor skills, reading, spelling and problem-solving activities. Sensory Motor and Target Groups run for at least one term with baseline and end of remediation programme assessments completed to set and review progress.

7. Planning

Long term planners are in place for Literacy and Numeracy with lines of development/progression for WAU and ICT. Teachers complete medium term planners every half term for Literacy, Numeracy and Topic work. Play planners are also completed in Foundation Stage. Short-term planning is based on weekly and daily notes which are completed by class teachers from their half-term planning and ongoing formative assessments.

8. Homework

Homework consolidates concepts and areas being taught in school ranging from reading, spelling/phonics, Numeracy, Literacy and other subject areas including topic work. Homework combines written and online tasks (e.g. Mathletics, Mathseeds, Nessy and Google Classroom) providing pupils with a variety of homework tasks which consolidate learning.

Extra Homework is provided in Primary 6 and 7 for children completing preparation work for external examinations.

9. Celebrating Children's Achievements

It is essential to celebrate children's achievement and we do this daily in Our lady's Primary School. Children's achievements are celebrated in a vast range of ways including special comment in class, assembly and on children's work; class thematic rewards charts recognise children's achievements through positive rewards in classes; stickers, prizes, stamps, and Golden Time are all used to acknowledge children's achievements.

Whole school recognition of children's achievements also occurs regularly with children presented with Merit Awards at weekly assembly, special mentions at assembly and children are also invited to show their achievements at special achievement assemblies. Mathematics/Mathseeds and Nesy awards are also presented at assemblies so that the whole school can celebrate our children's achievements. Photograph galleries of Merit Award recipients and other accomplishments are posted on our school website to celebrate the children's achievements.

10. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching

Monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching is necessary to ensure that we strive to deliver high standards for all. As a staff we monitor and evaluate the quality and progress of children's through the scrutiny of:

- Standardised Assessment data
- half-term planning and evaluations
- children's work through book looks
- observations of children's learning during lessons

We also take account of the views of the various stakeholders in our school:

- the 'pupil voice', through facilitating pupil focus groups
- staff professional dialogue, focussing on children's achievements and also on improving the quality of their learning experiences
- pupil, staff, parent, and Board of Governor surveys, which provide important information to assist monitoring and evaluating of learning and teaching in Our Lady's Primary School.

11. The Role of the Board of Governors

The Board of Governors in Our Lady's Primary School plays a crucial role in providing both support and challenge to the principal and teaching staff as they strive to maintain and improve the quality of provision and the quality of the outcomes achieved by all the children in our school. They have oversight of the School Development Planning process, and the production of a 3 Year Financial Plan to ensure sufficient financial resources are made available to allow effective implementation of the School Development Plan. The Board of Governors have direct input into the process of developing, monitoring implementation, and reviewing of this Learning and Teaching Policy in Our Lady's Primary School with advice and support offered when necessary.

12. Role of parents:

a. Informing and supporting to help their child's learning

Parents play a crucial role in supporting children with their learning and we as a school value their support and assistance. Curriculum nights are organised at the beginning of the school year to provide parents with an overview of what their children will be learning during the year. This is also an excellent opportunity for parents and teacher to meet and form a good relationship for the remainder of the year. We continue to ensure communication channels remain open during the year with parent teacher meetings usually occurring in October and 'Keeping in Touch' (KIT) phone calls scheduled for the end of February or the beginning of March. Pupil reports are sent home at the end of June to summarise children's progress and provide guidance on how children may continue to make progress.

b. Responsibilities of parents

Parents should ensure that their children arrive ready to learn at school. They must support their children with their learning and work in collaboration with the school as together we strive to ensure each child achieves their full potential. This involves attending school meetings and workshops and ensuring that homework is completed to a standard in line with their child's best efforts. Parents should also communicate to the school if they have any concerns or information regarding their children's ability to learn so that we can work together to support the children's needs.

13. Staff Development (Teacher Professional Learning)

Staff Development is vital to bring about improvement in the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning to ensure that the school is delivering high quality teaching and learning experiences for all children. We ensure time and financial resources are allocated to facilitate staff development through whole staff development sessions, individual CPD, variety of meetings throughout the year, staff workshops and professional discussions, working with outside agencies, bringing visitors to our school and through PRSD target setting.

14. Arrangements for policy review

This policy will be reviewed on a three-yearly cycle, to ensure it is kept in line with current practices. It will also be reviewed as required to ensure it reflects any changes in external guidance and direction from the Education Authority, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the Department of Education.