Learning & Teaching Policy

Olderfleet Primary School

Rationale

The Board of Governors, Senior Leadership Team and teaching staff of Olderfleet Primary School recognise that improving the quality of learning and teaching is a central aim of education. The relationship between learning and teaching is complex but the quality of teaching bears directly on the effectiveness of learning. All teachers must be concerned with what high quality learning means and the most effective approaches for promoting learning.

Meeting the needs of each *individual learner* and helping each to realise her/his potential is central to effective learning and teaching. Learning and teaching is at the heart of the educational process and the quality of the interaction is of fundamental importance in raising standards of achievement. One of our prime objectives in Olderfleet Primary School is to develop autonomous learners. We wish to develop in children, positive self-esteem and self-confidence because it is our belief that there is a strong link between a child's self esteem and his/her academic success; children who feel good about themselves learn more easily

In Olderfleet Primary School we believe it is important that children:
- have secure relationships with peers and adults in a positively affirming environment which supports their emotional development and which is sensitive to their growing self-esteem;

- have opportunities to be actively involved in practical, challenging play-based learning in a stimulating inclusive environment, which takes account of their development stage/needs, (including those with learning difficulties and the most able children) and their interests/experiences;

- have opportunities to initiate play which capitalises on intrinsic motivation and natural curiosity;

- have choice, exercise autonomy and independence in their learning, and where they are supported in taking risks in their efforts to succeed;

- are given equality of opportunity to learn in a variety of ways and in different groupings;

- are actively involved in planning, carrying out and reflecting on their work;

- are supported by trained, enthusiastic and committed professionals who work in partnership with parents and carers and where appropriate, professionals in other fields, to ensure that all achieve their full potential.

AIMS
The following are our agreed aims for learning and teaching:
- to ensure that the school provides a safe, happy, positive, pleasant and effective learning environment where good relationships are fostered;

- to develop high self-esteem and confidence in staff and pupils recognising that these are central to the learning process;

- to strive for the highest standards possible of learning and teaching appropriate to *individual children and their needs*;

- to achieve the true potential of all pupils;

- to ensure that children have opportunities to become autonomous and lifelong learners;

- to enable pupils to develop and use skills in a range of areas and contexts;

- to promote the use of a range of different teaching approaches to cater for different learning styles;

- to ensure that school policies are reviewed, observed and followed;

- to ensure that pupils are given effective feedback – both written and verbal;

- to set up and ensure an effective structure of monitoring and evaluation at all levels throughout the school to ensure high quality learning and teaching;

- to develop and maintain effective links with community groups for the mutual benefit of all;

- to create effective leadership and management structures.

PURPOSES
- Planning will be effective and show clear learning intentions, differentiation and high expectations.

- Teaching will be well paced and reflect clear learning intentions, differentiation and high expectations.

- A variety of teaching strategies will be used which are appropriate to each child and to the learning outcomes, and will include regular use of ICT.

- Teaching will motivate the children's interest and perseverance with their tasks.

- The children will be given opportunities to develop independence in their learning and use of equipment, materials and ICT.

- The children will be given opportunities to collaborate effectively in a variety of peer learning situations involving groups of different composition and size. Through this interaction they will learn to listen attentively to one another and take account of the opinions and views expressed in order to plan and complete tasks in a collaborative manner.

- Teachers will organise classroom routines efficiently and prepare adequate and suitable resources, which are readily accessible when required.

- Teachers will maximise the use of any classroom assistants/support staff for the benefit of the pupils.

We believe the effective teacher endeavours to create learning environments characterised by the following:

Planning which:

- is concise;

- takes account of prior learning and preferred learning styles;
    - the kinaesthetic learner;
    - the visual learner;
    - the auditory learner (See below for more detail).

- affords challenge and opportunities for all to learn at an appropriate pace;

- specifies what learners are expected to learn and how/when learning is to be undertaken;

- makes the best of available resources;

- builds in flexibility to take into account the reality of the learning environment and the needs of individual learners.

We recognise that children learn in different ways and that there are three different types of learning:

(i)   The *visual learner* who learns best by storing a series of images in his/her brain. These learners respond well to the written word, diagrams, pictures, videos, wall charts and posters.

(ii) The *auditory learner* who learns best through sound. These learners respond well to the spoken word, audio tapes, discussion and sound effects.

(iii) The **kinaesthetic learner** who learns best through movement and touch. These learners respond well to movement, hands-on activities, designing and creative activities and role play/drama.

Teaching approaches which;
- engage and stimulate the learner;

- allows for regular review of progress (linked to learning outcomes and success criteria);

- are varied to match learning needs and preferred learning styles;

- maximise opportunities to work directly with learners in whole class, group and individual situations;

- embed ICT in the learning process;

- promote positive social interaction.

Teacher-Learner Interactions which are marked by:
- sharing the purpose of learning and reviewing prior learning;

- clear and appropriate explanations and instructions;

- discussions which promote learning and build confidence, giving learners opportunities to express their thinking and use their initiative.

Questioning which:
- is skilful and excites the curiosity of the learner;

- allows time for thought/reflection;

- involves all learners;

- ascertains areas for improvement;

- values all genuine responses and exploits them to promote further learning.

Learners who:
- do not fear failure;

- become increasingly aware of how they learn;

- take responsibility for and are active in managing their own learning and often set their own targets;

- adopt a collaborative approach;

- are confident about expressing their own thinking and listen to and respect others' ideas;

- review their own and their peers' progress and have an understanding of how to improve;

- exploit skilfully the opportunities afforded by ICT to extend their knowledge and skills.

Assessment which:
- is well matched to clearly identified purposes and encourages learners;

- emphasises the formative, celebrating what has been achieved and identifying what still has to be achieved to progress;

- is an appropriate blend of self, peer and teacher review;

- provides useful information which is regularly shared with learners and where appropriate with parents/carers and partner professionals

- is formal and informal;

- is summative and formative.

To promote effective learning and teaching, the teachers in Olderfleet Primary, actively embrace and embed the concept of *'Assessment for Learning'*.

ASSESSMENT for LEARNING – (AfL)

When we hear the term 'assessment', we tend to think of exams, tests, marks, corrections, stress and pass or fail! We often tend to see assessment as an end product that is separated from the

teaching and learning process. Assessment for Learning, however, is part and parcel of the learning process. It allows teachers to work with the learner to determine what is being learned and identify what the 'next steps' should be. It provides both teachers and pupils with feedback to help improve the learning.

The proposed assessment arrangements for the Northern Ireland Curriculum place AfL at the heart of the learning and teaching cycle - emphasising progress, raising pupils' achievement in learning and celebrating success.

What does 'Assessment for Learning' mean for pupils?

Research shows that pupils learn best and benefit most from assessment when:
- learning intentions are shared between teacher and pupil;

- feedback is given on successes as well as areas to improve;

- opportunities are provided to read and respond to feedback;

- time for reflection and evaluation is provided, to consider what and how they learn.

Assessment for Learning provides pupils and teachers with a framework to meet these learning needs. The learning intentions and success criteria are set out for pupils. Feedback is given to pupils about their work, what they have done to meet the shared success criteria so far, and what else they need to do. Participation in this process results in pupils becoming increasingly effective, independent learners.

What does 'Assessment for Learning' mean for teachers?

Assessment for Learning provides teachers with a powerful tool. It enables them to identify where pupils are in their learning and to tailor their teaching to meet pupils' needs. This requires a shift in focus, with some ownership of responsibility for learning shared by the pupils. This encourages a more positive classroom environment and improved teacher/pupil relationship. An ethos of 'you can do' is promoted and where pupils recognise that getting into difficulties and making mistakes is all part of effective learning.

In Olderfleet Primary we believe the effective use of AfL involves the following five key actions:
- sharing learning intentions

- sharing and negotiating success criteria;

- giving feedback to pupils;

- effective questioning; and

- encouraging pupils to assess and evaluate their own and others' work.

The quality of learning and teaching will be monitored and evaluated at a variety of levels by all staff –
Areas to be monitored will reflect the priorities in the School Development Plan.

(i) **Teachers**
In the classroom teachers will assess through observation and discussion, through the marking of work, through their planning which includes learning outcomes and an evaluation of these at the end of each planning cycle and through both formative and summative testing

(ii) **Co-ordinators**
Co-ordinators will monitor through:
- teachers' planning notes;
- sampling children's work;
- classroom observation;
- leading subject groups;
- staff discussion.

(iii) **Senior Leadership Team**
The school management team will monitor through:
- all of the above;
- review of test scores etc., at whole school level;
- overview of children's learning at key stage and whole school level.
We recognise that, in our school, there will be children displaying ability levels at both ends of the spectrum.

Gifted and Talented Pupils

Gifted and talented pupils have high general ability, exceptional academic prowess in one or more subjects and/or diverse talents, some of which are more easily recognised and acknowledged than others, for example, to be musically gifted.

There is no single agreed definition of what constitutes ability and this can make the process of identifying gifted and talented children very complex. It is important, therefore, to agree a working definition of gifted and talented. The definition set out in CCEA's guidance is:

*'Those students who are achieving or who have the potential to achieve a level substantially beyond the rest of their peer group inside their **particular school**.'*

We will ensure that the process of identification of such pupils is continuous and that it draws on both quantitative and qualitative information.

Consequently, there needs to be a variety of strategies to identify gifted and talented children. They have an equal right to the same level of challenge and support as other pupils, if they are to fulfil their potential, therefore the curriculum overall must provide adequate stimulus and enrichment and extension work needs to be linked carefully with the curriculum.

Problem-solving and opportunities to investigate and research will feature frequently in their programme of work and records will indicate all-round strengths and needs – not only those relating to academic progress.

Pupils with Learning Difficulties
Information as to how these children are to be identified and ways in which they will be supported is found in the school's *Special Needs Policy*. It is sufficient to mention here general guidelines. The teacher will work with a classroom assistant if available, SENCo, parents/carers, and medical, psychological and social services where appropriate, in collecting and recording information which may lead to preventative action in the early years. Children who have been identified as having learning difficulties will have individualised education plans which will have short term targets and steps towards achieving the targets outlined. The progress of such children will be reviewed regularly.

Community Involvement
It is our belief that the whole community has a part to play in the all-round development of our children. We therefore will continue to make and maintain links with individuals and groups in the community for the mutual benefit of all. These will include links with:

- parents/carers (volunteer helpers, use of parents'/carers' skills and talents, PA);

- Board of Governor members;

- other primary schools (sporting activities, visits etc.);

- Shared Education links e.g. St MacNissi's, Moyle.

- local post primary schools, colleges and universities;

- local churches (Assemblies, participation in Church services and events);

- Larne Library;

- local places of interest (e.g. RNLI Station, Carnfunnock etc.);

- local services (e.g. PSNI, Fire and Rescue Service, Ambulance Service etc.);

- Education Authority North-Eastern Region and associated services;

- links with sporting clubs

Conclusion
The content of this policy is reviewed every two years or amended as appropriate to reflect new guidance/recommendations. Therefore, the implementation of this policy will ensure that the learning and teaching taking place in Olderfleet Primary School is effective and meeting the needs of all the pupils at the school and therefore ultimately helping prepare them as young people in a rapidly changing world.

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