

Teaching and Learning Policy

Introduction

The staff of Our Lady and St Patrick PS is dedicated to providing high quality teaching and learning experiences for all pupils. All staff work together with parents, Parish and community to ensure that every child is treated as a unique individual, able to fulfil his or her potential in a safe and secure environment. Teachers use a variety of strategies to ensure every child's needs are catered for and high standards are achieved. We believe that effective teaching and learning occurs when children are encouraged, supported and nurtured, within a caring, Catholic ethos. This policy outlines what we believe to be the key elements of effective teaching and learning, thereby ensuring that children perform to the highest standards and achieve their full potential.

Our policy covers the following sections

- Aims
- Conditions to bring about effective learning
- The learning environment
- Additional adults
- Planning For Learning
- SEN/G and T pupils
- Assessment
- Monitoring and Evaluating
- Home/school links
- Staff professional Development
- Community Partnerships

Aims of this Policy

As a Catholic school, we promote the values and ethos of Christ. We believe that respect, honesty, kindness and inclusion are central to all that we do. We work together with parents, parish and community to provide a secure and caring environment for every child. We aim to live everyday by our motto 'The Hand of God at Work'.

This policy aims to prepare children to be respectful, confident citizens, able to contribute to society. We aim to do this through:

- Promoting the Catholic caring ethos of our school
- Meeting the needs of every child
- Identifying and providing high quality SEN teaching and learning opportunities
- Promoting all children's and staff self-esteem and self confidence

- Promoting and embedding problem solving strategies and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities into all teaching and learning.
- Promoting transfer of knowledge and skills across all areas of the curriculum
- Encouraging lifelong learners
- Involving pupils fully in their own learning, planning and assessment
- Recognising and encouraging pupils' qualities, interests and talents
- Providing achievable challenges, with consistently high expectations for each child
- Developing children's communication skills across all areas of the curriculum
- Fostering a respect for self and others and for agreed rules and building friendships
- Promoting and encouraging healthy choices in diet, hygiene and exercise
- Developing and encouraging positive attitudes to teaching and learning
- Involving and supporting parents as co educators of their children
- Providing top quality ICT experiences, to build confident elearners, equipped to embrace the technology of the future

Effective Learning

In Our Lady and St. Patrick P.S. we believe that pupils learn best when;

- Their individual learning styles are catered for –Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic
- The lessons are varied, well planned, stimulating, challenging and differentiated to suit the individual needs of every child
- They are aware of what is expected of them – WALT/WILF
- Teachers communicate high expectations and pupils believe they can achieve these
- Rules, rewards and sanctions are agreed with pupils and clearly understood and carried out consistently
- They are encouraged and praised for their efforts
- They are enthusiastically involved in their own learning, planning, evaluating their work and setting targets/goals - AFL

The Learning Environment

We believe that children learn best when they are taught in a happy, secure and safe environment. We aim to provide this by -

- Promoting positive relationships through the school, between teachers and children, pupils and their peers and amongst staff
- Valuing all opinions
- The stability and security of everyday routines
- Ensuring classrooms are attractive and well organised
- Displaying and adhering to the school behaviour policy and rules
- Using a wide range of learning opportunities
- Celebrating children's learning through displays
- Encouraging responsibility for each other and school property
- Providing a varied range of suitable resources and encouraging children to independently access these
- Grouping children according to what best supports their learning at that time

We use a variety of teaching approaches and learning experiences to enable, empower and challenge each child, relevant to their needs. These include –

- Whole class, group, pairs and individual teaching
- Using ICT effectively
- Fully involving pupils in the planning process based on previous knowledge and connected learning
- Play and activity based learning in FS and KS1
- SENCO and other agencies involved in supporting individual needs
- Using effective questioning
- Pace of the lesson suited to the learner
- Providing practical, creative and problem solving experiences
- Relevant educational trips and visits
- The use of visitors and speakers
- Use of task boards and extension activities
- Effective plenary sessions to review learning
- AFL, marking for improvement, verbal feedback, peer and self-assessment and setting goals
- Use of school buildings and grounds e.g. football, drama, play
- Celebration of success through praise, pupil of the week/month, visit to principal, sharing in assembly
- Staff CPD to ensure up to date and continuous improvement in standards of teaching and learning

Additional Adults

In Our Lady and St Patrick PS all staff are valued and involved in the learning experiences of the children. Classroom assistants are an important support in the teaching and learning process. Where appropriate, classroom assistants enhance learning by –

- Being involved in the planning process with the teacher
- Being clear about who they are supporting and why
- Being directed by the teacher to support learning
- Fully engaging with pupils during lesson times
- Discussing outcomes and future teaching and learning experiences with the teacher
- Being respected and valued by pupils as a caring adult

All school staff has a responsibility to model the school ethos and values, thereby teaching children respect, kindness and inclusion

Planning for Learning

Teachers use planning as a means to ensure progression, to address the needs of all learners and to ensure every child has full access to a broad and balanced curriculum. At Our Lady and Saint Patrick PS the planning process begins with the Northern Ireland Programmes of Study, schemes of work, half termly planning/(or 4 weekly if appropriate in FS), daily notes.

Planning for effective teaching and Learning involves –

- Starting from children's own experiences and previous knowledge
- Assisting pupils to make connections with their own life experiences, through the provision of opportunity for connected learning
- Having clear learning intentions and success criteria, allowing for progression of skills, knowledge and understanding
- Awareness of different learning styles (VAK)
- Clarifying the range of teaching styles and approaches used
- Providing opportunities for connected learning and transfer of skills
- Detailing resources to be used
- Including all abilities referring to IEPs/groups, using colour coding
- Embedding Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

- Effective, reflective and honest evaluations of teaching and learning, to inform future planning
- Detailing, where appropriate, class and school targets
- Observation and assessment details where relevant

We ensure continuity and progression take place through –

- Schemes of work
- Agreed assessment and recording approaches
- Staff sharing ideas/resources
- Co-ordinators monitoring planning
- Internal standardisation of work in each year group

Strategies for teaching pupils with Special Educational Needs

In Our Lady and Saint Patrick PS, we strongly believe that every child has the right to access a full, broad and balanced curriculum and to be taught in a supportive manner, according to his or her needs.

In keeping with the Code of Practice for SEN, the class teacher, SENCO and any relevant outside agencies, work together to develop a planned programme suited to the needs of the individual child. See Special Educational Needs Policy.

We use the following strategies to support children with Special Educational Needs –

- Identifying children with SEN at an early stage in order to implement early intervention strategies
- Differentiation within planning and class teaching, suited to the individual's needs
- Developing of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in conjunction with parents, the child and all adults involved
- Effective use of classroom assistants to support learning
- Regular evaluation of targets and communication with parents and relevant personnel with regard to progress and future planning
- Praise, encouragement and celebration of success and effort

We believe that Gifted and Talented children are those who have the potential to develop significantly beyond what is expected for their age. This may be academic, creative, sporting or expressive. We employ the following strategies when teaching gifted and talented pupils –

- Work is differentiated to provide challenges and includes problem solving and investigations
- Teachers communicate higher expectations to gifted and talented children
- Children's successes and achievements are celebrated and shared
- Children are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities
- Children are given increased responsibility and independence
- Opportunities are provided for children to share and make the most of their talents in the school and community

Assessment

In Our Lady and Saint Patrick PS, we believe that the purpose of assessment is to provide information to teachers and pupils in order improve teaching and learning and ultimately to raise standards and empower lifelong learners.

We use the following standardised tests with pupils from P3-P7.

Cognitive Ability Test (CAT4) P3- P7

Progress Test in Maths (PTM) and Progress Test in English (PTE) P3-P7

Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) P4-P6

The test results are analysed by the SMT who use the data to inform the School Development Plan, according to areas needing improvement. Results are discussed with the Board of Governors. End of Key Stage data is used for measuring performance and benchmarking with similar schools. Teachers use the data to set class and individual targets and devise strategies to reach these targets. Teachers and co-ordinators collect evidence of improvement.

P2 children are diagnostically assessed using the Middle Infant Screening Test in term 2. The SENCO uses results to help teachers put early intervention strategies into place, with the help of classroom assistants.

Teachers use their own ongoing assessment throughout the year.

Assessment For Learning is carried out by teachers and pupils during self and peer assessment in order to -

- Involve children in their own learning through shared Learning Intentions, skills and knowledge needed and agreed success criteria
- Empower children to take responsibility for their learning and become lifelong learners
- Provide relevant feedback which can be used by pupils to improve their learning, self-esteem, confidence and performance

Outcomes of assessment are used to inform future planning for teaching and learning.

Monitoring and Evaluating

In Our Lady and Saint Patrick PS, we recognise the need for regular monitoring and evaluating of the teaching and learning, in order to bring about improvement and to raise standards.

Staff reflect on and evaluate their own teaching and learning and use the outcomes to inform future planning.

The principal and subject co-ordinators regularly monitor, in order to ensure targets set in action plans are being met. They do this through -

- Regular book scoops
- Staff audits and questionnaires to inform SDP
- Classroom observations and feedback to individual teachers
- PRSD observations
- Sharing good practice
- Evaluating Action plans of the SDP
- Reviewing IEP targets
- Standardised tests
- Target setting and review
- End of key stage data
- Benchmarking data
- Monitoring planning and teacher evaluations
- Reviewing schemes regularly
- Internal standardising of pieces of work
- Monitoring displays reflecting children's learning
- Meetings with staff to provide feedback and information

Home/School Links

At Our Lady and St Patrick PS, parents are welcomed, kept informed of their children's progress, and provided with information and help to support their learning. This is carried out through -

- School Website, including links and downloads to support learning at home
- September curriculum meetings in each year group
- School and class Newsletters
- Yearly and interim written reports
- Informal and ongoing meetings

- Parent/teacher Interviews and update reviews, reporting children’s progress
 - Comments used in marking for improvement
 - Homework which is differentiated and relating to class teaching and learning (see homework policy)
 - Open night for prospective P1 parents and children
 - Displays of children’s work
 - Parent workshops, day and evening
- Parents can support their children’s learning through ensuring regular attendance and punctuality, providing healthy lunch and snack and ensuring children have adequate sleep.

Staff Professional Development

Staff Development in Our Lady and St Patrick PS is closely linked with the SDP. The SDP outlines the professional development needs of staff in order to achieve targets set out in the action plans, and is regularly reviewed. INSET and training days are arranged, where appropriate.

Targets for PRSD are agreed and are monitored by members of the SMT.

Staff are encouraged and supported to pursue their own professional development and to share best practice.

Community Partnerships

In Our Lady and Saint Patrick PS, we believe that our school is at the heart of the community and learning is enhanced through a wide range of experiences and opportunities. We have developed links with the wider community, which include –

- Use of local youth club for after school provision and transition programmes
- Involvement in parish masses, ceremonies and events
- Links with nursery and post primary schools
- Library visits
- Visitors and speakers
- Time To Read
- Roots of Empathy
- Visits to local businesses
- Sports training from local GAA/soccer coaches
- Links with the local council – recycling, parades, workshops
- Local competitions and events
- Credit Union saving scheme
- Parents teaching Spanish

- Musical tuition