

Learning and Teaching Policy



Sacred Heart Primary School
Dundrum

(Updated 2019)

Vision Statement

"Striving for Greatness Together"

Mission Statement

In Sacred Heart PS we aim to give all the children in our care wide experiences appropriate to their age and ability. We try to develop in our pupils a pride in their own self worth and recognition of the value of other people regardless of social or cultural background. We expect our pupils to work hard to achieve our aims and for parents to assist us in carrying out our responsibilities in a mutually supportive and caring environment.

School Aims

We aim to:

- develop and strengthen each pupil's understanding and love of Catholic values by promoting the Catholic ethos throughout the school;
- create a safe, enjoyable learning environment, in which effective learning is facilitated and quality teaching is provided;
- implement all aspects of the Northern Ireland Curriculum;
- help our pupils to develop a positive attitude towards life and a love of learning;
- value, respect and nurture every child in our care;
- encourage pupils to respect themselves and others and to support and care for one another;
- equip our children with the necessary life skills to enable them to participate in a fast changing society;

- involve the parents, Board of Governors and wider community in the life of the school and in the holistic development of the children in our care.

The Quality of Learning and Teaching

Learning and teaching are at the heart of a school's work. The staff acknowledges that the connection between learning and teaching is complex and that the quality of teaching directly influences the effectiveness of learning. The staff members are committed to improving learning and teaching for pupils, the staff, the school and the wider community. Hence the development and improvement of learning and teaching are central components within the School Development Plan.

Within Sacred Heart Primary School, pupils are given opportunities to learn through well planned and purposeful teaching. Learning is encouraged through the use of a variety of teaching methods, resources and interactions. Pupils are encouraged to take personal responsibility for their own learning and to use their preferred learning style. Collaborative learning is used appropriately. Pupils are encouraged to take an active role in their own learning, and to be more aware of what they have learned, why they have learned it and how they have learned it. The children are also encouraged to reflect on what helps them learn, and what to do if they are stuck i.e. WALT/WILF and planning boards. Active learning methods and experiences are also used to promote learning and photographic evidence of these experiences is kept by each teacher and displayed on the school website. Every effort is made to create a stimulating learning environment, in which effective learning is facilitated and quality teaching is provided. The children are encouraged to transfer and to apply skills and concepts to other areas of learning and to think independently and "outside the box".

Effective Learning

We acknowledge that people learn in different ways and we recognise the need to develop strategies that allow children to learn in ways that best

suit them. In Sacred Heart Primary School we take into account the different forms of intelligence, different levels of knowledge and different levels of Special Needs when planning for learning.

Emphasis is placed upon the quality of teaching and the development of strategies for improving the quality of teaching. When teaching we focus on motivating the children and building upon their skills, knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. We use the school curriculum policies and curricular action plans to guide our teaching. These set out the aims and values of the school and detail what is to be taught to each year group. We ensure that the curriculum provided is broad, balanced and well planned and that there is progression and continuity from year to year. Opportunities are provided for the development of a cross-curricular approach.

We base our teaching on our knowledge of the children's levels of attainments. Our prime focus is to further develop the knowledge and skills of the children. We strive to ensure that the tasks set are appropriate to each child's or group's level of ability, to their interests and to their experiences.

Encouraging Independence

In Sacred Heart PS, we encourage the development of independent and life-long learning through:

- Access to resources
- Use of classroom assistant and teaching assistants
- Strategies for self-help
- Word banks, dictionaries, thesaurus etc.
- Class responsibilities, rotas, class contracts
- ICT Programmes/Equipment

Recognising and Celebrating Success

We recognise and celebrate the successes of staff, of pupils, of past pupils and of people in the wider community.

We do this by:

- Positive initiatives in classes
- Displaying work in classes, around the school and at assembly
- Awarding Pupil of the Month certificates
- Awarding Pupil of the Week Certificates
- Awarding Head Teacher's Certificates
- Awarding ICT Certificates
- Displaying photographs
- Hosting celebratory and charity assemblies
- End of the Year Endeavour assemblies
- Using the school's website and local media (Down Recorder and Mourne Observer)
- Informing parents through letters, newsletters and our SchoolComms Text service

Classroom Management

Our learning environments are managed in such a way as to facilitate different styles of learning, and to reflect our Special Educational Needs Policy and our other school policies.

In the classroom we use:

- Whole class teaching
- Group work, organised according to appropriate criteria (i.e. ability, mixed ability, interest, friendship/behaviour)
- One to one teaching
- Collaborative learning in pairs or groups; and □ Independent learning

All areas of the learning environment are planned for, including, where appropriate, the outside areas, in order to ensure opportunities for a range of practical activities, which will develop appropriate skills, concepts and knowledge.

We believe that a safe, stimulating environment creates a climate which is conducive to learning and which promotes the independent use of resources and high-quality work by the children. We have high

expectations of all children, and we believe that their work here in Sacred Heart PS is of the highest possible standard. We use classroom observations, children's written work, homework, assessment results, NINA, NILA, PTE and PTM data, CAT4 scores, NRIT Scores and End of Key Stage results to inform future planning. We review the progress of each child regularly and plan accordingly. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to play an active role in the life of the school and the wider community. Children may be involved in evaluation activities, within their own class and/or at whole school level. Teachers, Learning Support Centre teachers, Classroom Assistants, Teaching Assistants, Peripatetic Teachers, Volunteers and External Agencies support children with Special Educational Needs, as detailed in their Individual Education Plans.

We raise expectations by:

- making effective use of qualitative and quantitative data
- setting targets
- using WALT /WILF boards
- agreeing class and school rules/charters
- promoting the school's aims
- monitoring, evaluating and reviewing progress

Relationships

Our members of staff make a special effort to establish good working relationships with all the children, with other members of staff and with parents and carers. We treat the children with kindness and respect and provide them with equal opportunities to take part in class and school activities. The pupils are well motivated; they work well with all staff members in an atmosphere of mutual respect and good-natured co-operation. Staff encourage pupils:

- to enjoy school
- to be well behaved
- to demonstrate self-discipline and to respond well in class
- to take pride in their work and show by their interest and attention that they value the contribution made by others

The pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem are enhanced by the nature of the teachers' responses to their work and their behaviour.

Behaviour Management

All staff members follow the agreed school policy with regard to Positive Behaviour and classroom management. We discuss and agree Class Rules and Positive Behaviour with children. We expect all children to follow these which we jointly devise, in order to provide the best learning opportunities for all. We praise children for their efforts and, by so doing, we help to build positive attitudes towards school and learning in general. We insist on good behaviour at all times. When children misbehave we follow the guidelines for sanctions as outlined in our Positive Behaviour Policy.

The Positive Behaviour Team provides support and guidance for staff in relation to full implementation of the Positive Behaviour Policy.

Teaching Assistants and Classroom Assistants

We deploy assistants to assist the class teacher in delivering the curriculum effectively.

Classroom Organisation and Resources

Our classrooms are organised flexibly, to facilitate learning and to promote the development of independence. Resources are used effectively by:

- having well maintained resources, which are used to facilitate learning for all
- encouraging pupils to act independently in choosing, collecting, sharing and returning resources where appropriate
- ensuring that items of display which support learning are used appropriately to encourage recall and independence and to celebrate successful learning
- using a wide range of materials

- creating reading areas/book corners which are as comfortable and attractive as possible
- using labels, posters and displays which aim to enhance classrooms
- having play areas in Foundation Stage, in which role play is facilitated through regular changes to the learning environment
- ensuring that pupils are involved in the maintenance and care of all equipment and resources
- Our classrooms and corridors are attractive learning environments. We update our displays regularly to ensure that the classrooms reflect the topics being studied by the children. We ensure that all children have opportunities to display their work in the classroom and around the school

Learning Resources

Investigative, problem solving and research based tasks take place using a range of resources including:

- books (fiction and nonfiction) and a fully stocked class and central library systems
- support from the travelling library van
- a variety of writing tools
- practical equipment
- Easi-Speak Microphones and Recording Equipment
- iPad - a set for each Key Stage and individual iPads for children in the Learning Support Centres and the Nurture Class
- digital camera
- C2K software
- internet
- interactive whiteboards (Smarttouch and Acti Panel)
- play resources
- outdoor resources including a child friendly eco and sensory garden
- local environment
- flipcharts and personal whiteboards
- WALT/WILF and planning boards
- Visitors and external support
- peers
- school grounds/local community
- educational trips

- curriculum materials/textbooks
- ICT devices
- microscopes
- items brought in from home to aid learning.

We will ensure that the materials used are appropriate to the individual needs of the children.

Planning for the Curriculum

Planning within Sacred Heart Primary School is thorough and takes place on a half-termly basis. Plans reflect the Northern Ireland Curriculum, the School Development Plan, Action Plans, schemes of work and the policies of the school.

Half-Termly Planning documents can be accessed by the Principal, Key Stage Coordinators, Subject Co-ordinators and Teachers on "Public". Classroom Assistants and Support Teachers are involved in planning to ensure the effective learning of all children.

Planning for Teaching and Learning

Our planning includes the following elements which have been agreed throughout the school:

- clearly defined Learning Intentions which are shared in appropriate language with the children at the beginning of lessons
- an introduction which establishes an appropriate learning environment and connects the learning and shows differentiated tasks (where appropriate)
- use of appropriate resources
- use of self and peer evaluation (where appropriate)
- use of ICT
- topic approach
- review and evaluation
- effective questioning
- sharing success criteria.

The planning reflects the fact that:

- children demonstrate knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways
- there is a need to build on children's previous experiences and learning
- there is a need to prepare children for future learning
- there is a need to provide a variety of learning experiences which reflect various learning styles
- there is a need to provide opportunities for children to work independently, in pairs and in larger groups

Our plans are derived from the Northern Ireland Curriculum, the Literacy Strategy Framework and the Northern Ireland Strategy for Numeracy. They contain information about the learning outcomes, the content, teaching and learning approaches, ICT, differentiation, resources, and the way we assess the children's work. We evaluate our planning at the end of each half-term, so that we can modify and improve our future teaching and planning. Teachers plan ahead to take account of the total time available for the subject within a key stage, and, where relevant, to make effective use of the potential contribution of other subjects or areas of learning.

Teaching approaches which are fit for purpose

The teachers make use of teaching methods which are suitable for the situation and the time available, and which meet the needs of individual pupils, groups of pupils and their class as a whole; they do not confine themselves to any single teaching approach. Such methods will empower the children and will encourage the holistic development of the children.

The teachers' expectations are realistically high, and the pupils understand what is expected of them; the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are developed through challenging activities which require them to think as well as to 'do'. The teachers ensure that class work has a purpose and is well-ordered: they provide opportunities for the development of the key skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT. The teachers regularly monitor the extent

to which the pupils understand what they are being taught; they make use of assessment to consolidate and develop the pupils' learning.

Close links are developed between the local Pre-School Providers, Sure Start Downpatrick, Dundrum Community Playgroup and Parent Toddler Group.

- developed between the Primary School and the local Secondary and Grammar Schools (Assumption Grammar School, Shimna Integrated College, De La Salle High School, St. Malachy's High School, St. Mary's High School and St. Patrick's Grammar School)
- Subject co-ordinators are involved in the development of individual curriculum areas, in order to ensure continuity and progression throughout the school (Shared Education Links and KS2/KS3 Progression Links)
- There is liaison between subject/area coordinators in order to develop connected learning within the school
- Teacher observation takes place through PRSD/Classroom Observations
- Individual teacher's expertise is deployed where necessary
- WALT/WILF and Planning Boards are used in classrooms where learning intentions are shared with the whole class
- Foundation Stage, Key Stage One and Key Stage Two Teachers use a visual timetable where appropriate.

In Sacred Heart Primary School we make use of:

- Shared, modelled and guided teaching with elements of discussion and questioning
- Recognising and celebrating occasions when students make better progress than expected
- Previewing and reviewing work
- Extra-curricular activities
- Use of digital technologies throughout the Key Stages
- Appropriate support for children with special educational needs and/or health needs
- Promoting self-esteem and allowing thinking time
- Planning Boards

- Providing opportunities for reflection by pupils and by teachers; Self-Evaluation
- Demonstrating high expectations
- Previous learning/prior knowledge through their cross-curricular topic work
- Providing opportunities for repetition/reinforcement/consolidation
- Providing encouragement, positive reinforcement and praise
- Making judgements and responding to individual and/or group needs
- Intervening, as appropriate, in the learning process in order to encourage/facilitate development
- Providing all children with opportunities for success using positive language
- Using a range of communication strategies - verbal and non-verbal that have clear expectations and a focus on Assessment for Learning strategies
- Practical activities/active learning and risk taking
- Class and home tasks/activities
- Exploring, investigating and problem solving
- Fieldwork and visits to places of educational interest and visitors to school or class
- Participation in physical activity
- Reflection on what has been learned

Our teaching and learning strategies demonstrate a balance in terms of individual, group and whole class work. Advice and support are available from subject co-ordinators and also in the form of visitors or EA personnel.

Monitoring and Evaluating the Learning and Teaching Policy

The Leadership Team and the Governors will ensure that the quality of learning and teaching is carefully monitored and that the outcomes of the monitoring, will serve as a basis for action and for further evaluation. They will also ensure that an agreed school policy on assessment is implemented, that formal and informal assessment is undertaken as a normal part of teaching and that information from assessment procedures is used to influence learning and teaching strategies and future planning. The Principal and subject/area co-ordinators monitor

samples of children's books in Literacy, Numeracy and WAU through Collegiate Book Discussions. The Principal/ Core Co-ordinators and observe lessons as part of PRSD.

Formal and informal monitoring procedures include:

- Collegiate Book Analysis/Discussion
- IEPs and Pupil Feedback on their specific targets
- Questionnaires/feedback from parents, children and colleagues
- Teachers' /Classroom Assistants'/ Pupils' and Parents' evaluations
- Assessment Manager/ Benchmarking/Tracking Data
- PRSD and Self-Evaluation Work
- Classroom Observations
- Target Setting
- Teachers' Planning Documents and Displays.

Role of Parents

In Sacred Heart Primary School we recognise the important role parents play in the education of their children and believe that parents should have access to detailed information about their child's progress at school.

Good communication between parents and teachers is an important feature of the partnership ethos which exists in Sacred Heart Primary School. We welcome the opportunity to talk to and listen to parents as a means of supporting and helping children to reach their full potential, academically and personally.

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

- Parent-teacher meetings and curriculum evenings to explain our school strategies for teaching Literacy and Numeracy;
- Meeting for new Primary One pupils and parents through Induction in May/ June and August
- Sending information to parents in relation to policies and procedures
- Sending annual reports to parents in which we explain the progress made by each child and indicate how the child can improve further
- Distributing school newsletters and the use of the School Website

- Displaying pupils' work
- Involving parents each term in the target setting process for IEPs;
- Asking parents to check homework and to sign the homework diaries, reading diaries and weekly reading journals and learning logs
- Seeking the views of parents in relation to School Development Planning, school policies, procedures and school related issues

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

- 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 keep their child healthy and fit to attend school
- Inform the school if there are matters outside of school that are likely to affect a child's performance and/or behaviour at school
- Promote a positive attitude towards school and learning in general

Pupils' Responses

Children will be encouraged to:

- Work to an appropriately high standard and to persevere with their tasks
- To present their work well and take pride in it
- To show enjoyment in their learning and achievements and to be able to suggest follow-on activities
- To talk with knowledge and understanding about what they are doing and to apply what they have learned to unfamiliar situations;
- To show initiative and confidence in selecting and using appropriate resources in an effective way and to become increasingly independent in their use of equipment, materials and ICT

Gifted and Talented Children

In Sacred Heart we are committed to maximizing the potential of all children, including gifted and talented children. In the case of gifted children, appropriate extension work will be provided so that the children are being appropriately challenged in school and at home.

Staff Development

We will ensure time and resources are allocated to staff development, which will include:

- Whole school InSET, Individual InSET and the Evaluation of InSET
- Informal staff development, Meetings and Collegiate Working Groups
- PRSD/Classroom Observations and opportunities to enhance the Trusted Colleague Networking

All our teachers reflect on their teaching and plan their professional development needs accordingly. Teachers are supported in the development of their skills, and are encouraged to monitor, evaluate and improve upon their practice. We conduct all our teaching in an atmosphere of trust and respect for all.

Homework

We believe that homework is an integral and co-ordinated element in the school's policies and practices. Homework tasks are varied, useful and differentiated where appropriate. The demands made on the pupils' time are monitored. We use homework effectively to:

- Share expectations to reinforce and extend classroom work;
- Involve parents, encourage home-school based relationships and develop independent learning skills.

Role of Governors

The Governors determine, support, monitor and review the school's Teaching and Learning Policy. In particular they:

- Support the use of appropriate teaching strategies by allocating resources effectively and monitor how effective the learning and teaching strategies are in terms of raising pupil attainment and raising standards
- Ensure that the Performance Review and Staff Development Policy promotes good quality teaching and encourages improvements in learning and teaching
- Ensure that school buildings and premises are appropriate in terms of supporting successful teaching and learning
- Monitor teaching strategies in light of health and safety regulations
- Monitor the effectiveness of the Learning and Teaching Policy through the school's self-evaluation processes

Differentiation

Teachers differentiate the curriculum by:

- Task;
- Outcome; and
- Provision of teacher/adult support.

Differentiation is viewed as an on-going process which helps to meet the needs of individual children in our school. It can help the children to make at least their expected progress in relation to their capabilities. It can be achieved by the nature of the task, the nature of the resources used and/or by the nature of the outcome.

Special Educational Needs

When planning work for children with Special Educational Needs we give due regard to information and targets contained within the children's IEPs and previous review outcomes. The Learning Support Assistants support children with Special Educational Needs (where appropriate) who

are at Stage 2 to Stage 5 of the Code of Practice. The children who avail of this support experience a mixture of withdrawal support and team teaching.

When meeting the needs of children with special educational needs, we use the following strategies:

- Early intervention
- Collection and recording information
- Assessment diagnosis
- IEPs
- Steps outlined to achieve targets
- Teachers working with classroom assistants, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, Learning Support Assistants, support teachers, parents and external agencies (where appropriate)
- Knowledge of child's interests, strengths and/or weaknesses
- Knowledge of previous learning and experiences
- Ensuring that children experience success
- Suitability of materials used
- Raising self-esteem of children; and
- Highlighting ability and potential

Record-Keeping and Assessment

Regular assessments are made of pupils' work in order to establish the level of attainment, and to inform future planning. Record-keeping and assessment procedures are detailed in the School's Assessment Policy.

Assessment

Assessment is used to measure learning and to help to diagnose pupils' needs. It is used as a tool for learning and as a tool of learning. Children are encouraged to play an active role in relation to assessment and to work with the teacher to determine what has been learned, what is still to be learned and what is the most effective way to learn it.

Teachers use a variety of standardised and diagnostic tests to help them to monitor children's progress and to highlight achievements and underachievement. Internal summative assessments are carried out within Primary 1-7 classes and parents are provided with information about the child's achievements in these assessments. Individual targets are set for children who have special educational needs and these targets are reviewed on a termly basis.

The Assessment Co-ordinator, Numeracy Co-ordinator, Literacy Co-ordinator and Principal (Assessment Team) collate and monitor test results from P1-P7. The Assessment Team's primary purpose is to collate and analyse the data yielded from a range of assessments and to ensure that the data is used effectively. Teachers are actively encouraged to use the outcomes of all the assessments to inform future planning.

Within Sacred Heart PS the pupils' written work is regularly and consistently marked accordance with school's Marking for Improvement Policy.

Language and Literacy

Our language curriculum is designed to encourage and to provide all children with the opportunity to read fluently, write imaginatively and neatly in a grammatically correct manner, spell correctly and develop good speaking and listening skills. We approach the teaching of reading using a variety of methods. From an early age the children are taught phonics and word building skills. Opportunities are also given to increase their vocabulary by borrowing and reading a wide variety of books from school. In Foundation Stage and Key Stage One, parents are strongly encouraged to support their child's reading, and guidance is given by the teacher in a reading diary which is sent home. The older children are taught to develop wider reading competencies through topic research, library reference skills and independent reading. Literacy 'Bug Club' runs through the school and is available for the children to work on tasks at home giving parents much needed transparency within our reading structures.

Writing ability is promoted by providing opportunities for self-expression, as well as by teaching specific grammatical text, spelling techniques and correct letter formation and handwriting skills. The phonics programme is also used to help develop children's spelling techniques.

Additionally, the children are introduced to different forms of literature and poetry and we encourage the development of speaking and listening skills through discussion, debate and drama.

Using Mathematics

The work in Mathematics is based upon the National Curriculum. During the Foundation Stage much of the work involves practical tasks, games and activities to develop the children's understanding that Mathematics is involved with real things and part of the real world.

As children progress through the school they will be given more demanding challenges according to their level of ability.

Mental Mathematical skills and the ability to solve problems are given particular importance within the Mathematics Curriculum.

We are always keen that children are encouraged at home to develop their skills and any efforts made to encourage and develop these areas will be of great benefit to the children's progress. Mathematics is also one of the areas in which children will be expected to carry out regular homework tasks and again parental support and encouragement with the completion of these tasks will be very beneficial. We also deploy 'Education City' from P1-P7 and set homework on a weekly basis using this online learning tool.

Using ICT

In Sacred Heart PS Primary School we believe that ICT has the potential to transform and enrich pupil' learning experiences and environments. We also believe that it can empower pupils, develop self-esteem and promote

positive attitudes to learning. Additionally, the creative use of ICT has the potential to improve pupils' thinking skills, providing them with opportunities to become independent, self-motivated and flexible learners.

Pupils will develop the skills of using ICT by engaging in meaningful research and purposeful activities set in relevant contexts. They will use ICT to handle and communicate information, solve problems, pose questions and take risks and will process, present and exchange their ideas.

We are aiming for:

- More connected knowledge - of things, people, action
- Wider range of skills and strategies
- Increased engagement and motivation
- More positive emotions about and a greater affiliation of learning
- A sense of membership and participation in a learning community
- A greater facility for interacting and learning with others
- The promotion of oneself as a 'lifelong' learner; and
- The fun, sense of achievement and sheer enjoyment that learning brings

Review of Learning and Teaching Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually, taking into account new initiatives, changes in the curriculum, technological developments, resource developments and/or changes to the physical environment of the school.