

Whickham Parochial Church of England Primary School



Teaching for Learning Policy

"For I know the plans I have for you ... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." — Jeremiah 29:11

Mission Statement

At our Parochial school we aim to develop independent, lifelong learners by providing a stimulating and caring environment in which every child flourishes, with Christianity at the heart of all we do.

Aims

At Whickham Parochial we believe that every child is entitled to enjoy their childhood, celebrate their individuality and reach their full potential. We aim to do this through:

- Creating a caring school family living by Christian values.
- Celebrating effort, resilience and a lifelong love of learning.
- Valuing the opportunities we have to serve our school, our community and the wider world.
- Offering wide ranging quality experiences that stimulate and challenge children's minds.
- Encouraging respect, tolerance and a habit of service and justice.
- Building strong links between school, home, church and community.
- Preparing children for future challenges in a rapidly changing real and virtual world.

We wish every child to take with them happy memories of Whickham Parochial into their future life.



Teaching for Learning Policy

Guiding Principles

- Children learn best when they are motivated and engaged
- Learning should be visible and explicit so that pupils can be active in their own progress
- Children should have opportunities to feel successful but be allowed to make mistakes
- Learning groups should be fluid and dictated by specific need
- All learners have the right to make good progress

This policy is designed to:

- Set out guidelines for the agreed principles and approaches which underpin teaching for learning in our school
- Promote consistency of approach and expectations, continuity and progression in order to improve the quality of teaching for learning
- Recognise, acknowledge and implement the most effective classroom practices, in order to further children's learning intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically

The policy takes account of:

- The nature of our school community and the context in which teaching for learning takes place
- The collective experience and expertise of both teaching and support staff
- Educational research and knowledge and understanding about children and education

We aim to deliver a high quality education to all children by providing teaching that:

- Is relevant to the needs and interests of all children giving them the opportunity to develop self-knowledge and self esteem
- Provide children with the essential basic skills and instils a love of learning
- Promotes high expectations celebrating both success and effort
- Challenges and supports to empower all children including those with special needs and the most able
- Enables children to take ownership of their learning with the confidence to question and be independent
- Prepares children to take their next steps confidently, both in education and in the wider world

Drivers in our Curriculum and in our Teaching Style

Curriculum

Our curriculum is driven by our Christian values and our strong desire to develop in our pupils the characteristics of successful learners.

At Parochial we recognise that the majority of our pupils come from an area of low deprivation, from loving and successful families who are supportive and encouraging but often limited in the time they can spend with their children due to pressure from work etc. We also recognise that our pupils have very little experience of diversity of all types and that lack of this exposure could lead to lack of understanding or tolerance. As a Christian school, we want our children to be happy and nurtured, but we need them also to be challenged and to be supported in developing a resilient and robust attitude to learning.

As a result, we have designed curriculum areas to best support children's Christian values, and their appreciation of courageous advocacy in ourselves and in others now and through history, at home and abroad. We have developed the experiences and resources to ensure that children are exposed through their learning to diversity that they would not ordinarily experience in their everyday lives.



Teaching Style

After undertaking pedagogical research, we understood that our teaching needed to make use of research around developing the characteristic of effective learners, such as resilience, engagement and self-regulation.

In order to accomplish this we have made some changes to our classroom practice:

Mixed ability pairs and groups

Studies have shown that ability groupings do not support progress. If a child is continually grouped with less able pupils, they do not have a model to aspire to, they become comfortable working at that level. They also become set in thinking of themselves as 'less able' (no matter how carefully the teacher labels the groups!) Equally, more able pupils become afraid to ask for help or make mistakes.

Mixing groups gives children the freedom to think of themselves as more fluid learners – sometimes things will be easier, sometime harder. It also gives them the chance to be explained to and also the explainer – both of which deepen and enhance understanding.

When we group children for support, we do so on the basis of gap analysis and/or support plans. The groups are assessed regularly and are seen to be fluid.

Mixed ability grouping does not mean teachers do not assess or differentiate. One of the ways we accomplish differentiation is to assess understanding through questioning and then 'catch and release' – selecting children for a mini-focus session of additional explanation and teaching before allowing them to try independently.

Providing pupils with the tools to self-assess

Giving children the tools to self-assess helps them to become active, astute and articulate learners. We provide children with models of excellence and success criteria so that they know where they are going in their learning journey. We use technical vocabulary and ask them to use this in their discussion of their work.

We self-assess in numerous ways, including 'fist to five' and also by asking children to choose their own level of challenge (though this is carefully monitored). Self-assessment takes the mystery out of learning – it makes our goals explicit and allows the child to be a participant in their own progress.

Peer editing and assessment

Peer assessment provides children with a safe place to explore mistakes and make improvements. It gives an alternative explanation from the usual 'adult' viewpoint. Peer assessment also raises children's expectations of their own work – when they see their peers demonstrating a skill rather than their teacher expecting it, it not only becomes more attainable, it provides motivation and goals.

We also work on raising children's expectations of themselves by redrafting and responding to feedback. We want them to feel that criticism and high expectations are a good thing and that they help us learn.

Praise language and celebration

It has been discovered that the way we praise children can have an enormous impact on the way they view their ability. If we praise children for their ability or talent (which is known as 'trait' praise) the child will be afraid to fail or show weakness in their skill. This will lead them to only feel good about themselves when they get everything right, so they often choose easier tasks in order to demonstrate their success or, as they see it, how clever they are. However, if we praise children's effort in their task (known as 'process' praise), children will be more willing to have a go at difficult things and make mistakes, as in doing so they do not risk losing your approval, but in gaining it for their effort, their resilience and their courage. This has had a huge impact on what we celebrate and has made us careful in the way that we celebrate what would once have been described as talent.

Cognitive load

Our understanding of, and practice regarding cognitive load has never been more relevant than it is now in post-lockdown. We support our learners by finding out their starting points, re-igniting previous learning and making connections to foundational knowledge. We endeavour to refine the children's experiences so that we don't inadvertently add burden to their memories and support them in remembering more by engaging them with memory aids such as songs, mind maps and knowledge organisers.

Spaced retrieval

We have designed our curriculum, our plans and our lessons to encourage children in re-encountering important foundational knowledge such as spelling, grammar, maths rapid recall facts etc. We worked to move away from the habit of automatic revision and re-teaching and tried to encourage children to recall their knowledge. In order to do this, we have introduced features including:



- Re-igniting past knowledge by sharing or free recall on whiteboards
- Quick recall with whiteboards of known facts
- Low stakes quizzes such as five in five, morning starter activities, arithmetic tests, spelling test (all should be marked by the learner)
- Exit tickets
- Songs and mnemonics

SEND support and inclusion

We have the highest possible expectations of individual learners and endeavour to give them the opportunity to demonstrate what they can do, understand and achieve. Teachers will facilitate this in a variety of ways according to individual needs by adapting:

- pace;
- content;
- task;
- resources;
- extension;
- autonomy;
- outcome;
- teacher/adult support.

Our environment and ethos of praising and rewarding effort and engagement is ideal for all children but is especially supportive of SEND children, giving them opportunities to succeed and be celebrated for the same learning behaviours as their peers. Where possible, we encourage SEND learners to be accessing the same content as their peers, but with adjustments made as detailed above. Inclusion is important to us and to the learner as we want our SEND pupils to have access to the same broad and rich opportunities as their non-SEND classmates.

In some cases, learning plans and EHCPs may require individualised instruction. Where this is the case, efforts will be made to find places in the curriculum where the child can access lesson time with their peers.

Classroom Environment

The learning environment will be managed in such a way as to facilitate different styles of learning.

Opportunities will be made for:

- whole class teaching;
- focus group work
- one to one teaching;
- collaborative learning in pairs or groups;
- independent learning.

Each classroom must be kept tidy and be organised in such a way that children can easily access the resources that they need and can learn comfortably. Each room must have a class library area with books that are accessible to all learners and which represent our drivers.

Displays should include purposeful working walls, vocabulary, learning prompts and in some cases should showcase work that the children are proud of. We hope that children will enjoy the environment and that displays will be attractive and stimulating displays.

All key stage one and two classes should include: a maths and English working wall, a reflection area for collective worship, the Big Story from Understanding Christianity and a visual timetable.

Resources

Classroom and central resources are the responsibility of classroom teachers and subject leaders who ensure that:



- there is a range of appropriate, accessible and labelled resources available for which pupils can select materials suitable to the task in hand;
- all children know where classroom resources are kept and the rules about their access and use;
- children are encouraged to act independently in choosing, collecting and returning resources where appropriate;
- the class library is a valued resource and used appropriately;
- children work together to establish an attractive, welcoming and well organised environment engendering respect, care and value for all resources.

Each classroom will be equipped with a basic set of resources and books appropriate to the age range. Specialist resources will be stored in the appropriate curriculum resource cupboard/area, and will be regularly audited by the subject leaders. Consumables will be replenished as necessary. Staff may contact subject leaders with suggestions for specialist materials which may need ordering.

Pupils will be taught how to use all resources correctly and safely, with care and respect and with regard for Health and Safety and waste. Care will be taken to ensure that all pupils have equality of access.

At Parochial, the use of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum is valued and these are used throughout the school to widen children's experiences and support learning across a range of subject areas.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Regular assessments are made of pupils' work in order to establish the level of attainment and to inform future planning. Formative assessment is used to guide the progress of individual pupils. It involves identifying each child's progress in each area of the curriculum, determining what each child has learned and what therefore should be the next stage in their learning.

Formal summative assessment is carried out at the end of each National Curriculum Key Stage (i.e. in Years 2 and 6) through the use of SATs and teacher assessment. Phonics are tested in Year 1 and re-tested where necessary in Year 2. Initial assessment is used in Reception/Early Years within six weeks of starting school and Foundation Stage Profiles are maintained.

In addition to this, NFER testing materials are used in Year groups from Year 2 onwards in order to assess children's progress termly.

Continuity and rigour of assessment is maintained through regular staff moderation.

Reporting to parents is done three times a year, twice through consultations and once through a written report.

Rachel Walton
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