

# ST MARY'S PS MAGHERY



## TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

## **Introduction**

In St. Mary's Primary School we believe that learning is a dynamic process which begins at the time of conception and continues for the rest of our lives. Learning should be a rewarding and enjoyable experience for everyone. Through our teaching we equip children with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to be able to make informed choices about the important things in their lives. We believe that appropriate teaching and learning experiences help children to lead happy and rewarding lives. Learning and teaching are at the very heart of our school's work.

## **Mission Statement**

In St. Mary's Primary School we strive to create a secure, stimulating and happy learning environment where all pupils are of equal importance.

We work in close partnership with our parents, promoting catholic values and providing the best education for our pupils, so that the children are given important life skills to use in their role as future adults.

## **The Northern Ireland Curriculum**

The revised curriculum is set out in seven areas of learning: Language and Literacy, Mathematics and Numeracy, The Arts, The World Around Us, Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, Physical Education, Religious Education. At the heart of the curriculum lies an explicit emphasis on the development of skills and capabilities for lifelong learning and the skills for operating effectively in society. Through opportunities provided in our school children should progressively develop cross-curricular skills in: Communication; Using Mathematics; Using Information and Communications Technology. The development of Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities will also be fostered with the aim that our children will be able to think, solve problems and make decisions; work with others; manage information; manage themselves; be creative.

## **Aims and objectives**

Children learn in many different ways, so, in St. Mary's, we provide a rich and varied learning environment in which children are enabled to develop their skills and abilities to their full potential.

Through our teaching we aim to:

- provide opportunities for all children to reach their full potential
- enable children to become confident, resourceful, enquiring and independent learners
- provide opportunities for each child to learn in their preferred learning style by using a range of teaching strategies
- encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning

- use a variety of resources and differentiate according to ability
- ensure children feel happy, secure and are aware of boundaries
- inform children of the learning outcome and provide feedback
- promote children's self-esteem and help them build positive relationships with other people
- develop children's self-respect and encourage children to respect the ideas, values and feeling of others
- show respect for all cultures and in so doing, promote positive attitudes towards other people
- enable children to understand their community and help them feel valued as part of this community
- help children to grow into reliable, independent and positive citizens

### **Teaching approaches**

We aim to provide an environment where quality teaching and learning styles are nurtured so we use a variety of teaching styles which are stimulating, enabling, empowering, challenging, appropriate and relevant to each child's needs.

Teaching approaches currently used in the school include:

- whole-class work
- group work
- pair work
- independent work
- shared, modelled and guided teaching
- team teaching
- peer teaching
- sharing learning outcomes with children
- practical activities
- investigation and problem solving
- research and finding out
- asking and answering questions
- cross-curricular topic work
- creative activities
- designing and making things
- participation in athletic or physical activity
- use of the computer and interactive white board
- use of tv, dvd and audio material
- debates, role-plays and oral presentations
- fieldwork and visits to places of educational interest
- visitors to school/class
- utilising expertise

We try to encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning, to be involved as far as possible in reviewing the way they learn and to reflect on how they learn, for example, through the use of 'two stars and a wish'.

## **Effective teaching**

As stated in our Mission Statement we endeavour to conduct all our teaching in an atmosphere of trust and respect for all. We focus on motivating the children and building on their skills, knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. We use our curriculum policies and schemes which set out the aims, objectives and values of the school to guide the teaching and learning. We plan our lessons with clear learning objectives which we share with the children. Our planners contain information about the intended learning outcomes, the content, teaching and learning approaches, differentiation, the resources needed and our assessment of children's work. We base our teaching on our knowledge of the children's level of attainment. We evaluate lessons so that we can modify and improve our teaching.

## **Target-setting:**

Staff meet at various times throughout the school year to set targets for children in each academic year. We consult with the previous class teacher and the SENCo. We use standardised test scores to review the progress of each child at the end of the academic year and set revised targets. We try to ensure that all tasks set are appropriate to each child's level of ability. When planning work for children with special educational needs we refer to the information and targets contained in the children's Individual Education Plans (IEPs), soon to be Pupil Learning Plans (PLP's)

## **Working relationships:**

Teachers make a special effort to establish good working relationships with all children in the class. We treat children with kindness and respect. We are fair and provide equal opportunities for children to take part in class activities. All teachers follow the school policy with regard to discipline and classroom management. We set and agree class rules with children. We expect children to comply with these rules which we jointly devise to promote the best learning opportunities for all. We praise children for their efforts and, in so doing, we help build positive attitudes towards school and learning in general. We insist on good order and excellent behaviour at all times. We actively promote good behaviour through our Positive Behaviour Policy strategies.

## **School environment:**

Our classrooms and corridors are attractive learning environments. We change displays at least once a term, to ensure that the classroom reflects the topics studied by the children. All children have the opportunity to display their work at some time during the year. We believe that a stimulating environment sets the climate for learning and an exciting classroom promotes independent use of resources and high quality work by the children. Classrooms have a range of dictionaries and fiction and non-fiction books, as well as displays relating to literacy and numeracy. We have an excellent out-door area which allows us to develop Outdoor Learning and Eco Work. Each class grow something at least once per term. We also have a new School Pitch which allows for Sports Development. We are working on creating a Nurture and Well-Being Area in our School Mobile.

**Classroom organisation:**

Children will be taught in a variety of different ways, such as: reading groups, pairs, mixed-ability groups, individually, behaviour groups, whole class work, teacher directed groups and in a circle for Circle Time activities. The physical environment and class size may enhance or restrict classroom organisation. Pupils may be given jobs in the classroom or divided into teams. They will be encouraged to use the computers, laptops, iPads and any creative areas of the classroom such as the reading corner, library area, sand/water, religion table, nature table or art area.

**Use of helpers:**

We deploy classroom assistants and other adult helpers as effectively as possible. Sometimes they work with individual children and sometimes they work with small groups. Our adult helpers also assist with the preparation and storage of classroom equipment and resources. They help teachers ensure that all tasks and activities which the children do are safe. When children are taken out of school we inform parents and obtain their permission. We also carry out a detailed risk assessment in accordance with Department of Education guidelines.

**Planning for learning:**

In planning for learning we identify clearly defined learning outcomes which we share with the children at the beginning of lessons. Lessons have an introduction which establishes an appropriate learning environment and connects the learning. We use varied activities linked to the range of intelligences as defined by Gardner (1999): linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist. Children are encouraged to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways including self evaluation and peer evaluation. Teachers use a range of appropriate resources, including ICT. Cross-curricular links are established as appropriate, differentiation is central to planning and lessons are reviewed and evaluated.

**Learning resources:**

St. Mary's is a well-equipped school and our Parent Association have helped us to provide excellent resources for the children. Investigative, problem-solving and research based tasks are carried out. We recognise that the most valuable resource in any school is its personnel and our teachers, assistants, maintenance staff, peripatetic teachers, sports coaches, music coaches and invited guests all work together to provide the best learning environment possible, leading to the best results.

**Strategies for dealing with children with learning difficulties:**

We have high expectations of all children, while recognising the special needs of children with learning difficulties. We employ the following strategies:

- preventative action in early years
- collection and recording of information
- assessment and diagnosis
- use of individualised education plans
- use of short-term targets
- steps out-lined to achieve targets
- class teacher works with classroom assistant, SENCo, parents, medical, psychological and social services where appropriate
- knowledge of child's interests

- ensure children experience success
- use of suitable materials
- raising self-esteem of children
- highlighting ability and potential

Gardner (1998) wrote: ‘We are not all the same; we do not all have the same kinds of minds, and education works most effectively for most individuals if human differences are taken seriously’. The staff of St. Mary’s recognise this and the needs of gifted and talented children are also provided for through the use of individual learning programmes and enrichment materials.

### **The role of governors:**

The governors determine, support, monitor and review the school policies on teaching and learning. They support the use of appropriate teaching strategies by allocating resources effectively. They ensure that the school buildings and premises are best used to support successful teaching and learning. Governors also monitor teaching strategies in the light of health and safety regulations and they monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies in terms of raising pupil attainment. Their role includes the promotion of good quality teaching through staff development and performance management policies. Governors also monitor the effectiveness of the school’s teaching and learning policies through the school self-review processes. These include reports from subject co-ordinators and the principal’s annual report as well as a review of the in-service training sessions attended by our staff.

### **The role of parents:**

‘Children live their lives in two worlds; that of the home and community and that of the school. When these two worlds fail to know, respect and celebrate each other, children are placed in a difficult situation.’ Mc Caleb (1994).

We believe that parents have a fundamental role to play in helping children to learn. In St Mary’s, we have an excellent first-name relationship with our parents and they know they are more than welcome to speak with the class teacher regarding their child/children.

In St Mary’s we inform parents about what and how their children are learning by:

- holding parents’ meetings to explain our school strategies for teaching literacy, numeracy and other curriculum areas, and provide them with progress results
- sending annual written reports to parents in which we explain the progress made by each child and indicate how the child can improve further
- Termly Curricular Pamphlets

### **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

We are aware of the need to review the school teaching and learning policy regularly so that we can take account of new initiatives, changes in the curriculum, developments in technology or changes to the physical environment of the school. A review of our teaching and learning processes may include:

- daily observation
- assessment in class

- children's oral and written output
- testing
- samples of work collected for monitoring and evaluation
- classroom observation
- dissemination of good practice
- regular collection of books for marking by principal
- effectiveness of marking
- analysing standardised scores
- target setting
- individual pupil profile
- whole class record sheet
- subject co-ordinators monitor their subject

**Staff development:**

In line with our Staff Development Policy we will ensure that time and resources are allocated to staff development as outlined in the School Development Plan:

- whole school and individual training and staff development
- virtual/online training and staff development opportunities
- evaluation of training and staff development
- year group/KS meetings
- PRSD
- training from visitors to school (EA personnel and private providers)

This policy was presented to and discussed with staff in April 2022

Ratified by the BOG: May 2022

Signature: Mr Jimmy Mc Kee (Chairperson of the BOG)

..... Jimmy Mc Kee ..... 30 March 2022

Signature: Miss R Robinson (Principal)

..... Rita Robinson ..... 30 March 2022