

**UN CRC Article 28**

All children have the right to a primary education

# Our Learning and Teaching / Curriculum Policy

Adopted March 2020

Due for next review March 2023

## The Ethos and Values of Whiteabbey Primary School:

- To place the child at the centre of all we do in Whiteabbey Primary School.
- To provide an education which places importance on the development of the whole child, spiritually, academically, intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially.
- To educate our children to understand and recognise their rights as stated in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and to uphold the UNCRC to our stakeholders and the whole community within which we operate.
- To provide an environment where each child is encouraged to develop to the full extent of their ability. Where each person is valued and is made aware that they have the potential to make a positive contribution to the school.
- To help every individual learner build a good self-image.
- To provide a broad-based, stimulating and connected curriculum, including delivery of the statutory Northern Ireland Curriculum:
  - to develop basic skills of communication, language, literacy and numeracy
  - to develop the ability to observe, question, hypothesise and solve problems
  - to develop skills of communication and confidence
- To encourage the partnership between home and school. To encourage parents to take an active role in their child's education.
- To provide equal opportunities in work and play, and treat all individuals fairly.
- To value and celebrate the diversity of our society and to promote respect and tolerance.
- To forge learning links with all our local nurseries and secondary schools.
- To promote and develop aesthetic, cultural and creative understanding.
- To develop concepts of beauty in the natural and man-made world.
- To introduce children into the world of artists, writers and musicians.
- To develop a sense of heritage and appreciation for the locality, community and world.
- To develop a sense of spiritual awareness and freedom of choice.
- To use technology where appropriate to enhance our children's learning.
- To develop links with our community and promote community cohesion, to invite people from the community into our school and to make visits to the community from the school.

## Our Staff School Culture:

*"Compassion, Kindness, Collegiality and Cooperation"*

Whiteabbey Primary School is a very friendly, welcoming and caring school. We strive to live this out every day and believe that everyone achieves more when they feel happy, secure and valued. Our philosophy is to educate the whole person; we want the children to enjoy their learning and we have high expectations for their spiritual, moral, academic, creative and social development. Team spirit is very much part of the ethos of Whiteabbey Primary School and there are very high expectations of *all* our staff, pupils and parents to

work cooperatively, to make a positive contribution to the life of our school and to give continually of their best. There is a focused commitment on teaching and learning, which includes, all staff, families and the community and we as a learning community are proud of what we achieve together. There is an emphasis on mutual support through which we develop our shared professionalism. We as a staff are reflective and adaptive in our practise. This is a safe place for everyone to make mistakes - as making mistakes is a great way to learn! We are happy to try out new ideas, because we want to ensure that every child succeeds and achieves excellence in whatever discipline they are good at and wish to achieve in. Our mantra "Your best is good enough" is true for all!

### THE NATURE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN WHITEABBEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

We, at Whiteabbey Primary School, believe that the propensity to learn is a natural human condition.

We recognise that learning can and does take place in a multitude of ways, at various rates, in any place and at any time. We also recognise that learning can involve the utilisation of a host of intelligences and a variety of senses. We value all learning as a process to the development of the whole individual as a life long learner.

We consider that teaching should be specifically designed to expand and facilitate all learning opportunities. We also believe that teaching is the responsibility of the entire school community.

The nature, style and pace of teaching in Whiteabbey Primary School will vary depending on the nature of the learning and the learners.

Within Whiteabbey Primary School we consider that learning and teaching are supported by the development and sustenance of certain values inclusive of:

- Self - respect
- Dignity
- High self-esteem
- Self - discipline
- Positivity
- Appreciation of others
- Independence
- Interdependence

Our children are continuously encouraged to have or to be:

- |                                                                                               |                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Know their own <b>self</b> - emotional/social, literacy, spiritually | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible                                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-motivated, have innate curiosity                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Able to make connections / see patterns                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible                                                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Aware of progress, strengths, weakness and needs                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Persistent                                                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Reflective                                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High self esteem                                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Happy - secure                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confident                                                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Risk taker                                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Articulate                                                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Able to use a variety of intelligences and learning dispositions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Independent - in thoughts, in actions                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Able to demonstrate their learning in a variety of forms         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Willing to make and learn from mistakes                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Able to use appropriate thinking maps and De Bono's Hats         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Investigative                                                        |                                                                                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Show initiative                                                      |                                                                                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative                                                             |                                                                                           |

As a learning community we will promote these values so that all members of the school community will become effective, lifelong learners.

## THE AIMS OF OUR LEARNING AND TEACHING POLICY

The fundamental aim is to ensure that every learning and teaching opportunity is maximised so that everyone involved is assisted in their pathway to lifelong learning.

In order to achieve this primary outcome we will endeavour to:

- Make all learning and teaching as exciting and interesting as possible
- Design and implement learning and teaching activities which facilitate the development of independence among all learners
- Cater for different types of intelligences and do so via a variety of teaching styles
- Cater for all types of learning styles
- Develop and support a range of teaching approaches that cater effectively for the whole ability spectrum in order that all pupils achieve maximum learning
- Create and sustain a stimulating learning environment at all times that reflects current taught themes in the class and the year groups
- Provide appropriate staff development opportunities so that there are consistently high quality learning and teaching experiences within and across all year groups
- Consistently monitor and evaluate provision and provide regular year group and individual feedback to staff so as to ensure consistently high quality learning and teaching experiences within and across all year groups
- Acquire, maintain and utilise appropriate high quality resources to support all learning and teaching

**Curriculum Policy:** (Specific policies exist for many of our curriculum areas):

Our Governors and staff consider the curriculum to be the whole range of academic activities, non-academic activities, experiences and opportunities available to children during their time at Whiteabbey Primary School. Included are the programmes of study and cross-curricular themes as designated in The Education Reform (Amendment) Order Northern Ireland 1996, the programme of extra-curricular activities and other factors which contribute to the ethos of our school.

The Curriculum Policy offers statements of intent and provides a framework for action that relate to the school curriculum. The contents are consistent with the schools Mission Statement and the aims of the school.

In accordance with the school's Equal Opportunity Policy all children at Whiteabbey Primary School must be given full access to the Northern Ireland Primary curriculum. Staff will endeavour to help all children to reach their full potential irrespective of race, gender, age or ability.

Children are taught by a broad curriculum in each year group within subject areas like: Literacy, Numeracy, The World Around Us, Physical Education, Art and Design, Music, Religious Education and Personal Development and Mutual Understanding. All cross curricular areas of literacy, numeracy, ICT, TSPC, WAU and PDMU should be delivered in a coherent and effective manner. The cross curricular linkage should be planned, resourced and implemented only when the linkages are natural and meaningful. Furthermore, the activities delivered and the targets established must be appropriate to the age group/ability group that the pupils are in.

At all times there is a curriculum learning emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy. There is a valued reading scheme which commences in Primary 1, and as children progress there is a wide variety of supplementary readers, individualised reading, novels, book clubs, outings to the local library and visits from authors. From P4 our children participate in Accelerated Reading and a designated library has been created that is in addition to each class's own class library.

We aim to help each child discover pleasure and satisfaction, a sense of values and an enlargement of his/her sympathies in imaginative literature. We want our children to learn to convey their thoughts clearly and fluently in writing appropriate to different occasions and purposes.

For Dyslexia Awareness Week 2014 The British Dyslexia Association's (BDA) defined dyslexia as:  
*Dyslexia is a learning difference, a combination of strengths and weaknesses which affect the learning process in reading, spelling, writing and sometimes numeracy.*

We at Whiteabbey Primary School recognise the strengths of pupils with diagnosed and undiagnosed: Autism Spectrum Disorders, Dyslexia and other special needs within our community. We all aim to use these strengths to help our children learn across the curriculum. We have high expectations of all our children and the achievement of all our pupils is seen as *everybody's* responsibility. We achieve this through encouraging partnerships with parents and engaging pupils in their own challenging and progressive learning.

Children are provided with a positive mathematical environment in Whiteabbey PS. They are encouraged to develop problem solving skills using good mental methods. These should be based on a thorough understanding of place value accompanied by recall of table facts.

The World Around Us is a combined curriculum area that incorporates the teaching of Science, Geography and History learning. Science skills are taught at every age group and involve the full range of topics outlined in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Excellent use is made of our school grounds and the local environment in learning the skills relating to History and Geography and educational visits are organised to more distant locations in the Province where this is deemed beneficial to our children's learning.

Children experience a range of music taught not only by their class teacher but also by our peripatetic music teachers and private tutors during school time and as part of our extracurricular after school programme. We embrace opportunities to showcase to our children professional musicians and groups that open new opportunities to our children. We have a capable and talented choir and orchestra open to our children from P4 onwards and we hope to continue to broaden our musical offering to all our children.

Creative studies which include Drama, Physical Education and Art and Design are provided for in the Curriculum. There are a wide variety of after school clubs where any child may pursue their creative and expressive interests further.

Children have Christian based assembly (collective worship) twice per week, and are taught Religious Education as part of the Curriculum. However, where there are parents who do not wish their children to participate in Assembly and Religious Education, the school is in a position to abide by their formal requests.

### **Learning Processes:**

Children enter school at different stages of development. Children learn in different ways and at different rates of progress.

In the course of learning children will develop their skills through a variety of processes. These include:

- |                                       |                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| □ Investigation                       | □ Retrieving information                                              |
| □ Experimentation                     | □ Imagining                                                           |
| □ Listening                           | □ Repetition                                                          |
| □ Observation                         | □ Problem-solving                                                     |
| □ Talking and discussion              | □ Empowering children to make choices and responsible decision-making |
| □ Asking Questions                    | □ Reflecting and Evaluating                                           |
| □ Practical exploration and role play | □ Thinking                                                            |

In Whiteabbey PS opportunities are organised to allow pupils access to these processes, and for them to develop their own strategies to gain knowledge and skills.

### Learning Styles:

In our school - teachers and children **are** aware of our children's preferred learning styles, especially if they are strongly identified as one style of learner in particular. We recognise the majority of our children learn in a variety of different ways however or teachers will take into account the range of intelligences and learning preferences within their class through various strategies and use tools such as:

☐ Myself as a Learner (MAL) Questionnaire or

☐ Visual, Audio, Read/Write, Kinaesthetic (VARK or VAK) questionnaires for pupils and teachers to discover their learning styles

Children learn in a variety of ways, and for this reason it is necessary to ensure that planning incorporates as many styles as possible. These may include:

☐ Individual/Independent learning

☐ Collaborative learning in small groups, or in pairs

☐ One-one learning with an adult or on occasions with a buddy

☐ Whole class

### Creating a Quality Learning Environment:

#### Planning for Learning & Teaching:

In order to secure high quality learning and teaching we plan thoroughly via long term schemes of work, medium term planners and weekly or daily short term planning. There will be various aspects to our planning, these will include:

- Clear, specified learning outcomes
- Differentiation of teaching activities for various ability groups
- Activity - link to the range of intelligences
- A clear breadth and balance to planned activities within and across curricular areas
- Clear progression within planning
- Regular evaluation of the effectiveness of learning and teaching
- Secure opportunities for learners to engage in self & peer evaluation and review, where appropriate.

In order to secure the above we recognise that appropriate time will be provided. Accordingly, staff will have regular opportunities to:

- Plan collaboratively as year groups
- Evaluate the effectiveness of previous planning so as to inform future planning
- Reflect on existing practice in order to improve future provision
- Acquire resources for effective learning and teaching activities

**Homework:** will be provided for all pupils in line with the requirements outlined in the school's homework policy. These are designed to reinforce and extend learning across all curricular areas and especially within literacy and numeracy.

### Learning & Teaching Strategies:

Teachers will endeavour to plan and deliver the Northern Ireland Curriculum with a view to developing the desired skills within our children. Schemes of work will be prepared and updated by each year group, taking into account the individual differences of the children in each class. Individual class teachers will be responsible for drawing up short term planners and in ensuring appropriate progression in each of the skills area required for development by the various subject areas. Heads of School and Curriculum Leaders are charged with monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning in our school and curriculum leaders are also asked to inform our staff of the current acknowledged best practice within global education so a common approach can be employed within each class in Whiteabbey.

Child centred learning will take place appealing to a variety of differing learning styles in a variety of whole class, group work and individual teaching formats. The learning environment will be managed in such a way as to facilitate different styles of learning, with particular regard to Additional Needs (SEN). The needs of various ability groupings within each class will be carefully organised by the individual teachers and class and homework will be

differentiated to meet the learning needs of *all* our children. Work can be differentiated by: Task, Outcome or levels of teacher/ adult support. Differentiated tasks will be detailed in half termly planners. Learning intentions will be specified for all differentiated teaching. Detailed reference will be made in planning for Personal Learning Plans.

All areas of the learning environment will be planned for, including our outdoor leaning areas, in order to ensure opportunities for a range of practical activities, which will develop appropriate skills, concept and knowledge. Learning support assistants, learning support teachers, and external agencies will be utilised where possible to support children with Additional Needs, as outlined in their Personal Learning Plans.

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 defined in our marking policy.

### **Teaching Strategies:**

In order to ensure equality of access, and effective matching of tasks to needs, teachers will employ numerous and varied strategies eg.:

- Play/Activity-Based Learning including our Active Learning programme developed over recent years.
- Continued development of close links between Nursery and Primary One.
- Involvement of subject coordinators in the development of individual curricular areas, in order to ensure continuity and progression.
- Teacher peer observations,
- Dissemination of Intervention Strategies
- Discussion and questioning; (open and closed as appropriate)
- Pupils Reviewing work with teacher or peers.
- Listening activities,
- Brain Storming,
- Providing opportunities for reflection and self-evaluation by pupils
- Demonstrating high expectations
- Providing opportunities for repetition and reinforcement
- Providing encouragement, positive reinforcement and praise
- Making judgements and responding to individual needs
- Intervene, as appropriate, in the learning process in order to encourage development
- Use a range of communication strategies
- Provide all children with opportunities for success
- Celebrating children's work
- Physical exercises and Primary Movement
- Brain Gym
- Circle time
- Clear structure to all lessons, learning intentions and success criteria displayed in classroom
- Topic-based, cross-curricular teaching
- Educational visits
- Use of ICT and Interactive Whiteboard
- Assessment for learning and self-assessment
- Revisit previous learning
- Planning Boards - What do you know already...? What do you want to find out...? How will you find out...?
- Thinking maps to develop TSPC
- Introduction of De Bono's hats to develop TSPC
- Outdoor Learning Area
- Target-setting
- Play/Activity-Based Learning

Our teachers may use a range of above strategies in any one lesson: ensuring that there is provision for choice and that children have ownership of their learning. Our teachers, as far as is possible, will relate to real-life situations, bring the real world into the context of the children's experiences.

### **Strategies to Develop Motivation and Positive Attitudes Towards Learning:**

We will focus on positive behaviour, praising and rewarding individuals/groups who achieve the desired behaviour. Teachers will model desired/appropriate attitudes and also draw attention to these when they are evident in class. Our strategies can include the following:

- Set clear learning objectives so that the pupils are *aware* of *what* they are expected to learn/*how* they are expected to behave.
- Give responsibility appropriately to develop independence and self-motivation/self-discipline.

- Deliver interesting, varied and enjoyable lessons using V.A.K. and a multi-sensory approach where possible.
- Set achievable targets and state time deadlines.
- Develop confidence by creating a climate where opinions are valued.
- Ensure that classrooms are bright, welcoming and child-focused, and that pupils' work is prominently displayed.
- Use 'Time Out' slots for moments of reflection.
- Rewards for effort and special achievements:
  - House points
  - Pupil of the Week Award
  - Homework passes
  - Motivational marking, stickers, certificates
  - Treats/prizes
  - Showing work to another teacher/class/principal/etc

### **Developing Independent Learners:**

Independent learning will be developed in a variety of ways *appropriate* to the age, needs and ability of our learner. The strategies outlined below will provide examples of the core approaches we use to the development of such independence.

All pupils will have the opportunity to undertake:

- Leadership roles in curricular and organisational areas eg. P1, Canteen, Playground, Literacy, Numeracy or ICT Buddies, Pupil Class Representative or House Captain/Vice Captain etc.
- Research activities utilising appropriate technologies,
- Self-correction and correction of study buddy's work,
- Personal organisational skills eg. self-dress for PE, personal hygiene, organisation of personal resources.
- Role modelling eg. use of ICT equipment/study buddy,
- Playground Buddies: supporting younger pupils' management at break or lunch time,
- P1 Buddies: role modelling appropriate behaviours for younger pupils at agreed times,

The management of Whiteabbey Primary School attempt to direct as much resourcing as possible towards facilitating and improving the learning and teaching that occurs in our school. Whiteabbey Primary School will attempt to provide the resources for the teaching of the Northern Ireland Curriculum by means of funding from the LMS budget, parental support and other funding income. The use of sustainable or recycled resources will be encouraged. Resources will be provided for all subject areas, for the full range of classes and will be available at in classrooms or central levels. To make best use of available budgets, resources may have to be shared between classes.

Staff and children will be encouraged to take due care of all resources and will exercise and adopt required safety procedures, if required, in their use. Regular maintenance especially of electricity operated resources, will be carried out to ensure the safety of staff and children.

### **Learning on Educational Visits - See our Educational Visits Policy:**

Our educational visits will be planned so that our children can reinforce their learning gained in the classroom situation and can experience their learning in a practical way. Visits are arranged in line with best guidance from the Department of Education.

Parents are given due notice of such visits and the various classes undertaking such visits will be supervised by staff and if necessary, our parents.

Our children will be given the opportunity in school to hear visiting speakers who can make a valuable contribution to their learning (e.g. police, firemen, missionaries) and opportunities to hear professional performers.

### **Our Learning Aims Relating to Our Parents:**

As a learning community we continually seek:

- To establish a sound, friendly and professional working relationship between home and school in which parents and teachers can feel able to talk frankly with each other about our children's progress, development and special needs.
- To help parents to understand the aims and objectives of the school and the implications of these for the educational programme our children follow.
- To emphasise that, in the education of children, teachers and parents are engaged in a co-operative undertaking.

Whiteabbey Primary School consider that an important part of the delivery of our curriculum is to involve parents in an open and practical way. Parents will be encouraged to help in the school as specialists, volunteers and supervising adults with a role to accompany children on educational visits. The Parent Teacher Association organises various events which raise money for additional resources and opportunities for all pupils in our school. We are mindful at all times that we wish to follow the highest levels of safeguarding practice as possible during these times and it is for this reason that our volunteers, with unsupervised access to our children, are all fully vetted by Access NI.

Parents of new P1 children will be invited to school in the summer term, prior to their child's start to hear about the contents of the curriculum for the Primary 1 year. Information will be given in the teaching and resources available for the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Parents will be informed about school events by way of letters/emails that are sent home regularly. Parent Teacher meetings are held in October and February for parents to discuss their children's progress. If parents so desire, they can make an appointment at any time to talk with their child's teacher throughout the year.

### **Discipline (Positive Behaviour policy will give more detail):**

Good behaviour is a necessary condition for effective learning to take place. The school instils an ethos of positive behaviour and expects all our children to follow these generally accepted norms. All pupils are expected to behave in a responsible manner both to themselves and others showing consideration, courtesy and respect. The excellent behaviour of our pupils is often commented on positively and regarded as an asset of our school. We have developed a House System and 'Golden Time' credit system seeking positively to reinforce good behaviour and a diligent work ethic, whilst minimising the opportunities for unwanted behaviour and careless attitudes to develop.

Children are encouraged and rewarded for good attendance, discipline, diligence and excellent personal manners. We know that all children respond positively to praise. Our school monitors and records achievements and serious or repeated misbehaviour so that we can identify patterns and reasons for them.

The more serious or persistent forms of pupil disruption or poor work will necessitate the direct involvement of our pupil's parents lead by their class teacher, then if required: Heads of School, our Vice Principal and Principal.

### **Pastoral Care – (Various policies exist to meet the specific requirements of this area):**

The welfare of each pupil is initially the responsibility of the class teacher who may seek help from any of our Safeguarding Team or other staff members. The school may seek support from outside agencies. Parents will be informed of any such referrals.

### **Staff Development:**

Self-evaluation will be encouraged and our teachers meet monthly for curriculum and other types of training. Members of outside agencies, advisers and educationalists will be encouraged to visit our school on (e.g. Baker Days, educational evenings) to discuss with: staff, governors, parents etc. their various educational topics. There are expert teachers in Whiteabbey who also are encouraged to pass on some of their expertise in the field of

education. Evaluating and monitoring the curriculum will play an important role in informing the management of our school as to priority areas of staff development required.

Teachers will be encouraged to be self-starters and avail themselves of opportunities to enhance their own personal and professional development which will also be helpful in delivery of their classroom practice. Subject to current resourcing the school will be supportive of this and may give % contributions towards course costs based on needs of school, staff working week and length of service in our school.

New trends in the curriculum will be carefully considered and if found suitable for the benefit of our children, action will be taken by the Principal to involve the school in any such projects.

**Management/Organisation:**

The Board of Governors delegate authority for matters in the day to day running of the school to the Principal and are kept fully informed at monthly Board of Governors' meetings and by regular email correspondence.

Monthly meetings are held between curriculum leaders, management and teaching staff to discuss the curriculum and their plans for development. Curriculum teams will also update their various policies and suggest to management current best practice and appropriate upcoming staff development opportunities.