



## St Mary's Mission Statement

"At St Mary's the child is at the heart of the Catholic faith community. As a school, we aim to provide a high standard of child centred education, in a safe, supportive learning environment, where respect and Christian values are promoted."

# Curriculum Policy

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## **Policy Statement**

The Board of Governors, Principal and Teachers have a responsibility to deliver the requirements of the **Northern Ireland Curriculum** which supports pupils' learning, and celebrates their academic and non-academic achievements. We provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which develops the skills, concepts and knowledge, necessary for future learning and living.

To assist us in our efforts we work in close partnership with our parents. Our staff, through their enthusiasm, dedication and hard work, support the pupils, and provide effective education for **all** of them, in all aspects of their development. We enable our pupils to reach their full potential, irrespective of race, gender, age or ability.

The term 'curriculum' means all the opportunities for learning provided by a school.

## **Overview of the Curriculum in St Mary's Primary School**

The School is organised into Key Stages as follows:

**The Foundation Stage:** Years 1 and 2

**Key Stage 1:** Years 3 and 4

**Key Stage 2:** Years 5, 6 and 7

The pupils' knowledge, skills and concepts are developed through the active learning experiences they receive in the six **Areas of Learning**.

**Language and Literacy** (including Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing)

**Mathematics and Numeracy** (focusing on the development of mathematical concepts and numeracy across the curriculum)

**The Arts** (including Art and Design, Drama and Music)

**The World Around Us** (focusing on the development of knowledge, skills and understanding in Geography, History, Science and Technology)

**Personal Development and Mutual Understanding** (focusing on emotional development, social skills, learning to learn, health, relationships and sexuality education, and mutual understanding in the local and global community)

**Physical Education / Physical Movement** (focusing on the development of knowledge, skills and understanding through play and a range of physical activities)

Underpinning the success in these curricular areas is the development of **Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities** which aim to prepare each child for lifelong learning and to help them operate effectively in society. The five areas are:

- **T**hinking, **P**roblem **S**olving and **D**ecision **M**aking (TPSDM) - sequencing, ordering, making predictions, justifying methods, justifying methods, evaluating outcomes
- **S**elf-**M**anagement (SM) - setting targets, organizing and planning, sustaining attention, reviewing learning, managing their time, seeking advice
- **W**orking with **O**thers (WO) - listening actively, respecting views and opinions of others, using negotiation and compromise, suggesting ways to improve
- **M**anaging **I**nformation (MI) - selecting, classifying comparing and evaluating, collating, recording and representing information, awareness of audience
- **B**eing **C**reative (BC) - experimenting with ideas, taking risks in learning, learning from and valuing other people's ideas

The learning opportunities provided through the Northern Ireland Curriculum should guide and support young people to develop as:

- Individuals
- Contributors to Society
- Contributors to the Economy and Environment

## **Our Aims**

- to develop as confident, disciplined and enquiring learners, able to make informed choices and decisions.
- to enjoy reading and to develop a confidence with language which will enable them to communicate effectively with others.
- to develop the skills and knowledge of mathematics to enable them to cope confidently with everyday situations
- to know and understand their world through scientific, historical, geographical and religious inquiry and to come to an understanding of their responsibilities to care for the environment
- to develop practical, creative, artistic and physical skills.

The **cross-curricular** skills of Communication, Using Mathematics, and Using Information and Communications Technology (ICT) are the bedrock skills through which young people access knowledge. These **skills** are developed across the **curriculum** and are the responsibility of all teachers. Emphasis is placed on transferring, applying and 'using' skills effectively, throughout the curriculum.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Communication is central to the whole curriculum. Pupils should be able to communicate in order to express themselves socially, emotionally and physically, to develop as individuals, engage with others and contribute as members of society. The modes of communication include talking and listening, reading and writing. However, effective communication also includes non-verbal modes of communication, wider literacy and the use of multimedia and ICT technologies which may combine different modes.

Across the curriculum, at a level appropriate to their ability, pupils should be enabled to develop skills in:

Talking and Listening - Pupils should be enabled to:

- listen to and take part in discussions, explanations, role plays and presentations;

- contribute comments, ask questions and respond to others' points of view;
- communicate information, ideas, opinions, feelings and imaginings, using an expanding vocabulary;
- structure their talk and speak clearly so that ideas can be understood by others;
- adapt ways of speaking to audience and situation;
- use non-verbal methods to express ideas and engage with the listener.

Reading - Pupils should be enabled to:

- read a range of texts for information, ideas and enjoyment;
- use a range of strategies to read with increasing independence;
- find, select and use information from a range of sources;
- understand and explore ideas, events and features in texts;
- use evidence from texts to explain opinions.

Writing - Pupils should be enabled to:

- talk about, plan and edit work;
- communicate information, meaning, feelings, imaginings and ideas in a clear and organised way;
- develop, express and present ideas in a variety of forms and formats, using traditional and digital resources, for different audiences and purposes;
- write with increasing accuracy and proficiency.

## **USING MATHEMATICS**

Using Mathematics is the skill of applying mathematical concepts, processes and understanding appropriately in a variety of contexts. Ideally these should be in relevant real life situations that require a mathematical dimension.

Across the curriculum, at a level appropriate to their ability, pupils should be enabled to:

- choose the appropriate materials, equipment and mathematics to use in a particular situation;
- use mathematical knowledge and concepts accurately;

- work systematically and check their work;
- use mathematics to solve problems and make decisions;
- develop methods and strategies, including mental mathematics;
- explore ideas, make and test predictions and think creatively;
- identify and collect information;
- read, interpret, organise and present information in mathematical formats;
- use mathematical understanding and language to ask and answer questions, talk about and discuss ideas and explain ways of working;
- develop financial capability;
- use ICT to solve problems and/or present their work.

## USING ICT

In school, ICT forms a vital part of every pupil's developing knowledge, understanding and experience. Pupils need a broad range of experiences that reflect real-world uses of technology. Therefore, they need support to acquire and develop the skills necessary to become informed and responsible users of ICT.

All teachers have a responsibility to provide learners with experiences of using ICT appropriate to their subject.

Staff in St Mary's Primary school will develop children's ICT skills according to The Curriculum Requirements for Using ICT as set out under headings often described as the 5 'E's. These are -

**Explore** - access/manage data, research/select/process and interpret information, investigate/predict and solve problems and how to keep safe and display acceptable online behaviour

**Express** - create/develop/present and publish ideas and create information and multimedia products

**Exchange** - communicate using contemporary methods and tools, share, collaborate, exchange and develop ideas digitally

**Evaluate** - talk about, review and make improvements to work, reflecting on the process and outcome

**Exhibit** - manage and present their work, showcase their learning across the curriculum

## **Areas of Learning**

### **Language and Literacy**

Language and Literacy is an Area of Learning in the curriculum. It focuses on developing children's language and literacy skills. These enable children to interact effectively in the world around them, express themselves creatively and communicate confidently.

Teachers should enable children to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in:

- Talking and Listening
- Reading
- Writing.

We aim to develop a love of the English language in its written form. We encourage children to be responsive, enthusiastic and informed readers. Through the provision of an environment, a love of reading is nurtured and characterised by high expectations of success, so that each individual's potential may be realised.

### **Mathematics and Numeracy**

**Mathematics and Numeracy** is an Area of Learning in the curriculum. It gives children a wider understanding of how the world around them works and prepares them for making decisions, solving problems and processing everyday information.

Teachers should enable children to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in:

- Processes in Mathematics
- Number
- Measures
- Shape and Space
- Handling Data.

All of these are connected, but **Processes** in Mathematics should be at the heart of all Mathematics and Numeracy learning. These processes focus on how children learn rather than on the content that they cover.

## **The Arts**

The Arts is an Area of Learning in the curriculum. It has three strands: Art and Design, Drama, and Music. Through The Arts, children can express their individuality, imagination and creativity. These are closely linked to all aspects of their learning.

**Art and Design** activities encourage pupils to:

- respond to the world around them
- respond to their individual feelings and emotions;
- develop and use their imagination;
- express their ideas, thoughts and feelings;
- solve problems; and
- become more aesthetically aware.

**Drama** provides opportunities for our children to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings in verbal and non-verbal ways. Throughout the day, teachers encourage children to communicate through drama, for example during play-based learning and circle time.

**Music** provides our children with the opportunity to explore feelings and express themselves in ways that support or go beyond verbal communication. Teachers should involve children in musical activities as a whole class, in groups, individually and during play.

Children actively engage with the core musical activities of composing, performing and listening.



Composing gives children rich opportunities to develop their creativity by experimenting with musical ideas.

Performing allows children to make their musical ideas real by singing or playing an instrument. Sharing their musical creations can help to develop children's self-esteem and confidence, along with their ability to listen to others and value their contributions.

Listening and responding to their own and others' music making are important musical activities that help our children to develop focus and concentration.

### **Personal Development and Mutual Understanding**

Our PDMU programme is aimed at encouraging each child to:

- develop personally, emotionally, socially and physically;
- lead healthy, safe and fulfilled lives;
- become confident, independent and responsible citizens, making informed decisions and responsible choices throughout their lives.
- it provides the opportunity to focus on emotional development, health and safety, physical activity and the importance of exercise, relationships with others and the development of moral thinking, values and action.

### **Physical Development and Movement**

Physical Development and Movement is an Area of Learning in the Foundation Stage. It gives children the opportunity to experience and develop a range of fundamental movement skills. These improve co-ordination, locomotion, control, balance and manipulation.

Our pupils have the opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in: Athletics / Games / Dance / Gymnastics

Physical Development and Movement helps children gain confidence and self-esteem. Through taking part in physical activities, they begin to develop an

understanding of safe practices and the relationship between physical activity and good health in everyday life.

Our children have opportunities to take part in daily physical activities, either indoors or outdoors, such as physical play and regular planned sessions of Physical Education. The Department of Education recommends that schools should provide children with at least two hours of curricular Physical Education each week. Planned activities allow the children to work individually, in pairs and in small groups.

### **The World Around Us**

The World Around Us is an Area of Learning in the primary curriculum. It plays a key role in encouraging children's natural curiosity and it answers some of their questions about the world from the perspectives of Geography, History, and Science and Technology.

Teachers provide opportunities for children to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in four connected strands:

- Interdependence
- Place
- Movement and Energy
- Change Over Time.

It is the responsibility of the teachers to connect children's learning across the strands and embed the key elements that underpin the curriculum objectives. This brings meaning and relevance to their experiences in school and in the world around them.

Children have opportunities to use their senses to develop their powers of observation and their ability to sort and classify, explore, predict, experiment, compare, plan, and carry out and review their work.

The World Around Us promotes curiosity through play-based learning in the Foundation Stage and an enquiry-based approach to learning in Key Stages One and Two. Our pupils have access to broad and balanced experiences across the

three statutory contributory elements of *Geography, History, and Science and Technology*.

### **Religious Education in St Mary's Primary School**

The programme for Religious Education in our school is based on the *Grow in Love* series. Through it we prepare the children for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation. A number of parents' meetings are organised to support this preparation and we are grateful for parents' attendance at these. The school chaplain and other parish groups assist in encouraging and developing the spiritual growth of the pupils.

St Mary's Primary School is a Catholic school with strong links to the parish, church and local community. We aim to establish a community, centred on Christ, so that His values and gospel message permeate the whole life of our school. We are firmly committed to:

- the aims of Catholic education
- developing positive effective pastoral care systems in our school
- establishing close links with the home, the parish and the wider community

### **Approaches to learning**

Teachers in St Mary's Primary School make use of a wide range of teaching methods, balancing whole class, group and individual activities, to engage children in effective learning. Every effort is made to engage children in activities which are interactive, practical and enjoyable. Teachers strive to create positive, stimulating learning environments, building on children's natural curiosity, and ensuring children are involved in planning, carrying out and reflecting on their own work.

## **Assessment for Learning**

Teachers in St Mary's Primary school employ a range of **Assessment for Learning** strategies which includes -

- The active involvement of children in their own learning by sharing learning intentions, developing their awareness of the skills and knowledge being developed and developing their awareness of the strategies they employ in their learning
- The provision of effective feedback in the form of oral and written comments and "Marking for Improvement"
- The use of peer and self- assessment by helping them to review and evaluate their own and others' work, set their own goals and understand how to improve.
- The use of standardised and class tests to inform future teaching and learning

Information gathered from these assessment techniques is used by teachers to:

Identify strengths and areas for improvement

Plan the next stages of learning

Make summative judgements at a particular point in time, for example, end of a topic, or end of each year

Pupils' personal development, and progress in all the curricular areas of learning, is monitored and assessed throughout the year.

We aim to involve parents in the education of their children and keep them informed about their children's progress.

In compliance with the Northern Ireland Curriculum, we report annually on each pupils' progress in the six Areas of Learning and on the development of pupils' Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities (TSPCs).

**Policy Review** This policy was completed in June 2021 and will be regularly reviewed by the Board of Governors. It will be updated in line with St Mary's Primary School's Policy Schedule.