

Glenann Primary School



World Around Us Policy

March 2023

Reviewed September 2025

Introduction

This policy is based on the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum document which is the starting point for planning a school curriculum that meets the needs of individual children. Within these requirements we, at Glenann Primary School, aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum so as to prepare our children for a rapidly changing world.

Glenann Primary School is located in an educationally rich rural environment. The local countryside, the close proximity to the seashore and the nearby small villages of Cushendun and Cushendall provide many opportunities to explore The World Around Us. In addition to this, our school is situated in Glenann, which in itself provides further opportunities to explore this area of learning.

1. What is the World Around Us?

'Children are naturally curious and often ask profound questions about themselves and the nature of the world around them. The purpose of this area of learning is to find age-appropriate answers to some of these big questions from the perspectives of geography, history and science and technology.'

(Page 83 Northern Ireland Curriculum)

The World Around Us is one of the six areas of learning in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. It focuses on the development of knowledge, skills and understanding in Geography, History and Science and Technology. Glenann Primary School aims to retain the best of current practice within the three subjects, while developing a topic/theme-based approach to this area of learning, and making relevant connections across all areas of learning, while ensuring breadth and balance.

The statutory curriculum for World Around Us is structured as follows:

Foundation Stage:

The World Around Us *including* Geography, History and Science and Technology

Key Stages One & Two:

The World Around Us *through the contributory elements of* Geography, History and Science and Technology

The **World Around Us** is presented as four inter-related strands that connect learning.

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

Three contributory elements within the World Around Us

Geography explores the relationship between the earth and its people through the study of the environment, place and space. It develops knowledge of places and environments throughout the world, an understanding of maps and a range of investigative and problem-solving skills both inside and outside the classroom. Children should develop knowledge and understanding of their place in the world, other places, and the processes which affect the people, conditions and life in that place. They should explore ideas about people, jobs, the weather and the environment both locally and globally and begin to consider their part in maintaining a sustainable world.

History is concerned with the concepts of sequence and time and with evidence which allows us to find out what happened in the past. The concepts of chronology, change/continuity, empathy and cause and effect will be developed through investigation of life in the past. Children should gain an awareness of their past and changes which have occurred over time through examining evidence, looking at photographs, watching TV and multimedia clips and listening to stories. Children will recognise the importance of evidence in giving a picture of the past but will understand that there can be different interpretations of this depending on how it is viewed.

Science and Technology aims to stimulate a child's curiosity in finding out why things happen in the way they do. It teaches methods of enquiry and investigation to stimulate creative thought. Children learn to ask scientific questions and begin to appreciate the way science will affect their future on a personal, national and global level. Children should have opportunities to develop the skills of Science and Technology and to develop awareness of the relevance and importance of Science and Technology in everyday life in finding out about themselves, the environment, the material and physical world.

2. Aims

- To develop knowledge, understanding and skills in the context of the World Around Us.
- To promote understanding, respect and appreciation for the world in which they live and their immediate environment.
- To acknowledge and appreciate a sense of the past, changes which have occurred and how these affect the world today.
- To develop an appreciation of the relevance and importance of Science and Technology in everyday life.
- To develop in children the skills of enquiry, investigation, analysis, evaluation and presentation.
- To encourage the use of thinking skills and inquisition to develop knowledge and find out about the world around us.
- To develop the ability to think clearly and logically.

- To develop in all pupils the personal qualities of perseverance, confidence, independence and co-operation with others.
- To enable all pupils to experience success and pleasure through practical activities.
- To develop knowledge and understanding of places at local, regional and national level through our Shared Education partnership programme with Carnlough IPS and school educational visits.

3. Skills

‘At the heart of the curriculum lies an explicit emphasis on the development of skills and capabilities for life-long learning and for operating effectively in society. Through opportunities to engage in active learning contexts, children should develop Cross- Curricular Skills (in Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT) and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities.’

(Page 5 Northern Ireland Curriculum)

At Glenann Primary School we also develop Geography, History and Science skills through the World Around Us. These skills are listed in Appendix 1. Links with the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities Framework have been highlighted to enable teachers to cross reference both. While many of the skills will be developed incidentally, we also plan for the development of subject specific skills when appropriate.

4. Planning Approaches

The World Around Us programme will be implemented at a level appropriate to the needs of the children in the context of our school and will also provide opportunities for pupils to explore their world in the context of home, school, the local area and the wider world. All planning is based on the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. We will also use the Ideas for Connected Learning (ICL’s), Thematic Units, STEM Units and other guidance material from CCEA, ELBs and PSTT in our planning. Whilst initial planning is **for** the pupils, at all stages children will be encouraged to become active participants in the planning/ learning process as we plan **with** the children as part of a plan, do, review process in all Key Stages.

Planning for Progression and Continuity

Planning for The World Around Us builds on the earlier experiences of children and continues to help them to explore the world they live in. At Foundation Stage, skills and concepts are developed during play-based learning and other planned activities relevant to the children’s interests and experiences. Careful observation informs the planning of future learning experiences within the World Around Us.

We ensure that the overall programme of learning all year groups, and across the key stages, is broad and balanced and that there is continuity and progression in children’s learning. We are adopting:

'a spiral approach to the World around Us so that concepts, knowledge and skills are introduced without undue repetition or significant gaps and are reinforced in a variety of contexts.'

(Northern Ireland Curriculum Page 85)

Connected Learning

Recognising the changes and requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, we adopt a thematic approach to planning. We emphasise the totality of the children's learning across the curriculum by making meaningful links across the learning areas. We encourage children to transfer understanding and skills from one context to another; allowing them to practise and apply the skills they have gained.

Our planning for WAU aims to promote:

- good investigations and the development of children's enquiry skills;
- good use of ICT to support teaching and learning;
- effective use of the school/local environment, educational visits and visitors to the classroom;
- progression in key aspects of Geography, History and Science and Technology; and
- the link between Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

The Ethos of Thematic Planning

The Ethos of Thematic Planning Learning should be empowering for all children. They should be filled with a sense of achievement when they gain new knowledge, develop or enhance their skills or find some new or extended understanding. Children should be challenged, motivated and inspired to become lifelong learners; confident people aware of their own particular skills, abilities and talents and be aware of what choices they have in life and able to confidently make informed decisions in their lives.

They should be mindful of the rights and needs of others in their community and beyond. They should know how to protect and care for their locality, the environment and our fragile earth. Children should be confident in the use of ever-changing technologies and be able to move with the pace of change in the world.

The curriculum which they experience at Glenann Primary School should help them gain the knowledge, skills and understanding they need and will need to equip them for their everyday world. The curriculum provided by thematic planning is designed to ensure that children learn as they need to as active, motivated and rewarded participants.

Through this exciting thematic curriculum, children not only learn across the Learning Areas of The World Around Us (Science, History and Geography), The Arts and Personal Development Mutual Understanding. They have relevant and interesting opportunities to deepen and develop their learning in Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT. They have well planned, exciting opportunities to apply their learning and to share and reinforce their learning.

Thematic planning allows for creation of themes which will provide new and relevant contexts for the practise, application and enhancement of learning in the key areas of Language and Literacy and Mathematics and Numeracy. This approach aims to raise standards for all learners.

5. Learning and Teaching

In Glenann Primary School, learning and teaching approaches provide suitably challenging opportunities for all pupils to take part in lessons fully and effectively. Learning experiences are active, practical and enjoyable. We make use of a wide range of teaching methods balancing whole class, group and individual activities to engage children in effective learning.

In the Foundation Stage, pupils experience much of their learning through well planned and challenging play-based activities. Children have opportunities to make choices and decisions, developing their own ideas and interests, either as starting points for learning activities or pursuing a topic in more depth. Children are provided with opportunities to participate in investigative work and practical activities through STEM. They are supported in taking risks in their efforts to succeed and are actively involved in planning, carrying out and reflecting on their work within the World Around Us learning area.

These broad, balanced experiences are built upon as pupils progress into Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, helping pupils to make connections within and across their learning, bringing meaning and relevance to their experiences in school and in life.

The World Around Us is presented as four inter-related strands that connect learning. Through the contributory elements of History, Geography and Science and Technology teachers should enable pupils to explore and develop knowledge, understanding and skills within each statutory requirement in the following:

Strand 1 Interdependence

➤ Foundation Stage:

- Who am I?
- What else is living?
- Am I the same as everyone else?

- How do living things survive?
- **Key Stage 1:**
 - Me in the world
 - How plants and animals rely on each other within the natural world
 - Interdependence of people and the environment
 - The effect of people on the natural environment over time
 - Interdependence of people, plants animals and place
- **Key Stage 2:**
 - How they and others interact in the world
 - How living things rely on each other within the natural world
 - Interdependence of people and the environment and how this has accelerated over time by advance in transport and communications
 - The effects of people on the natural and built environment over time

Strand 2 Movement and Energy

- **Foundation Stage:**
 - How and why do things move now and in the past?
 - How do things work?
 - Where do living things move?
 - Why do people and animals move?
 - Where do people and animals move to?
 - What sources of energy are in my world?
 - How and why they are used?
- **Key Stage 1:**
 - Sources of energy in the world
 - How and why people and animals move?
 - Changes in movement and energy over time
- **Key Stage 2:**
 - The causes and effects of energy forces and movement
 - Causes that affect the movement of people and animals
 - How movement can be accelerated by time and natural events such as wars, earthquakes, famine and floods
 - Positive and negative consequences of movement and its impact on places, people and interdependence

Strand 3 Place

➤ **Foundation Stage:**

- Where do I live?
- How have I changed over time?
- What is in my world?
- What is beyond my world?
- How has this place changed?

➤ **Key Stage 1:**

- How place influences plant and animal life
- Ways in which living things depend on and adapt to their environment
- Features of the immediate world and comparisons between places
- Change over time in local places
- Positive and negative effects of people on places

➤ **Key Stage 2:**

- How place influences the nature of life
- Ways in which people, plants and animals depend on the features and materials in places and how they adapt to their environment
- Features of and variations in places, including physical, human, climatic, vegetation and animal life

Strand 4 Change Over Time

➤ **Foundation Stage:**

- How do things move?
- What kind of changes happen, have happened or might happen?
- How can we make changes happen?

➤ **Key Stage 1:**

- Ways in which change occurs in the natural environment
- How people and places have changed over time
- Positive and negative changes and how we have a responsibility to make an active contribution

➤ **Key Stage 2:**

- How change is a feature of the human and natural world and any have consequences for our lives and The World Around Us
- Ways in which change occurs over both short and long periods of time in the physical and natural world
- The effects of positive and negative changes globally and how we contribute to some of these changes.

See Appendix 1 for the Learning Intentions for all these four strands, as outlined in the Northern Ireland Curriculum for Foundation Stage, Key Stage One and Key Stage Two.

6. Assessment

Assessment in The World Around Us, as in all areas of learning, will be used to promote, enhance and deepen the children's learning. It involves all methods normally used to appraise the children's learning, either individually or in groups. The outcomes from these assessments can then be used to identify the progress which pupils make in relation to the processes, skills, understanding and knowledge outlined in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. We take account of Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies and allow this formative assessment to help and guide planning. The key reasons for assessment within WAU will be to:

- enhance performance, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- promote greater resilience when faced with challenges;
- increase independence;
- develop a better understanding of the natural and physical aspects of the world in which they live;
- experience a quest for knowledge;
- promote the acquisition of skills; and
- develop a positive climate for learning.

7. Inclusion

At our school, the World Around Us forms part of the school Curriculum Policy to provide a broad and balanced education to all children. Through our teaching, we provide learning opportunities that enable all pupils to make progress. We do this by setting suitable learning challenges and responding to each child's different needs and plan pupil experiences accordingly.

At Glenann Primary School, we promote enjoyment in learning and endeavour to meet the needs of all our pupils. At our school, we work with external agencies, who will provide advice, support and specialised intervention when required.

Children will be helped to access this learning area using a range of learning styles, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. They are able to record and demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways according to their learning needs and preferences. Children with exceptional ability will have access to more demanding aspects of The World Around Us and increased resources may be required.

8. Learning in the Outdoors

Glenann Primary School has developed the potential for outdoor learning through the exploration of our local glen (Clachan and Ossian's Grave), planning for outdoor learning within themes, Play Based

Learning and Activity Based Learning, links with our Shared Education partner school, Carnlough Integrated Primary School and, wherever relevant and possible, facilitating learning through the exploration of the local and wider area, including Cushendall Beach and Cottage Wood. When appropriate, help from outside organisations/facilitators is used to help maximise these opportunities. The outdoor classroom, installed in January 2022, provides opportunities for lessons which encourage children to explore, discover and be creative within their surroundings.

Our pupils have opportunities to develop skills and concepts in an outdoor learning environment where they will:

- become more aware of, more observant in and more responsive to their surroundings;
- develop an approach to careful observation, accurate recording and thoughtful analysis;
- encourage an interest in environmental issues; and
- foster a sense of wonder and discovery.

Children should have the opportunity to study aspects of their own immediate world, including different features of town and countryside and make comparisons between local and wider world issues.

All educational visits will be undertaken in accordance with **Educational Visits - Policy, Practice and Procedures**.

9. Health and Safety

We enable pupils to have access to the full range of World Around Us activities. Where children are to participate in activities outside the classroom, we carry out a risk assessment prior to the activity, to ensure it is safe and appropriate for all pupils.

There will always be elements of risk and uncertainty as children engage in active learning. The NI Curriculum document states:

‘All activities must be taught within a safe environment and children must be made aware of safe practice at all times’

(Page 84 Northern Ireland Curriculum)

For The World Around Us activities, we assess and manage risks with reference to the following documents.

- ASE: ‘Be Safe!’ which provides detail on legislation, teacher responsibilities, risk assessment and curriculum activity

- EA: 'Educational Visits' details statutory obligations of schools when taking children off the school premises.
- CLEAPSS: providing direct assistance to classroom teachers.

10. WAU Coordinator/Curriculum Leader - Role and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of The World Around Us Co-ordinator to:

- draw up action plans for the development of the World Around Us in our school;
- monitor the running of the World Around Us scheme to ensure continuity and progression throughout the school;
- negotiate the place of WAU within the School Development Plan and be involved in monitoring and evaluating;
- develop and disseminate knowledge and expertise of The World Around Us in the context of the whole school policy on Curriculum Professional Development (CPD);
- advise and guide colleagues with regard to appropriate classroom practice;
- formulate policy / scheme of work in association with teachers and principal and in line with the School Development Plan;
- promote and disseminate the policy within school;
- undertake monitoring to include lesson observations, examination of planning and carry out evaluations, where appropriate;
- ensure that the area of learning is properly resourced in terms of acquisition, safe storage and access; and
- liaise with appropriate advisory services, eg: EA, CLEAPSS, PSTT, etc.

11. Personnel

Taking account of the Revised Curriculum, we as a staff recognise the responsibility which every member of staff has for developing the World Around Us. The co-ordinator, with the principal's guidance, will be responsible for leading policy development and leading all teaching staff in the teaching and development of the World Around Us in our school. As a school with a history of close staff co-operation, the World Around Us will be developed with whole staff input to include a review of present schemes of work in accordance with the requirements of the guidelines of the Northern Ireland Curriculum as it is further implemented throughout the school with the use of thematic units and thematic planning.

It will be important for the co-ordinator to ensure progression and continuity in the World Around Us throughout the school. The co-ordinator, wherever possible, will support colleagues in their development of schemes of work and in their assessment and record keeping activities. Following consultation with staff as to the school's training needs, the co-ordinator will arrange training, when necessary, through the World Around Us Advisory Services.

An important aspect of the co-ordinator's role will be to monitor progress and advise the principal on action needed and to keep up to date with development in World Around Us education through reading and attending relevant courses.

12. Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all teaching staff. Monitoring of the standards of children's work and of the quality of teaching in Geography, History and Science and Technology within the World Around Us is the responsibility of the World Around Us Co-ordinator.

The work of the World Around Us Co-ordinator also involves supporting colleagues in the teaching of this learning area, being informed about current developments, and providing a strategic lead and direction. As required, time is allocated for fulfilling the vital task of reviewing samples of children's work and monitoring teaching and learning in the subject.

The World Around Us Co-ordinator gives the principal an annual evaluation of the action plan, in which the achievements of the school year, strengths and areas of future development in this learning area are evaluated.

13. Monitoring and Evaluating

Monitoring and evaluating are integral parts of the teaching and learning in our school and are the responsibility of all members of staff. The co-ordinator will oversee the progress we are making towards fulfilling our aims. This will be achieved through:

- formal World Around Us meetings;
- regular and informal discussions with staff;
- evaluation of pieces of work;
- displays of work; and
- discussions with pupils.

The evidence which we gather through these monitoring procedures, will be evaluated regularly in order to inform future planning. We will ensure that the pupils' work is of a high standard and that these standards are evaluated, maintained or, in some areas, improved. We intend to do this through:

- the sharing of learning intentions and success criteria;
- formative assessment;
- formal / informal assessment undertaken as part of normal classroom teaching;
- observation of practical activities; and
- discussion with pupils including pupils' self-assessment.

14. Resources

We are continually developing, renewing and updating resources for all WAU topics/themes in the school. We keep some essential equipment and practical materials in a central store. Class teachers will supplement these resources with their own (and pupils') materials. Classroom libraries contain a supply of topic and reference books and children have access to computer software (C2K programs) and the internet to complete individual research. Teachers utilise the school grounds, the outdoor learning area and the local environment to enhance children's learning experiences (refer to Section 8 – Learning in the Outdoors).

15. Home/School Links

Parents will be kept informed of topics that their children will be learning about and how to participate in their education. They will also be made aware of issues of interest to them concerning developments within the school or the wider education field.

This will be done through:

- annual written reports at the end of the school year;
- displays of work around the school;
- photographs and videos;
- parent interviews;
- the Glenann Primary School website; and
- the official Glenann Primary School Facebook.

Approval of World Around Us Policy

Approved by Board of Governors

Acting Chairperson: *Mr F Close*

Date: 23 / 09 / 25

Acting Principals: *Mrs Bailey and Miss Loughrey*

Date: 23 / 09 / 25

Date of Next Review: September 2028

Appendix 1

Stages	Learning Intentions (We are learning...)
Foundation Stage	
	<p>To begin to have a sense of the world around them (BC)</p> <p>To become familiar with concepts such as fair/not fair, the past, my place (MI)</p> <p>To use our senses to find out about our world (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To stop to look closely and carefully (MI)</p> <p>To use a magnifying glass, digital microscope (MI)</p> <p>To record independently in a variety of ways (MI)</p> <p>To make suggestions when planning what to do (BC)</p> <p>To use simple subject specific language (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To begin to have a sense of the passage of time (MI)</p> <p>To be aware of how to find out about the past (TPS & DM)</p> <p>That we can find out by exploring (BC)</p> <p>To begin to ask questions relevant to our explorations (BC)</p> <p>To recognise change in our own lives (MI)</p>

Stages	Learning Intentions (We are learning...)
Key Stage One	<p><i>As for Foundation Stage and</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To begin to have a sense of how geography, history, science and technology help us to understand our world (MI) <li>To begin to ask more focussed questions around our observations (BC) <li>To make simple predictions and give reasons for these (TPS & DM) <li>To recognise and begin to explain why tests are fair/not fair (TPS & DM) <li>To classify according to simple differences (TPS & DM) <li>To recognise patterns in the natural and built environment e.g. Spring growth, house types etc. (MI) <li>To interpret information from simple maps (MI) <li>To begin to plan what to do (MI) <li>To follow a structured enquiry (MI) <li>That we may use all senses to explore and survey the natural and built environments (MI) <li>To use standard measures when working (MI) <li>That we can record work in a variety of ways (MI) <li>To describe what happens and explain why (TPS & DM) <li>To relate what happened to what we predicted (TPS & DM) <li>To examine evidence and opinions from a range of sources (TPS & DM) <li>To record information using simple timelines (MI) <li>To begin to understand what life was like for older people we know (BC) <li>To be aware of how people's experiences may have influenced how they felt (BC) <li>To identify how life in other time periods is similar to, or different from, the present day (TPS & DM) <li>To begin to identify why events happened in the past (TPS & DM)

Stages	Learning Intentions (We are learning...)
Key Stage Two	<i>As for Key Stage One and</i>
	<p>That history, geography, science and technology help us to understand our world (MI)</p> <p>To use more precise subject specific language (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To suggest subject specific questions using an enquiry-based approach (MI)</p> <p>To record and present information in appropriate formats (MI)</p> <p>To use different ways to find out about our world e.g. exploration, survey, fair test (BC)</p> <p>To make predictions based on previous knowledge (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To design and carry out a fair test (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To make observations noting close detail and to be able to use microscope (MI)</p> <p>To make observations taking account of the need for care and accuracy (SM)</p> <p>To make decisions about what, when and how to measure with increasing accuracy (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To draw conclusions and make comparisons from our work (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To sort and classify according to more complex similarities and differences, offering explanations (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To begin to relate cause with effect (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To structure a simple enquiry (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To investigate an issue from different viewpoints (BC)</p> <p>To develop a sense of place through the use of maps, plans, photographs and atlases etc. (MI)</p> <p>To examine evidence and opinions from a range of sources and distinguish between fact and opinion (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To order and sequence information to demonstrate understanding (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To create timelines within a broad historical period (MI)</p> <p>To identify change and continuity within a period studied and suggest reasons (TPS & DM)</p> <p>To appreciate that there may be different points of view / different causes and consequences of an event or situation (BC)</p>

MI – Managing Information

BC – Being Creative

TPS & DM – Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making

SM – Self Management

WWO – Working With Others