



SAINT MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL- POLICY FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING 2016

As a Catholic Primary School, our core purpose is to ensure that our curriculum is embedded within a Christian community and that all our pupils achieve their potential in all subject areas especially literacy and maths. Leaving this school with both high levels of attainment and having progressed well from their starting point. We believe that we will be more successful if this core goal is enshrined in a clear and shared approach to teaching and learning and to school ethos.

As a school, we aim:

- To ensure that we inspire in all pupils, a love of learning and the desire to continue to learn.
- To treat each child as an individual and cater for their distinctive needs.
- To equip all pupils with the tools and self-confidence necessary to constructively influence their own lives.
- To ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to take part in the life and work of the school.
- To be a place every child remembers with affection.

The following describes how we work together as a school in pursuit of these aims. These are our common principles of teaching and learning.

Put creativity at the heart of teaching and learning

We believe that children who think creatively and independently are more likely to discover things for themselves, to be open to new ideas and to be motivated to work beyond lesson time to pursue topics of interest. Allowing children to think and work creatively develops self-confidence and builds up key learning skills e.g. how to manage their own behaviour, their understanding of the learning process, their preferred learning style, their ability to think systematically, to manage information and to learn from others. Creativity enables the children to explore ideas and make links which are characteristics of effective learning which underpin learning and development across all areas of learning.

We believe these key skills and attitudes are best developed within a motivating crosscurricular and thematic approach. Our aim is to create a rich and varied curriculum which meets the national requirements but is uniquely developed by us. Teachers are encouraged to think creatively when planning a term's work in all subjects -to make connections between subjects, to take risks, and to be innovative. Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- Each class has its own topic each half term.
- There is no requirement to adhere strictly to the structures of any particular schemes of work, working from the New National Curriculum, teachers are free to create the context for learning that they feel not only inspires

themselves and then will consequently inspire the children, whilst covering all statutory requirements.

- Teacher's personal enthusiasms and passions are positively encouraged and supported.
- Teachers use each other's expertise and are encouraged to share good practice.
- We value children's individual responses and independence of thought.
- We have several special events during the year.

Make learning vivid and real

As teachers we work hard to plan interesting and engaging work that stimulates imaginations. We maximise first hand and practical experiences using as many resources (objects, artefacts, people, places) as we can find. Depth is more important than breadth and work is blocked in subjects such as design technology and art to allow for maximum engagement and quality rather than superficial curriculum coverage.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- We have a policy of a minimum of 3 trips or visitors per class per year.
- We subscribe to the Derbyshire Library Service and each class may order a box a term, including costumes where relevant.
 - It is expected that artefacts that support topic work will be displayed centrally in the classroom.
 - Our termly planning matrix allows teachers to plan work in blocks.
 - Children are actively encouraged to bring in resources to support class work.

Inclusion and success make for success

We are an inclusive school. The achievements, attitudes and well-being of every person in the school matters. This is made evident in our ethos and values. All staff instinctively attempt to overcome children's barriers to learning.

Tell me and I will forget

Show me and I will understand

Involve me and I will remember

We regard pupils equally in relation to their individual needs. As a staff, we constantly consider teaching style, environment, rules and expectations of behaviour to ensure that every child is feeling confident happy and secure. There are good supports in place for SEND provision. Recognising and celebrating success through assemblies, displays and performances is very important. We ensure that there is a broad range of opportunities to shine.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- It is expected that work will be differentiated to at least 3 broad levels.

- As part of our commitment to a Growth Mindset philosophy, ability groupings are flexible.
- All children should find work 'just right' and no child should experience repeated failure.
- We have teaching assistants who work closely with classteachers to offer additional support and expertise.
- We have good relationships with a range of other professionals and value their support and advice in meeting children's needs.
- We have a School Council, which meets twice every half term and we are members of the High Peak Kids Council.
- There are regular references on our Friday newsletter which specify a range of achievements.
- Our Friday 'Star of the Week' assembly is a celebration of the children's achievements, perseverance and effort. Which fully endorses growth mindsets.
- Teachers mention individual children who come to the front and receive a certificate, pencil and a sticker.
- Children's opinions are regularly sought through questionnaires, child's voice class council meetings, discussions and suggestion boxes.

Set high standards

We have high expectations of staff in terms of commitment and professionalism, classroom organisation, display and personal expectations of the children.

We have high expectations of learners and the effort they should put into learning at school and at home, and what they can achieve.

We regard the acquisition of knowledge and understanding as being the utmost importance, therefore the topics are planned so as to include lots of information and interesting facts.

Examples of how this looks policy looks in practice:

- Staff meetings begin on time with a prayer and everyone is there.
- Deadlines must be met – they are set for a reason.
- Classrooms are expected to be well organised, tidy and arranged to enable the children to be independent in using resources.
- Sympathetic and carefully thought out colours should be selected for mounting work and the display boards.
- Classroom display boards should be changed at least half termly, with work that reflects the term's theme; display boards should encompass learning walls for the core areas.
- We work as a team to cover all communal display boards once a term.
- Children are expected to be at school on time every day.
- The quality of work expected from the children is high.

Children should experience excellence

We recognise and value high achievement and create opportunities for those children

who excel, where relevant, to compete beyond the school. We positively encourage teachers to seek out subject specialists to enhance topic work so that the children have the experience of working alongside experts. Each teacher has personal strengths too and is encouraged to share these with their class or by leading a club.

Asking questions is central to learning

We recognise the significance of questioning, participating in 'shared thinking' and discussion, in our teaching and in our work as a staff. Interactive teaching promotes this style of learning. Teachers' questions need to be well planned and to both prompt ('What was the name of...') and probe ('What if'...) the children's thinking. The best questions are those aimed just above what the child can already do; Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development".

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- We start each topic finding out what the children already know and what they would like to find out.
- We make good use of 'talk partners' and 'hot seating'.
- The plenary is seen as a vital part of the lesson, and is used to further extend children's thinking and to test possibilities for next steps.
- Children's questions are always responded to and valued.
- We positively encourage inquisitiveness and intellectual curiosity!

We have a growth mindset culture

A key concept which shapes the ethos of our school is **growth mindsets** based on the work of Carol Dweck. Rather than simply praising success we praise effort and persistence. We believe the best thing to do is to teach children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep on learning. For children who find work easy we make sure they encounter more difficult tasks. Our children recognise that effort, persistence and good teaching are what help them improve. If children have fixed mindsets they find it hard to cope with failure: we teach our children to see mistakes and failure as positive. This makes for a very energetic and inclusive culture. It also has a really positive effect on our ethos and on how children approach learning and support each other.

Assessment for learning is at the heart of all assessment.

We aim to include children in their learning as much as possible.

Teachers are constantly assessing, as they ask questions in lessons, mark children's work and observe children working, this style is known as formative assessment. We also value summative assessments of learning, where the children are assessed against national standards. Teachers meet with parents individually to discuss progress, mid Autumn term, mid Spring term, and then at the end of each school year, when teachers write a very full report on each child.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- Some work is marked alongside the child, if not alongside then before the next lesson.
- Teacher's comments are there to help the children improve their work and also so praise their efforts.
- The children are encouraged to evaluate and edit their work.
- All assessment data is kept by the class teacher and the head teacher.

Develop learning skills and personal qualities across the curriculum, inside and outside the classroom

We believe that by involving the children in roles and responsibilities beyond the classroom contributes to our ethos and sense of community. We place a high value on learning outdoors and all the children benefit from our forest schools area and our large outdoor areas. We also value special events and traditions and the importance these have for our school's culture. As a small school relationships between adults and the role models these offer the children are vital. We want parents, children and staff to enjoy school! We value the role of families in learning and expect good open communication with parents, listening sensitively and responding thoughtfully to their queries and concerns.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- Meet and greet every morning by a member of staff.
- Excellent behaviour when visiting places out of school.
- Teachers readily become involved with after school and lunchtime clubs.
- Teachers present evenings for parents to inform them about various curricula areas.
- Staff and pupils really enjoy their work at this school, and this is communicated to our many visitors.

Here at Saint Mary's Catholic School we strive for excellence!

This policy was reviewed in April 2016.