



Curriculum Policy

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SCHOOL CURRICULUM POLICY

Definition

The curriculum of Victoria Primary School consists of the activities and experiences designed to promote the personal, social and academic development of its children. It includes the schemes of work followed, the NI Curriculum and the wider curricular activities available. It is reflected in the school's ethos: the way the school is organised, the equality of opportunity, the personal relationships, the attitudes and values which we intend children to develop as a result of attending our school. Children learn from all of these experiences so we try to make sure that we are consistent in providing an appropriate curriculum for the children entrusted to our care.

The curriculum policy that follows is a statement of intent. It reflects the requirements of the Education Reform (NI) Order (1989), sets out our guiding principles and main aims and provides a framework for our continued development. It is recognised that it is a constantly evolving document and will be reviewed in light of any future developments.

“The Northern Ireland Curriculum sets out the minimum requirement that should be taught at each key stage. Within these requirements, schools have a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all children and schools should aim to give every child the opportunity to experience success in learning and to achieve as high a standard as possible.”

(CCEA 2009 p2-‘The Northern Ireland Curriculum-Primary’)

In Victoria Primary School, we aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all children. We strive to give every child the opportunity to experience success in learning and to achieve as high a standard as possible. Our staff is dedicated to meeting the needs of each child, setting high standards for pupil effort, achievement and behaviour. We encourage our pupils to develop lively, enquiring minds, to think creatively and to use their own initiative to work with increasing independence.

Guiding Principles

Everyone involved in the school works to ensure that Victoria Primary is a friendly, welcoming and caring family centred school where individual qualities are valued and each child is nurtured, supported and challenged to achieve the highest possible personal and academic standards.

We believe:

- In the importance of promoting self esteem, developing self-confidence and encouraging positive attitudes to learning;
- That quality teaching and learning takes place in an orderly but relaxed atmosphere where positive behaviour is promoted and acknowledged and close home-school contact is maintained;
- That a rich and varied curriculum should be available to every child whilst a focus on achieving appropriately high academic standards in Communication, Mathematics and ICT is maintained;
- The teaching staff has a strong commitment to providing the highest quality of teaching and is dedicated to ensuring the children have every opportunity to develop their personal, social and academic potential.

General Aims

The Board of Governors, principal and Staff of Victoria believe the broad aims for the school should be:

- To promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of children;
- To prepare children for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life;
- To enlarge children's knowledge, experience, skills and imaginative understanding;

- To provide quality teaching and learning experiences for the benefit of every child who attends the school.

We work towards achieving these broad aims by promoting purposeful teaching and learning, through an appropriate range of structured educational and social experiences, within the general framework of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and by helping children to:

- Develop self esteem and respect for themselves and others;
- Recognise and become confident in their developing abilities;
- Work independently and as members of co-operative groups;
- Develop self-discipline within an environment which promotes positive behaviour and attitudes towards people and their property;
- Acquire appropriate knowledge, skills, concepts and attitudes;
- Begin to understand the community in which they live and to appreciate the values, beliefs and attitudes of our society and the society of others.

We believe that it is our responsibility to ensure that children are encouraged to develop their capabilities fully and are supported in whichever ways are necessary to prepare them for the social and educational challenges that lie ahead.

We seek to maintain positive relationships within which teaching and non-teaching staff, Governors, parents and others with an interest in the education and welfare of children, can help us to achieve these aims.

Objectives

In drawing up the school's guiding principles and main aims with regard to the curriculum we carefully considered:

- What we should provide for the children who attend our school;
- What range of knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes we want our children to gain through the work being done at each stage;
- What understanding and qualities we wish to help children develop or to acquire.

The specific objectives about what we wish children to achieve will be set out in each subject policy statement as appropriate and reviewed in light of changes in curriculum development.

Organisation of the Curriculum

Our aim is to provide a curriculum that contributes to the development of the whole child. This will be achieved by ensuring study in the following skills and knowledge:

Cross-curricular skills:	Communication; Using Mathematics and using ICT
Areas of learning:	The Arts; Personal Development and Mutual Understanding; Physical Education; the world around us and Religious Education
Thinking skills & Personal Capabilities:	Managing information; Working with others; Thinking, Problem Decision Making; Self-Management; Being Creative.

It is important that the school retains within its teaching complement staff who are experienced in co-ordinating and delivering the key areas of the curriculum, namely Communication, Mathematics and ICT. It is also essential that these staff participate in curriculum development training and promote and disseminate this to all staff.

By following programmes of work closely based on the requirements of the NIC, a breadth of learning can be achieved.

Within this broad curriculum, balance, differentiation and equality of opportunity in teaching and learning is required.

Breadth in the Curriculum

Breadth in the curriculum will be achieved by ensuring children experience work in each of the areas of study and educational themes. It will also feature within a curricular area, for example, in Communication opportunities exist for talking and listening as well as for reading and writing. The structure of the NIC provides for breadth both within each curricular area and in areas that relate and complement one another (interconnected learning) so that knowledge, skills, concepts and attitudes can be learned and practised right across the curriculum.

Balance in the Curriculum

Balance in the curriculum will be achieved by making sure time is carefully managed to ensure that appropriate development of each area of study and the educational themes over the course of a school year. Balance will also be sought in:

- Teaching organisation –** whole class, group, pair, indoor and outdoor and individual provision; and
- Teaching approaches –** between practical and theoretical work and between knowledge and skills development. Catering for the various learning styles and ensuring work is differentiated to cater for various needs

The Relevance of the Curriculum

We intend to make the curriculum we offer is relevant as possible by ensuring that what is taught and learned meets the children's present and future needs and clearly contributes to the progressive development of knowledge, understanding, skills, qualities and attitudes. We try to ensure that the curriculum available is practical, first in the sense that it involves active learning, doing and making, and second that the learning is related, where possible, to real situations and seen to be applicable to everyday life.

Differentiation in the curriculum

Our curriculum is provided for all children, but as children learn at different rates, the learning and teaching methods used have to take account of individual needs and interests. Teachers consider carefully how provision can be made available for different levels of attainment, ability and experience in each class and year group. PLPs are written by the class teacher, in conjunction with the LSC and external organisations (when required) to support pupils with identified learning needs.

Monitoring, assessing and recording of work and progress provide useful information to assist in matching work to the needs of the children.

Equality of Opportunity in the Curriculum

We seek to ensure that our children have equal opportunity to cover the areas of study and theme regardless of sex, ethnic background or religion.

The community and the Curriculum

We acknowledge and seek to foster parental involvement in supporting children's learning. Opportunity to be involved with other adults interested in their education and welfare will also be sought where this can enrich the learning experience.

DELIVERY OF THE CURRICULUM

Coherence in the Curriculum

To ensure that children do not see the curriculum as a series of unconnected parts, elements of the areas of study are drawn together where this can be achieved in a meaningful way. For example, communication skills, talking and listening, using mathematical skills, problem solving, use of ICT and study skills are developed across the various areas of the curriculum. Work on these themes provides for a range of elements from individual subjects to be carefully integrated. This contributes to the development of knowledge and understanding, of skills and attitudes associated with several areas of study.

Continuity and Progression

Careful planning and good communication ensures that each teacher is aware of what has been achieved and what needs to be done with each class. Close monitoring of each child's progress, continuous assessment and record keeping will also contribute to ensure coherence. Continuity in teaching methods, closely following agreed programmes of study, school guidelines and careful assessment and record keeping all help to ensure teaching and learning in any one school year builds on what has already been achieved. Our subject guidelines are structured to ensure appropriate progression in learning through sequencing experiences, activities, knowledge and skills development, appropriate to the age and ability of the children.

Assessment

The measuring of a child's progress and achievement, the recording of this information and the annual reporting of information to parents are important elements in the school curriculum. Assessment helps the teacher to determine the progress, level of ability and attainment of each child. Teachers provide children with individual targets, at least twice per year. These targets are outlined in each child's planner. It also helps the teacher to decide the content and pace of further work. Assessment takes many forms, from the monitoring of written class and home work to teacher observation of children

undertaking a range of tasks.

Standardised tests are used to provide additional information about a child's ability in Communication and Mathematics. The LSC and Class Teachers monitor pupil scores throughout the school to ensure consistency of progress and baseline achievement and feed this into curriculum development. Diagnostic assessment and screening is undertaken as required by the LSC. Senior Leadership and relevant Subject Leaders regularly monitor pupil progress through book scoops, classroom visits and Curriculum Conversations to ensure as consistent an approach as possible.

Children's progress and attainments are reported to parents through written reports annually. Teacher/parent consultations take place in October and February/ March for all classes.

Learning and Teaching Approaches

We endeavour to meet the needs of children generally within the context of composite classes, each with a teacher who is primarily responsible for the overall educational and personal development of each child in that class. Some use is made of outreach specialist teaching for children experiencing difficulty with learning and/or behaviour.

Teachers decide how children are organised in each class. Teaching occurs in whole class, mixed or ability groups, or when required, for individual children. Various teaching and learning approaches are used involving direct teaching, practical, exploratory and interactive methods. The requirements of the subject, the intended outcome(s) of the planned activity and the needs of the children in each class determine class organisation and teaching methods.

Review and Evaluation

The Governors, Principal and Teaching Staff recognise that the school's curriculum is not a fixed entity but needs to evolve in response to the changing needs of society and the requirements of government initiative reflecting changing needs in society. The school is responsive to such development and actively reviews and evaluates its progress in adapting and moving forward. A periodic review of the curriculum and other aspects of school is undertaken by the staff and, in conjunction with the governors, used to determine priorities for future development. All internal review and evaluation is undertaken with the intention of maintaining and developing the quality and relevance of teaching and learning that occurs within the school.

School schemes of work, planning (termly and weekly) and timetables give an indication of the breadth and balance of the various elements of the curriculum. External evaluations through, for example, inspections will give an indication of the quality of learning experiences provided and internal and external assessment results show the range and level of achievement of different groups of children.

Conclusion

The Education Reform Order requires Board of Governors to maintain a written curriculum policy. The school's guiding principles, main aims and this curriculum policy have been developed by the teaching staff and the Board of Governors. The curriculum section of the school development plan contains further details of curriculum organisation, priorities and planned developments.