



Teaching and Learning Policy

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Introduction

At Victoria Primary School we aim to ensure that the children at our school are provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to a consistently high level of pupil achievement. We recognise that children learn best when they are happy, confident and safe. We believe that every child is an individual and that they will learn through a range of different teaching / learning strategies and experiences.

The staff of Victoria have worked in partnership with the children and parents to develop a set of core values and beliefs, which have created the foundation for a learning school, one where the children do feel happy and confident. Amongst these values and beliefs is trust and respect for each other, generosity of spirit, a sense of self-worth and a strong sense of inclusion.

Our aim is to raise pupil achievement by having high expectations of everybody, both learners and teachers. By creating a learning and teaching culture in the school, by constantly involving the staff in professional development and by recognising that the Principal is a leader of learning, staff in Victoria believe that they have a solid foundation for an excellent teaching and learning environment.

The Northern Ireland Curriculum now promotes a more active and participatory classroom allowing for a learner-centred approach to teaching & learning. There is also a shift from product-driven learning to process-driven. These changes encourage us to reflect not only on the key principles of learning and teaching but also on our role in the process. Pupils now become more active learners and focus on asking questions and taking responsibility for their own learning. They in fact become reflective learners collaborating in their learning and actively listening to opinions of others. Instead of learners of individual subjects they are connecting their learning.

Aims and Objectives

Our Learning and Teaching Policy seeks to raise the achievement of children by:

- Using approaches to learning and teaching, which are consistent, innovative and challenging hence effectively meeting the needs of pupils.
- Understanding and accommodating, the range of types and preferred learning styles of pupils.
- Meeting the needs of all staff by offering continuing professional development opportunities.
- Meeting the need to retain the best features of educational practice when implementing the school curriculum.
- Providing an agreed focus for monitoring teaching and learning.
- Identifying pupils with Special Educational Needs and offering early intervention to assist pupil performance.
- Effectively using AFL techniques.

Effective Learning

In Victoria we acknowledge that people learn in different ways, therefore when planning we take into account the different forms of intelligence ensuring wherever possible there is a Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic element to each of our lessons.

Visual Learners – prefer teaching and learning materials which include; pictures, mind-maps, computers, interactive whiteboards, diagrams, flow charts, key words, television extracts and video clips. They also like work which is in colour as it aids retention, different colours on diagrams to denote different meanings, highlighter pens on written notes, information in bullet point format or using key words.

Auditory Learners – prefer teaching and learning opportunities which use sounds and voices and prefer teaching and learning activities which are organised into discussion group work which helps with the understanding of the task, talking through demonstrations, making auditory recordings instead of written notes and use computers.

Kinaesthetic Learners – often enjoy sessions where teacher demonstrates a skill and then gives them a practical task, enabling them to feel, touch and practise their skills. Teaching and learning could involve ‘brain gym’ activities, activities which require them to touch and feel and activities which are practical, use of computers and standing up and stretching every 20 minutes.

Effective Learning stems from high expectations and the expectations we have for our pupils are that they will:-

- understand lesson outcomes
- fully engage with all their lessons
- respond to questioning
- develop literacy and numeracy skills
- use both peer and self assessment to improve their learning
- show the ability to generate ideas and concepts
- collaborate effectively with others
- show a capacity for independent learning.

Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, to think for themselves and to become independent learners as far as possible.

Effective teaching

Effective learning only comes about from effective teaching. In Victoria the pupils learning is improved when the teacher:

- Focuses beyond **what** children learn to **how** they will learn and how the teacher needs to intervene in the process.

- Structures lessons well – has focused missions that are written in a language that children understand, includes meaningful tasks and has a plenary that allows time to reflect and review on what has been learned.
- Demonstrates a wide range of teaching strategies to accelerate learning. Uses visual, auditory and kinaesthetic teaching styles to ensure that all children are reached in a way that suits their particular learning style. Communicates in an articulate way using a variety of effective questioning to ascertain understanding and challenge learning. Models and demonstrates, uses stimulating foci and teaches memory and study skills.
- Encourages a variety of learning techniques and talks to children about how they learn and responds positively to their efforts.
- Marks children's work and in accordance to the school's marking policy, indicating what children need to do next in order to raise their own attainment – refer to school's Marking Policy.
- Makes the most of opportunities to learn together, reflecting on their own experiences and sharing good practice with colleagues especially those who are new to the profession.
- Tries new ways of working, embraces new ideas and takes pedagogical risks.

Lesson structure

At Victoria we have adopted an agreed lesson structure that embraces the ethos of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. It is paramount to stress the position of the teacher as a leader and facilitator of learning; it is through the teacher's enthusiasm, innovation and vision that children will be equally enthused to develop as lifelong learners.

Introduction

This is the opportunity for staff to discuss prior learning, to introduce and discuss the mission of the lesson and to negotiate the success criteria of the lesson. In effect, the teacher and pupils are producing the road map to learning success in their lesson, pupils should move away motivated to learn and succeed and knowing what it is they have to do to succeed.

Development

This should be made up of relevant and challenging tasks. There should be opportunities for different learning styles to be catered for and indeed different learning settings to be utilised, e.g. individual, paired, group and whole class. There should be a balance between guided and independent, active task. These tasks should be made up of a variety of differing types including non written tasks. There should be opportunities for children to self manage, manage information, be creative, work with others, think, problem solve and

make decisions. These opportunities should be developed across the whole curriculum, including Communication, Using Mathematics and Using I.C.T.

Plenary

This is the opportunity to assess the learning and indeed to celebrate the learning and to re draw the road map for future learning. Through effective questioning of and by the children we can truly assess what has been learnt and how it will impact upon future learning. We can look forward to new learning opportunities that may arise from the learning opportunities just experienced and we can link in with prior learning. It is important to recognise the voice of the learning participants in this process, all will listen and all will have an equal say in discussing their prior learning and determining their future learning.

Target Setting

In Victoria, we base our teaching on our knowledge of the children's level of attainment, our focus being to further develop the knowledge and skills of the children. We strive to set tasks appropriate to each child's level of ability. When planning work for our children with special educational needs we give due regard to information and targets contained in the children's Individual Educational Plans (IEPS). We have high expectations of all our children and believe that their work should be of a high standard. We set whole school, class and individual targets using the results of standardised tests and End of Key Stage Assessment. Targets are set taking into account areas that are highlighted as requiring improvement. Teachers working within the context of the SDP focus on raising the achievement of their pupils in highlighted areas so as to raise overall standards. Additionally, we set Targets for Underachieving Pupils; these pupils are identified through a direct comparison between CAT4 and PTM/ PTE scores. Additionally, a teacher's subjective judgement may also come into play in the formation of a class underachievement list. The targets for those identified pupils are created by the class teachers under the direction of the Numeracy and Literacy curricular leaders, and are constructed on analysis of test results and teacher input. Once underachievers have been identified, the reasons for underachievement are investigated and action plans drawn up so as to enable these children to make necessary progress.

Planning

Lessons are planned with clear mission. Our planning contains information about the tasks to be set, the resources needed, if identified, and the way we assess the children's work. All lessons are evaluated so that we can modify and improve our teaching and inform our planning in the future.

Ethos

In Victoria everyone is treated with respect and trust. Special effort is made to establish good working relationships, both in the class and throughout the

school. All teachers have access to copies of the school policies. Children are expected to comply with the policies so that we can promote the best learning opportunities for all. Classroom assistants and other adults who help in the classroom play an important role. As well as working with our children they help plan lessons with the teachers and assist in the evaluation of the children's work. They make an invaluable contribution to the learning environment of the school.

The Learning Environment

To ensure quality teaching and learning takes place in Victoria we believe we have created a learning environment which is:

- peaceful and calm
- challenging and stimulating
- happy, welcoming and organised
- well resourced

Classrooms are well organised to ensure children have the opportunity to learn in different ways:-

- investigation and problem solving
- research and finding out
- group work
- pair work
- independent work
- whole class work
- questioning and answering
- whole class work
- use of ICT
- educational trips
- creative activities
- role play and oral presentation
- designing and making things
- participation in sports and other physical activities.

Display in class and around the school.

At Victoria we as teachers believe it is important that we show pupils that we value their work. Teachers are responsible for changing their classroom displays regularly and also those on corridors. We are committed to displaying work, which is well presented, and reflects the best efforts of the children providing the work. We wish to encourage our children to become accustomed to taking care in the way they present their work and to regard its appearance as an important aspect of the completed product. Displaying pupils work can help us to promote in our pupils good self-esteem and a sense of the importance of always doing their best. Display in the school is used to create an attractive and stimulating environment. It should include work on different aspects of the curriculum and reflect the individual child's efforts as well as ability.

Homework

Homework is based on work, which is ongoing in school, and it reflects the learning taking place. It is intended to be relevant, challenging and appropriate to the pupils' needs. It is differentiated based on pupil ability. Tasks are varied to take account of learning styles and take the form of both practical and written activities – refer to school's Homework Policy.

Achievement

This is celebrated in many different ways:

- displays of work
- weekly classroom prizes
- verbal or written praise by teachers, peers, principal and parents
- opportunities to perform and share (e.g. Assembly)
- Over and Above Award (weekly)
- house points

Role of the Board of Governors

In Victoria, the Board of Governors play an active role in all aspects of school life. They fully support the teaching and learning taking place in the school by:

- monitoring and reviewing the school policies on learning
- supporting the various teaching strategies
- meeting termly to evaluate the work going on within the school.

The Role of the Parents

Like our Board of Governors, the parents play an active role within the school. We believe they have a fundamental role to play in helping children learn. We inform parents about what and how their children learn by: -

- holding parent meetings and information sessions to explain our school strategies for teaching and learning
- sending regular reports to parents explaining the progress made and how further improvement can be made with parents help
- encouraging parents to support their children with homework
- inviting them to curriculum workshops
- encouraging them to volunteer to accompany pupils on educational visits
- parental surveys

Parents also have a responsibility to the school. We would like our parents to:

- ensure that their child has the best attendance possible

- ensure that their child is equipped for school e.g school uniform, homework completed
- do their best to keep their child healthy and fit for school
- inform school if there are matters outside of school that are likely to affect performance or behaviour at school
- promote a positive attitude towards school and learning in general
- Support the school in its Positive Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy

Assessing, Monitoring and Reviewing pupil performance

All of our pupils are assessed each year in Numeracy and Literacy using standardised tests. The results of these tests are analysed by the teachers, co-ordinators and principal, and discussed with the staff and presented to the Board of Governors. The results of the tests are used to target set and to identify areas for improvement within our Teaching and Learning strategies. Each teacher assesses learning outcomes within their class through classroom observation and informal assessment.

Special Needs Pupils

In Victoria our aim is to ensure that all pupils receive a quality education that is delivered in such a way as to meet the needs of all pupils regardless of their ability. We strive to identify Special Educational Needs at the earliest opportunity through classroom observation, informal assessment and discussion with parents and pre school providers. When a child has been identified as having a special need the Code of Practice will be followed and IEPs will be provided where needed and if necessary the advice of outside agencies will be sought. SEN pupils will receive diagnostic testing at the beginning of each year and their progress will be regularly monitored through on going assessment. Where it is deemed appropriate, pupils will receive additional teacher support from Special Needs Assistants in the areas of Numeracy and Literacy. Within the class setting these children will also receive differentiated work appropriate to their needs.

Staff Development

In service training in the form of workshops are provided for staff by the subject coordinators. Teachers are provided with useful teaching materials and offered guidance and support. Teachers are actively encouraged by the principal to attend courses relating to the areas in which they are interested or would like to improve upon. Teachers are constantly reviewing their own teaching performance with the help of peer observations.

Teacher Induction in the Teaching and Learning Policy

Each new member of staff is given a copy of the policy on arrival and is then taken through the document by the curriculum coordinators. All areas are explained in detail and new teachers have an opportunity to ask questions and to seek clarification.

Time Management.

All teaching and learning activities are well planned so that each child is working at their correct level, they begin promptly and the initial pace is maintained. At the beginning of each year each teacher devises a timetable based on agreed specified times for teaching different areas of the curriculum. Children are aware from week to week when they will be covering different areas of the curriculum so that they are well prepared. This is achieved through good start / finish to each lesson and good working documents i.e., schemes, planners, notes etc.

Planning and Preparation.

- NI Curriculum Online materials;
- School Schemes & Policies;
- Medium Term;
- Weekly notes

Efficient planning and classroom organisation significantly reduces time-wasting activities. Teachers plan all activities by collaborating with other members of their year group during directed time. Six-weekly planners and weekly notes are studied by Co-ordinators who give feedback to the teachers.

Supply Teachers

Teachers may attend courses from time to time and because of this, supply teachers are needed. To ensure continuity, teachers should leave written guidance and suggested activities for all planned absences from the classroom. The teacher's weekly notes will also be available showing lesson plans, timetables and curriculum documents. If in doubt about additional needs the sub teacher is advised to contact the office and seek as much information as they can about the children they may have. Such information will be given orally and discretely on the teacher's introduction to the class from the outset by the Principal/ SLT. In many cases the class teacher may have left a schedule of work to be covered in class. The temporary teacher will then attempt to cover this complete schedule. For longer term substitutions the SLT work together to assist the temporary teacher plan and deliver the curriculum to the best of his / her ability.

Resource Finance

Curriculum areas are allocated money according to the needs identified in the School Development Plan and the accompanying School Budget Plan. The Principal and Co-ordinators discuss resource needs at the beginning of each year and closer to requisition time in the middle term. Requests for all equipment should be made to the Principal. Teachers should be mindful of the value and usefulness of resources they wish to purchase.