St Bride's PS
Teaching and Learning Policy

CONTENTS

Policy adopted by Governors January 31st 2017

1. Introduction

1.1 The staff of St. Bride's PS is dedicated to providing high quality teaching and learning experiences for all pupils.

1.2 All staff work together with parents, St. Brigid's Parish and the whole community to ensure that every child is treated as a unique individual and able to fulfil his or her potential in a safe and secure environment.

1.3 Teachers use a variety of strategies to ensure every child's needs are catered for and high standards are achieved.   We believe that effective teaching and learning occurs when children are encouraged, supported and nurtured, within a caring, Catholic ethos.

1.4 This policy outlines what we believe to be the key elements of effective teaching and learning, thereby ensuring that children perform to the highest standards and achieve their full potential.

2. Aims of this Policy

As a Catholic School, we seek to provide a happy, safe, caring environment in which all children are treated as individuals, are given the opportunity to grow in independence and develop self-confidence. Teachers motivate the pupils and engage them actively in their work. They encourage all pupils to become involved and value their contributions and efforts.

We believe this will enable our children to be better prepared personally, academically, spiritually and socially for the challenges of young adult life.

We aim to:
2.1 Develop the child as an individual and help them become a positive contributor to society
2.2 Enable children to reach their full potential by providing a broad and balanced curriculum with a varied range of extra-curricular activities;
2.3 Ensure teaching approaches include a well-judged balance of whole-class, group and individual activities, including using a range of organisational approaches, such as setting, to ensure that individual needs are properly addressed;
2.4 Make use of a wide range of teaching methods/ learning styles and use questioning to promote learning;
2.5 Encourage the pupils' abilities to think and do for themselves through open-ended tasks, problem-solving, investigation and personal research;
2.6 Work closely with home, community & St. Brigid's Parish to create an environment in which we promote learning;
2.7 Develop spiritual awareness through a strong Catholic Ethos which encourages the values of trust, honesty, respect, tolerance and a sense of fair play;
Utilise emerging technologies to develop the children's ability to become effective learners and provide them with the life skills for modern society;

We aim to do this by:

2.8 Promoting the caring Catholic ethos of our school, thus developing self-esteem and self-   confidence among all;

2.9   Meeting the needs of every child by identifying and providing high quality teaching and opportunities for all children, with additional support for Newcomer children and children with special educational needs;

2.10   Promoting and embedding problem solving strategies and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities into all teaching and learning;

2.11   Promoting transfer of knowledge and skills across all areas of the curriculum;

2.12   Involving pupils fully in their own learning, planning and assessment;

2.13   Recognising and encouraging pupils' qualities, interests and talents and providing for these;

2.14   Providing achievable challenges, with consistently high expectations for each child;

2.15   Developing children's communication skills across all areas of the curriculum;

2.16   Fostering a respect for self and others for agreed rules and building friendships;

2.17   18Promoting and encouraging healthy choices in diet, hygiene and exercise;

2.18   Developing and encouraging positive attitudes to teaching and learning;

2.19   Providing quality ICT experiences, to build confident e-learners, equipped to embrace the technology of the future;

2.20   Involving and supporting parents as co educators of their children;

2.21   Effectively using outside agencies, parents, and members of the local community to enhance teaching and learning experiences;

2.22   Providing a variety of excellent, high quality resources which are of high interest to pupils to support the curriculum;

2.23   Encouraging lifelong learners;

3. Effective Teaching and Learning

We base our teaching on our knowledge of the children's level of attainment. Our prime focus is to develop further their knowledge and skills. We strive to ensure that all tasks set are appropriate to each child's level of ability. When planning work for children with special educational needs (SEN) we give due regard to information and targets contained in the child's Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

The staff of St Bride's believe that pupils learn best when;

3.1   Teachers communicate high expectations and pupils believe they can achieve these;
Pupils' individual learning styles are catered for: Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic;

3.2   The lessons are varied, well planned, stimulating, challenging and differentiated to meet the individual needs of every child;

3.3   The pupils are aware of what is expected of them. Clear learning intentions are discussed/shared at the beginning of each lesson;

3.4   The pupils are enthusiastically involved in their own learning, planning, evaluating their work and setting targets/goals – Assessment for Learning (AFL);

3.5   A plenary is carried out at the end of each lesson to help gauge learning and to inform future planning;

3.6   The pupils work well with their teachers in an atmosphere of mutual respect. They are at ease, well behaved and demonstrate self-discipline;

3.7   Pupils are encouraged and praised for their efforts. They respond well in class, take pride in their work and show, by their interest and attention, that they value the contribution made by others;

3.8   Children are involved in School Development Planning through the use of adapted child friendly pupil questionnaires;

3.a   Assessment for Learning

Assessment for Learning is one of the most important purposes of assessment. It involves the on-going use of assessment in the classroom to raise pupils' achievement. Assessment for Learning is

based on the idea that pupils will improve most if they understand the aim of their learning, where they are in relation to this aim and how they can best achieve the aim (or close the gap in their knowledge).

Assessment for Learning is central to classroom practice and involves the following principles:

3a.1   Sharing learning goals with pupils;
3a.2   Helping pupils know and recognise the standards to aim for;
3a.3   Providing feedback that helps pupils to identify how to improve;
3a.4   Believing that every pupil can improve in comparison with previous achievements;
3a.5   Both the teacher and pupils reviewing and reflecting on pupils' performance and progress;
3a.6   Pupils learning self-assessment techniques to discover areas where they need to improve;
3a.7   Recognising that both motivation and self-esteem, crucial for effective learning and progress, can be increased by effective assessment techniques;

Some of the key characteristics of Assessment for Learning are:

3a.8   Using effective questioning techniques;
3a.9   Using marking and feedback strategies (see Marking Policy);
3a.10   Sharing learning goals;
3a.11   Peer and self-assessment;

Teachers assess children's work in a sensitive and constructive way, fostering motivation and promoting understanding of goals and criteria. To involve pupils fully in their learning teachers should:

3a.12   explain clearly the reasons for the lesson or activity in terms of the learning objectives;
3a.13   share the specific assessment criteria with pupils;help pupils to understand what they have done well and what they need to develop ;

3.b   Learning Processes

We recognise that children enter school at different stages of development, learn in different ways and at different rates of progress. We aim to ensure children make progress in line with their prior attainment and abilities. In the course of learning, children will develop their skills through a variety of processes and achieve standards in line with their abilities. These processes include:

- Investigation
- Experimentation
- Listening
- Observation
- Talking and discussion
- Asking questions
- Practical exploration, Drama and role play

- Retrieving information
- Imagining
- Repetition
- Problem-solving
- Empowering children to make choices and responsible decision-making
- Reflecting and Evaluating
- Thinking

Learning opportunities are organised to allow pupils access to these processes, and for them to develop their own strategies to gain knowledge and skills. Pupils can talk with knowledge and understanding about what they are doing and they can apply what they have learned in a variety of contexts.

Teachers may use a range of strategies (Appendix 1) in any one lesson: ensuring that there is provision for choice and that children have ownership of their learning.

Teachers, as far as is possible, will relate to real-life situations, bringing the real world into the context of the children's experiences.

3.c   Learning Styles

Whilst we receive and process information through all five senses all the time, we recognise children may have a preference towards one particular learning style.

Therefore we use different presentation styles and provide access to different learning materials and activities to ensure that children have the opportunity to learn through their preferred learning style. For example:

3c.1   *Visual Learners*
These learners respond well to:

- Teacher's body language;
- Visual timetable;
- The written word;
- Diagrams/illustrations/cartoons;
- Pictures/ images / maps;
- Video clips on Youtube/Vimeo/National Geographic/ podcasts/films/film and animation e.g. Windows Movie Maker;
- Fronter/powerpoints;
- C2k Newsdesk ;
- Posters/ graphs – RM Starting Graph/charts;
- Games/interactive games (Mangahigh, Viking Quest) online/ interactive white board CD Roms e.g. Collins Primary Literacy;
- Educational Visits e.g. Ulster Museum, Water Works;
- Mind Mapping;

3c.2   *Auditory Learners*
These learners respond well to:

- The spoken word;
- Stories, poems, listening to internet audio recordings;
- Music/ CDs/ ipods/ Youtube, Vimeo, podcasts, raps;
- Discussion between teachers and peers;
- Sound effects;
- Plays/ Drama, debates, assemblies;
- Show and tell;
- Interactive Programs, e.g. Viking Quest, Fronter ;

3c.3   *Kinesthetic Learners*
These learners respond well to:
- Teachers who give real life examples;
- Movement during lessons/active learning strategies E.G. carrousel, action, gesture and sign language to rhymes and songs;

- Hands on Activities e.g. practical maths Bee-Bots, Pro-bots, Roamer, IZAK9, 3D model making;
- Art and Design E.G. 3D model making using clay, scrap material etc.
- Drama/ E.G. Hot Seating, Conscience Alley, Role play E.G. Learning Through Play activities;
- Music e.g. percussion instruments/body percussion;
- Surveys e.g data handling;
- Interactive whiteboard;
- Educational Visits;
- Displays/ posters;
- ICT – tablets for Ipads, Desktop publisher, data loggers;
- Science Experiments STEM/ printer to allow 3D model making;
- PE;

4. The Learning Environment

We believe that children learn best when they are taught in a happy, secure and safe environment. We aim to provide this by:

4.1 Promoting positive relationships through the school, between teachers and pupils, pupils and their peers and amongst staff;

4.2 Living the Pastoral Care and Positive Behaviour Policy of St Bride's;

4.3 Valuing all opinions including that of the pupil voice through the School Council & ECO committee;

4.4 Offering opportunities for peer support e.g. digital leaders, lunch time prefects, and special events throughout the year (Maths week);

4.5 Ensuring teachers organise the classroom routines efficiently and prepare stimulating and suitable resources so that pupils can self-manage;

4.6 Providing a range of learning opportunities in a variety of environments e.g. classrooms, foyers, playground, assembly hall, computer suite, outdoor play area and off site;

4.7 Allowing pupils to collaborate effectively in a variety of situations involving groups of different composition and size best suited for the task in hand and to meet their needs;

4.8 Celebrating children's learning through displays on display boards in school or work published in the school magazine (The Bridge), on the school website (www.stbridesps.org.uk) or on the school Twitter account (@StBridesPS1);

4.9 Creating a learning environment that includes visual cues in addition to written word;

5. Additional Adults

All staff are valued and involved in the learning experiences of the children. Classroom assistants are an important support in the teaching and learning process. Where appropriate, classroom assistants enhance learning by:

5.1 Being involved in the planning process with the teacher and a variety of external agencies;

5.2 Being clear about who they are supporting and why;

5.3 Being directed by the teacher to support learning;

5.4 Fully engaging with pupils during lesson times;

5.5   Discussing outcomes and future teaching and learning experiences with the teacher;

5.6   Being respected and valued by pupils as a caring adult;

All school staff have a responsibility to model the school ethos and values, thereby teaching children respect, kindness and inclusion.

6.   Planning for Learning

6.1   Teachers use planning as a means to ensure progression, to address the needs of all
6.2   learners and to ensure every child has full access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

6.3   In St. Bride's the planning process begins with, schemes of work based on the Northern Ireland Curriculum, fortnightly planning and personal notes. The pupils' own ideas and interests are used appropriately as starting points for learning activities.

Planning for effective teaching and learning also involves

6.4   Starting from children's own experiences and previous knowledge;
6.5   Assisting pupils to make connections with their own life experiences, through the provision of opportunity for connected learning;
6.6   Having clear learning intentions and success criteria, allowing for progression of skills, knowledge and understanding;
6.7   Awareness of different learning styles (VAK);
6.8   Clarifying the range of teaching styles and approaches used;

Detailing resources to be used;

6.9   Including all abilities, referring to IEPs/groups, (for example spelling, maths, reading groups)
6.10   low and underachievers and the more able;
6.11   Embedding Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities;
6.12   Effective, reflective and honest evaluations of teaching and learning, to inform future planning;
6.13   Detailing, where appropriate, class and school targets;
6.14   Observation and assessment details where relevant;
6.15   Fortnightly Planners are seen as working documents;
6.16   Using outside agencies e.g. school podcast.org and Google Expeditions to build the capacity of staff and enhance the learning experiences of the pupils;
6.17   The use of Fronter;
6.18   Use of specialist teachers for team teaching in subjects such as art, music and ICT;

We ensure continuity and progression takes place through:

6.19   Schemes of work
6.20   Agreed assessment and recording approaches
            Staff sharing best practice
6.21   Co-ordinators monitoring planning, pupil books and other pupil outcomes
6.22   Internal standardisation of work in each year group
6.23   Staff attendance at EA courses, cluster group meetings or other relevant courses to facilitate capacity building of our staff and to ensure the most up to date strategies and resources are employed

7. Strategies for supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs

In St Bride's we recognise that all children develop at different rates. We have many strategies in place for the identification of pupils with learning difficulties and provide learning programmes for these children.

7.1   We have a strong Learning Support team which provides individual and group support in literacy and numeracy. The Learning Support team supports teachers and classroom assistants, establish short term and achievable targets so that pupils experience success;

7.2   The SEN Department is well resourced and materials/ resources are suited to the child's age and ability to ensure the raising of self-esteem, self-worth and the enjoyment of learning;

7.3   Analysis of Standardized Tests to screen for pupils who are underachievers and low achievers who require support in school or externally;

7.4   Results are collated and analysed by the SMT, subject coordinators and teachers to inform target setting;

7.5   The teachers identify possible barriers to learning for these pupils, set Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART) targets, liaising with the parents and the child. Targets are reviewed twice annually to assess progress;

7.6   Individual pupils can be identified through records of concern and appropriate support offered either in the classroom or by SENCO;

7.7   Individual Education Plans (I.E.P.s) are written for individual pupils by class teacher and SENCO setting targets for literacy, numeracy and where appropriate behaviour. These are shared with the parents and the pupils. These are reviewed three times annually;

7.8   We make use of external agencies, including Educational Psychology, CIDs Team, Peripatetic Service (including the teacher of the deaf), Oakwood ASD Service, Clarawood and Harberton Behavior Support, Harberton Outreach Support, the School Nurse, Health Visitors and Gateway to support our pupils;

7.9   Links with feeder nurseries and Post-Primary Schools to facilitate transitions;

8. Strategies for supporting Newcomer pupils

As an inclusive school, 16% of pupils in St. Bride's are Newcomer pupils. In order to support their learning and to recognise and celebrate the variety of cultures among our pupils, the following strategies/procedures are in place:

8.1   The development of an Inclusion Policy by the Learning Support Team;
Induction interview with parent to establish background information and ability;

8.2   Dissemination of all relevant information following the initial meeting to the child's teacher including pertinent cultural information;

8.3   Base-line assessment carried out by the newcomer support teacher including the completion of the CEFR with the class teacher;

8.4   Translation Service and Interpreter Service as required;

8.5   Coffee morning with Newcomer children's parents;

8.6   Development of multi-lingual signage around the school;

8.7   Support for class teacher from newcomer support teacher with regards to resources and advice;

8.8   Capacity building of staff during school Inset Days in relation to Newcomer resources and strategies;

8.9   Withdrawal support for Newcomer pupils;

8.10   Bilingual library for parents of Newcomer pupils every Thursday;

8.11   Links with external agencies such as the Inclusion and Diversity Service;

8.12   Inclusion of "Translate" button on St Bride's Primary School website so that parents can access the website in any language.

9.   Strategies for extending more able pupils

In St. Bride's we recognise that there are children who are achieving at a significantly higher level than their peers.

We recognize this may be in terms of academic achievement, creativity, sporting or expressive endeavours. We employ the following strategies when teaching these pupils;

9.1   Work is differentiated to provide challenge and includes problem solving and investigations and project work;
9.2   Teachers communicate higher expectations to these children;
9.3   Children's successes and achievements are celebrated and shared through a variety of forums (school magazine, website, Achievement Book, Twitter, Assemblies);
9.4   Children are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities;
9.5   Children are given increased responsibility and independence;
9.6   Opportunities are provided for children to share and make the most of their talents
         in the school and community.

10.   Assessment

The process of assessment in St. Bride's supports and reinforces the implementation of the programmes of study within each of the areas in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The teachers use varied forms of assessment, including standardised tests, CCEA and teacher designed Assessment Tasks, teachers' observations, discussions with pupils, marking, written tests and other structured assessment tools, which are matched well to the pupils' ages and stages of development. Pupils' work is regularly, frequently and consistently marked in ways which highlight the strengths and shortcomings, and are well understood by the pupils and their parents. The pupils receive clear guidance, sometimes in the form of written comments, on the quality of their work and effort and have the opportunity to discuss, reflect on and improve their achievements.   Assessment is designed to provide effective support in the classroom by:

10.1   Being integral to the processes of planning, teaching and learning;
10.2   Taking account of previous levels of pupil performance and being capable of detecting any significant changes;
10.3   Indicating learning successes and identifying shortcomings;
10.4   Focussing upon learning processes as well as learning outcomes;
10.5   Being objective and consistent;
10.6   Being based on criteria which are clear and precise;
10.7   Actively involving pupils in the process of self-assessment, encouraging them to review, reflect and evaluate their performances.

Please refer to the school's Assessment Policy for information regarding assessment and reporting procedures.

11.   Monitoring and Evaluating

In St. Bride's, we recognise the need for regular monitoring and evaluating of the teaching and learning, in order to bring about improvement and to raise standards.

Staff reflect on and evaluate their own teaching and learning and use the outcomes to inform future planning. The principal and subject co-ordinators regularly monitor, in order to ensure targets set in action plans are being met. They do this through:

11.1   Regular book scoops;

11.2   Staff audits and questionnaires to inform the School Development Plan (SDP);

11.3   Classroom observations and feedback to individual teachers;

11.4   PRSD observations;

11.5   Sharing good practice;

11.6   Evaluating Action Plans alongside the SDP;

11.7   Reviewing IEP targets;

11.8   Standardised tests;

11.9   Target setting and review;

11.10   End of key stage data;

11.11   Benchmarking data;

11.12   Monitoring planning and teacher evaluations;

11.13   Reviewing schemes regularly;

11.14   Internal standardisation of pieces of work;

11.15   Monitoring displays reflecting children's learning;

11.16   Meetings with staff to provide feedback and information;

11.19   Use of external agencies such as Inclusion & Quality Mark, Green Flag Award, Investors in People to monitor our standards;

12.   Role of the Board of Governors

12.1   It is the Governors' role to monitor and review the policy and its practise by:
12.2   Receiving reports from the Principal, co-ordinator reviews, and review of in-service training sessions attended by staff;
12.3   Link Governors' meeting with subject coordinators (discussing Action Plans, Strategic Plans and reviews) reporting back to all Governors;
12.4   To monitor the effectiveness of the school's teaching and learning policy & practice;

13.   Home/School Links

In St Bride's PS, parents are welcomed, kept informed of their children's progress, and provided with information and help to support their learning. This is facilitated by;

13.1   School Website, including links and downloads to support learning at home;
13.2   September Parent Curriculum evening meetings in each year group;
13.3   Curriculum workshops for parents e.g. Literacy workshop, NSPCC safer internet workshop
13.4   Whole school newsletter;
13.5   Curriculum Newsletters twice a term;
13.6   Yearly written reports (June);
13.7   Informal and ad hoc meetings;

13.8   Parent/teacher Interviews and update reviews, reporting children's progress including target children;
13.9   Comments used in marking for improvement;
13.10   Displays of children's work;
13.11   Homework which is differentiated and relating to class teaching and learning (see Homework Policy);
12.12   Open Day for prospective P1 and Nursery parents and their children;
13.13   Newcomer Coffee Morning and bi-lingual library service;
13.14   Invitations to Prayer services, assemblies and concerts;
13.15   Sacramental meetings for parents;
13.16   Curriculum workshops for parents;
13.17   Twitter account and School magazine;
13.18   Use of See-Saw app and Nursery e mail facility (parent Zone);
13.19   Parent text service.

14.   Staff Development

14.1   Staff development in St. Bride's is closely linked with the SDP. The SDP outlines the professional development needs of staff in order to achieve targets set out in the action plans, and is regularly reviewed. INSET and training days are arranged, where appropriate.
14.2   Targets for PRSD are agreed and are monitored by members of the SMT.
14.3   Staff are encouraged and supported to pursue their own professional development and to share best practice, including peer observation, trusted colleague networking, and attending cluster groups.

15.   Community Partnerships

In St. Bride's, we believe that our school is at the heart of the community and learning is enhanced through a wide range of experiences and opportunities. We have developed links with the wider community, which include:

15.1   Involvement in masses in St. Brigid's Church every Tuesday and in other ceremonies and parish events during the academic year;
15.2   Links with old peoples' homes at Christmas;
15.3   Links with feeder nursery schools, primary schools in South Belfast and with post primary schools including CPD Literacy & Numeracy Project;
15.4   Links with Pastoral Care Agencies such as the NSPCC;
15.5   Links with Charities such as Cancer Focus, Simon Community, Trócaire and St. Brigids' Third World Group;
15.6   Links with Educational – SENTINUS (Stem) , Ulster Museum, National Trust, Young Enterprise, Armagh Planetarium, Streamvale Farm, N. Ireland Water Service, Northern Ireland School of Falconry;
15.7   Links to local businesses e.g. Tescos, Bank of Ireland;
15.8   Links with local sports clubs e.g. St. Brigid GAC, Queen's PEC, Cumann na mbunscoil Antrim, Windsor Tennis Club, Belfast Primary School Netball League; Irish Football Association, Belfast Activity Centre;
15.9   Links with the local council – N. Ireland Water, Belfast City Council, Primary Cross Country League;
15.10   Local competitions and events e.g. Beat The Street;
15.11   Links with City of Belfast School of Music (CBSM);
15.12   A variety of after school activities.

16.   Development, Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of Policy

16.1   This policy has been drawn up in consultation with staff and BOG. As part of the school's monitoring and evaluation process, we continually strive to adapt and improve our practice to meet our pupils' needs.

16.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner, if necessary.

17.   Appendix

In order to ensure equality of access and effective matching of tasks to needs, teachers employ a variety of strategies:

17.1   Development of close links between all feeder nurseries and Primary One;

17.2   Involvement of subject coordinators in the development of individual curricular areas, in order to ensure continuity and progression;

17.3   Sharing of good practice such as teacher peer observation, the sharing of good practice and trusted colleague networking;

17.4   Demonstrating high expectations;

17.5   Providing encouragement, positive reinforcement and praise;

17.6   Discussion and questioning; (open and closed as appropriate);

17.7   Reviewing work;

17.8   Listening;

17.9   Brain Storming / mind mapping;

17.10   Providing opportunities for reflection and self-evaluation by pupils;

17.11   Providing opportunities for revisiting previous learning e.g. repetition and reinforcement;

17.12   Making judgements and responding to individual needs;

17.13   Intervene, as appropriate, in the learning process in order to encourage development;

17.14   Use a range of communication strategies;

17.15   Provide all children with opportunities for success;

17.16   Celebrating children's work;

17.17   Physical exercise;

17.18   Circle time;

17.19   Clear structure to all lessons, learning intentions and success criteria displayed in classroom;

17.20   Topic-based, cross-curricular teaching;

17.21   Educational visits or use of outside agencies or parents expertise in school;

17.22   Use of ICT and Interactive Whiteboard to enhance learning experiences;

17.23   Assessment for learning and self-assessment;

17.24   Planning Boards - What do you know already…? What do you want to find out…? How will you find out…? ;

17.25   Thinking maps to develop Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities (TSPC);

17.26   Outdoor Learning Area e.g. playground, school garden, outdoor play ground in nursery and Key Stage 1;

17.27   Target-setting;

17.28   Learning Through Play (Years 1-3) / Activity Based Learning;

17.29   Use of "Digital Leaders" e.g. Year 6 pupils assist Year 2 pupils in the ICT suite;

17.30   Year 6 and 7 mentors.