



Learning & Teaching Policy

Rich, Relevant & Imaginative

School Values

Our values are:

- B**ravery (persevering when things are difficult, facing learning challenges)
- R**espect (respect for ourselves and others)
- I**ntegrity (being honest and trustworthy)
- D**etermination (challenging ourselves to improve)
- G**enerosity (thoughtfulness, cooperation and emotional growth)
- E**xcellence (taking pride in everything we do)

Rationale

At Whitehall Junior School we believe in providing an inspiring environment which stimulates all of our children to acquire the skills, attitudes and knowledge which will foster their development as lifelong learners. We acknowledge the importance of a positive learning environment in which effective teaching results in effective learning. We aim for our pupils to become 'masters' in their learning; an approach we have adopted since the introduction of the National Curriculum from September 2014. Guidelines on this approach can be found in the appendix of this policy.

Intent

Our drive to raise standards and 'close the gap' must focus on the classroom. Continued improvement depends upon raising the quality of learning and teaching that takes place on a daily basis. We expect our pupils to be provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to high levels of achievement (both attainment and progress), especially in reading, writing, communication and mathematics.

We expect every teacher to be a good teacher – no child deserves less.

By adopting a whole school approach to learning and teaching across our school, we aim:

- to support the quality of learning and teaching in the school in order for all children to achieve and make progress.
- to enable children to learn as efficiently as possible.
- to enable teachers to teach as effectively as possible.
- to provide an inclusive education for all the children.
- to foster a positive learning environment.
- to learn from each other - to promote positive attitudes towards other people.

Objectives

These aims will be fulfilled:

- by effectively planning to use a range of teaching styles and promote multi-sensory learning.
- by effective communication within and across year groups.
- by providing high quality training opportunities for all staff.
- by using assessment to identify the needs of all children and build on prior learning.
- by developing positive relationships across the school.
- by regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning across the school.
- by using assessment for learning strategies.

Implementation - Characteristics of effective teaching

Whitehall Junior School ensures high quality teaching, which enables pupils to learn most effectively in a positive learning environment. When teaching, we focus on motivating our learners and building on pupils' existing skills, knowledge and understanding.

Teachers will achieve this through:

- a) sound subject knowledge, skill and understanding.
- b) effective planning, including Assessment for Learning strategies.
- c) high expectations.
- d) a range of teaching styles.
- e) developing positive and productive working relationships with pupils.

a) Sound subject knowledge, skill and understanding

Teachers should:

- consciously show enthusiasm and positivity for subjects.
- have a thorough subject knowledge appropriate to current NC requirements.
- make informed assessments of children's needs.
- have an awareness of children's previous experiences and their ability range.
- have knowledge of how children learn.

b) Effective planning

Teachers' planning will show:

- clear learning objectives presented to the children in a way they understand.
- evidence of progression, sequencing and appropriate challenge.
- an awareness of the needs of individuals through differentiation and a variety of teaching styles (see Inclusion Policy).
- carefully considered use of questioning which relates to our professional reading on the work of Bloom and Allison.
- well-considered spacing of learning, in order that learning 'sticks' (as per our reading by Bjork & Bjork and Peps McCrea).
- references to appropriate resources.
- carefully planned for direct teaching of subject specific vocabulary (as per our reading by Alex Quigley).
- that it takes account of regular evaluation.
- assessment for learning.

c) High expectations

Teachers should:

- have high expectations of learning and progress, with a clear overview of progression within the class.
- set and achieve high standards of behaviour and motivation by using praise and positive reinforcement to foster self-esteem, motivation and confidence.
- provide opportunities for children's feedback and independence.
- encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning, including helping each other and working collaboratively.

d) A range of teaching styles

Using a range of teaching styles should enable pupils to become independent learners:

- teacher directed.
- pupils given opportunities to make their own decisions.
- pupils taking greater responsibility for their own learning, using success criteria, etc.
- problem solving and reasoning (and a sound knowledge base which enables this).
- enquiry based learning from a suggested focus (ask open ended questions to develop curiosity, allowing time for pupils to consider their response).
- independent learning.

e) Developing positive & productive working relationships with pupils.

Positive classroom relationships are necessary in order to learn. Our motto, 'Happiness at the heart of learning' should be visible in all lessons. Pupils will not learn if they are not in an appropriate state to learn (see also Behaviour Policy). Teachers should:

- create a classroom environment in which pupils feel safe. It should be stimulating, reassuring and well organised.
- ensure other adults in the room support a child who is not 'ready' to learn.
- greet all pupils with a smile and take an interest in their lives.
- plan for collaborative learning in order to foster cooperation, consideration and respect for one another.

Characteristics of effective learning

At Whitehall Junior School we aim to encourage a life-long interest in learning through a willingness to ask questions and seek answers.

We believe that effective learning is characterised by pupils who:

- acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding developing ideas and applying them in different contexts.

- make links between previous learning and reflect on their own learning journey.
- apply intellectual, physical and creative effort and interest in their work.
- are able to sustain concentration and think and learn for themselves.
- understand what they are doing, why they have done it and how they can improve.
- are confident as learners and can co-operate effectively, including providing sensitive feedback to peers.
- recognise the importance of persevering and learning from their own mistakes.
- organise and manage themselves, their time and resources successfully.
- feel that they are valued by teachers and that their achievements are being recognised.
- are given sufficient thinking time (at least seven seconds) when answering questions.

Speaking and listening

The act of talking helps us to organise our thoughts and so deepens our understanding. Talking and listening is central to learning. We encourage our pupils to talk with a partner, in a small group and as part of a whole class discussion. The use of talk helps to develop children's learning, demonstrates their understanding, strengthens their ability to learn collaboratively and enables the teacher to monitor and assess progress.

Feedback

We know from the research of The Sutton Trust that effective feedback is central to pupil progress. Assessment for learning is widely used across our school to ensure that pupils are clear about how they can improve. Teacher feedback books (used in mathematics) and marking show pupils their next steps for development and encourages a two-way dialogue between teacher and pupil/s. Pupils must be given time to respond to any written feedback (see also Assessment & Feedback Policy).

Resources

In order for effective teaching and learning to take place, there will be good organisation and management of resources.

This will be achieved through:

- effective deployment of support staff.
- the use of practical equipment to promote multi-sensory learning.
- enhancing learning through the use of ICT.
- careful, considered timetabling.
- a clear system that enables easy access to planning.

Additional adults should be clearly directed in order that they support learning. Teaching Assistants should be fully engaged with pupils, whilst also aware of the children's need to become independent learners. Teaching Assistants must be clear about who they are supporting and why. They must be made familiar with the planning before the lesson; this enables them to gather appropriate resources. Teaching Assistants are involved in assessing the pupils' understanding and in sharing this information with the teacher so that progress is continually tracked.

Environment

The surroundings in which children learn can influence their performance and well-being in school. The better our school looks, the more inspired our pupils will become. An attractive and well organised classroom sends out a visual signal of a teacher's commitment to fostering the best climate for learning.

'Working walls' for English and maths should encourage pupils to see connections between their learning.

Equal opportunities

Within our school, the practices, procedures and customs should positively promote equality of opportunity for all. We believe all children, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, ability and socio-economic status should experience effective teaching; which in turn, should lead to effective learning.

Staff must encourage high standards of achievement and behaviour, aiming for ALL children to achieve their full potential.

The role of parents and carers

We believe that good relationships between the school, home and community benefit all children academically and socially. Through a range of planned activities and communications, as well as informal opportunities, we aim to share information which will benefit each child's development. We believe that parents have a responsibility to support their children and the school.

We inform parents and carers about what and how their children are learning by:

- hosting termly parents' meetings which share targets, discuss progress and suggest ideas for support at home.
- issuing termly 'Attainment and Attitude' record sheets.
- issuing termly curriculum newsletters outlining the content of each term's curriculum, sharing knowledge mats and vocabulary lists.
- providing daily reading liaison through our Pupil Planners.
- making homework and extension activities available on year group web pages.

We would like parents to:

- ensure that their child has the best attendance rate possible.
- ensure that their child is equipped for school with the correct uniform, PE kit, homework, reading book and pupil planner.
- read with their child on a daily basis.
- do their best to keep their child fit and healthy and able to participate in school life.
- inform school if there are matters outside of school which are likely to affect a child's performance or behaviour.
- promote a positive attitude towards school and learning and not let any negative school experiences they may have had influence this.
- fulfil the requirements of our Home School Agreement.

The role of Governors

Our Governors determine, support, monitor and review the school policies on learning and teaching. In particular they:

- support the use of appropriate teaching strategies by allocating resources effectively.
- ensure the school buildings and premises are best used to support successful learning and teaching.
- monitor teaching strategies in the light of health and safety regulations.
- monitor how effective learning and teaching strategies are in terms of raising pupil attainment.
- ensure that staff development and appraisal policies promote good quality teaching.
- monitor the effectiveness of the school's learning and teaching policy through the self-evaluation process.

Impact and Review

To ensure that this policy is being followed by all, there will be opportunities for monitoring and evaluation to take place. Effective teaching and learning will be monitored using various strategies (see also Monitoring Policy). This will be carried out by subject leaders and members of the Senior Leadership Team.

All staff should strive to implement this policy throughout the school. In situations where the policy has not been followed successfully, senior staff should be made aware and appropriate support be provided. We are aware of the need to review the school learning and teaching policy regularly so that we can take account of new initiatives, changes in the curriculum, developments in technology or changes to the physical environment of the school.

*The route to deep learning and expertise is, to quote Tim Oates, fewer things in greater 'depth.'
Mary Myatt in 'The Curriculum: Gallimaufry to coherence'*

Appendix

Guidelines on a mastery approach to learning

Mastery in Practice

Better never stops - Professional learning

'Teachers need to improve. Not because we are not good enough, but because we can be even better.' Dylan William

Professional Development at Whitehall Junior is research informed and based on the best theories of pupil learning, pedagogy and teaching effectiveness. Sources include:

- John Hattie's meta-analysis of teaching interventions;
- The Education Endowment Foundation's research into the effectiveness and value for money of various interventions;
- Carol Dweck's work on the development of growth mindsets;
- Alex Quigley's work on the importance of vocabulary (the SEEC model – Select, Explain, Explore, Consolidate);
- Robert Bjork's work in the field of cognitive science and;
- Doug Lemov's work on the professional development of teachers.

We know that some styles of continuous professional development (CPD) are more effective than others. Research into effective CPD has identified the following conditions, which our approach seeks to create:

On the effectiveness of CPD provided, we ask 'Are children performing differently as a result?' rather than 'Are teachers performing differently as a result?' The evaluation of our CPD, and indeed our teaching is measured using the progress and attainment of our children rather than teachers' behaviours. Priorities for CPD are determined from the School Improvement Plan.

Growing great teachers provides the opportunity to opt into an area of interest, led by senior and middle leaders and work with colleagues on developing an aspect of teaching.

- Finding and developing strategies that will have the greatest impact.
- Deliberate practice – focused, intentional practice supported by high quality feedback.
- Action research – experimenting with strategies to find out what works.

Support is offered through:

- Coaching, particularly to support ECTs in their first terms, in addition to an ECT Mentor;
- Quality discussion and recommended reading with appraisers and;
- High quality CPD speakers.

Growing great teaching - High expectations of teachers and of children

When planning lessons, we should focus on what pupils will be made to think about rather than on what they will do. Learning happens when children think hard about subject content so teachers prepare lessons with this in mind. To develop a learning culture in which pupils produce high quality work:

- Set tasks which inspire and challenge pupils (the 'challenge zone'), and which are predicated on the idea of every student succeeding;
- Develop a sense of whole-class pride in the quality of learning and a sense of peer encouragement for pupils to keep up with the expected standard;

- Provide pupils with exemplars that show them what a great piece of work looks like, which they can analyse in order to decide what makes them strong and;
- Instil the belief that quality means rethinking, reworking, and polishing so that pupils feel value in returning to work and improving it.

Mastery and scaffolding

Providing various scaffolds which give children the opportunity to master the expected concepts is at the heart of mastery learning. Underlying misconceptions do need to be worked on, but through appropriate scaffolding, which is withdrawn at the right time, children can master concepts. There are a number of options to choose from when deciding on the scaffolding required:

- Generating and using success criteria;
- Showing excellence before children work;
- Worked examples to support modelling and explanations;
- Partially completed examples for deliberate practice;
- Exploring the concrete and pictorial before working abstractly and;
- Guided groups/use of adults.

What great lessons look like

Teachers are sensitive to the needs of their pupils and adjust their lessons to the here and now. Children work best for the teachers who respect them, know their subjects, and are approachable and enthusiastic. The most effective teachers are relentless in their pursuit of excellence and are able to explain complex concepts and address misconceptions in a way which makes sense.

- Dweck's idea of a 'Growth Mindset', that pupils are more likely to get better at something if they believe intelligence can be changed through hard work.
- External research and thinking around cognitive science particularly regarding the limits of working memory, encoding in and retrieval from long term memory.
- What our own internal research and findings from monitoring, carried out by our own staff, suggests works within our context.

Learning is invisible and cannot be observed in a single lesson. A lesson does not exist in isolation so it is better to think of a lesson as one learning episode in a long series. Within that series of lessons, there'll be stimulating experiences which prompt high quality talk and supports the initial encoding of knowledge and concepts into long term memory. There will also be clear explanations, modelling and success criteria to show children how to think about subject content to acquire knowledge and skills.

Desirable difficulties (Bjork) make information harder to encode (learn initially) but easier to retrieve later. This leads to deeper learning. We achieve desirable difficulties by: spacing learning apart with increasingly long gaps; interleaving topics rather than finishing one topic then moving onto another; testing frequently – using low stakes quizzes at the start of topics/lessons to identify prior learning as well as knowledge gaps, and to interrupt forgetting; and making learning materials less clearly organised so that pupils have to think hard about the materials.

There are some key aspects of pedagogy that should be consistent throughout our practice. They are outlined below:

Challenge

As Matt Bromley (education journalist and advisor) says on 'expert teaching', if the work is too easy, pupils will switch off; if the work is too hard, pupils will switch off. Work must be pitched in the 'zone of proximal development' – hard but achievable with support. If something's too easy, we rely on our memory instead of thinking (e.g. $1 + 1 =$); if it's too hard, we run out of processing power (e.g. $46 \times 237 =$) and stop thinking; if it's challenging but achievable and we are successful,

our brains reward us with a dose of dopamine which is pleasurable and binds neurones together creating memories. This is learning.

- Are learning objectives concise and challenging for all?
- Are the tasks set going to allow all pupils to be stretched and challenged?
- Is there scaffolding support in place to allow stuck learners to achieve these challenging objectives?
- Does the teacher's knowledge of the pupils they are teaching allow them to be proactive about implementing this support – so that it is seamless and focused?
- Are examples of excellence shared, discussed and deconstructed with the class?

Explanation

- Does the teacher establish prior knowledge and use this to 'hook into' new knowledge?
- Does teacher's subject knowledge add clarity, depth and breadth to the learning?
- Does the explanation focus on the key learning points and success criteria?
- Are there opportunities to make the explanation more concrete and credible e.g. demonstration, visual, practical appropriate use of analogy, etc.?
- Does the explanation generate curiosity and so 'open up the learning gaps'?
- Is explanation clear and concise, especially when subject matter is challenging?
- Is teacher talk and gesture enthusiastic, firm, kind and inclusive?
- Does the teacher judge carefully when to move from surface learning i.e. key 'bits' of knowledge to deep learning i.e. using, linking and applying that knowledge?

Modelling

- Is work carefully modelled, so that pupils are shown how to use this new knowledge and skills?
- Are exemplary examples of work deconstructed with the pupils?
- Do teachers model 'expert thinking' by verbalising implicit thought processes?

Deliberate Practice

- Once pupils have had input from the teacher, are they given time to practise this new knowledge & skills?
- Are pupils made to redraft and improve their work?
- Does the teacher observe for mistakes, intervene when necessary and so ensure that practice is perfect?
- Are mistakes utilised as a key aspect of learning?
- Is practice supported by scaffolds and support when necessary?
- Are scaffolds and supports removed at the right time to allow for independence?
- Is there evidence that threshold concepts (key subject-specific knowledge and skills) are practiced regularly to improve retention?

Questioning

Classroom discussion – best achieved through artful questioning – makes pupils smarter because they make pupils think. Questions should only be used if they cause thinking and/or provide information for the teacher about what to do next. The most common model of teacher talk is IRE: initiation, response, evaluation. But it does not always work very well. A better model is ABC: agree/disagree with, build upon, and challenge, whereby pupils pass questions around the classroom; they can polish each other's answers, refining them and challenging each other's thinking.

- Does questioning involve a wide range of pupils?
- Does questioning both deepen and develop thinking and check for common misconceptions?
- Are pupils given enough time to think about their responses?
- Are reluctant respondents encouraged to respond by careful scaffolding?

- Are pupils encouraged to respond to and evaluate the responses of their peers e.g. use ABC questioning – after a response, they need to agree, build on or challenge the response.
- Are pupils encouraged to ask questions?
- Are pupils expected to rephrase answers in Standard English?

Feedback

Feedback works best when it is explicit about the success criteria, offers suggestions for improvement, and is focused on how pupils can close the gap between their current and their desired performance. Feedback can backfire – it needs to cause a cognitive rather than emotional reaction – i.e. it should cause thinking. Feedback can promote the 'growth mindset' if it is: as specific as possible; focuses on factors within pupils' control; focuses on factors which are dependent on effort not ability; and motivates rather than frustrates pupils.

Self and peer assessment can be effective strategies because they: give pupils greater responsibility for their learning; allow pupils to help and be helped by each other; encourage collaboration and reflection (useful skills for life); enable pupils to see their progress; and help pupils to see for themselves how to improve. The only useful feedback is that which is acted upon – it is crucial that the teacher knows the student and knows when and what kind of feedback to give, then plans time for pupils to act on feedback.

- Is our teaching (within and between lessons) and curriculum planning responsive, based on the performance of pupils?
- Do we use a good variety of feedback, which encourages pupils to consider – Where am I going? How am I going? Where to next?
- Is personal feedback focused on the effort and hard work that pupils put in to their work?
- Is there a good mix of verbal and written feedback?
- Is feedback kind, specific and helpful?
- Is feedback designed to make pupils think?
- Is feedback timed right i.e. are pupils given enough 'struggle time'?
- Are self-assessment strategies, such as proof-reading, editing and redrafting, employed to aid meta-cognition?

Assessment beyond Levels at Whitehall Junior School

Ten Principles of Assessment which are recognised and valued are that it:

- is part of effective learning;
- focuses on how pupils learn;
- is central to classroom practice;
- is a key professional skill;
- is sensitive and constructive;
- fosters motivation;
- promotes understanding of goals and criteria;
- helps learners know how to improve;
- develops the capacity for self-assessment and;
- recognises all educational achievement.

(The above is nothing new – these principles were set out by the Assessment Reform Group in 2002)

Please read this policy in conjunction with our Assessment & Feedback Policy.

Assessment Principles at Whitehall Junior:

- Give reliable information to parents;
- Share information with pupils – they need to know how to progress;
- Help drive improvement for pupils and teachers;
- Keep up with best practice and innovation;
- Manageable and useful;
- Identifies where pupils are falling behind in a timely manner;

- Directly linked to the taught curriculum;
- Helps to shape curriculum design and teaching and;
- Identifies how pupils are progressing towards national expectations.

Whitehall Junior School commits to:

- Designing lessons with high levels of thinking;
- Reducing cognitive overload;
- Ensuring that new topics that are learnt develop high storage strength;
- Order topics to help the learning of new information;
- Practically implement interleaving (Bjork & Bjork) and;
- Use assessment which is purposeful and used diagnostically.

During lessons, children practice recalling knowledge and concepts. This low-stakes testing, where the focus is on practising remembering, rather than achieving a score, strengthens memories. Teachers use this formative information to adapt sequences of lessons. Strategies include:

- Multiple choice questions
- Test your partner (What can you remember about it?)
- Picture link (what unit and topics and keywords can you remember that link to this picture?)
- Remembering 5 or 10 points about a subject
- Just a minute – speaking for a minute about a subject
- Testbase
- Flashcard quizzes
- Questioning set in different contexts to encourage links between ideas
- Examples provided are minimally different to ensure that children think hard about subject content

Effective feedback will be given to the children orally and through teacher feedback books and marking. Effective feedback should:

- be specific, accurate and clear (e.g. 'It was good because you...' rather than just 'correct');
- compare what a learner is doing right now with what they have done wrong before (e.g. 'I can see you were focused on improving X as it is much better than last time's Y...');
- encourage and support further effort - praise should be given sparingly so that it is meaningful;
- provide specific guidance on how to improve and not just tell pupils when they are wrong and;
- be supported with effective professional development for teachers.

Curriculum objectives inform teachers, parents and pupils of agreed priority targets, and enables teachers to track progress across the year. Pupils will be entering, developing, securing and mastering year group expectations depending on how secure their coverage of the age-related expectations are. We use standardised tests to ensure consistency across the school. The school has very clear base-lining procedures in place at the beginning of each year using standardised tests for reading, spelling, assessing mental maths on entry and verbal and non-verbal NFER assessments.

Information for parents

It is important and imperative to give reliable information to parents. Parents will be given information on where their child is, in terms of age-related expectations, three times per year. Information shared will also grade effort, behaviour and personal organisational skills. Age-related information is produced in line with year group target cards. Parents will also be able to view standardised assessment results three times per year.

Research Information

The school is research informed. Every teacher has a copy of 'Putting Assessment for Learning into Practice' by David Spendlove. The school pays attention to the work of the Education Endowment Foundation, John Hattie, Mary Myatt, Sean Allison & Andy Tharby and Alex Quigley and others.