

Ashgrove Primary School

Guidelines
for
Teaching
& Learning

1 January 2005

VERSION 1:1

Guidelines For Teaching & Learning

Rationale

All children are born with a natural curiosity and the ability to learn. Each has much to offer. Our challenge in Ashgrove Primary School is to develop children's self-esteem and to provide them with the skills and experiences that inspire happiness and excellence.

Good relationships are vital and we pride ourselves on the positive relationships between staff and children, the fun of the learning process and the celebration of success. We expect children to enjoy their time at Ashgrove and to leave confident in the skills and knowledge they have gained and in their ability as autonomous learners to make the most of life's opportunities with breadth, depth, imagination and enthusiasm.

Our Aims for Teaching and Learning

It is our intention to:

- treat children with dignity;
- cater for the needs and strengths of individual children from both sexes, from all ethnic, religious and social groups, and including the most able as well as those who are experiencing learning difficulties;
- facilitate children's acquisition of attitudes, knowledge and skills and those qualities that will help them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically, morally, creatively and aesthetically, so that they may become confident, independent, responsible, useful, thinking, and considerate members of the community;
- provide an appropriate curricular balance;
- ensure that each child's education has continuity and progression;
- ensure that there is a match between the child and the tasks he/she is asked to perform;
- maintain an exciting and stimulating learning environment;
- recognise the crucial role that parents play in their children's education and make every effort to encourage parental involvement in the educational process; and
- to develop the skills, values and attitudes necessary for autonomy of learning.

Autonomous Learners

To some degree all learners rely on others for support, information and guidance but the most effective learners are autonomous. They are objective about their abilities and gain confidence from an understanding of what they are able to do. They set their own high standards and expectations. They are ambitious and know how to access the help, knowledge, materials and equipment they require. Autonomous learners can articulate their learning to others. They share a range of positive values.

Values For Learning

Many of the values that we encourage in Ashgrove have particular relevance to the development of autonomy. They include:

- self-motivation;
- enjoyment of challenge;
- perseverance;
- willingness to take risks and learn from mistakes;
- confidence and assertiveness;
- respect for others;
- co-operation;
- respect for the learning possibilities of mistakes;
- curiosity;
- creativity;
- initiative;
- sense of right and wrong;
- ambition;
- optimism;
- common sense;
- responsibility;
- imagination;
- respect for connections, patterns and meaning;
- flexibility; and
- self-awareness and objectivity.

Personal and Emotional Development of Staff

Coping with the needs and opportunities that arise in any class is a demanding job and one taken conscientiously by all the teachers in Ashgrove Primary School. To ensure that the experience is both personally satisfying and professionally productive, teachers are given all possible support and encouragement. Opportunities are sought by all involved to improve:

- physical security, safety and comfort;
- individual workloads and expectations;
- praise, respect, trust and a happy atmosphere;
- publicity relating to achievement;
- open communication between colleagues, parents and children;
- ownership of school initiatives;
- adequate and appropriate resourcing;
- a management style that is flexible enough to facilitate individual needs;
- effective planning;
- opportunities for performance review; and
- professional development to meet individual needs and those of the whole school.

Personal and Emotional Development of Children

A happy child works and learns most effectively. The school will ensure that children are secure and content by:

- developing friendly and supportive relationships between staff and children;
- knowing children as individuals with different backgrounds, interests, strengths, needs and preferred learning styles;
- reminding children of available help and the procedures relating to child protection, bullying, anxiety, etc.;
- encouraging open communication with parents;
- maximising opportunities for praise;
- providing learning opportunities at appropriate levels;
- encouraging children to attempt tasks they find difficult and to see mistakes as part of the learning process;
- celebrating success, well-being and aspiration (positive comments, stickers, homework exemption, trophies, etc);
- rewarding good behaviour within clear and reasonable expectations;
- meeting children's special educational needs; and
- giving children responsibility.

Management Structure

Ashgrove is characterised by harmony and professionalism, with all members of staff valued as people and for their work. The management structure is intended to be open and supportive, making it enjoyable for all to contribute to the planning, teaching and learning of the whole school.

The staff includes a principal, a vice-principal/key stage 2 co-ordinator, a key stage 1 co-ordinator and fourteen part-time and full-time teachers with various class and co-ordinating roles. As well as working with the children, teachers plan in year groups, key stages, as a whole staff and in teams. The teams include:

- Literacy;
- Numeracy;
- The World Around Us;
- The Arts;
- Personal Development;
- Special Educational Needs;
- Physical Education;
- Religious Education; and
- ICT.

There is also a management team comprising the principal, the vice-principal and the key stage 1 co-ordinator.

Planning for Teaching and Learning

For effective teaching and learning to take place in all of our children it is essential that planning reflects clarity of thought. Teachers plan to ensure specific learning outcomes by selecting or devising appropriate teaching strategies, learning activities and forms of classroom organisation that facilitate differentiation. Appropriate links are made across the curriculum and resources are selected to raise the standards of learning in children of all abilities. Teachers evaluate children's learning and their teaching against success criteria set at the planning stage.

Styles of Teaching and Learning

In planning schemes of lessons, teachers will promote learning that is:

- carefully differentiated;
- the result of both support and challenge;
- appropriately shallow, deep and profound;
- a development from experience to reflection and then to creativity;
- linked to existing skills and knowledge;
- meaningful and realistic;
- interesting and enjoyable;
- accessible to children with different preferred learning styles;
- based on the full range of intelligences;
- social and develops interdependence;
- valuable in childhood (as well as preparatory for adulthood);
- both convergent and divergent;
- a development from gathering information to its interpretation and then to decision making;
- both pragmatic and imaginative; and
- empowering.

Teaching Approaches and Classroom Organisation

Children's learning will be both subject-specific and cross-curricular within seven main areas.

- Mathematics / Numeracy
- English / Literacy
- The World Around Us
- The Arts
- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- Personal Development

Each subject and topic will promote the development of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes. Six types of skills are included:

- Physical skills
- Thinking Skills
- Inter-Personal Skills
- Intra-Personal Skills
- Learning Skills
- ICT Skills

Many of these skills have uses across the curriculum and children will be encouraged to make connections in their learning and to select skills and methods of working that are appropriate to each situation. Core skills include

- problem-solving
- generating topic work
- talking and listening
- reading activities
- writing activities
- physical development
- testing and investigation
- safe and effective use of materials and equipment
- cultural studies
- contextual studies
- drawing
- investigation and research
- use of maps, diagrams and graphic representation
- creative expression

Teachers will employ a range of approaches to develop learning:

- whole class teaching;
- explanation;
- collaborative work in (mixed ability, mixed gender, ability, friendship) groups;
- work in pairs;
- individual, autonomous learning;
- teacher/pupil tutelage;
- circle time;
- field trips and visits;
- demonstration;
- team teaching;
- practical activities;
- drama;
- structured play; and
- questioning.

The Use of Learning Resources to Develop the Autonomous Learner

A wide range of learning resources will be made available to promote autonomous learning. Children will be guided in their appropriate selection and use with increasing independence. They might include:

- books (library, texts, etc), magazines, newspapers, brochures, etc.;
- practical equipment;
- video/DVD;
- digital camera;
- tapes, compact discs, etc.;
- computer software;
- internet;
- tailored worksheets;
- school environment;
- locations and institutions outside school;
- visitors; and
- peers.

Monitoring and Evaluating

Procedures are in place to evaluate the teaching performance through monitoring effective learning.

- marking children's class work;
- questioning;
- observation (child or group);
- homework;
- formal assessment (weekly tests, topic tests, end of key stage assessment, transfer procedure, etc.);
- sampling of books (classes, years, subjects, etc);
- teacher self-evaluation (lesson, scheme, etc);
- observation of teacher.

Strategies for Dealing with Children with Learning Difficulties

One of our aims for teaching and learning is:

To cater for the needs and strengths of individual children from both sexes, from all ethnic, religious and social groups, and including the most able as well as those who are experiencing learning difficulties

Our commitment is to know all of our children as individuals, to monitor their strengths and needs, and to provide the appropriate support required to enable each child to fulfil his or her potential. It is likely that, at any time, about 20% of our children will be identified for specifically targeted support and recorded on the SEN register. A cycle of needs identification, planning, communication with parents,

provision and evaluation takes place twice per year. The school policy relating to special educational needs outlines the rationale and procedures employed to address the individual needs of children.

Extending Gifted and Talented Children

Procedures are in place to identify, support and challenge those children of exceptional ability, the gifted and talented.

Community Partnerships

Learning is most effective when it takes place in a supportive atmosphere. It becomes broader, richer and more secure when applied within different contexts. In Ashgrove we value many active partnerships, including:

- parents;
- Parent Teacher Association;
- Ashgrove Nursery School;
- St Mary's-On-The-Hill PS (Schools Community Relations Programme);
- charities;
- leisure centres;
- Newtownabbey Borough Council;
- local post-primary schools;
- residential homes and hospitals;
- churches;
- various public and private initiatives (sports, arts, environmental, etc).

Review

These guidelines will be reviewed every three years.