

Errol Primary School
<i>Learning & teaching policy</i>

Part A – Rationale

Learning is the top priority for our school. The aim of this policy is to set down the elements of professional practice which will result in excellence in learning. Our learning & teaching policy endorses wholeheartedly for pupils, parents and staff the educational purposes described in Curriculum for Excellence. We aim to develop ourselves and those we teach as: Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors. Our success in this aim will depend on how far all involved feel secure and valued, and the extent to which we all learn how to think effectively in different contexts.

Learning

An excellent learning experience will include most of the following most of the time:

- People welcoming other people, enjoying each others' company and having fun through challenge and hard work
- Learners reviewing prior work, making choices and agreeing what needs to be done, how it is to be done, where and when it is to be done using appropriate resources including ICT
- Learners leading - asking each other meaningful questions which require thought, engaging in dialogue as a class and in groups, modelling processes and demonstrating knowledge and skills to each other and other audiences
- Learners understanding and sharing standards, self and peer assessing, receiving meaningful feedback about what has been achieved and agreeing next steps to improve.

Teaching

Learning is at its best when learners feel happy and secure. It is the responsibility of the school community – school staff, pupils, parents and carers, professionals from partner agencies and others in the local community – to work together to ensure that each learner feels safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Young people think that the teacher has a central role in this process, working with others in the school community to create the right conditions for effective learning.

Over the last sixty years, young people's ideas about what makes a successful teacher have been surprisingly consistent. These focus on personal qualities – how the teacher (i.e. any person who provides a learning experience including support staff) acts as a role model – building relationships with individuals and the class as a whole, fostering relationships amongst learners.

According to young people, successful teachers are:

- Aspirational - genuinely believe that all learners can succeed

- Assertive - decisive and confident, firm but fair
- Encouraging - positive, supportive, welcoming genuine error as an opportunity to learn
- Enthusiastic - believe in what they are teaching and enjoy the job
- Humorous - show humour naturally and put learners at ease
- Open - prepared to challenge their own thinking and admit they may be wrong
- Respectful - genuinely like young people, care about them, listen to them, enjoy their company and do not disrespect them individually or collectively.

Assessment

Effective assessment informs and supports the learning and teaching process, helping to raise attainment and achievement. All involved should understand and take appropriate account of the three main types of assessment:

Assessment for learning is essentially formative. It is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence so that learners, parents/carers and teachers can decide, through high quality dialogue, where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go next and how best to get there.

Assessment as learning is essentially evaluative. It is about using assessment to learn how to learn and thus encourage the development of autonomous learners. In effective assessment as learning, learners through self and peer assessment identify and reflect about their own evidence of learning. Personal learning planning provides a supportive framework for these processes.

Assessment of learning is essentially summative. It is about measuring, analysing and reporting performance. Effective assessment of learning provides information about individual skills and knowledge leading to awards which are passports to opportunities in life, work and education.

Part B – Policy Principles

The Key Principles upon which this policy statement is based are as follows:

Inclusion

Learners should not be subject to discrimination, intentional or otherwise, on the grounds of their social circumstances, gender, race, religion, cultural beliefs, disability or sexual orientation.

Engagement

Learners need motivation. They should have a significant reason for engaging in the learning process and positive feelings about involvement.

Learners – especially the young – are often self-motivating; they are desperate to find out, know, understand – it's as natural as breathing. Learning brings its own emotional and/or

intellectual reward. Equally often, though, learners require an external incentive to provide motivation – an award, a certificate, a prize, praise, promotion. To be effective, such incentives must be meaningful to the learner.

As teachers – often through personal example – we should foster a love of learning by nurturing self motivation. But we should also motivate – inspire, challenge and praise. We should show that we value all learners, creating an ethos of achievement and organising tasks which will bring rewards that matter from the learner's point of view.

Participation

Learners need to participate in the learning process. They should be active and take as much responsibility as possible for their own learning.

Learners should lead whenever possible. They should make informed choices about what, where and how they learn; they should self and peer assess. Learners should be aware of themselves as learners, conscious of their own preferred styles of learning, confident enough to seek help, perceptive enough to know where help may be best sought, skilful enough to access help readily.

As teachers, we are lifelong learners – a state of mind which should inform our professional practice, development and our own wider learning. Through collegiality, we should create learning communities in our classrooms, establishments and beyond.

Dialogue

Learners need to communicate through verbal and/or multi-sensory dialogue. Research and empirical evidence demonstrate that real understanding takes place when learners work through with someone else what is to be learned and how far they have been successful in their learning.

Learners, where possible, should talk through their learning regularly with their teachers, their peers, parents and others. They should question, answer, expound, challenge assertions, support propositions, offer alternatives, suggest solutions, peer assess ...

As teachers – through personal example and setting standards in our questioning and provision of feedback – we should create the conditions in which communication and dialogue can thrive, where self confidence and respect for others underpin all interaction, where achievement is celebrated and error welcomed as a stepping stone to success.

Thinking

Learners need to think. This thinking should be critical and creative, robust and flexible in order that all may understand and achieve their potential whatever the context.

Learners should be positively critical: questioning, investigating, testing, seeking after the truth about themselves, others and the world in which they live. They should be creative: imagining, expressing, exploring the boundaries of the possible so that there are no limits to ambition.

As teachers we should be thinkers: reflective professionals – self aware, systematically evaluative, focused on our own improvement and that of those in our care. We should use the language of thinkers, ask the questions that matter, enable and empower other

learners to ask those questions, so that they and those who respond may make their thinking explicit. Crucially, despite the pressures, we ourselves should take time to think.

Part C – Policy Outcomes

Teaching approaches will:

- Be appropriately varied and of a consistently high standard
- Be well matched to learners' needs
- Take full account of learners' prior learning and attainment
- Ensure lessons are well structured and planned with clear outcomes
- Ensure that the purpose of lessons is shared with learners
- Use praise effectively
- Ensure explanations, expositions and instructions are clear
- Engage learners through discussion, dialogue and interaction
- Encourage learners to express their views and ask questions
- Include skilled use of questioning to stimulate learners' interest and check and develop pupils' understanding
- Motivate learners and develop their independent learning skills
- Encourage and value learners' contributions, promote learning and build confidence
- Involve learners in evaluating teaching approaches
- Make regular and effective use of ICT to support and extend learning

Pupils' learning will:

- Be of a consistently high standard
- Be relevant, stimulating, challenging, exciting and motivating
- Take account of learners' previous experiences
- Provide continuity and progression in learning
- Provide opportunities for learners to take responsibility, become more independent and think more independently
- Engage learners in thinking about, and being active in, their learning
- Enable learners to develop their critical thinking skills and creativity
- Enable learners to use their imaginations and develop a strong sense of self-worth and confidence
- Provide learners with a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve
- Be well paced and provide appropriate support and challenge to all
- Enable all learners to make progress in their coursework
- Actively involve learners in their own learning and development
- Provide opportunities for learners to work independently and with others in groups to make decisions, explain their ideas, solve problems and provide solutions
- Make regular and appropriate use of ICT to support and extend learning

Learners' needs will best be met by:

- Matching learning tasks, activities and resources to the needs of individual learners and groups
- Provide appropriate support and challenge to all learners
- Developing programmes of work to meet all learners' needs

- Ensuring that the quality and delivery of programmes include all learners in the learning process
- Using assessment information to identify gaps in learners' skills, knowledge and understanding and to plan learning
- Removing barriers to learning through the regular identification, review and evaluation of learners' needs including those who have additional support needs
- Effective partnership working between teachers, learners, parents and services
- The provision of effective support and advice by learning support staff to teachers and individual learners about strategies to meet learners' needs
- Understanding and implementing current legislation including that relating to additional support needs
- Setting appropriate learning targets in individualised educational programmes and co-ordinated support plans
- Reviewing, in partnership with parents and learners, learners' needs and learning plans

Part D – Responsibilities

Learning is the lifelong responsibility of all school users.

Pupils are responsible for fully participating in their own learning and the learning of others.

Parents are responsible for supporting the school in its delivery of learning & teaching.

Support staff are responsible for supporting teachers in the delivery of learning and teaching.

Teachers are responsible for the learning & teaching in their class.

The principal teacher is responsible for assisting the head teacher in overseeing learning & teaching in the school.

The head teacher is responsible for overseeing learning & teaching in the school.

Reviewed November 2009