

**Holy Souls Catholic Primary School**  
**Teaching and Learning Policy.**  
**Making A Difference .**

**Christ At The Centre.**

The Church provides Catholic schools to:

- Assist in its mission of making Christ known to all people.
- Assist parents, who are the primary educators of their children, in the education and religious formation of their children.
- Be at the service of the local Church – the diocese, the parish and the Christian home.
- Be a service to society.

Our Catholic Schools are distinctive when we:

- Manifest a Catholic ethos which is evident and open to experience by all who enter the school.
- Promote Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church as an integral part of their mission.
- Follow policies that reflect and embody the teaching of Christ and the Catholic Church.

The core Gospel values based on the Beatitudes may be summarized as follows:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven”

Values: **Faithfulness & Integrity**

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”

Values: **Dignity & Compassion**

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”

Values: **Humility & Gentleness**

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied”

Values: **Truth & Justice**

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy”

Values: **Forgiveness & Mercy**

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God”

Values: **Purity & Holiness**

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God”

Values: **Tolerance & Peace**

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice for your reward is great in heaven; they persecuted the prophets before you in the very same way”

Values: **Service & Sacrifice**

Gospel values “...are a guarantee of peace and of collaboration among all citizens in the shared commitment to serving the common good”.

## **Our School.**

The context of our policy for teaching and learning has been clearly articulated by the Bishops of England and Wales.

*...The aims of our schools are to help everyone within the school community to grow in faith, to make the most of every ability they have been given, to achieve academic excellence and to prepare well for adult life in a modern and diverse society. (Sept. 2007)*

These aims are mirrored in both our own school mission statement and our statement of the preferred future for our school. The Professional Teachers Standards also provide further a clear set of practices which define the role of the teacher in fulfilling the teaching dimension to our purpose. Our own school's teaching and learning policy takes these standards and, based on our staff's professional consensus of our best practice, defines the principles of teaching which make a difference in ensuring the excellent quality of education which we wish to provide for the children in our care.

Applying these principles, each teacher has his/her teaching quality assured through the monitoring of the impact of his/her teaching on the children's learning outcomes. (see monitoring and evaluation schedule). In order to have our teaching quality assured in our school, each of these principles are to be followed consistently. The key processes in achieving this consistency are firstly through the effective assessing and reviewing of the impact of our most recent teaching on our children's learning, followed by thorough shared preparations in planning the next teaching and learning lessons. This requires an ongoing professional commitment from our staff to work with year group colleagues daily, weekly and termly which is provided immeasurably by all staff.

Due to the consistently good and often outstanding teaching practice in our school, we can guarantee to our children and their parents an assurance of good quality teaching which will impact on good quality learning. If for any reason, identified through the regular monitoring of the learning outcomes of our children, the teaching practice of a colleague becomes variable and is not applying all of the principles of good quality teaching as set out below, then support is required for that colleague's teaching to improve back to the level of the quality assurance guarantee. Such support shall be readily provided by colleagues working together and shall be readily accepted by colleagues working together.

The principles of teaching which make a difference are:

- High Expectations
- Pitch
- Prior Attainment
- Clear Learning goals
- Challenge
- Clear Success Criteria
- Modelling success
- Questioning

- Flow
- Feedback
- Metacognition

### **High Expectations.**

Having high expectations of our children shows that we care for them. Research shows that children meet the expectations that we have of them. Our policy is to have high expectations and be prepared to be surprised. It is particularly important to have high expectations of our older children who are in lower sets.

In our school we understand that to achieve our high expectations the following practices are required:

- consistency in the following;
- good communication is needed between all involved in our children's learning: teachers (class share colleagues and other colleagues within the year group), teaching assistants, other support staff, parents and the children themselves;
- good knowledge of our children's experiences and circumstances;
- targets and benchmarks;
- confidence that our prior teaching experience having high expectations did result in good and often better progress;
- effective use of success criteria as the key framework for articulating what the learning achievements will be;
- sharing our high expectations with each other and how we teach to achieve them so that we can improve as teachers;
- effective differentiation.

### **Pitch.**

High pitch along with high expectations by everyone involved does impact on our children's learning. Being a role model for our children is important showing them that we genuinely believe in their ability to succeed in their challenges, tasks and targets

Our understanding of pitch includes the following principles:

- trusting in the transition information received from our colleagues to challenge our children at the beginning of an academic year;
- a common understanding that good progress at the end of a year is defined as being more than a year's outcome for that year's input.

To accurately pitch our teaching and our children's learning the following practices are required:

- consistency in the following;
- make best use of our professional teacher experience and expertise in that year group;
- reference to relevant curriculum objectives;

- reference to national expectations of attainment and achievement;
- targets;
- points that are achievable if our children work hard and try their best;
- knowing our children and their prior attainment.

### **Prior Attainment.**

Knowing the starting point of each lesson is crucial as this informs the size and nature of the challenge for our children in that lesson. To move our children's learning forward at the beginning of each lesson or new unit of learning, the following practices are required:

- consistency in the following:
  - use of previous assessment information (baseline eg attainment on entry to school, end of KS1, termly assessments eg unaided writing);
  - use of assessment activities at the beginning of a unit of learning;
  - ongoing daily recorded observations;
  - marking of our children's work;
  - teacher expertise expressed through good subject knowledge of the relevant curriculum subject,
  - often (but not exclusively) enhanced by a built up experience teaching within a particular age group;
  - communicating all the above through the PPA process.

### **Clear Learning Goals.**

For our children to make good progress they need to clearly understand the starting point of lessons and their pathway through the lesson. This is a key skill of teachers and requires:

- consistency in communicating with our colleagues the following;
- good, confident subject knowledge;
- using language with our children which they understand;
- building with children their awareness of their own learning;
- clear (to the child) success criteria;
- clear feedback.

### **Challenge.**

Achieving success where the challenge first felt difficult is the real 'elixir' of learning. It is what gives us the greatest buzz as teachers and learners. Learning may be defined as an enabling task which moves someone from a place of current understanding to a new step on the learning ladder. Providing the correct challenge is an expert teacher skill. It is a fine balancing act between securing/mastering a skill and being exposed to the next more difficult learning step. It involves having a minimum expectation with learning that initially must seem out of reach to our children but, with help and practise, will realistically be achieved. It requires the following practices:

- good teacher subject knowledge to know all the steps to the learning thus confidently providing open ended learning opportunities;

- knowledge of the individual child in knowing when the right time to move the child forward or when to support new learning needs that are identified;
- a trusting relationship with the child where the child (who knows the teacher is there to help and support) is unafraid and confident to make mistakes in new learning, get things wrong, take risks, think, investigate in order to succeed in the challenge;
- the teacher to be unafraid of getting the pitch of the challenge wrong at times;
- planned and unplanned questioning at different levels;
- teacher and children ensuring that next steps are being aimed for by using the success criteria together;
- ongoing dialogue and feedback with the child where the higher the challenge, the more accurate and specific the feedback needs to be.

Challenge is not always about new learning. The brain often can only take on more difficult steps once current learning skills have been mastered to a sufficient degree. This requires much opportunity for focussed concentration and deliberate practice on aspects of the challenge which may need to be refined with feedback and repetition until success has been achieved. Homework or use of extra adult support are ideal opportunities to support this type of over learning.

### **Clear Success Criteria.**

In our school the use of clear success criteria supports both the teacher in planning, preparing and assessing the learning pathway for our children and supports our children in learning how to learn. As our children progress through using WILF and learning ladders they learn to take responsibility to place themselves as learners onto the ladder accurately and then work to achieve the learning steps on the ladder. Our older children also use assessment levels along with their targets and the success criteria to help them with their challenge.

Using success criteria is an expert skill and requires the following practices:

- ability to break down the learning objective into skills tasks (often hierarchical) which can be mastered by the child;
- an understanding of how our children perceive the learning ladder, their thinking capabilities;
- providing words that our children can use to master a skill and explain their new learning;
- providing words that support our children in understanding what to do in a learning situation;
- translating levels of thinking into tasks which can be mastered by our children;
- confidence to not place a ceiling at the top of the learning ladder;
- ongoing dialogue and feedback;
- an understanding and awareness of which children are learning more quickly than others and how we support the other children to do so eg through peer learning groups.

## **Modelling Success / Showing how to...**

Our children need to touch and /or see what the successful learning looks like in addition to seeing statements on a learning ladder. A key teaching skill is to model and demonstrate the steps to success accurately using correct concepts, skills and words.

This requires physical concrete apparatus to begin until the child is ready for visual models through IWBs, power points, visualisers, books or other secondary resources.

## **Questioning**

Questioning is a key expert skill because it models the thinking required for our children to attempt and then master new learning. Our children need to learn and connect that key words in a question prompt a certain type of response and may require different levels of thinking.

Using questioning requires the following practices:

- choosing the language in questions carefully to optimise the learning in a lesson;
- good subject knowledge particularly of common mistakes and misconceptions which our children have;
- clear modelling along with clear modelling of correct answers;
- providing children with time for meaningful discussion and productive talking where the teacher can join in but will as often listen and therefore learn from the children also;
- talk, listen and do;
- use of an effective taxonomy to support levels of improving and deepening thinking such as Bloom's taxonomy.

## **Flow.**

When flow happens it is a consequence of teachers using key expert skills. Flow does not happen accidentally and needs to be consistently assessed, planned and prepared for and communicated with all colleagues within the year group to achieve parity of opportunity for all children. The following practises are required:

- the learning objective is worthwhile to our children thus intrinsically motivating;
- the success criteria are clear to our children;
- an appropriately high level of challenge;
- a good attitude to the learning;
- our children have the skills at the right level for the next stage of learning;
- minimal input is used with the whole class;
- feedback is timed as immediate as practically possible during the lesson;
- opportunities for talk partners, mixed thinking ability pairs and groups to support independent, 'have a go', perseverance based learning.

To support our children's motivation we often use a 'hook'. This is usually an experience, resource, story or idea which has relevance to their experiences, desires audiences or meaningful purposes in their lives. Teachers will often use role play to stimulate interest.

The aim is for all our children to become (if not already) intrinsically motivated to love learning in itself. The learning ladder ideally becomes the hook, the intrinsic motivation. This is a real challenge particularly with the current knowledge based national curriculum and it is a worry that children who are already or do become intrinsically motivated. remain so as they get older.

### **Feedback.**

Our children want to know how well they are doing, where they are going next and how they are going to get there. Our children want help from their teacher with understanding their learning and with how to improve their learning. Our children place a high value on receiving feedback against their learning achievement and have a high value of teachers who provide it. Helping our children to learn something new is why we teach and what gives us most pleasure and satisfaction. Ideally this feedback is best given at the point at which our children need it as it maximises learning. Certainly best practice with our youngest children is to follow this approach. Whilst all our teachers agree with this principle, feedback is organised in a manner which balances the immediate and emerging needs of the children in any given point within any lesson with the finite adult resources present in the lesson. Getting this balance correct, but not at the expense of wearing a teacher out, is arguably a definition of an expert teacher. It is an expert teaching skill to optimise the learning time and to know when to intervene as necessary to support learning or move learning forward.

We have established marking feedback policies which share these principles and the specific practise of them in more detail. Effective marking provides the opportunity to optimise learning at the beginning of the next lesson and provide feedback predominantly through groups. Most lessons now have two adults working with the children so beyond the first lesson in a unit, lessons can begin straight away with group based feedback, teaching and/or gap tasks to reinforce or extend learning. Towards the end of lessons allowing our children to self and peer assess allows us a crucial opportunity to evaluate the quality of their understanding and thinking thus giving us immediate feedback on the quality of our teaching. Guiding our children to accurate high quality metacognition as they get older feeds intrinsic motivation and therefore is a goal of our school.

### **Metacognition. (Learning how to learn)**

Metacognition is present in a lesson when children know what they know and are involved in their own learning It requires the following practices:

- children can explain what they have been learning;
- children can understand what they are trying to learn;
- children know how successful their learning is and what good progress is for them;
- children know what their next step is;
- children are intrinsically self motivated and love learning.

## **Values, Skills, Attitudes, Knowledge, Excellence and Enjoyment.**

Our school believes that the principles of excellence in learning and enjoyment of learning are vital to children's personal wellbeing and academic achievement.

Learning experiences are planned and delivered following our agreed criteria.

### ***The curriculum must be:***

- driven by good quality outcomes and high standards;
- centred around good quality standalone core subjects of RE, Maths and English;
- clear in its overview;
- 'basics' skills driven;
- relevant to children's needs, their experiences and their locality;
- a reinforcement of basic skills taught in core subjects;
- owned by children and teachers in each year group to guarantee excellent engagement.
- less in breadth but more in depth if children are to be nurtured as learners.
- flexible to respond to current affairs.

### **Our list for *EXCELLENT* learning; our ingredients for *ENJOYMENT* memorable lessons.**

- successful learning took place, a eureka moment, a penny dropping, a buzz, I get it
- achievement and accomplishment of outcomes building on previous best
- the teaching was enthusiastic
- the children taken safely out of their comfort zones to enjoy taking risks
- carefully chosen resources to hook, fascinate, excite, inspire and motivate everyone
- humour, fun and enjoyment
- recognition of learning and celebrating it
- practical finding out, experimenting, trial and error, actively engaging
- a planned experience eg trip or visitor
- drama, role play or performance
- ICT led
- relevant, purposeful, real with a bigger picture
- ownership
- audience and clarity of purpose
- challenging questions by adults and children which are listened/responded to
- something of value is created
- when there is an awareness of God's presence and work at hand

The key **SKILLS** that our children need to learn are:

- gross and fine motor
- listening accurately and speaking correctly
- concentration
- independence in reading, writing and maths
- read and write HF words
- fluency in reading for decoding and comprehension
- ask questions and solve problems
- basic maths
- interpersonal, social, emotional
- resilience and resourcefulness
- organisation between home and school
- money
- ICT
- access knowledge
- imagination and creativity
- correct choices in given situations to use and transfer skills

The key **ATTITUDES** that our children need to learn are:

- motivation to love learning as the key to a good and fulfilling life
- aspiration and ambition
- self belief and confidence
- initiative and determination
- enthusiasm and optimism
- take on a challenge and not be afraid to make mistakes
- form an opinion
- persistence to see it through to the successful end
- responsibility and respect
- beatitudes to be as good as we can be
- fruits of the Holy Spirit
- to value opportunities and appreciate aesthetic experiences

The key **KNOWLEDGE** that our children need to learn about are:

- God's love for us, how to live our faith and understand our religion
- our world and the cultures within
- our society and our role as citizens within
- the statutory curriculum, RE, English and Maths, to good SATs standards
- our bodies, good health and physical well being
- our environment
- music
- the past and its conflicts
- money

