



Curiosity, Courage, Compassion

'A community learning together in God's love'

Thundridge and Tonwell St Mary's Church Schools' Federation

Teaching and Learning Policy

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1. Introduction/Philosophy

At our school, we believe in the concept of lifelong learning, and the idea that both adults and children should learn new things to help them to flourish in their lives. Through our teaching, we equip children with the skills, knowledge, resilience and

independence to be able to make informed decisions about important things in their lives and become lifelong learners themselves.

Our philosophy for learning is based on certain cognitive principles. As a school, we believe that:

‘Memory is the residue of thought’ which is the idea that what children **think carefully** about is what they will remember in their long-term memory and therefore have learned.

‘We understand things in the context of what we already know’ which is why our curriculum is designed so that children can **revisit and build upon knowledge** across series of lessons, across each year and across the school (‘sticky knowledge’).

‘It is virtually impossible to become proficient at a mental task without extended practise’ which is the idea that practice enables automaticity and learning to be stored in the long-term memory, so opportunities are planned in each series of lessons to **practise skills with the language of Growth Mindset**.

2. Aims and Vision

We work as part of a partnership of schools within our federation. As part of a community learning together in God’s love promoting our core values of ‘Curiosity, Courage, Compassion’. Our federation is a community where each person is known and valued. We are ambitious for all to develop our three Cs, as well as Christian and British values.

Further to this, we aim to help each person to:

Be interested to develop a love and independence for learning and be ready to try new things.

Be brave enough to make mistakes, have a go at challenges and try again.

Be kind showing respect and care to all.

Our vision is theologically rooted in the Bible story of The Good Samaritan with central bible verses ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’ and ‘Go and do likewise’.

3. Spirituality

Promoting ways for children and adults to explore spirituality is central to our schools, transcending all areas. We believe that there is more to life than what we see in front of us. We recognise that all people have spirituality and for some that includes faith. Spirituality connects the relationships we have with ourselves, with others, with the wider world and, for some, with God.

Our daily collective worship is the heartbeat of our school and gives opportunities to both pupils and staff to develop spirituality. We use the GERS model (Gather, Engage, Respond/*Reflect*, Send). Our reflection could be through prayer, periods of silence or listening to music.

We aim to develop spiritual skills:

Be **curious** to ask questions

Ask how can we ‘Go and do likewise’ like the Samaritan in our Bible story

Show care and **compassion** for yourself, others and the world around us

Be able to stop rushing and be still, calm & peaceful
Be able to forgive
Develop own sense of right & wrong and have **courage** to share your beliefs
Be able to make mistakes, learn from them & move on with a growth mindset
Be aware of what makes you, you & what is special about you
Be able to give and help others

Across our curriculum, we provide many opportunities to develop spirituality, for example:

- Time for reflection in collective worship and in lessons
- Chances to ask questions, considering their own responses and others'
- Invitational moments to connect with self, others, with God and the wider world
- Daily collective worship is designed around core Christian values, which are also values for life linking to fundamental British Values
- Curriculum designed around key curiosity questions with opportunities to learn about ourselves, others, the wider world and different faiths/worldviews.
- Regular gardening club sessions and visits to Jean's Community Orchard
- Termly visits to our local church and annual visits to other places of worship
- Links to our local care home and pre-school
- Celebration of Feeling Good Week and use of 5 ways to wellbeing

4. **Our philosophy and pedagogy**

Curriculum

We value the importance of a broad and balanced curriculum where basic skills in English and maths are promoted across the curriculum. We ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum (2014), The EYFS Framework, Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus for RE. English and maths are taught daily across the school. Phonics is taught daily in EYFS and KS1 using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds programme. Other subjects are taught weekly over a half term or full term. Due to the unique size and mixed-age class structure, our curriculum is organised on a rolling programme. This allows a 'spiral' organisation with key knowledge, vocabulary and skills being revisited and built upon across the school. Our curriculum is designed using a question-based approach to encourage and develop thinking carefully and problem solving. In EYFS, our focus is to secure learning and development in the three prime areas of learning- personal, social and emotional development; communication and language; and physical development as well as begin teaching children through the four specific areas of learning- literacy; mathematics; expressive arts and design; and understanding the world.

Growth Mindset

We use a 'Growth Mindset' approach to their learning, where effort, practice and determination are valued. This approach has been chosen to develop resilience in our children. Staff regularly model language such as 'I can't do it...yet', 'try, try and try again' and 'marvellous mistake' with children. The message of Growth Mindset is reinforced with the whole school community at the beginning of the school year.

Independence

We teach children skills to help them to be more independent. Every classroom has age-appropriate, accessible working walls and reference areas. Classes have resources to support children to self-check their work, including reusable checklists and the gold standard for writing. Children are also encouraged to develop their

independence beyond the academic, for example: joining school council, sports ambassadors, class jobs. Adults challenge children to be independent by stepping back and encouraging them to use resources and strategies available to them.

Structure of lessons

We share learning objectives with children and where appropriate give them the 'big picture' of the lesson or series of lessons. We ensure children understand success criteria. Staff connect the learning to previous lessons and review what has been learned. In line with our philosophy, across each series of lessons, children are supported to think carefully, practice skills with the language of Growth Mindset, revisit and build upon knowledge. Children are encouraged to have a balance of adult-led and independent activities throughout the day participating in whole class, group, paired and individual work. Whenever possible, we plan opportunities for children to ask questions, investigate, reason and solve problems, research and discover, debate, role-play and present.

Reading

Learning to read is one of the most important things children will learn at our school. We want children to love reading – and to want to read for themselves. This is why we work hard to make sure children develop a love of books as well as learning to read. Across the school, children have opportunities to read individually, in guided groups and as a whole class. Staff support children to make appropriate choices of texts and model themselves as readers.

Learning environment

At our school we provide a safe, rich and well-organised learning environment that allows children to develop their skills both inside and outdoors. Children's safety is at the forefront of everything we do. We ensure that safeguarding procedures and policies are followed and risk assessments are in place. We ensure the best possible environment for learning by developing a positive atmosphere where pupils feel safe, enjoy being challenged, are set high expectations for behaviour, display is engaging with a balance of celebrating children's work and resources to support learning. All children have the opportunity to take part in Forest School activities weekly (Tonwell) and Gardening Club in spring/summer (Thundridge)

Enrichment

We organise and value a diverse range of regular visitors, in school workshops and trips to complement classroom learning. This approach is important because it gives our children access to information, experiences and cultural capital (the best of what has been thought and said) they may not be able to access outside of school. Where possible, this is organised at the start or end of a unit of learning to either build up knowledge or to revisit and think more deeply about knowledge already learned. Children almost always show a positive emotional response to these experiences and remember them.

Assessment

Formative and summative assessment are an integral part of school life. Teachers make ongoing assessments of each child's progress and use this to inform planning, to provide feedback celebrating successes and to support progress. Our approach is set out in our Feedback policy. At the start of a sequence of lessons, staff use prior knowledge quests to find out what they already know (e.g. mind

maps/open questions). During lessons, staff use techniques such as questioning, live marking and observation to check understanding. At the end of a sequence of lessons, staff ensure there are opportunities for retrieval practice (e.g. adding to mind maps/low stakes quizzing/knowledge organisers). Assessment is used to highlight any children who may be identified as having SEND, are disadvantaged or who are high attaining. These children are discussed at pupil progress meetings and relevant support planned. Aspirational targets are set at the start of each academic year and monitored termly.

Adapting Learning and Providing Challenge

We strive to ensure that all children are supported and challenged at an appropriate level and to ensure we meet all statutory requirements related to inclusion. Research shows that children learn most effectively when activities are pitched carefully, in order to challenge them to think hard but not to overwhelm them. Children are encouraged to challenge themselves and sometimes have the chance to choose their own level of work, whilst sometimes being guided by the teacher. When planning work for children with SEND or Looked After Children, we give due regard to information and targets from their Learning Plan or PEP. We recognise that children may have different levels of attainment across subjects and that some children are highly able. When planning lessons, teachers consider core, support and challenge for all learners.

Inclusion

We utilise a variety of strategies to support, scaffold learning and challenge children with SEND across all subjects. This can include: use of resources, scaffolding (e.g. writing frame, speaking frame, word banks), paired or group work, reducing cognitive load (e.g. task lists, sentence starters, visuals), adult support, pre-teaching, visuals and picture cues, breaking tasks down into smaller chunks, recording learning in different ways (e.g. not always having a written outcome), personalised tasks, use of external professional advice.

Higher Attaining learners

We recognise these children as those who have a secure knowledge of the objectives for their year group and are working at a greater depth. We employ a range of approaches to support and challenge higher attaining children. This can include: use of questioning, application of their learning into different contexts, differentiated success criteria, supporting a peer, teaching others, use of resources, pace of learning, personalised tasks.

Deployment of other adults

We deploy teaching assistants and volunteers as effectively as possible. They work 1:1 and in small groups with pupils, make observations and assessments of pupils and meet with external experts to learn to deliver specialist programmes for SEND or pupil premium pupils.

Equal opportunities

We value each child as a unique individual regardless of background and treat them fairly. Staff are familiar with the relevant equal opportunities legislation e.g. protected characteristics, such as gender, race, disability, sexuality, religion, SEN.

5. Role of Governors

Our governors determine, support, monitor and review the school's approach to teaching and learning. In particular they:

- Ensure safeguarding is robust and procedures followed correctly;
- Support the use of particular teaching strategies by allocating resources effectively;
- Ensure school premises are used optimally to support teaching and learning;
- Seek to ensure staff performance management and development both promote good quality teaching;
- Monitor the effectiveness of the school's teaching and learning approaches through the school's self-evaluation process, Headteacher's reports to governors, the school development plan and governor visits, including those with external agencies such as the LA or Diocese.

6. Role of parents

We believe that parents/carers have a fundamental role to play in helping children to learn. We do all we can to inform them about what and how they are learning by:

- Holding meetings at the start of each year for parents to meet the teacher and share information about topics and age related expectations;
- Updating information on the school's website to share curriculum information and news about children's learning;
- Sending written interim reports in Autumn and Spring term as part of parent consultation evenings explaining progress, celebrating successes, setting targets and explaining ways parents can help at home;
- Sending an end of year written report sharing attainment and progress information;
- Inviting parents to talks about school curriculum e.g. Relationships education, how phonics is taught;

We believe parents/carers have the responsibility to support their children and the school in implementing school policies and asked them to read and sign the Home School Agreement.