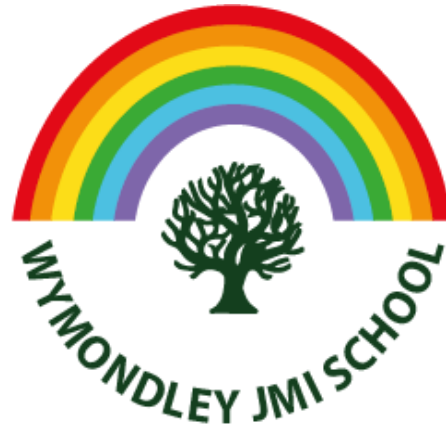


# Wymondley JMI School



## Teaching and Learning Policy

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As a primary school, our core purpose is to ensure all our pupils attain the highest standards in all aspects of English and Maths, leaving this school with both high levels of attainment and having progressed well from their starting point. We believe that we will be more successful if this core goal is enshrined in a clear and shared approach to teaching and learning and to school ethos.

As a school, we aim:

- To ensure that we inspire in all pupils, a love of learning and the desire to continue to learn;
- To equip all pupils with the tools and self-confidence necessary to constructively influence their own lives;
- To ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to take part in the life and work of the school

and

- To be a place every child remembers with affection.

The following describes how we work together as a school in pursuit of these aims. These are our common principles of teaching and learning.

## **Put creativity at the heart of teaching and learning**

We believe that children who think creatively and independently are more likely to discover things for themselves, to be open to new ideas and to be motivated to work beyond lesson time to pursue topics of interest. Allowing children to think and work creatively develops self-confidence and builds up key learning skills e.g. how to manage their own behaviour, their understanding of the learning process, their preferred learning style, their ability to think systematically, to manage information and to learn from others.

We believe these key skills and attitudes are best developed within a motivating cross-curricular thematic approach. Our aim is to create a rich and varied curriculum, meeting national requirements but uniquely developed by us.

Teachers are encouraged to think creatively when planning a term's work in all subjects – to make connections between subjects, to take risks, and to be innovative.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- Each class has an over-arching topic each term (occasionally half term in EYFS) and the whole school knows about it;
- There is no requirement to stick within the structures of any particular schemes of work. Working from the National Curriculum, teachers are free to create the context for learning that they feel most inspires them and will inspire the children, whilst covering all statutory requirements;
- Teacher's personal enthusiasms and passions are positively encouraged and backed;
- Teachers use each other's expertise and during their PPA time, may work alongside colleagues sharing particular expertise;
- We value children's individual responses and independence of thought;
- We embrace key events across the year with themed days, like Chinese New Year, Black History Week, World Book Day, Red Nose Day and Children in Need, which often feature workshops and specific tasks/activities across the whole school that encourage creative thinking and innovation.

## **Make learning vivid and real**

As teachers we work hard to plan interesting and engaging work that stimulates imaginations. We maximise first hand and practical experiences using as many resources (objects, artefacts, people, places) as we can find. Depth is important and work is often blocked in subjects such as design technology and art to allow for maximum engagement and quality rather than superficial curriculum coverage.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- We have a policy of a minimum of 3 trips or visitors per class per year;
- We subscribe to the Hitchin Library Service Loan Service and each class may order a box a term, including costumes where relevant;
- It is expected that artefacts that support topic work will be displayed within the classroom;

- Children are actively encouraged to bring in resources to support class work.

## **Inclusion and success make for success**

Wymondley JMI School is an inclusive school. The achievements, attitudes and well being of every person in the school matters. This is made evident in our ethos and values. All staff instinctively attempt to overcome children's barriers to learning.

We regard pupils equally in relation to their individual needs. As a staff, we constantly consider teaching style, environment, rules and expectations of behaviour to ensure that every child is feeling confident happy and secure.

There are good supports in place for SEND provision.

Recognising and celebrating success through assemblies, displays and performances is very important at Wymondley JMI School. We ensure that there is a broad range of opportunities to shine.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- It is expected that work be clearly planned out and differentiated to meet the needs of every child;
- We do not have set groupings. As part of our commitment to a Growth Mindset philosophy, groupings are flexible. All children should find work 'just right' and no child should experience repeated failure or effortless success;
- We have an experienced team of support staff who work closely with class teachers who provide additional support;
- We have good relationships with a range of other professionals and value their support and advice in meeting children's needs;
- When we do a whole school art theme, we ensure every child's outcome is displayed;
- We offer all children from Year 1 the chance to learn to play the violin and/or recorder and all KS2 children have the chance to learn how to sing in the school choir that meets on a weekly basis;
- Our school is filled with high quality work on display that reflects current topic work;
- Our Friday assembly is a celebration of the children and their achievements. Individual children always have the chance to explain what they have achieved and give further information around their achievement.
- Children's opinions are regularly sought through questionnaires, discussions and suggestion boxes.

## **Set high standards**

We have high expectations of staff in terms of commitment and professionalism, classroom organisation, display and personal expectations of the children.

We have high expectations of learners and the effort they should put into learning at school and at home, and what they can achieve. We place huge importance on subject knowledge and as such children should be taught with real depth, not a superficial coverage. Topics should be planned so as to include lots of information and interesting facts.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice:

- Staff meetings begin on time and everyone is there;
- Deadlines must be met – they are set for a reason;
- Classrooms are expected to be well organised, tidy and arranged to enable the children to be independent in using resources;
- All of the children's work on display must be at least single mounted, with the exception of working walls;
- Classroom display boards should be covered by half term, with work that reflects the term's theme;
- We work as a team to cover all communal display boards once a term;
- Children are expected to be at school on time every day;
- The quality of work expected from the children is high.

## **Children should experience excellence**

We recognise and value high achievement and create opportunities for those children who excel, where relevant, to compete beyond the school.

We positively encourage teachers to seek out subject specialists to enhance topic work, so that the children have the experience of working alongside experts. Each teacher has personal strengths too and is encouraged to share these with their class or by leading a club.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- We welcome experts into school to enhance any aspect of learning;
- We belong to the North Herts School Sports Partnership and take part in several competitions e.g. the rural schools football and netball tournament, the North Herts tag rugby competition and the rural sports athletics festival. We are also members of the Hitchin Football League and take part in both the girls and the boys Wix cup and football tournaments throughout the year.
- We prioritise learning over task completion, but we do give children time to complete creative pieces of work to achieve something of quality and to be proud of.

## **The planning process demands thought, creativity and time**

There is a high expectation of the quality and depth of medium term planning and it is not acceptable to simply photocopy and follow pre-written plans without annotation or thought to how they will meet the specific needs of a particular class.

If teachers are motivated and enthusiastic about the term's work, then the children will be too.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- Topics are planned for the year, at the start of the year, ensuring that different subjects take priority, essentially, one history led, one geography led.
- There is no expectation that every foundation subject is taught every week, every term, rather a balance across the year;
- Our planning matrix gives an overview of how the term is planned, how subjects link together

and which, if any subjects are to be 'blocked';

- Weekly plans must be written to the agreed format and must be uploaded to the shared planning Google drive by Friday evening, to ensure plans are available if staff are off sick/training.
- Teachers are expected to actively research and plan ahead for school trip opportunities/visitors to come in to the school, to deepen children's knowledge.

## **Teaching technique matches learning need**

Teachers working at this school must be strong in the full range of teaching techniques. We believe in matching teaching technique and strategy to learning need and objectives – fitness for purpose – and as such, a week's lessons should include whole class direct teaching and modelling, ability group work, mixed ability work, practical tasks, paired work and individual work. There should be a good balance between teacher/pupil talk and well-structured pupil/pupil talk opportunities. We structure and pace teaching and learning so that children understand what is to be learnt, why and how.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- Groups are flexible so teachers can respond to different rates of progression and appropriate next steps;
- There are opportunities at other times for children to choose where to sit and who to work with, to increase motivation;
- Clear defined space for whole class teaching, and tables arranged to facilitate group and individual teaching;
- We regularly share 'tips' for teaching techniques at staff meetings;
- We make good use of 'talk partners' in every class;
- There are many real opportunities for co-operative group work;
- Our youngest children learn songs and stories with actions;
- We make good use of visual resources in our teaching.

## **Asking questions is central to learning**

We place great importance on asking questions, participating in 'shared thinking' and discussion, in our teaching and in our work as a staff. Interactive teaching promotes this style of learning. Teachers' questions need to be well planned and to both prompt ('What was the name of...') and probe ('What if...') the children's thinking. The best extension questions are those aimed just above what the child can already do;

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- We start each topic finding out what the children already know and what they would like to find out;
- We make good use of 'talk partners' and 'hot seating';
- The plenary/mini-plenary can occur at different points in lessons, but is seen as a vital part of the lesson and is used to further extend children's thinking and to test possibilities for next steps;
- Children's questions are always responded to and valued;

- We positively encourage inquisitiveness and intellectual curiosity!

## **We have a growth mindset culture**

A key concept which shapes the ethos of our school is growth mindsets based on the work of Carol Dweck. Rather than simply praising success we praise effort and persistence.

We believe the best thing to do is to teach children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep on learning. For children who find work easy we make sure they encounter more difficult tasks. Our children recognise that effort, persistence and good teaching are what help them improve.

If children have fixed mindsets they find it hard to cope with failure: we teach our children to see mistakes and failure as positive. This makes for a very energetic and inclusive culture. It also has a really positive effect on our ethos and on how children approach learning and support each other.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- 'Good/Useful mistake' is a constantly used phrase in class. Children know that mistakes are how we learn, and that failure is part of learning.
- We always mark giving 'next steps' in English and Maths so that all learning for all children, even the very brightest, is seen as a way to grow.
- You won't find charts on the wall listing times table results in rank order or stars for behaviour;
- We don't have set ability groups that are fixed for the year;
- Children strive to improve their PB (personal best) in times table tests rather than seeing coming top as the goal.

## **The assessment priority is assessment for learning**

We aim to include children in their learning as much as possible.

Teachers are constantly assessing, as they ask questions in lessons and lean over shoulders. We place great importance on this style of formative assessment for learning during lessons. We also value summative assessments of learning, where the children are assessed against national standards.

Teachers communicate with parents individually to discuss progress, mid Autumn term, towards the end of the Spring term, and then at the end of each school year, when teachers write a very full report on each child.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- All work where possible is marked alongside the child. If not alongside then before the next lesson;
- Why work is happening and what needs to happen next to improve is always discussed and explained;
- We keep all formal assessment levels in computer files, tracking each class in Maths and English, alongside contextual data on each child and
- We use the Hertfordshire AM7 system to analyse this data.

## **Develop learning skills and personal qualities across the curriculum, inside**

## **and outside the classroom**

We believe that a school teaches in 3 ways; what it teaches, how it teaches and by the kind of place it is. Involving the children in roles and responsibilities beyond the classroom contribute to our ethos and sense of community. We place a high value on these expecting them to be carefully planned and well used. We also value special events and traditions and the importance these have for our school's culture.

As a small school, relationships between adults and the role models these offer the children are vital. We want parents, children and staff to enjoy school!

We value the role of families in learning and expect good open communication with parents, listening sensitively and responding thoughtfully to their queries and concerns.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- We have an open door policy for parents and there is opportunity to pass on issues to class teachers in the morning through our Teaching Assistant on the school door or through conversation with the Headteacher at the school gate. At the end of the school day teachers come on to the school playground to hand the children over and are available for brief conversations, but would also be happy to make appointments for extended conversations;
- Teachers readily become involved with extras such as clubs and evening events;
- We have many traditions that belong to the children;
- Staff and pupils really enjoy their work at this school, and this is communicated to our many visitors;
- Year 6 pupils have roles and responsibilities for the school, such as setting up assembly, being library monitors.
- We have a weekly newsletter, a blackboard outside the school to echo this information, termly class coffee mornings and at least one themed day with class sessions for all parents to join in with, each term. We also host a weekly shared reading morning and afternoon session, where parents in Classes 1 and 2 are invited to come in to the classrooms and join in with the children;
- We have an active and enthusiastic PTA.

## **This is a learning community**

At Wymondley JMI School, there is a common purpose and shared responsibility amongst children, parents, staff and governors. All are actively committed to the life, growth and development of this school. There is intellectual challenge for everyone and a culture of learning and questioning practice.

Teachers share a common understanding achieved through discussion, consideration of practice, the sharing of information and whole school planning of important issues. Teachers are thoughtful and self-critical. Teachers' individuality is valued but some autonomy must be sacrificed for coherence, consistency and shared standards in school life.

Examples of how this policy looks in practice are:

- We expect teachers to be motivated individuals who are open to new ideas and enquiry;
- Staff really talk at meetings;
- The pupil progress meeting cycle is well established for all staff;

- Attendance at courses and further study is positively encouraged and supported;
- Many staff pursue additional study and this is encouraged by the school and
- We actively seek to build partnerships with local organisations to enrich learning.