Learning Policy

Lead member of staff	Brian Ball
Approval Level	Full Governing Body
Signed by	Nicola Waters, Chair of Governors
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Next Review	Autumn 2024

'I hope it will be said we taught them to stand tall and proud, even in the face of history and the future was made new and whole for us all, one child at a time'

Brian Andreas

Introduction

At Billingshurst Primary School (BPS) we are committed to teaching in a manner that results in all children loving learning, having a sense of the world around them and are emotionally literate themselves. We want each child to have an understanding of their own talents and interests and we are committed to working with each child and family to achieve the very best for each child, academically, creatively, emotionally and socially.

This policy provides information for staff and parents on the way in which learning is structured in school and the general principles upon which it is based.

We are an inclusive school: we welcome all children. We see and develop the potential of every unique child and make no judgement or discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, social background, sexuality, beliefs, economic background or disability. We view every single child as equal in aspiration, education and value. We see every child as unique and know that some children will need more support and resources than others to ensure they are treated equitably. Our most disadvantaged children deserve and receive our 'first and best' in all we do to help them bridge the gap between themselves and more advantaged children.

Ethos

The ethos of the school is drawn from the following principles**:**

- Every child is a **unique child** who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at **different rates**

Learning Behaviours

At BPS we teach our children to be:

- **Curious**: to question, research, explore, evaluate and make decisions
- **Creative**: to imagine, take risks, invent, experiment, and adapt
- **Resilient**: to persevere, self-assess and improve, manage feelings, set goals and solve problems
- **A team player**: to communicate, listen, share, support each other, reach agreements and learn from each other

We expect, and support, every teacher to aspire to excellence – no child deserves less

By adopting a whole school approach to teaching and learning at BPS we aim to
- Enable children to learn as effectively as possible
- Provide consistency of teaching and learning
- Enable teachers to teach as effectively and creatively as possible
- To give the children the skills they need to become effective lifelong learners
- Provide an inclusive education for all children
- Learn from each other through the adoption of a collaborative and evaluative approach to teaching and learning where good practice is shared

Principles of Teaching in Practice

Our teachers are creative professionals and have the autonomy to teach according to the needs of the children, both academically, socially and emotionally. There is no preferred lesson format at BPS. Instead we agree a set of teaching principles. The effectiveness of teaching is judged in development of learning over time.

Following development of these principles in 2020, referenced to evidence-based research, we have reflected on the elements of teaching that have impact and have consequently revised and renewed our approaches in line with [Roseshine's Principles of Instruction](#) (2012).

We at BPS have combined these elements into our key principles of effective teaching:

- **Quality of Instruction**: review of previous learning, small steps, engagement, oracy, excellent teacher subject knowledge
- **Modelling**: providing models and scaffolds to help children construct and understand the learning
- **Challenge**: the curriculum and planning supports learning and progress
- **Questioning**: checking, assessing, oracy
- **Practice**: guided and independent
- **Feedback**: in class at the point of learning, self and peer assessment, progress reviews

Quality of Instruction

Teachers' subject knowledge is the key to ensuring that our children make excellent progress from their unique starting points. Teachers plan in year groups and year leaders ensure that the planned curriculum is delivered in all three classes. Each lesson has a clear learning intention that is focused and precise. The teaching sequence (steps) are identified clearly with modelling to illustrate the learning and scaffolding to support each learner in achieving the learning objective. A focused learning outcome is made clear in the plans.

Teachers should start each lesson with a short review of previous learning, putting the new learning into context and providing whole-class feedback from any immediately previous lessons. The teaching sequence will identify the appropriate small steps in learning to be gained that day. Small steps are appropriate to the context of the learning and learners but should not be so small as to stall or decontextualize the learning. Gap analysis and pre-teaching of work (for those pupils that need it) should be an essential part of the support provided in order to inform teaching and prepare all pupils to be successful in their learning.

Modelling

Expert modelling is key to enabling children to master the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding. The modelling engages children ('anchor' tasks in mathematics, shared writing in English, Oracy strategies in all lessons) and structures the learning with them, not for them. Modelling and thinking aloud, whether the teacher or the child, provides the cognitive support to allow children's working memory to be supported whilst gaining the learning and mastering it – enabling it to be stored in the long term memory. We understand the need to manage the 'Cognitive Load' (see below) to allow children's working memory not to be overloaded so the information can be processed and stored in the long term memory.

Scaffolds are provided to enable all children to make progress from their starting points to achieve the learning objective. They are temporary supports to help children learn difficult tasks. Scaffolds may be resources in the learning environment, word banks, mathematical/concrete apparatus, cue cards, checklists, questions, oracy strategies and models provided by the teacher. Ready-made resources should be used after careful thought and only where they help enhance the learning for pupils. This includes the use of worksheets in lessons. We plan for independence for all our learners and ensure that models support the initial learning and scaffolds support the learner's progress from their unique starting point to achieve the intended learning for all.
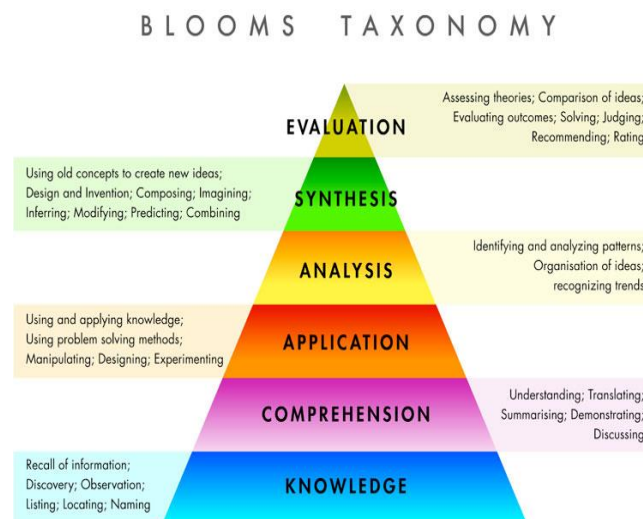
Challenge

Our curriculum is progressive, relevant and challenging. By challenge we mean ensuring children are making progress and are gaining new skills, knowledge and understanding. At BPS we refer to attainment as a reflection of where the children

are in their learning rather than ability, which attempts to predict or restrict the expected future outcomes. We know that a class will have a range of attainment at any one time and our teaching will provide challenge for each unique child.

Questioning

Questioning is key to checking children's understanding and ensuring all children are making progress. The most effective teachers check for understanding frequently. The quality of questions used to do this is essential in ensuring a real understanding of how well the children are learning. Lessons, models, scaffolds and feedback can then be effectively informed by what the teacher gains from effective questioning.

Bloom's taxonomy provides a useful hierarchy to pose questions that initiate and develop learning rather than engaging in a 'guess what I am thinking' game that is led by the teacher in the classroom. Questions should address why children think what they think and begin to develop children's own skills of metacognition (see below) or the ability to think and talk about learning and themselves as learners.

BLOOMS TAXONOMY

EVALUATION — Assessing theories; Comparison of ideas; Evaluating outcomes; Solving; Judging; Recommending; Rating

SYNTHESIS — Using old concepts to create new ideas; Design and Invention; Composing; Imagining; Inferring; Modifying; Predicting; Combining

ANALYSIS — Identifying and analyzing patterns; Organisation of ideas; recognizing trends

APPLICATION — Using and applying knowledge; Using problem solving methods; Manipulating; Designing; Experimenting

COMPREHENSION — Understanding; Translating; Summarising; Demonstrating; Discussing

KNOWLEDGE — Recall of information; Discovery; Observation; Listing; Locating; Naming

Practice

Guided and Independent practice is necessary to ensure children can store new learning in their long-term memory. If this is not evident, children will lack the ability to recall the learning in the future and this will undermine future progress and attainment. It is vital that teaching is built on assessment, questioning and feedback because if children practise errors, they will become learned - and very difficult to unlearn. This is evident at all stages of learning, for example, in pencil grip and handwriting, and in all parts of the curriculum (see feedback).

All guided and independent practice requires monitoring closely. Teachers at BPS are effective in then bringing the lesson back to them to address common errors or in providing individual verbal feedback at the point of learning. Guided practice

4

involves giving examples (see modelling) and 'rehearsing' the learning with the children.

Independent practice follows guided practice where children work on their own and practise what has been taught. Working alone does not mean working in isolation – they are working without the direct support of the teacher unless there is a requirement for the teacher to intervene. The children may be working with others, talking with each other and sharing collaboratively. Independent practice allows children to gain fluency whether this be in facts, concepts or skills. Independent practice should involve the same material as the guided practice. Once fluent the child or children can move on to the next step. Checking for fluency may involve questions such as 'Can you prove?', 'How would you know?', 'Can you explain this to another audience?' Collaborative learning is powerful and develops cognitive and metacognitive strengths for all children.

Feedback and marking

At BPS we do not, as a rule, mark the children's work after the lesson. Instead we offer feedback at the point of learning – in the lesson – to the whole class or to individuals. Feedback can take place at any part of the lesson and should address misconceptions as soon as these are identified. Feedback should identify the learning achieved and next steps but should draw on the metacognitive skills we want to develop. Discussing with the child what has been achieved, how well the child thinks they have done and why, and what the agreed next steps are, is far more powerful than the teacher telling the child. This is why we have moved away from a traditional written form of feedback.

Teachers can make comments in children's books, use post-it notes to support spelling corrections and highlight basic errors that have been missed if these persist but all should be preceded by verbal feedback. Verbal feedback draws on the strengths of relationships at BPS and supports our approach to the unique child. This then leads on to the review of previous learning in the next lesson. Through development of metacognitive approaches, children are also encouraged to assess their own and each other's learning.

Developing excellent Teaching and Learning

To achieve the excellent teaching and learning that we aim for at BPS we work collaboratively to share good practice, reflect on and evaluate our successes and failures, take informed risks and work in an atmosphere of respect and commitment so that each of us can become the very best teacher we can be and for the school to be a great one for the children. We:

- Plan collaboratively in our year teams, and across year teams, with everyone making a contribution and taking responsibility for the success of the team
- Come prepared to meetings and make a contribution

- Be prepared to identify areas for improvement and reflect on our own practice
- Be prepared to share aspects of our good practice and be a model for others
- Implement all school policies consistently
- Bring our personality to learning but not let it dominate the children; instead we bring out their personalities, attributes and talents
- Know that we never perfect teaching and it is that aspect of the profession that excites us and challenges us to be better
- Listen to guidance and advice
- Be prepared to support others
- Have high expectations of ourselves and the children
- Come in to class with a smile every day

Strategies

Oracy

Oracy is a key teaching strategy in all lessons that is essential to enable children to learn through talk and to learn how to talk. The ability to articulate is directly linked to successful learning and is also linked to underachievement for disadvantaged children. The remit of this policy is not to detail all the elements of Oracy in our teaching. Please see the Oracy policy.
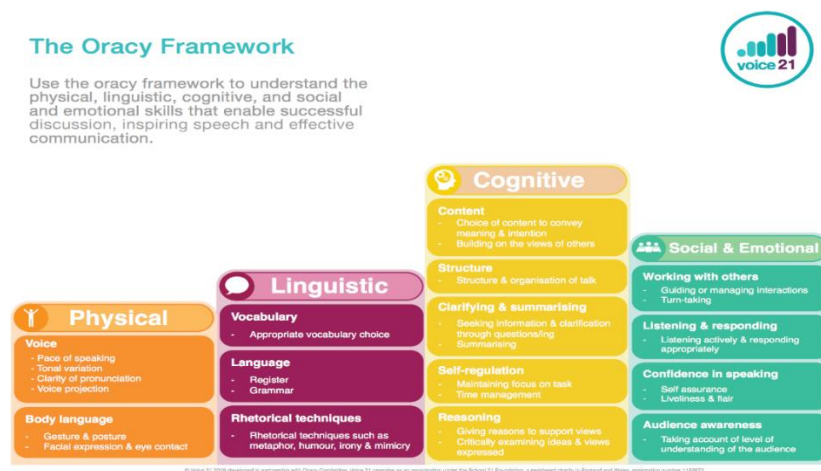
Metacognition

Metacognition is the awareness and understanding of our own thoughts and describes the process involved when learners plan, monitor, evaluate and make changes to their learning behaviour. We articulate and model this with children in all lessons, use questioning and oracy strategies to develop articulation and fluency and ensure that all children have access to this. It is not an extension. Metacognitive strategies are some of the most effective in ensuring children make excellent progress. (EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit)

Metacognitive strategies introduce the children to the general importance of planning, monitoring and evaluating. Children need to have grasped the subject matter (cognition) before they can develop metacognitive skills – it is hard to have knowledge about how you can learn in a subject without a knowledge of that subject. Explicit modelling of strategies for learning by the teacher, activating prior knowledge, guided and independent practice with structured reflection, all enable children to develop metacognition. Explicit teaching of the vocabulary of learning is also vital to give children the language to express themselves (see Oracy).

Cognitive Load

Cognitive load is the amount of information our working memory can hold at any one time. The working memory is where we process information and is key to learning. The capacity of the working memory is limited but we can support children to maximise their working memory with a range of metacognitive strategies. The more we can help children process learning into the long term memory, the more we can free the working memory to learn new things.

To enable the working memory to learn new things we need to maximise the Germane load - the load placed on working memory that contributes directly to learning – dependent on the Intrinsic Load – the inherent difficulty of the subject matter – and minimise the Extraneous Load – the extra unnecessary thinking a child has to do that does not contribute to learning. The use of small steps, an enabling not distracting learning environment, scaffolds, models, stories, mnemonics, learning tables by rote, all contribute to enabling the children to maximise the working memory. We avoid clutter and 'wallpaper' displays in our classrooms, fulfilling the principle that the environment enables learning.

Monitoring of the Teaching and Learning Policy

At BPS we want our teaching to be excellent as we know that is what our children deserve. In order to continually develop and improve teaching and learning at BPS, regular monitoring will provide information to plan improvements and develop excellent practice. Monitoring and support by leaders at all levels takes place in a variety of ways, some formal and some informal:

- Attending planning meetings
- Monitoring planning
- Formal lesson observations, with or without notice
- Learning walks looking at specific areas
- Scrutinising children's work
- Talking to children
- Asking parents for their views
- Asking teachers for their views
- Asking children for their views through the School Council
- Monitoring pupil progress
- Monitoring assessment files

The role of the Governing Body

The Governing Body determine, support, monitor and review the school's approach to teaching and learning. They:

- Support the use of appropriate teaching strategies by allocating resources effectively
- Ensure that the school buildings and premises are used optimally to support teaching and learning
- Seek to ensure our staff development and our appraisal systems promote good-quality teaching
- Monitor the effectiveness of the school's teaching and learning approaches through the school's self-review processes, which include reports from subject leaders, the termly Headteacher's report to governors and a review of the in-service training sessions attended by staff