



St. Anthony's P.S & Nursery Unit

Ethos and Aims

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Approved: _____
Chairperson Board of Governors

Date: _____

Introduction

St Anthony's Primary School is a place of both learning and teaching. We recognise ourselves as learners and teachers, and we encourage our pupils to see themselves in the same way. Learning does not end when school is over; in the 21st century. It is essential that pupils view themselves as lifelong learners.

It is the responsibility of the school to foster in pupils the skills, attitudes, and dispositions necessary to become independent, reflective, and self-motivated learners. Pupils are supported to develop the ability to learn how to learn, to think critically, and to approach challenges with confidence and resilience.

Our curriculum policies, teaching approaches, resources, and relationships within the school are designed to promote this vision. By providing valuable and engaging learning experiences, we aim to equip pupils to leave St Anthony's as confident, caring, and productive individuals, prepared to participate actively and responsibly in society throughout their lives.

Aims

At St Anthony's Primary School, we aim to:

1. **Provide a Safe and Supportive Environment:** Create a school environment in which children feel safe, secure, and valued as individuals, and are encouraged to develop positive relationships with others based on cooperation, respect, and tolerance.
2. **Foster Enthusiastic, Independent Learners:** Provide a stimulating and engaging learning environment that caters to pupils of differing abilities, using a variety of relevant teaching strategies and resources. Our goal is to encourage children to become curious, independent learners who can question, speculate, analyse, and reflect critically.
3. **Continuously Improve Teaching and Learning:** Regularly monitor and evaluate the learning environment, teaching practices, and curriculum to ensure they effectively meet the changing needs of our pupils, school and community. We aim to develop a culture in which both teachers and pupils are confident and effective evaluators of learning.
4. **Promote Community Involvement:** Encourage parents, carers, guardians and all members of the wider community to participate actively in school life, enriching the children's education, welfare, and social development.

Values of the School

The following values underpin the philosophies, policies, and practices of St Anthony's Primary School and inform our teaching approaches:

- Mutual Respect, Equality, and Inclusivity: Recognising the rights of all pupils to learn in a supportive and fair environment.
- Perseverance: Encouraging pupils to keep trying, using difficulty and challenge as motivation to succeed.
- Self-Esteem and Confidence: Promoting a positive sense of self-worth in every pupil.
- Encouragement and Motivation: Responding positively to each individual, fostering engagement and a love of learning.
- Holistic Development: Supporting the growth of the whole child—physically, morally, spiritually, emotionally, and socially.

At St Anthony's, we believe these values are best promoted when pupils...

- Feel safe, confident, and valued within the school environment.
- Experience success through a variety of activities, tasks, teaching strategies, and resources.
- Understand that difficulty and challenge are a natural part of learning and are not to be seen as failure.
- Have ownership and understanding of clear classroom and school rules.
- Are given opportunities to contribute to their learning and to develop their own interests.

Learning

Children learn in diverse ways and bring unique learning and thinking styles to the classroom. To support all learners, the teacher will employ a variety of teaching strategies and offer a range of materials and activities that promote engagement and understanding.

Positive Learning Environment

A positive learning environment is one in which staff and pupils share strong, respectful working relationships and where all members of the school community feel supported and valued. We believe that the following elements are essential in promoting a positive learning environment for our students;

- Positive teacher-pupil relationships.

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- A consistent and encouraging approach to learning.
- A stimulating and attractive classroom environment.
- Clear and well-established routines.
- Effective management and reward systems.
- Well-matched, achievable tasks.

School management recognises that a positive learning environment is equally important for adults within the school.

Management structures therefore aim to promote staff wellbeing through...

- An awareness of staff welfare.
- A clear and supportive management structure.
- Opportunities for staff development.
- The promotion of positive staff relationships through out-of-school activities.
- The provision of a calm and relaxing staff room.
- Strong support for new and substitute teachers.

The Autonomous Learner

An autonomous learner is a highly motivated and confident individual who is...

- Literate and Numerate.
- Organised
- Analytical
- Reflective

Autonomous learners are able to work competently in a variety of situations, communicate effectively, show initiative and seek help when necessary.

To develop these attributes and dispositions in our students, we aim to provide...

- Access to a wide range of resources, including ICT, reference materials, local companies and the wider community.
- Opportunities for students to contribute to and shape their own learning.
- Challenging tasks that require planning, problem-solving and evaluation.
- Opportunities to research topics and present findings to a range of audiences (e.g. PowerPoint presentations).
- Time to reflect on, discuss and evaluate their work.
- Opportunities to contribute to collaborative team and group tasks.

Monitoring and Assessing Learning

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Management facilitates structures that enable all teachers to participate actively in the development of an affective system for monitoring and assessing learning within the school. This is achieved through the rigorous collection of evidence on our own practice and the evaluation of learning and teaching initiatives.

These processes are supported through the following strategies:

- Examination of student's exercise books and homework.
- Use of standardised and diagnostic assessments.
- Pupil tracking and end-of-key-stage assessments.
- Development and expansion of the role of subject coordinators.
- High expectations consistently held by teachers.
- Effective use of questioning and discussion.
- Ongoing staff development focused on teaching and learning strategies.
- Opportunities for teachers and students to become confident and reflective self-evaluators.
- Ongoing class-based assessment.

Planning

Careful planning is essential to ensure effective teaching and learning. High-quality planning supports consistency, progression and meaningful learning experiences for all students.

Elements of good planning;

- An agreed whole-school planning format.
- Cooperative planning, which is recognised as the most effective approach.
- Short, medium and long-term planning to ensure continuity and progression.
- Clear identification of teaching approaches, learning intention, learning activities and required resources.
- Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of plans to inform future planning.
- Use of Individual Education Plans (IEP's) or Personal Education Plans (PEP's) where necessary.
- Consideration of different learning styles and multiple intelligences.
- Inclusion of a broad range of questioning techniques to promote higher-order thinking and learning.
- Planned differentiation to meet the diverse needs of students.
- Involvement of classroom Assistants in the planning process.
- Clear communication of expected learning outcomes to students at the start of the lesson, along with regular, constructive feedback.

Learning Styles

- Visual
- Auditory
- Kinesthetic

Strategies and Approaches

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In order to provide high-quality teaching and learning, we adopt a range of relevant and stimulating teaching approaches that support the holistic development of each child.

These approaches include:

- Individual, group and whole class teaching.
- Practical and hands-on activities.
- Discussion and dialogue
- Flexible grouping arrangements.
- Opportunities for independent learning and critical thinking.

The Classroom Environment

Children learn best in a safe, friendly, supportive and stimulating environment where positive attitudes to learning are fostered through mutual respect.

Elements of effective classroom organisation and environment include:

- Seating arrangements that enable children to engage fully in learning activities and promote positive social interaction.
- Flexible seating to support group work, individual tasks, whole-class teaching, mixed ability and same ability groupings.
- Facilities for displaying children's work to celebrate achievement and enhance self-esteem.
- Resources/computers positioned for easy access to encourage independence and responsibility.
- Child-generated class rules displayed clearly within the classroom.
- Well-established and appropriate classroom routines that promote a sense of security and support independent learning.

Special Needs – Children with Learning Difficulties

We are committed to providing all students with access to rich educational experiences and opportunities for success within a whole-school environment that recognises and supports a broad range of needs and abilities. We make special provision for students with learning difficulties through a systemic approach that includes identification, the gathering of evidence, careful planning and targeted action.

Throughout this process, we acknowledge and respect the uniqueness, individuality and specific needs of each student.

Identification:

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- Nursery – Primary 1 Transition Form
- Baseline Assessment
- Early Identification checklist – SEN
- Middle Infant Screening Test – Primary 2
- Class, standardised and end of Key Stage assessment
- Individual Diagnostic Assessment
- Continuous teacher monitoring and observation of pupils' development
- SIMS
- CPOMS
- IT Assessment Strategies
- School related agencies – parents, SENCO, medical, psychological, social services

Provision:

- IEP's/PEP's
- Referral to Educational Psychology Service
- Classroom activities to promote self-worth e.g. circle Time; extra-curricular activities.
- Parental Involvement
- Differentiation
- Setting of short-term achievable targets and differentiated activities to enable children to experience success and thereby raise self-esteem
- IT Accreditation Scheme
- Communication and liaison between teachers
- Teacher – understanding of the child's interests, strengths and needs
- Effective management of classroom assistants
- Inclusion
- Broad range of resources appropriate to children's needs

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- Provision of appropriate intervention programmes e.g. Paired Reading, Reading Partnership, Forward Together (Parent Programme), Thinking Skills

Special Needs – Extending High Achievers

We recognise that some children are high achievers and that students who demonstrate exceptional talent or achievement may require additional provision within the classroom. We are committed to enabling these student's to reach their full potential, while recognising that their social and emotional needs are as important those of all students.

Identification:

- Classroom observation involving both written and oral work.
- Class Tests
- Standardised Tests
- End of Key Stage Assessment
- Communication with parents and between teachers
- Specific talents
- Information from other sources

Provision:

- Individual teacher attention
- Individual planning
- Extension activities which challenge
- Extra Curricular Activities
- Use of reward system
- Pupil tracking
- Competitions to motivate
- Personal projects
- 'Habits of Mind' approaches

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- Development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills
- Involvement in SELB initiatives e.g. Gifted and Talented Programme

Community Involvement

We recognise that Saint Anthony's does not exist in isolation and is an integral part of the wider community. The school is committed to encouraging students to become active, responsible and engaged members of society. Accordingly, we actively seek to establish and maintain strong links with the parish and the wider community. Through these partnerships, the school aims to enrich and extend teaching and learning opportunities, thereby enhancing students educational experiences and personal development.

Community Involvement

➤ *Parents and Families*

- Clear communication and engagement through parent teacher meetings, information meetings, school assemblies and parent workshops.
- On going communication via the school website and other digital platforms.

➤ *Links with other Primary Schools*

- Collaboration through sporting activities, shared education initiatives and music programmes.

➤ *Links with Post-Primary Schools*

- Engagement in transition and induction programmes to support pupils progression.
- Participation in taster days, collaborative activities and work experience opportunities where appropriate.

➤ *Parish and Church*

- Close partnership with the local parish and school chaplain.
- Preparation for and celebration of the sacraments.
- Involvement and altar serving, weekly masses, choir participation, Carol services and religious celebrations.

➤ *Local Community and Organisations*

- Engagement with local organisations, including the Eire Og Gaelic club and the Moyraverty Arts and Drama Society.
- Participation in and enhancement of local events, services, concerts and competitions.
- Links with the local Credit Union to support financial education and community awareness.

➤ *Statutory and Support Services*

- Collaboration with the EA and CCMS.
- Engagement with emergency and health services, including the fire and ambulance services, police services, dental health team and school nursing service.

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- Access to professional support services such as the Educational Psychology Service, Behaviour Management Team, interventions support team, Play Therapy, REACH, Education Welfare Officer and Speech and Language Therapy Services.

- ***Teacher Education and Training***
 - Partnerships with Teacher training colleges to support teaching practice placements and professional development.

- ***Charitable and Voluntary Organisations***
 - Active involvement in charitable initiatives and awareness raising activities with organisations such as Trocaire, Saint Vincent De Paul and the NSPCC.

- ***Wider Community and Support Services***
 - Engagement with the general community and local support groups to promote inclusion and social responsibility.
 - Links with traveller community support groups to support equality, inclusion on pupil well-being.
 - Participation in local youth and sporting initiatives, including Craigavon City football club, Fitzone and Healthy Kidz through coaching programmes and extracurricular activities.
 - Collaboration with statutory support services including Social Services, Sure Start and family intervention services.
 - Provision of information and guidance on available support services through the school website and Parent App to ensure accessibility for parents and carers.

Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation is a fundamental component of the school's ethos and commitment to continuous improvement. It serves as a structured process through which strengths are identified and areas for development or addressed in a systematic and purposeful manner. Pupils, teaching staff and non-teaching staff are actively engaged in the self-evaluation process, ensuring a collective and inclusive approach. This shared responsibility promotes autonomy, accountability and a strong sense of ownership of the school's ongoing development. Teachers are reflective practitioners and committed learners who model reflective practice, thereby fostering students' capacity to become thoughtful, reflective learners and critical thinkers.

Strategies/Methods used:

- Systemic evaluation of relationship with pupils, staff, parents on the wider community.
- Regular review of personal teaching styles in light of pupil learning outcomes, achievement and differing viewpoints.
- Evaluation of learning and teaching at year group, key stage and whole school levels to ensure consistency and progression.

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- Ongoing review, adaptation and effective use of teaching and learning resources.
- Identification, sharing and embedding of good practice across the school. Recognition and celebration of individual and collective achievements.
- Participation in staff and coordinator teams contributing to the School Development Plan through self-evaluation and improvement planning.
- Active involvement in whole-school improvement initiatives including the Lakeside Learning Community.
- Whole-staff professional development focused on building a shared understanding of quality indicators of effective practise.
- Staff audits and curriculum development to support continuous improvement.
- Ongoing communication and liaison across the whole school to ensure coherence and shared responsibility.
- Teacher monitoring to support and enhance teaching and learning.
- Training and professional development of non-teaching staff to support effective practice. Promotion of people self-assessment and reflection as part of the learning process.
- Clear indication of explicit learning outcomes for each lesson.
- Regular assessment and evaluation of students work to inform planning and progression.
- Performance review and staff development process is aligned with the school's ethos, aims and commitment to continuous improvement.

Appendix 1

Planning for Thinking Skills

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Learning Intentions:

- Be explicit about the kind/s of thinking children will be doing (WALT)
- Share these with the children
- Plan for and share success criteria
(Outcome and Process)
(O) By the end of the lesson we will know we've been successful because...
(P) What you need to focus on while working to achieve success is ...
- Think about the way you use questions
Learning Intentions can be written as questions (helps children make connections)
How long do you give children to respond? Children need time to process and formulate an answer. At least 5 seconds is needed for this: research shows that average wait time is .09 second!
Do they have opportunities to articulate their responses to peers before responding?
- If Learning Intention is clear, feedback will be very focussed – in terms of the outcome and the process – children will know what to do to improve
- The clearer the learning intention, the easier it is to use peer and self- assessment.
Traffic Lights can be used: RED – Don't really understand; AMBER – Not too sure about ...; GREEN – I've got it! Amber and green could work together to sort it out; Reds could have your attention.
(A self evaluation poster can help – children choose appropriate questions)
- Feedback needs to be used – allow time for this

Appendix 1*(continued)*

Self Evaluation

Thinking about what happens when we are learning

- What did you find easy about learning to ...?
- What are you most pleased with about learning to...?
- What really made you think/did you find difficult while you were learning to...?
- What helped when something got tricky?
- What do you need more help with?
- How would you do things differently next time?
- What can you do now that you couldn't before?
- What have you learnt that is new about...?
- How do you think you can use what you've learnt today in the future?
- How would you change this activity for another class?

Choose 1 or 2 and add the words of the Learning Intention

Appendix 2

DRAFT questioning framework being developed as part of Wigan Arts. Thinking and Reasoning Skills (ARTS) Project

(Please give due acknowledgment to Lorna Pout if using in any form)

Questions Creating the right atmosphere

What do you think?

Why do you think that?

How do you know?

Do you have a reason?

Can you be sure?

Is there another way?

What do you think happens next?

Questions Developing responses.

What reasons do you have for saying that?

Do you agree with this?

Why do you agree/disagree?

What do you mean by that?

Is what you are saying consistent with what you first said/thought?

Are you and s/he contradicting each other?

Are there any alternatives?

Questions Encouraging clarification of thought.

What I think you are saying is...

Are you saying that?

I get the impression that...

So you see it as...

As I understand it, you think...

So from the point of view...

Can we say it like this...?

Am I correct in assuming you think...?

Questions Consolidating thoughts, constructing new meaning

Can you sum up your arguments/ideas/views?

So you think these points.....are important?

Which points do you want to emphasise?

If you were explaining it to someone else who is away today, what would you say? What are the most important parts of your argument/ideas/views?

Questions pushing thinking on

In view of what you said before, do you now still think that?

The implications of what you have said are...

Could your meaning/idea be taken in this other way..?

What if I misinterpret what you are saying and think that..?

Are you also implying that...?

Doesn't what you have said also mean that.....?

Appendix 2(continued)

Classroom Dialogue

Questioning:

Questions that focus attention:

Did you notice?
Have you seen?
How many?
How long?

Questions that seek clarification:

What do you mean by that?
Can you explain further?
Can you give an example?
Can you put it another way?

Questions that invite inquiry:

What do we need to know?
How can we find out?
What would happen if?

Questions that seek reasons:

Why did you say that?
What are your reasons?
What is your evidence?
Why do you think that?

Analysing the question:

What do you mean by...?

Rephrasing the question:

Are you saying...?

Turning the question back to the pupil:

What do you think?

Asking an additional question:

I wonder whether...?

Suggesting a line of enquiry:

Perhaps we could...?

Appendix 2(continued)

Questioning

- A good question enhances thinking and learning in the classroom. A Question should be an invitation to think.
- 2 Criteria for questions:
 - 1) Reproductive: About information/Do you already know it?
 - 2) Productive: Causes thinking/Do you have to think about it?
- Why is 'x' a case of 'y' is a useful structure – an invitation to think – not about information? Example: Why is a square a rectangle?
- What is the impact on learning of whole class question time/ Why are you asking the questions? / Do the same children dominate?
- Who is doing the thinking in the classroom?
- Hands up only to ask a question, not to answer one. Everybody should be ready with an answer even if it's I'm not sure...
- Rules for questioning might include: I'm not looking for an answer; I'm looking for an explanation.
- Both teachers and children need to feel comfortable in exploring wrong answers.
- Wait time can improve confidence: many children feel anxious if they are rushed to give an answer.
- How often do you ask a question and answer it yourself? Do you rush to closure?
- Are children encouraged to pose questions? Questions can be generated with peers.
- Is questioning 'ping-ponging' between teacher and child? (Like spokes in a wheel: T-C; T-C; T-C; T-C etc) or are children encouraged to respond to other children's answers, e.g. I agree/disagree because...
- Is question time competition time?
- Do you correct wrong answers?
- An alternative to questioning is to use statements, e.g.
 - Could you say a little more about...?
 - Talk to your partner and give me three examples of...