

Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí



**Polasaí ar Theagasc
agus Fhoghlaim**

2017

Introduction

We recognise that children learn best when they are happy and confident. The staff of Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí have worked in partnership with the children and parents to develop a set of core values and beliefs, which have created the foundation for a learning school, one where the children feel happy and confident. Amongst these values and beliefs is trust and respect for each other, generosity of spirit, a sense of self-worth and a strong sense of inclusion.

Our aim is to raise pupil achievement by having high expectations of everybody, both learners and teachers. By creating a learning and teaching culture in the school, by constantly involving the staff in professional development and by recognising that the Principal is a leader of learning, staff in Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí believe that they have a solid foundation for an excellent teaching and learning environment.

Aims and Objectives

Our Learning and Teaching Policy seeks to raise the achievement of children by:

- Meeting the needs of pupils effectively using approaches to learning and teaching, which are consistent, innovative and challenging
- Focussing on the process of learning as well as the produce of it, putting emphasis on how we learn as opposed to how we teach
- Meeting the needs of all staff by offering development opportunities
- Meeting the need to retain the best features of educational practice when implementing the school curriculum
- Providing an agreed focus for monitoring teaching and learning
- Identifying pupils with Special Educational Needs and offering early intervention to assist pupil performance
- Ensuring that learning outcomes are shared and agreed with the pupils

Effective Learning

In Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí we acknowledge that people learn in different ways, therefore when planning we take into account the different forms of intelligence ensuring wherever possible there is a Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic element to each of our lessons.

Effective Learning stems from high expectations and the expectations we have for our pupils are that they will:-

1. Know they have succeeded
2. Feel they can do more
3. Explain what they have learned
4. Apply it to other situations
5. Teach it to someone else
6. Feel good about themselves

Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, to think for themselves and to become independent learners as far as possible.

Effective teaching

Effective learning only comes about from effective teaching. In Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí the pupils learning is improved when the teacher:

- involves the pupils in quality interaction and uses different learning styles, is aware of multiple intelligences and the need for differentiation, independent learning and critical thinking.
- varies teaching styles to enable pupils to have first-hand experience and therefore engages them in a variety of investigative work.
- enables the children to communicate their findings in different ways and produce work for a variety of audiences, thus, improving their self-confidence and developing interpersonal skills.
- develops their knowledge, improves their skills making them more independent learners.
- involves them in planning and organising their own learning
- involves modern technologies as an aid to learning – use of Interactive Whiteboards, for example.
- plans using team approach and in accordance to the outcomes of assessment.
- celebrates achievement in many ways: in the classroom between class and teacher, weekly prizes, celebration at the weekly 'tionól' and prize-giving at the end of school year.

We have adopted an agreed lesson structure that embraces the ethos of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. It is paramount to stress the position of the teacher as a leader and facilitator of learning; it is through the teacher's enthusiasm, innovation and vision that children will be equally enthused to develop as lifelong learners.

- The Lesson Introduction. This is the opportunity for staff to discuss prior learning, to introduce and discuss the learning intention of the lesson and to negotiate the success criteria of the lesson. In effect, the teacher and pupils are producing the road map to learning success in their lesson, pupils should move away motivated to learn and succeed and knowing what it is they have to do to succeed.
- The Learning. This should be made up of relevant and challenging tasks including the use of I.C.T. There should be opportunities for different learning styles to be catered for and indeed different learning settings to be utilised, e.g. individual, paired, group and whole class. There should be a balance between guided and independent, active tasks, these tasks should be made up of a variety of differing types including non written tasks.

There should be opportunities for children to self manage, manage information, be creative, work with others, think, problem solve and make decisions. These opportunities should be developed across the whole curriculum, including Communication, Using Mathematics and Using I.C.T.

- The Plenary. This is the opportunity to assess the learning and indeed to celebrate the learning and to re draw the road map for future learning. Through effective questioning of and by the children we can truly assess what has been learnt and how it will impact upon future learning. We can look forward to new learning opportunities that may arise from the learning opportunities just experienced and we can link in with prior learning. It is important to recognise the voice of the learning participants in this process, all will listen and all will have an equal say in discussing their prior learning and determining their future learning.

Target Setting

In Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí, we base our teaching on our knowledge of the children's level of attainment, our focus being to further develop the knowledge and skills of the children. We strive to set tasks appropriate to each child's level of ability. When planning work for our children with special educational needs we give due regard to information and targets contained in the children's Individual Educational Plans (IEP'S). We have high expectations of all our children and believe that their work should be of a high standard. We set targets for classes using the results of standardised tests and End of Key Stage Assessment these targets are agreed with each class teacher. Targets are set based on areas that were highlighted as requiring improvement. Teachers then draw up a plan of action explaining how they intend to ensure progression and then gather evidence to demonstrate the improvement. Additionally, we set Targets for Underachieving pupils; these pupils are identified through a direct comparison between GL and NRIT I.Q. scores. Additionally, a teacher's subjective judgement may also come into play in the formation of a class underachievement list. The targets for those identified pupils are created by the Numeracy and Literacy coordinators, in conjunction with the class teacher and are constructed on analysis of NFER tests and teacher input.

Planning

Lessons are planned with clear learning intentions. Our lesson plans contain information about the tasks to be set, the resources needed, if identified, and the way we assess the children's work. All planning is evaluated so that we can modify and improve our teaching and inform our planning in the future.

Climate

In Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí everyone is treated with respect and trust. Special effort is made to establish good working relationships, both in the class and throughout the school. All the teachers have access to the school policies. The children are involved in reviewing some of these policies, in particular our Positive Behaviour Policy. Children are expected to comply with the policies so that we can promote the best learning opportunities for all. Classroom assistants and other adults who help in the classroom play an important role. As well as working with our children they help plan lessons with the teachers and assist in the evaluation of the children's work. They make an invaluable contribution to the learning environment of the school.

The Learning Environment

To ensure quality teaching and learning takes place in Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí we believe we have created a learning environment which is:
- peaceful and calm

- challenging and stimulating
- happy, welcoming and organised
- well resourced

Classrooms are well organised to ensure children have the opportunity to learn in different ways:-

- investigation and problem solving
- research and finding out
- group work
- pair work
- independent work
- whole class work
- questioning and answering
- whole class work
- use of computer
- educational trips
- creative activities
- role play and oral presentation
- designing and making things
- participation in sports and other physical activities.

Our school has many attractive features which help create a lovely learning environment, large classrooms, spacious resource areas and display boards which are regularly updated.

Homework

Homework is based on work, which is ongoing in school, and it reflects the learning taking place. It is intended to be relevant, challenging and appropriate to the pupils' needs. It is differentiated based on pupil ability. Tasks are varied to take account of learning styles and take the form of both practical and written activities.

Rules and Routines

Rules and routines in the classroom and throughout the school contribute to a healthy learning environment. These have been:-

- agreed by the children and understood
- fair and consistent
- realistic and positive
- kept to a minimum but enforced.

All rules result in the children of Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí knowing the boundaries of behaviour as written in their Positive Behaviour Policy.

Achievement

This is celebrated in many different ways:

- displays of work
- positive notes
- Páiste/Oibrí/Gaeilgeoir of the week/month
- weekly classroom prizes
- verbal or written praise by teachers, peers, principal and parents
- opportunities to perform and share (e.g. Assembly)

Role of the Board of Governors

In Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí, the Board of Governors play an active role in all aspects of school-life. They fully support the teaching and learning taking place in the school by: -

- monitoring and reviewing the school policies on learning
- supporting the various teaching strategies
- meeting termly to evaluate the work going on within the school.

The Role of the Parents

Like our Board of Governors, the parents play an active role within the school. We believe they have a fundamental role to play in helping children learn.

We inform parents about what and how their children learn by: -

- holding parent meetings at the start of each academic year to explain our school strategies for teaching and to outline the programme of study for the year
- sending regular reports to parents explaining the progress made and how further improvement can be made with parent's help
- encouraging parents to support their children with homework
- inviting them to curriculum workshops
- encouraging them to volunteer to accompany pupils on educational visits

Parents also have a responsibility to the school. We would like our parents to:

- ensure that their child has the best attendance possible
- ensure that their child is equipped for school e.g school uniform
- do their best to keep their child healthy and fit for school
- inform school if there are matters outside of school that are likely to affect performance or behaviour at school
- promote a positive attitude towards school and learning in general

Assessing, Monitoring and Reviewing pupil performance

All of our pupils are assessed each year in Numeracy and Literacy using standardised tests. The results of these tests are analysed by the management team and discussed with the staff and presented to the Board of Governors. The results of the tests are used to target set and to identify areas for improvement within our Teaching and Learning strategies. Each teacher assesses learning outcomes within their class through classroom observation and informal assessment.

Assesment for Learning

Pupils are involved in planning with the teachers and have a say in what they want to learn within a given topic. They are made fully aware of what the intended learning outcomes will be for each topic through the use of planning boards and the use of the TAFF and ABC boards within their class. These boards clearly state what

the children are learning, why they are learning this and how they will approach their learning.

The curriculum provides opportunity for a child centred practical and flexible teaching and learning environment; where children are encouraged to evaluate the both their own performance and that of their peers. Pupils are encouraged to talk with confidence about what they are learning in an atmosphere that promotes achievement and success.

Special Needs Pupils

In Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí our aim is to ensure that all pupils receive a quality education that is delivered in such a way as to meet the needs of all pupils regardless of their ability. We strive to identify Special Educational Needs at the earliest opportunity through classroom observation, informal assessment and discussion with parents and pre-school providers.

When a child has been identified as having a special need the Code of Practice will be followed and IEP's will be provided where needed and if necessary the advice of outside agencies will be sought. SEN pupils with learning difficulties will receive diagnostic testing and their progress will be regularly monitored through on going assessment. Where it is deemed appropriate, pupils with considerable learning difficulties will receive additional in-class teacher support in the areas of Numeracy and Literacy. These children will also receive differentiated work appropriate to their needs.

Staff Development

In service training in the form of workshops are provided for staff by the subject teams and coordinators. Teachers are provided with useful teaching materials and offered guidance and support. Teachers are actively encouraged by the principal to attend courses relating to the areas in which they are interested, or would like to improve upon. Teachers are constantly reviewing their own teaching performance with the help of peer observations. An open door climate has been created and teachers are invited to watch each other teach and to discuss and share ideas.

Teacher Induction in the Teaching and Learning Policy

Each new member of staff is given a copy of the policy on arrival and is then taken through the document by the curriculum coordinators for early, middle and upper years. All areas are explained in detail and new teachers have an opportunity to ask questions and to seek clarification.