Children come to school with widely varying experiences and abilities, and from a variety of religious, social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The ethos in our school encourages pupils, parents/carers and staff to recognise these differences as positive. It helps us to understand how this diversity supports our learning and teaching on equality and fairness and is fundamental to the development of confident individuals and responsible global citizens. Having inclusion, equality and fairness at the heart of school life promotes positive behaviour and successful learning, as children feel listened to and respected. The school’s positive behaviour approaches are consistently applied to build a shared understanding of expectations in our school community. We discuss our high expectations with our children and parents, and expect our learners to be effective contributors because they feel safe, healthy and happy at school with staff who are clearly committed to them and care genuinely about their wellbeing.

When planning for learning, staff will focus on the Experiences and Outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence, taking into account the needs and interests of all our learners. They will use the Aberdeenshire frameworks and the national benchmarks to follow pupil progress and plan next steps. Planning will be clear and strategic, building on children’s prior knowledge and allowing for personalisation and choice within the curriculum. Programmes will meet the needs of individual learners and groups with differing abilities and will aim to engage all children in active experiential and contextualised learning.

Having established the need for a strong, supportive ethos and a sound curricular knowledge, as teachers we also know that **how** **we teach is as important as what we teach.**

**Learning & Teaching Approaches in our classrooms**

Teachers and learners will

1. connect the learning to prior knowledge & experiences
2. use Visible Learning strategies so that pupils are aware of learning intentions and success criteria
3. teach & learn in a cognitively active way
4. demonstrate understanding (learners)
5. use the review and recall process
6. have a Growth Mindset approach to learning.

**1. Connect the learning**

In order that we embed learning, it is essential that we make connections with

what our children already know. They will be more receptive to new knowledge if a lesson begins by engaging with familiar concepts.

Making learning connections builds confidence, allows children to demonstrate what they already know and motivates them to learn more.

**2. Learning intentions and success criteria**

Sharing the learning intentions and success criteria is a key approach in formative assessment. The learning intention is not the activity being undertaken. For learning to be purposeful, we need to know

* Why we are learning
* What we are learning
* How we will be successful.

Sharing the learning intentions keeps children and young people motivated and focused on the learning as opposed to the task or activity. Success criteria let children and young people know exactly how their work will be judged and ensure meaningful feedback is related directly to the learning. Together, learning intentions and success criteria encourage greater independence and a sense of responsibility for learning. This is particularly so if the children are involved in wording the success criteria and using them for self and peer assessment during and after the learning. Pupils should also be able to see examples of What A Good One Looks Like (WAGOL) when this is appropriate.

**3. Active learning**

What makes learning Active, Collaborative and Cognitive?

Active I’ve…

* been involved
* listened to others
* taken responsibility
* explained to others
* worked things out

Collaborative I’ve…

* worked in a team
* shared ideas
* contributed
* taken turns
* shown respect

Cognitive I’ve…

* asked questions
* answered questions
* thought of ideas
* offered solutions
* reflected on my learning

**4. Demonstrate understanding**

Children can demonstrate their understanding during, and after, a lesson in a variety of ways, just as their learning can be more formally assessed through making, saying, doing and showing. The following suggestions do not form an exhaustive list:

* Explain to a partner
* Be the teacher
* Write
* Mindmap
* Present/show
* Have a final product
* Debate
* Draw/label
* Model
* Make a poster
* Questions and answers

Personalisation and choice can be incorporated by offering children choices about how to present their learning.

**5. Review & Recall**

* When appropriate allow time at the end of a lesson to review learning
* Refer back to learning intentions and success criteria throughout a lesson to allow teachers and children and young people to assess learning
* Recap on the main learning points. Make sure key questions have been asked and explored. Recap key vocabulary
* Provide opportunities for children and young people to work together collaboratively and be actively involved in the review process
* Look forward and connect to the next lesson
* Wherever possible – make it fun!

If we are offering our children interesting experiences on relevant contexts, we will enable them to see connections to their own lives and the wider world, and offer a greater depth of purpose to their learning. This will have a positive impact on their motivation and behaviour, as does working collaboratively. Working as a team prepares children and young people for the kind of collaboration that is necessary in today’s workplace. It is enjoyable, motivating and allows children to express their thinking to a small group of peers rather than to an entire class. This can be of particular benefit to those learners who find speaking to a large audience inhibiting.

Working as a team includes:

■ Four heads are better than one

■ Brainstorming

■ Calling cards

■ Carousel brainstorming

■ Group roles

■ Jigsaw

■ Pairs to fours

■ Think – pair – share

■ Timers

■ Work as a team

**Thinking Strategies & Questioning**

In recent years, teachers have become more focused, and more skilled, in helping children to understand the level of their learning and to develop the language to allow these learning conversations to take place. Children who can explain their thinking and discuss their learning can approach tasks and problems with increased confidence and tend to know when they require help. They are also are likely to ask for it, as they have the necessary concepts and vocabulary.

**Bloom’s Taxonomy of questioning and thinking (revised terms)**

* Creating
* Evaluating
* Analysing
* Applying
* Understanding
* Remembering

**Questioning**

Questioning is at the heart of an effective learning environment. An effective questioning climate is one that activates understanding and thinking and focuses on the development of learning rather than a test of recall. Allied with varied teaching approaches, our children and young people will be exposed to a range of experiences that promote active learning by making learners think and ask questions. Planned activities will therefore promote a high level of interaction and involvement to ensure that learning and teaching is motivating, stimulating and relevant to the learners’ needs. ICT is a key element in enriching, motivating and supporting learning and should be used in as many curricular areas as possible, both to enhance current learning and as a vital life-long set of skills. Visible Learning strategies enhance the learner’s thinking process.

Questioning’ includes:

* Answer and pass on
* Bloom’s taxonomy
* Language of questions
* No hands up
* Thumbs
* Use a picture
* Wait time
* Whiteboards.

Children are consulted about the approaches used by teachers, and the strategies they use as learners, that promote their learning and increase their wellbeing in school. Staff use CPD and collegiate time to focus on sharing good practice, both in theoretical discussion and by direct classroom modelling.

**Where does learning take place?**

Hopefully the answer to this questions is everywhere in the life and environment of the school.

Innovative teachers make the best use of the available resources, including the settings for learning. Learning through play remains a powerful cross-curricular approach at the Early and First levels and supports transition from Early Years establishments. It often enables children to demonstrate their learning while they are still acquiring the English they would have needed in a more formal classroom setting. Play activities help children to establish friendships and positive patterns of behaviour as they become part of the class and school community.

Outdoor learning is an important developing area which staff will use increasingly in the coming years. In addition to providing imaginative and varied settings for current teaching, use of the outdoors enhances health and wellbeing and can involve partner agencies from the local community. Visiting places of interest brings learning to life, and although challenging to fund and arrange, remains a high priority within our school.

Seesaw, assemblies, Star Wall and Friday groups provide opportunities for children to talk about, and for staff to find out about, wider interests and achievements the children might have. The school’s recognition of these activities boosts their status and helps to improve the confidence of the children involved.