 **EDUCATION & CHILDREN’S SERVICES**

**Learning and Teaching Policy**

**Skene School**



**Working Together, Learning Together, To Be The Best We Can Be**

Skene School Learning and Teaching Policy

Our vision at **Skene School** states that:

**Working Together, Learning Together, To Be The Best We Can Be**

* An **inclusive school** where everyone feels **valued** and **able to participate** in the life and work of the school.
* A **safe, stimulating** **learning environment** where individuals are **supported** and **challenged** to **achieve their full potential**.
* A place where all children are **encouraged** to become **confident individuals, responsible citizens, successful learners** and **effective contributors.**
* **A learning community** which promotes **self-evaluation** at **all levels**, leading to **continual improvement.**
* An ethos which promotes **mutual respect** and **partnership working** within the **school and the wider community.**

Aim of policy

This policy is designed to help meet the aspirations set out in our vision above. In addressing what is at the core of the education process, its significance is clear. It has implications for all members of staff, as well as for pupils and their parents.

It is intended that this policy be used in the following ways:

* as a reference on the underlying philosophy behind effective learning and teaching
* as an indication on current thinking on good practice
* as an aid to self-evaluation in the area of learning and teaching.

**Setting the context**

*Curriculum for Excellence aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18, firmly focused on the needs of the child and young person and designed to enable them to develop the four capacities. The changes brought about by Curriculum for Excellence should lead to improved quality of learning and teaching and increased attainment and achievement for all children and young people in Scotland, including those who need additional support in their learning.*

Building the Curriculum 3

The 3-18 Curriculum for Excellence aims to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the **attributes, knowledge and skills** they will need to flourish in **life, learning and work**. The knowledge, skills and attributes learners will develop will allow them to demonstrate these four capacities which lie at the heart of this policy:

**Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens, Effective Contributors**

Building the Curriculum 1-5 form the rationale of our learning and teaching practises. Aberdeenshire Council's a Curriculum Framework 3 to 18 Entitlements describes the range of experiences our young pupils have at Skene School. These are:

* A coherent 3 – 18 progression curriculum particularly at points of transition from nursery to P1 and P7 to S1.
* Cultural experiences
* Environmental experiences
* Health and well-being experiences
* Creative and enterprising experiences and
* Vocational experiences.

The curricular areas that we teach in accordance with Curriculum for Excellence are:

* Literacy
* Numeracy
* Health & Well being
* Social Studies
* Sciences
* Technologies
* Expressive arts
* Religious and moral education.

**Curriculum Design**

Our curriculum is designed on the basis of the following 7 principles:

* Challenge and enjoyment
* Breadth
* Progression
* Depth
* Personalisation and choice
* Coherence
* Relevance

**Curricular Levels**

Curriculum for Excellence defines five levels of learning.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Level** | **Stage** |
| **Early** | The pre-school years and P1, or later for some. |
| **First** | To the end of P4, but earlier or later for some. |
| **Second** | To the end of P7, but earlier or later for some. |
| **Third and Fourth** | S1 to S3, but earlier for some. The fourth level broadly equates to Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework level 4.  The fourth level experiences and outcomes are intended to provide possibilities for choice and young people's programmes will not include all of the fourth level outcomes. |

Good Practice Examples

For teachers to meet the needs of all learners a wide range of strategies are needed. Examples of good practice in this area are illustrated below under the headings and linked closely to the relevant Quality Indicators (QI’s):

* 1.1 Improvements in Performance
* 2.1 Learners’ Experiences
* 5.1 The Curriculum
* 5.3 Meeting Learners’ Needs
* 5.9 Improvement through Self-evaluation

**1.1 Improvements in Performance/Expectations and Promoting Achievement**

Teachers should:

* Project high expectations for **all** learners
* Display awareness of the needs of all pupils from those who require additional support to the gifted
* Provide a range of activities for personal and wider achievements and recognise these achievements
* Promote an ethos of achievement through highlighting learners’ successes
* Insist on high standards of behaviour and promote a climate of mutual respect
* Develop leadership at all levels
* Ensure next steps are followed to allow all pupils to achieve and progress

The Head Teacher should:

* Have regular focus for learning conversations.
* Analyse standardised assessment data with teachers and plan for progression and next steps.
* Track pupil progress and attainment to ensure it increases/maintains at a consistently high standard.
* Track achievement in a range of activities for personal and wider achievements.
* Encourage responsibility at all levels/ Foster leadership at all levels

## 2.1 Learners’ Experiences

Teachers should:

* Promote a sense of fairness and equality
* Take steps to engage all learners regardless of their background, race or gender
* Reduce barriers to learning through identification of and response to learners’ needs
* Create a positive learning environment; engage with learners to ensure their motivation and involvement
* Employ a varied and considered range of approaches to support different learning styles
* Identify and respond to learners’ strengths and weaknesses
* Encourage all pupils to be responsible and contribute actively to the life of the school and the wider community.
* Ensure learners feel safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, included, respected and responsible and help to develop these qualities in others.

The Head Teacher should:

* Listen to the pupil voice – regularly meeting with focus groups of children with a specific focus e.g. Maths
* Use pupil voice ideas to feedback to all staff and create next steps.
* Engage pupils in conversations about what they are learning and why they are learning it. Pupils should be able to talk about the attributes, skills and knowledge and show their progression through them.

## 5.1 THE CURRICULUM

Teachers should:

* Aim to achieve the best outcome for each child through partnership between pupils, parents, staff and the wider community
* Ensure that a clear rationale exists with regard to the design of learning experiences
* Implement a curriculum which allows **all** pupils to be challenged and given opportunities for progression
* Review the curriculum on a regular basis
* Ensure that, at times of transition, learners are fully supported
* Ensure our learners are creative, enterprising and prepared for the world of work and their future careers.

The Head Teacher should:

* Ensure all stakeholders are aware of the curriculum rationale based on shared values.
* Encourage all staff to be leaders of learning.
* Ensure quality learning and teaching experiences are being delivered (Quality Assurance calendar)
* Evaluate learning and teaching against the increased expectations
* Work with all staff to develop and refresh the curriculum on a regular basis

## 5.3 MEETING LEARNERS’ NEEDS

Teachers should:

* Plan and deliver purposeful learning experiences
* Match learning activities to the needs of individual learners and groups with differing abilities or aptitudes
* Ensure the pace of learning is appropriate
* Be aware of and respond to information on learners’ needs
* Work closely with parents and partner agencies to meet learner needs

The Head Teacher should:

* Audit a random selection of pupils randomly to ensure their needs are being met using the 8 well-being indicators (safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible, included)
* Engage in deep, reflective conversation with all staff about how they are meeting specific needs.
* Use data analysed from standardised assessment to question how we are meeting specific needs.
* Ensure Individualised educational programmes and coordinated support plans contain appropriate learning targets for our learners. Parents and learners are involved, where possible, in reviewing learners’ needs and learning plans.

**5.9 IMPROVEMENT THROUGH SELF-EVALUATION**

To ensure effectiveness in Learning and Teaching a rigorous, planned programme of evaluation needs to take place. All stakeholders have crucial roles to play in this context.

Emerging from evaluative exercises should be confirmation of good practice and, if needed, specification of strategies to pursue in order to improve quality. Staff development needs may also be identified as a result of this process.

The creation of a culture which values open and honest reflection is fundamental to success in this area.

## A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

A framework for evaluating Learning and Teaching should include the following:

Fixed Points - INCAS Data analysis and next step formation

* ePIPS Data analysis and next step formation
* SQUIP Schools Quality Improvement Planning
* Quality Assurance Calendar
* Annual Review with all staff (PDRS, EAR)

Ongoing Processes - Classroom observation/supporting visits

* Head Teacher presence in all classes
* Scrutiny of pupils’ work
* Learning conversations with staff
* Review of feedback from pupils
* Review of planning by teachers
* Moderation of activities between stages
* Regular meetings with the pupils (Pupil Voice opportunities)
* Audit of variety of teaching methodologies
* Parental views sought and shared

Practical Steps to Support Learning

**1. Sharing Learning Intentions**

“Learning intentions and success criteria have become paper exercises in many places, where teachers simply go through the motions. The main rationale for learning intentions and success criteria is that they can support and enhance these conversations on a daily basis. If they do not, then they are not worth the paper they are written on.”

Learning Unlimited – Assessment for Learning – A practical guide by Ian Smith

All staff should make themselves familiar with Shirley Clarke’s ‘Outstanding Formative Assessment’ Book. All teaching staff attended training in relation to this in 2015/16.

1. How to write Learning Intentions

* Devise Learning Intentions and Success Criteria at the same time, when possible to ensure they match
* Distinguish between Learning Intentions (the what) and the Success Criteria (the how)
* Make sure that the intention describes the learning and not the task
* Use positive, learner-friendly language

2. How to generate Success Criteria

* Avoid describing the task as the Success Criteria
* Think in terms of ‘strategies for success’ and ‘evidence for success’
* Devise strategies that require pupils to ‘perform their understanding’
* Make sure that the criteria focuses on the understanding and not the process

3. How to share Learning Intentions and Success Criteria with pupils:

* Flag up the Learning Intention at the start of the lesson
* Display Learning Intentions during the lesson
* Involve pupils in identifying/creating the Success Criteria
* Use different Success Criteria and have different groups undertake different tasks
* Never forget that we learn by having conversations

## 2. Asking Better Questions

One way in which our questioning can be improved is to ask better questions, that stimulate and support thinking and cause learning.

Ask more **HOT (higher order thinking)** questions:

- What do you think? - Can you be sure?

- Why do you think that? - Is there another way?

- How do you know? - Do you have a reason?

Productive questions have been called “fat”, higher order thinking or “hot” questions.

If you want to enrich your own questions there are a range of strategies you can use. These strategies all involve asking pupils to think about possible answers not just the right answer. Pupils can then apply what they know and understand it a context. This helps them consolidate what they know and understand.

**3. Promoting Self and Peer Assessment**

Why promote assessment by pupils?

* Pupils give each other on-going support and feedback **while** they are learning.
* The quality of the support that pupils give each other can sometimes be higher than that given by the teacher, simply because the teacher has to spread themselves out amongst the pupils.
* Through peer and self-assessment pupils develop self-motivation and a positive mindset.

How to adopt self and peer-assessment strategies:

* Clearly explain the ground rules for paired working.
* Give careful thought to choosing groups, especially in practical work.
* Have high expectations about what pupils can achieve together.
* Ensure the success criteria are clear and sufficiently detailed to allow each pupil to give effective feedback.
* Other practical ideas can be found on Page 8 of *Promoting Assessment by Pupils, Ian Smith.*
* Pupils should discuss not only why something is good, but also what strategies were used to make it good.
* Encourage pupils to use their own language to describe quality.
* Use the carousel system.
* Use a wide range of self-evaluating questions.
* Emphasise that having difficulties is all part and parcel of learning.

**4. Making Feedback Count**

A. **Why do we need to make our feedback count?** It will help to close the learning gap between what someone already knows and what they will want/need to know in the future.

B. **How to improve the quality of verbal feedback.** We all have a preferred style: you have to decide what your personal preferences are and make sure that you are not neglecting important styles. See Page 8 in Booklet.

C. **How to make written marking manageable.** Reflect on **why** we are marking – to close the learning gap to be effective and to ensure impact.

D. **How to make written comments count.** Written feedback must cause **thinking** on the part of the student. Consider asking questions for them to respond to.

Learning and Teaching Approaches

At Skene School we aim to deliver a curriculum for all our pupils that is coherent, flexible and enriched. We strive to support our less able learner's and challenge our more able pupils. We work to implement the following learning and teaching approaches.

**Active Learning Experiences**: a hands on approach where pupils can see the relevance to real life situations. There should be a balance of textbook, written and active work to reinforce learning. Active Learning also promotes cognitive thinking – active minds.

**Cooperative Learning**: a strategy enriching **group work, academic goals and social goals.** Specific roles are given with children being accountable for their learning.

**Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL):** At Skene School we are starting to explore ways to deliver well planned interdisciplinary projects. These focus on a selection of experiences and outcomes and support learners in making links across different aspects of their learning. They build opportunities for progression in knowledge, understanding and skills. These opportunities provide deep learning.

**Group work** with clearly defined **allocated roles** so pupils understand their part in the task.

**Outdoor Learning Experiences** thatmaximise the use of the outside playground space: planters, Grab and Go Boxes etc as well as the wider local community: local woods, Loch of Skene and Dunecht Estate.

Use of **Games Based Learning** and as a stimulus, SMART boards and other interactive **new technologies** e.g. digital cameras, netbooks and iPADS’s.

**Teacher/ peer and self-assessment strategies**. Assessment is for Learning Strategies (AiFL) are used to show pupils what they have achieved in their learning, what they need to do to improve and how they can go about achieving this. Pupils are assessed by their teacher and are taught how to assess themselves and their peers. Some AiFL strategies used include thumbs up, no hands up, lollipop sticks, 2 stars and a wish, tickled pink and green for growth, traffic lights and learning partners.

**Joyning the Learning type projects/topics** where pupils are motivated and stimulated by a 'hook' to captivate their learning.

**Cross curricular learning** with Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Well-being forming the core elements.

### **Collaborative Learning** is frequently most effective when learners have the opportunity to think and talk together, to discuss ideas, analyse and solve problems. This is central to many of the experiences our pupils experience at Skene School.

**Learner’s as Leaders** - Opportunities for our **pupil voice** to be heard e.g. Community Carousel, Concerned Councillors, Playground Pals, Charity Champions, Budding Broadcasters, Website Whizzes. Pupils are beginning to have a choice in influencing what they are learning about. We are also developing Pupil's Voice in relation to direct learning e.g. Pupil Learning Circles.

Our **Additional Support Need** teacher works throughout the school in the 5 roles: Consultancy, Cooperative teaching, direct teaching, Staff development and liaison with partner agencies. In addition, our Support Staff are well utilised to meet the needs of all our pupils. Outside agencies are used when intervention is required to support pupils to ensure we ‘Get it Right for Every Child’ (GIRFEC): Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, occupational Therapy, Social Work, English as an Additional Language, School Doctor and Nurse etc. We work hard to ensure each child in our care is Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. Teachers evaluate and work with parents to inform them of strategies that are in place in school.

**Leadership** is fostered at every level in Skene School. Our teachers lead curriculum areas: Outdoor Learning/Eco Schools, Science, Digital Literacy, RRSA, Health Promoting Schools. This is an area that we will continue to develop.

**Achievements** are celebrated using our Achievements Wall, Skene’s ACE Book, Newsletters and at Assemblies.

The work of our pupils is shared with parents and carers in our **Curricular Open Afternoons and Evenings.**

**Creativity and enterprise** is encouraged where possible e.g. Community Café, Christmas Fayre, Nativities, School Shows etc.

**Parental/ Community Partnership** is encouraged. This can be through curricular events, parent’s evenings, parent helpers/volunteers, focus group members. An open door policy operates throughout the school. We work closely with a range of local partnerships: Dunecht Estate, Skene Playgroup, Skene Church etc.

Learning styles

All pupils work in a different way and have a preferred way of learning. The VAK model suggests three different styles – visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. As we teach, we try to take into account all three styles to ensure we help each child reach their full potential.

Some key points for each style…

**Visual -** Learns best when they can see what they are learning or have visual aids e.g. pictures, objects.

**Auditory -** Enjoys learning by hearing new information or discussing. This can come in a variety of forms – teacher lead instruction, group discussion, DVD, audio text.

**Kinaesthetic -** Enjoys a more hands on approach to learning, perhaps through movement, design, modelling, creating, constructing or ICT.

Summary

At Skene School we aspire to achieve everything outlined in this policy for all of our pupils, parents and staff.

**Skene School:**

**Working Together, Learning Together, To Be The Best We Can Be**

Appendix 1

**Our vision:**

**Working Together, Learning Together, To Be The Best We Can Be**

**Our values are:**

* Partnership Working
* Opportunities for all
* Being Safe
* Respect for Everyone
* Growth Mindset/Can do attitude

**Aims:**

* To achieve the best outcome for each child through partnership between pupils, parents, staff and the wider community.
* To ensure that everyone feels a sense of achievement in all that they do.
* To celebrate cultural and social diversity so that everyone feels valued and respected.
* To develop enquiring minds and skills to embrace lifelong learning.
* To promote children to take responsibility and to make informed choices about their future.
* To ensure the school community observes the rights of children, as set out in the UNCRC, and the rights respecting behaviour.
* To foster an ethos of distributive leadership at all levels.