

## Core Principles for Learning and Teaching

A Policy Informed By Effective Practice and Impact    March 2015

### Our Philosophy

#### **Climate Is Around Us – Culture is Part of US:**

We are a family of schools that celebrate our individual character. Our schools may have different systems, pedagogies and climates, but we aim to share the same learning culture. Our shared culture is driven by shared values and core principles. Fundamentally, we understand the need to focus on learning and the impact of teaching. We aim to develop a collaborative culture, where teachers are learning professionals, committed to developing effective teaching practices. Our collaborative culture will encourage: support, trust, openness and collective reflection; where pupil learning is at the heart of every discussion.

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to exemplify our expectations in relation to effective learning and teaching. Our schools aim to provide a curriculum of rich, varied and memorable learning experiences that nurture children, allowing them to flourish and thrive. Teachers collaboratively plan engaging curriculum opportunities where pupils acquire knowledge and develop skills and positive attitudes to achieve their full potential.

Through our teaching we aim to:

- develop growth mindsets, where learning is seen as incremental and achievable with no glass ceiling;
- enable children to become confident, resourceful, resilient, enquiring and independent learners;
- foster children's self-esteem and help them build positive relationships with other people;
- develop children's self-respect and encourage children to respect the ideas, attitudes, values and feelings of others;
- show respect and tolerance for all cultures and faiths, promoting positive attitudes towards other people;
- demonstrate British values: valuing democratic decision making, a sense of fairness, freedom of speech and different view points and perspectives
- enable children to understand their community and help them feel valued as part of this community;
- help children grow into reliable, independent and positive citizens.

### Effective Learning

The characteristics and indicators of effective learning are visible when pupils develop a deep understanding of concepts and a fluency of essential skills leading to confidence flair and mastery; ultimately these pupils achieve high standards. Pupils will be seen to respond well to challenging tasks and adjust well to working in different contexts. Pupils will demonstrate positive learning characteristics, behaviours and attitudes. They will work in a sustained manner with commitment and enjoyment, be confident in raising questions and have perseverance when answers are not readily available. Children will be able to select appropriate methods, organise the resources they need effectively and be able to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. Pupils will engage in meaningful dialogue and actively seek feedback from other pupils first and foremost, before that of the teacher.

We aim to develop pupils as subject experts: we focus on developing effective writers, mathematicians, scientists etc, as opposed to children that write, do sums and do fair tests etc. We focus on developing the Head (knowledge), Hand (skill) and Heart (attitude) of a writer, mathematician, scientist etc.

We actively encourage pupils to become effective learners by reflecting on how we learn best (metacognition).

We place great importance on effective early years pedagogy and practice. We regard how pupils learn as fundamental to effective practice. The EYFS 'Characteristics of Effective Learning' guide the principles of effective learning throughout our schools.

#### **Playing and exploring (playful enquiry – iterative processes – trial and error – reflect, review and refine – pose; ponder; polish)**

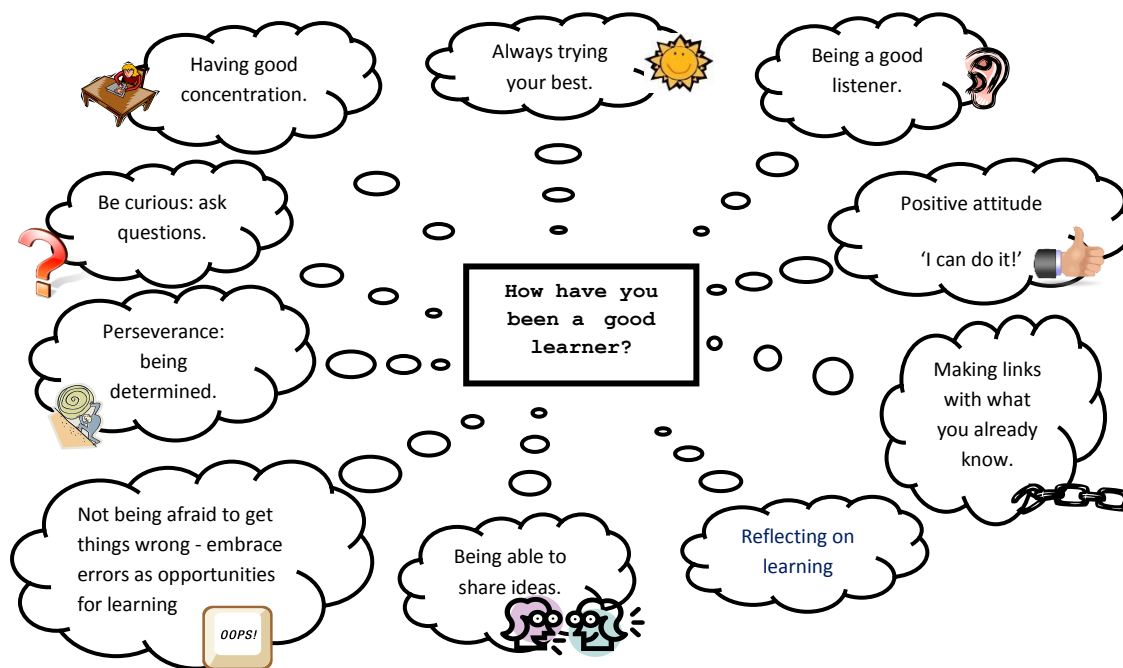
- finding out and exploring • playing with what they know • being willing to have a go

#### **Active learning (committed and engaged to finding solutions)**

- being involved and concentrating • keeping on trying • enjoying achieving what they set out to do

#### **Creating and thinking critically (surface to deep to conceptual learning; fluency and flair leading to confidence and mastery)**

- having their own ideas • making links • choosing ways to do things and finding new way



### **Effective Teaching**

Effective teaching is when teachers challenge and inspire pupils, expecting the most of them – their ambition for learning is high. They manage pupils well, insisting on high standards of behaviour. Effective teachers have good subject knowledge and deep understanding of concepts. They are technically competent in teaching essential basic skills, such as phonics, grammar, number value and place value. Effective teachers use a variety of tools and methods to enable all pupils to learn deeply. They use feedback as a fundamental tool for improvement. They assess pupils' work and understanding thoroughly and use assessments to help and encourage pupils to overcome barriers and difficulties. Effective teachers' planning has clear learning intentions and success criteria that pupils understand and refer to. They use time, support staff and other resources effectively. Effective teachers work collaboratively to know and evaluate their impact on learning. They move away from anecdotes and focus instead on quality evidence. (John Hattie 2015)

Effective teachers are explicit about what successful learning looks like - they confidently model what successful learning looks like. Effective teachers are learning professionals; they share learning and welcome critique and supportive feedback.

### **Effective Lessons in a Sequences of Learning**

Effective lessons ensure pupil progress is at that heart and have:

- ✓ Clear learning intention/objective shared with the pupils.
- ✓ Clear success criteria linked to the learning intention/objective.
- ✓ High quality questioning
- ✓ Learning and teaching activities designed to provide students with opportunities to meet the learning intention/objective.
- ✓ Pupils reflecting and assessing their own learning and their peers
- ✓ Clear feedback which has an impact on learning.

#### **Five Characteristics of Effective Feedback:**

**(Chappuis, 2012)**

- 1. Effective feedback directs attention to the intended learning, pointing out strengths and offering specific information to guide improvement.**
- 2. Effective feedback occurs during the learning, while there is still time to act on it.**
- 3. Effective feedback addresses partial understanding.**
- 4. Effective feedback does not do the thinking for the student.**
- 5. Effective feedback limits corrective information to an amount the student can act on.**

#### **Feedback Essentials:**

**(Grant Wiggins, 2012)**

**Helpful feedback is:**

**goal referenced;  
tangible and transparent;  
actionable;  
user-friendly (specific and personalized);  
timely;  
ongoing; and  
consistent.**

At the Rivers C.of E. Academy Trust we appreciate that we are on a journey regarding feedback for learning.

We have an ongoing system of compiling examples of work to prompt discussion and explore the important concept. We appreciate that there is not one definitive way of providing feedback and that feedback marking in books is only part of the whole feedback picture.

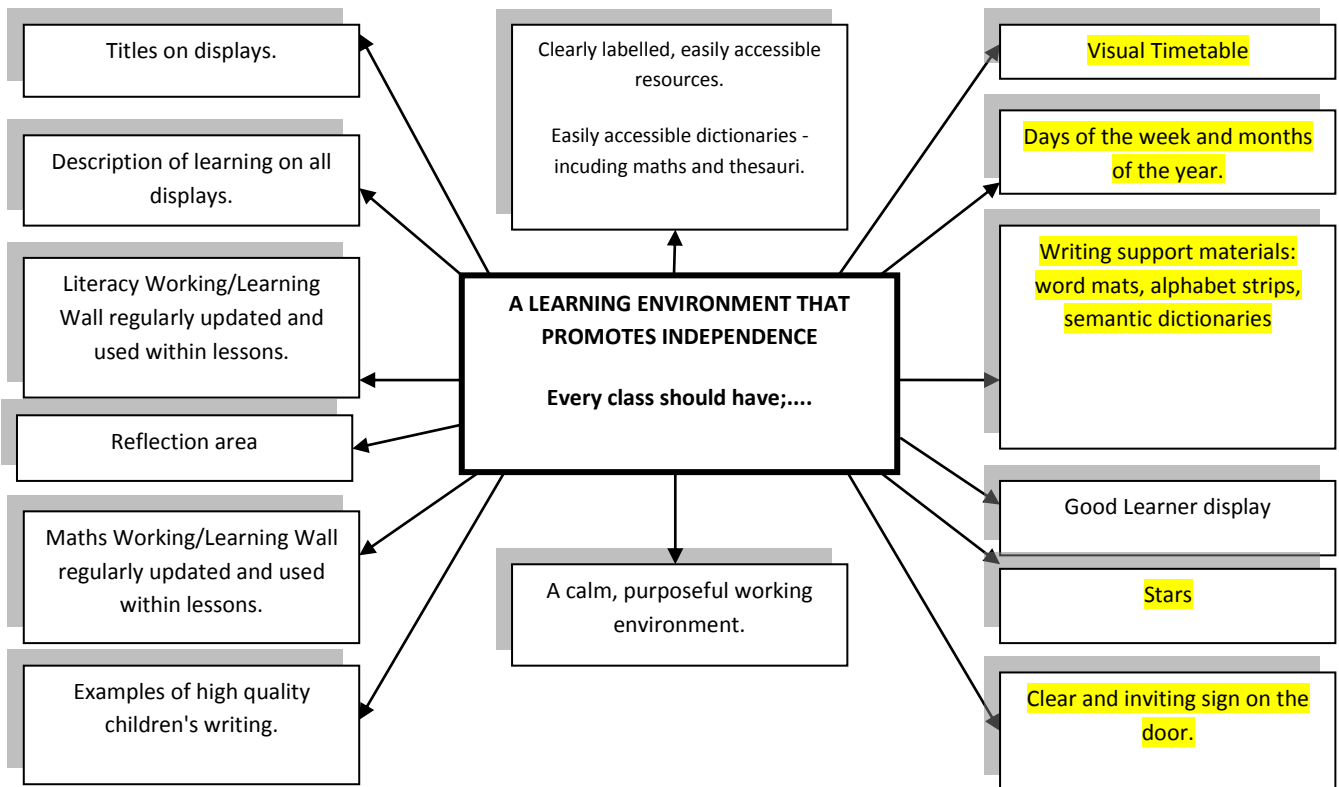
**Feedback can only build on learning;  
if the learning isn't there, the feedback isn't going to  
move it forward.  
(Chappuis, 2012)**

**Feedback should lead to action and change;  
if there are no changes – there's no learning.**

#### **Learning Environment/Climate**

We work hard to ensure our classrooms are attractive, inspiring learning environments.

We change displays regularly, to ensure that the classroom reflects the topics/themes studied by the children. We use working/learning walls to make explicit connections to the sequence of learning as well as to provide prompts, modelled learning, exemplify quality and excellence and track the learning journey. We also strive to create attractive and engaging displays around school, providing opportunities for reflection and sharing of work. We believe that a stimulating environment sets the climate for learning, and a well organised classroom promotes independent use of resources and high-quality work by the children. Our classroom and school climate reflects our academy values and culture.



### Curriculum Design

The philosophy of an effective early years curriculum is aligned perfectly to designing the whole school curriculum. The curriculum may be described as the sum total of the experiences, activities, and events whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children's learning and development. The curriculum is provided by the people, places, and things in the children's environment: the adults, the other children, the physical environment, and the resources. The curriculum integrates care and education and includes both specifically planned experiences and activities and interactions that arise spontaneously.

Curriculum themes are appropriate vehicles for learning - the themes should not drive the learning, but immerse children in a menu of learning opportunities that they need to deepen their understanding.

The curriculum will be a vehicle for **key drivers** of learning that are aligned to the needs, aspirations and dreams of our learners:

#### **Team Workers:**

Able to work independently when required but also able to collaborate, value and support other, communicate and listen.

#### **Resilient and Reflective Learners:**

To reflect on their learning and adopt new strategies, try different approaches and to be determined to succeed.

#### **Independent Enquirers:**

To be curious, ask questions, make choices, form opinions, apply knowledge to reason and justify.

#### **Creative Thinkers:**

To use their imaginations and apply their learning to new situations. To be creative and choose a way of learning which suits their learning style.

#### **Self Managers:**

To persevere, to become role models for learning, to set achievable goals and celebrate achievement. To know what their next steps in learning are and how to achieve them.

There is also a strengthened focus on securing essential English, Maths and Science skills in line with the Revised National Curriculum 2014 with continual opportunities to develop, use and apply these skills across the whole curriculum. We recognise that children require a well-rounded school experience in order to achieve and be successful. We also ensure that our curriculum aids planning for progressions throughout the phases and allows us the flexibility to tailor learning to local needs and the need of all children. We promote the curriculum as being dynamic and continually evolving. Our aim is to provide memorable learning experiences and rich opportunities whilst promoting outstanding outcomes through our innovative curriculum design and highly tailored programmes.

### **Improving Outcomes Through Coaching and Development and Monitoring of Teaching**

Improving outcomes requires a team approach – collaboration is key. The team works together to agree on the nature of success throughout the school year. This success is reflected in the degree of improvement in pupils' understanding of specific content, through development of more effective learning strategies, or in a greater desire among pupils to invest in their learning. There's a mutual agreement that any interventions that don't achieve the intended impact will be changed or dropped. (John Hattie 2015)

A range of strategies are used to monitor standards of teaching which are used to inform professional coaching and development needs for all staff. These include observations, learning walks/walk throughs, informal discussions, work scrutinies/book looks, pupil discussions/conferences etc. We use the TDA core standards as part of our performance management procedures.

### **The Role of Parents and carers**

We believe that parents and carers have a fundamental role to play in helping children to learn.

We do all we can to inform parents about what and how their children are learning by:

- holding parents' evenings to explain our school strategies for teaching and learning and to provide information about children's attainment/achievement, trajectory towards the age expected curriculum standards;
- sending information to parents at the start of each term in which we outline the topics that the children will be studying;
- sending annual reports to parents in which we explain the progress made by each child and indicate how the child can improve further;
- explaining to parents how they can support their children with home/school learning.

We believe that parents have the responsibility to support their children and the school in implementing school policies. We would like parents to:

- ensure that their child has the best attendance record possible;
- ensure that their child is equipped for school with the correct uniform
- do their best to keep their child healthy and fit to attend school;
- inform school if there are matters outside of school that are likely to affect a child's performance or behaviour at school;
- promote a positive attitude towards school and learning in general;
- fulfil the requirements set out in the home/school agreement.

### **The Role of Directors and Governors**

The schools' directors and governors focus on the strategic elements of school improvement and learning and teaching; the operational elements are best managed by school leadership teams. School leadership teams have responsibility for aligning both strategic and operational elements. Directors and governors provide supportive challenge to school leaders, holding leadership accountable for pupil learning and achieving standards.

Directors and governors:

- provide supportive challenge regarding impact and effective use of appropriate teaching strategies and resources;
- ensure that the school buildings and premises are best used to support successful learning and teaching;
- monitor teaching strategies in the light of health and safety regulations;
- monitor how effective learning and teaching strategies are in terms of improving pupil outcomes;
- ensure that staff coaching and development and performance management policies promote high quality teaching/effective pedagogy and practice;
- monitor the effectiveness of the school's learning and teaching policies through the school's self-review processes.

**This policy will be reviewed in July 2016**