

# THE RATIONALE FOR OUR CURRICULUM

## New Pitsligo and St. John's Primary School



### Our Vision

**To ensure all our pupils are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included, so that each individual can be fulfilled and reach their potential within a supportive and proactive community.**

To achieve this vision it is essential that we develop a structured curriculum which ensures that all children are provided with learning opportunities that recognise and celebrate their uniqueness, develop their full potential, allow them to fulfil their aspirations in an ever changing job market. It is our role to foster ambition to be actively involved in society.

We aim to deliver excellence in learning and teaching and create an ethos where learners to be actively engaged in their own learning. Our curriculum focuses on the child as learner, and allows for breadth and depth of learning, offering challenge and enjoyment. We offer choice and personalisation as well as progression through levels, allowing the opportunity for attainment at the highest level.

At every level, an ethos of high aspirations and ambition for all our learners is encouraged and attainment, achievement and participation are recognised and celebrated. We encourage a growth mindset that celebrates effort.

*At New Pitsligo & St. John's we are always mindful of the rich social mix in our catchment and one of the primary missions of our curriculum structure is to engage all children in exciting, powerful learning experiences that will allow them to become active leaders in their community, critical thinkers, and life-long learners. In order to achieve this goal, our pupils take part in community linked experiences with a view to transferring skills from the classroom into wider achievement. Therefore, learning experiences will be meaningful and relevant, and education will strive towards equipping our learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to become responsible adults of the future. Our curriculum recognises the need to support personal development and empowerment so that each child within our care is able to develop as a healthy, balanced, self-confident individual and fulfil their educational potential.*

Curriculum for Excellence identifies key **values** for life, four **contexts** in which learning takes place, six **entitlements** for learners, seven **principles** for curriculum design and eight **curriculum areas** in which learning is organised. These values, contexts, entitlements, principles and curriculum areas are at the heart of decision making regarding our Curriculum Structures rationale.

### Skills Development

Skills are developed through an 'I can' approach, across all years with the delivery of Experiences and Outcomes. The development of skills is essential to learning and supports our pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. The skills and attributes which our pupils develop will provide them with a sound basis for their development as lifelong learners in their adult, social and working lives, enabling them to reach their full potential. Our curriculum aims to foster the development of key skills and for the pupils to be able to recognise the skills they are developing and set targets for further development.

### Learning and Teaching

The success of our curriculum is through the delivery of high-quality learning and teaching. This is at the heart of our work and the use of a variety of teaching methodologies is an essential feature of our curriculum. A wide range of teaching strategies is implemented by all staff, where approaches to learning and assessment are varied and pupil-centred. Assessment for Learning techniques, direct teaching, self and peer assessment, individual and group work, text-based work and practical work, the use of IT to support learning, outdoor learning, rights respecting, educational visits and visiting speakers are examples of approaches and methodologies designed to actively engage our pupils in their learning. We underpin our academic studies with nurture and emotional literacy approaches. In particular these are designed to develop a better environment for learning allowing us to work towards closing the attainment gap. We work closely with other agencies to support this process and support families.

There is a focus to continually support the professional development of our staff in the field of learning and teaching which involves colleagues sharing practice, within both the school and the Cluster which has led to further reflection of practice, incorporating new ways of engaging and supporting our learners. Formal and informal observation, survey results, attainment analysis and feedback are considered to promote improvement.

## **The Whole Curriculum**

In addition to the formal curriculum, the value of other educational experiences is recognised and given emphasis within New Pitsligo & St. John's School. We wholeheartedly embrace Curriculum for Excellence in that we are continuously improving and extending opportunities to ensure delivery of the best possible curriculum for all of our pupils. We have an achievements wall and run an annual audit of learning beyond the curriculum.

## **The Ethos and life of the school as a community**

Our curriculum offers a broad range of learning experiences for our pupils, where the children and a wide range of relevant partners, contribute to planning themes and interdisciplinary learning opportunities in order to make learning meaningful. Our pupils are encouraged to contribute to the school community at every stage, where they have opportunities to lead their own learning and being instrumental in bringing about change and improvement. Shared values are communicated and promoted through Assemblies, Committees, Pupil Council, Parent Council and day to day running of the school. A wide variety of opportunities take place regularly throughout the year to develop School and House identity, Buddy Systems, Pupil Council, Eco-Committee, Rights Respecting Committee, Communication Committee, Younger Committee membership in developing the environment and House Captains, allowing pupils to grow, develop and support the work of the school. Volunteering is recorded and recognised as part of the developing the young workforce approach.

## **Curriculum Areas and Subjects**

The period of education from pre-school to the end of S3 has the particular purpose of providing each young person in Scotland with a broad general education. At New Pitsligo all our learners will experience a **Broad General Education** which will include all of the experiences and outcomes across all 8 curriculum areas, progressing through the Levels, as far as this is consistent with their learning needs and prior achievements.

## **Inter-disciplinary Learning (IDL)**

Inter-disciplinary Learning (IDL) is a key feature of Curriculum for Excellence, which enhances the curriculum and is reflected in our contextualised planning. We believe that this approach towards delivering the curriculum brings about rich rewards, allowing for increased and improved collaboration across subject areas and leads to exciting and challenging opportunities for our pupils to make connections across learning within the context of **Broad General Education**. IDL opportunities exist across two or more subject areas to support and enhance learning e.g. the teaching of Scots and Doric in literacy, Scottish Dance in Expressive Arts and Scots singing in music. Links are increasingly being incorporated into planned approaches. Developments have led to more involved experiences such as the WW1 Commemoration week and the Homecoming project.

## **Personalisation and Choice**

As our pupils progress through their levels there will be opportunities for personalisation and choice in relation to their learning. Allowing our pupils to make informed choices about their learning encourages and motivates them to become successful learners. Pupils are involved in selecting big questions for IDL and planning the process. Personalisation and choice takes many forms including what pupils will learn from and within lessons as well as to approaches to learning and assessment opportunities. It also relates to how pupils will learn through active learning, through different activities offered within lessons and to the challenge relating to a learning outcome.

There will also be opportunities for choice as to how pupils will demonstrate learning through *making, saying, writing or doing*, offering a range of assessment approaches.

## **Opportunities for personal achievement**

The children's achievement wall demonstrate to the Whole School Community the high value we put on our pupils' personal achievements, where pupils parents and staff are encouraged to recognise and support wider achievement. Our Charity Work involves the whole school and develops the concept of giving. Our Eco Schools' Work, our Poppy and Children in Need fundraisers and our Rights Respecting work help to develop social responsibility.

## **Our Next Steps**

At New Pitsligo and St. John's School all staff were involved in redesigning our curriculum using loose bundling of experiences and outcomes. This has been shared with pupils to further explore how the life of the school enhances the curriculum and it is now being piloted. Pupils will use this to assist in planning IDL. Curriculum for Excellence and is underpinned by our Curriculum Structures Rationale and Vision. It is a priority for us to ensure that there is parental confidence in our plans and we are committed to involving parents/carers. As the impact of current changes becomes evident (e.g. Active Literacy), there will also be a greater understanding of and an ever increasing confidence in the development of the curriculum. This will allow for true reflection and the opportunity to refine and further develop our practice. As a team we are developing Visual Learning and Thinking approaches in the classroom to further underpin the development of skills in a taxonomy school.

November 2014

Updated September 2015