

# HOLY FAMILY PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

## WORLD AROUND US POLICY

### DEFINITION OF THE WORLD AROUND US (here after referred to as WAU)

In our school, we believe that WAU in the primary school through the examination of the past, our environment and our present will develop an awareness of where we came from, how we arrived at where we are and identify where we intend to go. This breath of study will involve the asking of questions and the development of strategies to uncover answers through a broad range of approaches. The main emphasis of this curriculum is on developing ways of exploring and thinking in order to investigate ourselves and our environment.

### AIMS

1. To promote an enjoyment of scientific, geographical and historical methods of enquiry. To foster among pupils a positive attitude towards the subject and to help pupils perceive the subject as enjoyable, stimulating and challenging.
2. To develop pupils' understanding, skills and knowledge in relation to the WAU. To develop among pupils an awareness that there are certain skills, knowledge and approaches to study which are specifically related to this subject area.
3. To develop in the pupils, acquisition and ownership of language that is specifically scientific, geographic or historic and recognise the value of such language in everyday life. To aid pupils' growing awareness of the value and impact of this subject in everyday life and to inculcate in them a recognition and ownership of the language associated with this curricular area.
4. To develop the pupils' ability to think scientifically, historically and geographically. To promote in pupils such thinking processes and to provide them with opportunities to demonstrate this e.g. planning, hypothesising, analysing, evidencing etc.

### LEARNING AND TEACHING STYLES

In order to secure learning across all identified intelligences and in a manner that will meet the learning styles of our pupils, we will encourage the use of drinking water as appropriate as well as 'warm up' or 'waken up' brain gym activities. A range of VAK activities will be included in lessons. These will be reviewed regularly to ascertain whether or not there is a balance of VAK learning taking place. Clear learning outcomes will be communicated to the pupils as appropriate. We will engage with the children, encourage all to become involved, value their contributions and offer constructive, supportive feedback as required.

A wide range of teaching strategies will be employed which will include:

- Practical activities, group, paired and individual.
- Whole class activities.
- Problem-solving activities.

- Group discussion.
- Pupil led activities.
- Activity based sharing.
- Topic-based activities.
- Team-teaching.
- Educational visits/visitors.
- Circle time.
- Differentiated questioning techniques.

These will be backed up by appropriate reinforcement. Realistic, high expectations in a variety of situations will be maintained. Activities will be well-paced and challenging. Our teaching strategies will also facilitate the early identification and support for children with learning difficulties.

While all of the above strategies will be addressed to secure the development of pupils, the core foci in our efforts within WAU will be to:

### **1. Promote A Positive Attitude To WAU**

- a. Pupils will experience a variety of learning situations where they will succeed. This will
- b. Develop a positive attitude towards the subject.
- c. Pupils will experience a variety of learning situations which are interesting, stimulating and challenging.
- d. Pupils will engage in activities which are either individual or collaborative. This will ensure that pupils' positive attitude to the subject is maintained.
- e. Pupils will visit places of scientific interest, historic and geographic interest.

### **2. Develop Scientific, Historic And Geographic Knowledge, Skills and Understanding**

- a. Pupils will have the opportunity to investigate a range of topics. This range will permit the development of a broad knowledge and understanding as well as an array of skills integral to the WAU.
- b. Pupils will have the opportunity to partake in a range of activities. This likewise will ensure that pupils encounter various knowledge, utilise different skills and be challenged to gain greater understanding.
- c. Pupils, as they progress up through the school will be required to partake in activities at increasing degrees of depth. This will enable pupils to gain greater understanding.

### **3. Develop Appropriate Language Integral to the WAU**

- a. Pupils will be given the chance to become familiar with scientific, historic and geographic language and allow them the opportunity to use such language in discussions.
- b. Encourage pupils to recognise that there is terminology associated with WAU and that they should acquire these so that they have a fuller understanding of the subject.
- c. Give pupils ample opportunities to talk about and discuss their work in pairs, groups and as a class.

### **4. Develop Pupils' Ability To Think Scientifically, Historically and Geographically**

- a. Pupils will be challenged to investigate problems and approach their resolution through the scientific method.

- b. Pupils will be encouraged to consider problems and decide upon the most appropriate method of investigation (historic, geographic, scientific or a combination) prior to partaking in problem solving.

### **RECORD KEEPING AND ASSESSMENT**

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. It permits a true evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and aids planning for future learning.

1. **Pupils' Profiles:** Updated annually which highlight the progress achieved and the attainment gained in the WAU.
2. **WAU Topic Books:** These will be kept for every pupil from P1 to P7. They will contain a representative sample of all areas of work covered in WAU.
3. **Curriculum Tests:** A WAU curriculum test will be held once per year (2<sup>nd</sup> term).
4. **Teachers' Record Books:** Some teachers record individual pupil progress in their own record books. This form of record keeping is to be encouraged. The preceding record keeping and assessment arrangements are under constant review and may be altered in the light of any guidance from C.C.E.A.
5. **Time Allocation:** The time devoted to WAU will vary as the child progresses through the school. There will be an increasing amount of time devoted to WAU as the child moves from keys stage to key stage.

### **CROSS CURRICULAR THEMES**

We acknowledge that learning does not occur in tight compartments. We will ensure that there will be a flow of information and skills into and out of other curriculum areas. Our topic based approach to WAU will deliver a mode of learning which is intrinsically cross curricular and which will emphasise the most effective learning approaches associated with all curricular areas.

### **CONTINUITY AND PROGRESSION**

Continuity and progression can be ensured if all teachers adhere to the school WAU scheme and cover the topics and skills assigned to their year group in a manner which is appropriate to the ability levels existent in their classes. The WAU co-ordinator will ensure that the scheme meets all the continuity and progression needs of the pupils.

Differentiation - Pupils progress at different rates and have different strengths. Such differences need to be taken into account when delivering the WAU curriculum. All pupils are entitled to access the same broad and relevant WAU curriculum and a range of strategies which ensure that this access leads to effective teaching and learning, will be provided. Lower attaining pupils may benefit from a curriculum with a different pace and emphasis. Such pupils will have access to activities with greater emphasis on active learning methods.

### **RESOURCES**

Each teacher will have a copy of the inventory of the WAU equipment available in the school. This will be reviewed annually. The equipment is stored in labelled boxes in the central store in the science centre and can be borrowed at any time for as long as is necessary. Borrowed equipment must be

signed for and returned to its appropriate place when teachers have finished with it. The school science centre is an excellent resource which should be accessed consistently to support the development of this area of the curriculum and the learning experiences of all our pupils.

There is also a teachers' reference section in the school library, which includes reference books, reference files, posters and videos.

### **FIELD TRIPS/EDUCATIONAL VISITS**

Children in our school will be encouraged to take part in educational visits within the school grounds and the local community to promote their learning.

Pupils will also be encouraged to visit places such as factories, St Columb's Park, Ulster American Folk Park, Roe Valley Country Park, Loughs Agency, Derry Museum, Work House Museum to take part in activities relevant to WAU studies, e.g. autumn walks, pond dipping, beach studies etc.

All visits must be risk assessed prior to the trip occurring.

### **HOMEWORK**

Homework is an integral part of everyday work and learning for our pupils. It helps to inform parents of the activities in which their children take part in school. It forms an important link between home and school and affords parents the opportunity to make a significant contribution to their children's education. In WAU, parents can play a most important part in helping their children, for example if the homework is about carrying out an investigation in the kitchen, helping children to gather up materials for an experiment or if it is associated with local history, parents and grandparents can provide important information.

### **MARKING**

Marking is directly related to everyday work and is carried out on an ongoing basis. The aim of marking is to praise pupils for satisfactory work and to make recommendations on how to improve when and wherever necessary. Marking should always be constructive and where possible it should be immediate. All marking should be in line with the school's marking policy.

### **CO-ORDINATOR**

The WAU co-ordinator will have overall responsibility for:

- a. Co-ordinating WAU throughout the school.
- b. Ensuring that the schemes of work devised by each year group correlate with the statutory requirements.
- c. Reviewing/updating schemes of work.
- d. Maintaining, updating and implementing present policy.
- e. Promoting a thoughtful approach to WAU.
- f. Maintaining and updating WAU inventory.
- g. Ensuring that all staff development activities necessary for the full implementation of the WAU curriculum are provided.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

The Principal, Vice Principals, and Co-ordinator will be responsible for the overall system of monitoring and evaluation of WAU throughout the school. Evidence used to inform such evaluations will include:

- (a) Children's work
- (b) Teachers' planners
- (c) Interviews with teachers, pupils and parents
- (d) Curriculum tests held annually (2<sup>nd</sup> term)
- (e) Inset meetings

## **REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed regularly and the date for the next review is October 2008. The co-ordinator, in consultation with the staff is responsible for the review.