

Policy for Personal Development & Mutual Understanding (PDMU)

Reviewed May 2023
Next Review May 2026



Introduction and Rationale

St. John's is a 'Rights Respecting School'.

This policy is rooted in our belief and our work in developing and re-enforcing the messages from the 'rights' perspective.

We want pupils to develop their understanding of rights for themselves and for others, intrinsically with their personal development and their understanding of others.

We live in a society characterised by challenges and change: technological, economic, social. It is increasingly difficult for children to find role models and significant adults who can guide and inspire their balanced development with emotional intelligence, appropriate values and suitable life skills. In St. John's, Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) are believed to make a valuable contribution to the holistic development of children - personal, emotional, social and physical. It also goes hand in hand with our Catholic ethos.

Perhaps more than most aspects of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, PDMU is rooted in families and the community as much as in school and so we work in partnership with parents, the Church and members of the local community to foster the attitudes, values, skills and knowledge that our children can use now, that they can use later to support themselves as adolescents, and eventually to thrive as responsible, self-aware adults.

The delivery of our programme for PDMU is supported by the school's caring, positive ethos, an atmosphere in which all pupils, staff and parents know they are valued. This is characterised by interaction with children as individuals; open communication; a shared approach to meeting children's pastoral needs and the celebration of achievement.

Aims

In St. John's, our PDMU programme is aimed at encouraging each child to:

1. develop a knowledge of and respect for his/her own body, personality, abilities, needs and culture; as well as those of other people; and to develop a readiness to support the needs of others who cannot do so themselves;
2. develop life skills that enable them to engage with society safely and effectively;

3. identify, review and evaluate their values beside those of the local community and wider society;
4. develop independence of mind and take increasing responsibility for their decisions and actions;
5. develop self-reliance and enterprise, self-discipline and perseverance, self-respect and self-esteem, honesty, justice, compassion.

Self-Esteem and Self-Awareness

Central to the ethos of St. John's is a respect for others. Each member of the school community has the right to be treated as an individual and nurtured as someone with unique abilities, personality and needs; a unique contribution to make to the life of school; and the potential to improve him/herself. The accepting of self and an aspiration to improve require confidence - vital if children are to benefit fully from the variety of experiences offered throughout the curriculum. In order to develop such self-esteem, independence and responsibility, children are provided with opportunities to experience success in a variety of contexts, such as when:

- ☐ given compliments and focused encouragement;
- ☐ sharing in the negotiation of class rules;
- ☐ handing out resources;
- ☐ asked to be a messenger;
- ☐ given classroom praise and awards;
- ☐ receiving awards in assembly;
- ☐ having work chosen for display;
- ☐ taking good work to the principal;
- ☐ elected and participating in the School Council, Eco Team and Steering Group for RRS (Rights Respecting School);
- ☐ escorting visitors around the school;
- ☐ receiving House Points

Children are encouraged to reflect on how their actions are influenced by values, attitudes and past experiences; and to apply this understanding to future situations. As they become more self-aware and develop a more objective ability to engage in self-assessment, children are led to reflect on their achievements, targets and personalities and how these affect personal development. Children are helped to realise that they grow and change emotionally as well as physically.

Independence and Social Development

There are many opportunities in St. John's for children to develop social skills. As children mature, and through real situations, we teach children to recognise inter-

personal skills and to develop them by considering roles, communication, co-operation, body language and various forms of behaviour. Much of this is achieved through a class/school ethos in which pupils and adults are expected to treat each other with mutual respect and consideration.

Staff both teaching and support staff, encourage children to act with increasing independence. This means providing opportunities for children to feel secure enough to take responsibility, to risk failure but expect success, and to operate with autonomy. If a child can do something or if a group of children can manage a task/situation, staff encourage the children to “have a go”. Problems are presented as learning opportunities and children are offered challenges that stimulate creativity and collaboration, for example:

- ☐ carrying out a range of tasks on their own or in a group;
- ☐ discussing more than one strategy for tackling a problem;
- ☐ asking for advice and acting on it independently;
- ☐ showing the ability to set realistic goals for themselves and others;
- ☐ discussing how others’ needs may be more important than their own;
- ☐ demonstrating an ability to select from a range of choices and discussing the reasons for their decisions;
- ☐ taking increasing responsibility for their own actions;
- ☐ extending their thinking to a consideration of peer pressure, cultural influences and the effects of media upon their lives and society.

Curricular Structure

PDMU is one of the six areas for learning in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. In the Foundation Stage, Key Stage One and Key Stage Two it is divided into two strands:

- ☐ Personal Understanding and Health
- ☐ Mutual Understanding in the Local and Wider Community

Children are expected to acquire skills and knowledge from nine themes within these two strands:

Strand One: Personal Understanding and Health

1. Self-awareness
2. Feelings and Emotions
3. Learning to Learn
4. Health, Growth and Change

Safety (4a)

Strand Two: Mutual Understanding in the Local and Wider Community

5. Relationships
6. Rules, Rights and Responsibilities
7. Managing Conflict
8. Similarities and Differences
9. Learning to live as members of the community

These areas are developed in a cumulative, spiral manner as they are revisited in each key stage.

Methodology

In recognition of the fact that we all learn in different ways, a range of learning styles and teaching strategies is employed. These approaches emphasise group and collaborative ways of working that maximise opportunities for pupil input, decision-making and problem-solving.

Lessons are conducted in a non-judgemental atmosphere with the teacher in the role of facilitator, where a safe and supportive environment is maintained.

Empathetic relationships based on mutual respect are developed to create a place where fears and concerns can be expressed openly; where children can “have a go” without risk of ridicule or reproach.

Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities mapped to PDMU themes by Key Stage

Foundation Stage

Managing Information	Theme
Work with a focus, ask and respond to questions to clarify the task.	
Select, with help, information from materials and resources provided and suggest ways to obtain information.	4 4a
Follow directions in relation to a task.	4a
Begin to plan.	8 9
Identify and use simple methods to record information.	4 8

Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making	Theme
Show their ability to memorise by recalling and restructuring experiences and stories.	5 8
Make close observations and provide descriptions of what they notice.	1 2 2 4 4a 4b 8
Show the ability to sequence and order events and information, and to see wholes and parts.	
Identify and name objects and events as same/different, sort and put objects into groups.	
Make simple predictions and see possibilities.	2 4 7
Give opinions and reasons.	2 4a 4b 6 9 9
Ask different types of questions.	9

Being Creative	Theme
Be curious and ask questions about the world around them, using all the senses to explore and respond to stimuli.	4 4a 5 9
Talk about their memories and experiences.	1 2 4 4a 5 8
Play for pleasure and as a form of creative expression.	4a 8
Show excitement, enjoyment and surprise in learning.	
Be willing to take on new challenges.	
Experiment with ideas through writing, drawing, mark making, model making.	2

Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities mapped to PDMU themes by Key Stage

Working with Others	Theme
Be willing to join in.	3 5 9
Learn to work and play cooperatively.	3 6 9
Develop routines of listening, turn-taking, sharing, cooperating, and reaching agreement.	1 3 5 6 8
Be able to learn from demonstration and modelling.	3 4
Be aware of how their actions can affect others.	2 6
Learn to behave and to use words to suit different purposes.	5 6 9
Develop confidence at being with adults and other pupils in a variety of contexts.	2 5 8 9

Self-Management	Theme
Talk about what they are doing and what they have learned.	3 4 4a 4a 5 8
Develop the ability to focus, sustain attention and persist with tasks.	3
Develop awareness of emotions about learning, their likes and dislikes.	1 3
Be able to make choices and decisions.	3 4 5 6 7
Ask an adult or friend for help.	2 5

Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities mapped to PDMU themes by Key Stage

Key Stage 1

Managing Information	Theme
Ask more focused questions about the task; clarify purpose and what needs to be done.	3 4 8 9
Recognise where similar tasks have been done in the past.	3
Use their own and others' ideas to identify, locate and select various sources of information.	4 4a 8
Set goals for their work, break tasks into smaller parts and plans the next steps.	3
Record information in a variety of formats.	4 6
Begin to identify audience and purpose when communicating.	5 6

Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making	Theme
Show their understanding by organising and summarising.	6 9
Sequence, order and rank along different dimensions.	9
Identify similarities and differences by making simple comparisons and connections.	8
Begin to test predictions and to look for evidence.	
Make decisions and generate options.	4 5 6
Suggest possible solutions to problems.	2 3 4a 5 6 8 9
Be systematic and work through the stages in a task.	6
Explain their methods and opinions, and the reasons for choices and actions.	4 6 8 9
Recognise the differences between why, what, where, when, and how questions.	4a

Being Creative	Theme
Show curiosity when approaching new tasks and challenges.	6 8
Have experiences with all the senses.	2 4a
Listen to and share ideas and experiences.	1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9
Generate as many ideas and options as possible, building and combining ideas.	1 2 2 4 4a 5 6 7 9
Take time to use imagination for enjoyment.	6
Enjoy the unexpected, unusual and surprising.	3
Experiment and investigate real life issues.	2 4 4a 5 6

Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities mapped to PDMU themes by Key Stage

Working with Others	Theme
Develop further the habits of collaborative learning.	4a 8
Become more adept at turn-taking, sharing and cooperating when working in a group or team.	8
Decide what needs to be done in a group and take responsibility for aspects of the work.	5 6 9
Show the ability to learn from shared and modelled activities.	1 2 7 8
Adapt behaviour and language to suit different situations.	2 7 8 9 9
Show fairness to others.	2 5 6 8 9 9
Recognise and respect other people's feelings and ideas.	1 2 2 4 4a 5 6 8 9 9

Self-Management	Theme
Check that they are achieving their purpose by talking about what they are learning, how the work was carried out and some aspect that might be improved.	3 4a
Check their work routinely for accuracy and precision.	
Persist with tasks until an appropriate endpoint, with teacher prompting.	5
Seek help from other people.	2 4a 5 8
Work towards personal targets identified by teacher.	
Develop an awareness of what they enjoy and what they find difficult, their personal strengths and limitations.	1 1 2 3 5 7

Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities mapped to PDMU themes by Key Stage

Key Stage 2

Managing Information	Theme
Be able to ask deeper and wider questions to clarify the task, to plan and to set goals.	1 2 4 7
Begin to challenge conventions and assumptions.	5 6 8 8 9 9
Be able to classify, compare and evaluate information, and to select the most appropriate methods for the particular task.	4 4 5 6 9
Develop methods for collating and recording information and monitoring progress on a task.	1 4 9
Have a sense of audience and purpose.	4 4 9

Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making	Theme
Show the ability to use memory strategies to deepen understanding and comprehension.	4a
Identify and order patterns and relationships through a range of strategies such as grouping, classifying and reclassifying, comparing and contrasting.	9
Make and test predictions, examine evidence and make links between possible causes and effects.	2 4 4 4a 6 7 9
Discriminate between fact and opinion and question the reliability of evidence.	2 5 6 8 9 9
Explain and justify methods, opinions and conclusions.	6
Understand more than one point of view.	2 5 6 8 9
Examine options and weigh up pros and cons.	2 5 5 6 8 9
Try alternative problem-solving solutions and approaches.	4a 4a 5 8
Use different types of questions systematically and with purpose.	4a 8 9

Being Creative	Theme
Pose questions that do not have straightforward answers, seek out problems to solve and challenge the routine method.	6 8
See opportunities in mistakes and failures.	1 2 3
Use all the senses to stimulate and contribute to ideas.	8
Experiment with different modes of thinking (e.g., visualisation).	2 3
Learn from and build on own and others' ideas and experiences.	2 2 3 4 5 6 8
Value other people's ideas.	1 2 2 3 3 5 6 8
Experiment with objects and ideas in a playful way.	3 8
Make ideas real by experimenting with different designs, actions and outcomes.	3 4 8 8
Begin to develop their own value judgements about the merits of their work.	3

Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities mapped to PDMU themes by Key Stage

Working with Others	Theme
Become more independent in their social and interpersonal skills.	2 4 4a 5 8
Show that they can work in different roles in a group and take responsibility for appropriate tasks.	3 4 4a 4a 8 9
Be willing to help others with their learning.	1 8
Understand and learn to respond to feedback.	8
Work with their peers to reach agreements and begin to manage disagreements.	2 5 6 7 8

Self-Management	Theme
Evaluate what they have learned and compare their approaches with others.	3 4
Make links between their learning in different contexts.	3 4 4a 6
Become self-directed by working on their own or with a group.	5 6
Learn ways to manage their own time.	3
Seek help from a variety of sources.	4 4a 5 8
Work towards personal targets identified by themselves, or jointly with the teacher.	3 4
Be more confident in their knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses.	1 2 3 4 5

Cross-Curricular Approach

Each area of the curriculum has a contribution to make to PDMU and vice-versa. In St. John's, teachers employ cross-curricular topics to the mutual benefit of all areas of learning: Language & Literacy; Mathematics & Numeracy; PDMU; The Arts; The World Around Us; Physical Education; Religious Education; and the cross-curricular skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT.

Within the Northern Ireland Curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 three objectives and a series of issues are identified in relation to all areas of learning, including PDMU:

To Develop the Young Person as an Individual

- ☐ personal understanding
- ☐ personal health
- ☐ mutual understanding
- ☐ moral character
- ☐ spiritual awareness

To Develop the Young Person as a Contributor to Society

- ☐ citizenship
- ☐ cultural understanding
- ☐ media awareness
- ☐ ethical awareness

To Develop the Young Person as a Contributor to the Economy and Environment

- ☐ employability
- ☐ economic awareness
- ☐ education for sustainable development

Related School Policies

In addition to curricular links this policy is set against the broader context of pastoral care and should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Pastoral Care Policy (incorporating Child Protection, Anti-Bullying, Reasonable Force, Positive Behaviour)
- Pastoral Care – A Child's Guide
- Drugs Policy
- Health, Healthy Breaks
- Employability

Monitoring, Evaluation & Review

We recognise the importance of monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the delivery of the curriculum for Personal Development & Mutual Understanding. This policy will be reviewed every three years.