

St. John's Primary School

The World Around Us

Policy



Introduction

This policy is based on the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum document (2007) which is the starting point for planning a school curriculum that meets the needs of individual children. Within these requirements we at St. John's aims to provide a broad and balanced curriculum so as to prepare our children for a rapidly changing world.

1. What is the World Around Us? (WAU)

Children are naturally curious and often ask profound questions about themselves and the nature of the world around them. The purpose of this area of learning is to find age appropriate answers to some of these big questions from the perspectives of geography, history and science and technology. (P83 N.I. Curriculum document)

The World Around Us is one of the six Areas of Learning in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. It focuses on the development of knowledge, skills and understanding in Geography, History, Science and Technology. St. John's aims to retain the best of current practice within the three subjects, while developing a topic/theme based approach to this area of learning, and making relevant connections across all areas of learning, while ensuring breadth and balance.

The statutory curriculum for World Around Us is structured as follows:

Foundation Stage:	The World Around Us <i>including</i> Geography, History and Science and Technology
Key Stages One & Two:	The World Around Us <i>through the contributory elements</i> of Geography, History and Science and Technology

The **World Around Us** is presented as four inter-related strands that connect learning.

- **Interdependence**
- **Place**
- **Movement and Energy**
- **Change Over Time**

Three contributory elements within the World Around Us

Geography explores the relationship between the earth and its people through the study of the environment, place and space. It develops knowledge of places and environments throughout the world, an understanding of maps and a range of investigative and problem solving skills both inside and outside the classroom. Children should develop knowledge and understanding of their place in the world, other places, and the processes which affect the people, conditions and life in that place. They should explore ideas about people, jobs, the weather and the environment both locally and globally and begin to consider their part in maintaining a sustainable world.

History is concerned with the concepts of sequence and time and with evidence which allows us to find out what happened in the past. The concepts of chronology, change/continuity, empathy and cause and effect will be developed through investigation of life in the past.

Children should gain an awareness of their past and changes which have occurred over time through examining evidence, looking at photographs, watching multimedia clips and listening to stories. Children will recognise the importance of evidence in giving a picture of the past but will understand that there can be different interpretations of this depending on how it is viewed.

Science and Technology aims to stimulate a child's curiosity in finding out why things happen in the way they do. It teaches methods of enquiry and investigation to stimulate creative thought. Children learn to ask scientific questions and begin to appreciate the way science will affect their future on a personal, national, and global level.

Children should have opportunities to develop the skills of Science and Technology and to develop awareness of the relevance and importance of Science and Technology in everyday life in finding out about themselves, the environment, the material and physical world.

2. Aims

- To develop knowledge, understanding and skills in the context of the World Around Us
- To promote understanding, respect and appreciation for the world in which they live and their immediate environment
- To acknowledge and appreciate a sense of the past, changes which have occurred and how these affect the world today
- To develop an appreciation of the relevance and importance of Science and Technology in everyday life
- To develop in children the skills of enquiry, investigation, analysis, evaluation and presentation

3. Skills

‘At the heart of the curriculum lies an explicit emphasis on the development of skills and capabilities for life-long learning and for operating effectively in society. Through opportunities to engage in active learning contexts . . . children should develop **Cross-Curricular Skills** (in Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT) and **Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities.**’ (P5 NIC)

At St. John’s we also develop Geography, History and Science skills through the World Around Us. (These skills are listed in Appendix 1) (**Links with the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities Framework have been highlighted to enable teachers to cross reference both.**) While many of the skills will be developed incidentally, we also plan for the development of subject specific skills when appropriate.

4. Planning Approaches

The WAU programme will be implemented at a level appropriate to the needs of the children in the context of our school and will also provide opportunities for pupils to explore their world in the context of home, school the local area and the wider world. All planning is based on the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. We will also use the Ideas for Connected Learning, Thematic Units and other guidance material from CCEA¹ in our planning. Whilst initial planning is **for** the pupils, at all stages children will be encouraged to become active participants in the planning/ learning process. (Through ideas such as Planning Boards and KWHL Boards.)

See Appendix 2 for planning formats.

Planning for Progression and Continuity

Planning for the WAU builds on the earlier experiences of children and continues to help them to explore the world they live in. At Foundation Stage, skills and concepts are developed during play and other planned activities relevant to the children’s interests and experiences. Careful observation informs the planning of future learning experiences within the World Around Us.

We ensure that the overall programme of learning in any one year group, and across the key stages, is broad and balanced and that there is continuity and progression in children’s learning. We are adopting

‘a spiral approach to the World around Us so that concepts, knowledge and skills are introduced without undue repetition or significant gaps and are reinforced in a variety of contexts.’ (NIC P85)

Connected Learning

Recognising the changes and requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, we have begun to plan thematically. We emphasise the totality of the children's learning across the curriculum by making meaningful links across the learning areas. We encourage children to transfer understanding and skills from one context to another, allowing them to practise and apply the skills they have gained.

Our planning for WAU aims to promote:

- Good investigations and the development of children's enquiry skills
- Good use of ICT to support teaching and learning
- Effective use of the school/local environment, educational visits and visitors to the classroom
- Progression in key aspects of geography, history and science and technology.

5. Learning and Teaching (see St John's Learning and Teaching policy)

In St. John's, Learning and Teaching approaches provide suitably challenging opportunities for all pupils to take part in lessons fully and effectively. Learning experiences are active, practical and enjoyable. We make use of a wide range of teaching methods balancing whole class, group and individual activities to engage children in effective learning. In the Foundation stage children experience much of their learning through well planned and challenging play. Children have opportunities to make choices and decisions, developing their own ideas and interests, either as starting points for learning activities or pursuing a topic in more depth. They are supported in taking risks in their efforts to succeed and are actively involved in planning, carrying out and reflecting on their work within the World Around Us Learning Area.

6. Assessment

Assessment in WAU, as in all areas of learning, will be used to promote, enhance and deepen the children's learning. (Refer to school Learning and Teaching policy). It involves all methods normally used to appraise the children's learning, either individually or in groups. The outcomes from these assessments can then be used to identify the progress which pupils make in relation to the processes, skills, understanding and knowledge outlined in the NI Curriculum. We take account of Assessment for Learning strategies and allow this formative assessment to help and guide planning. The key reasons for assessment within WAU will be to:

- enhance performance, self-esteem and self-confidence
- promote greater resilience when faced with challenges
- increase independence
- develop a positive climate for learning

7. Inclusion

At our school the World Around Us forms part of the school curriculum policy to provide a broad and balanced education to all children. Through our teaching we provide learning opportunities that enable all pupils to make progress. We do this by setting suitable learning challenges and responding to each child's different needs.

The teachers are aware of the requirements of SENDO and plan pupil experiences accordingly.

Children will be helped to access this Learning Area using a range of learning styles, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. They are able to record and demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways according to their learning needs and preferences. Children with exceptional ability will have access to more demanding aspects of the WAU.

8. Learning in the Outdoors

(see also the Play Policy)

The outdoor area provides children with one of the best environments in which to learn. As Margaret McMillan (c1925) says, ***'the best kept classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky'***.

Our pupils have opportunities to develop skills and concepts in an outdoor learning environment where they will:

- Become more aware of, more observant in and more responsive to their surroundings
- Develop an approach to careful observation, accurate recording and thoughtful analysis
- Encourage an interest in environmental issues
- Foster a sense of wonder and discovery

Children should have the opportunity to study aspects of their own immediate world, including different features of town and countryside and make comparisons between local and wider world issues.

All educational visits will be undertaken in accordance with current EA guidance.

9. Health and Safety

We enable pupils to have access to the full range of World Around Us activities. Where children are to participate in activities outside the classroom, we carry out a risk assessment prior to the activity, to ensure it is safe and appropriate for all pupils.

There will always be elements of risk and uncertainty as children engage in active learning. The NI Curriculum document states:
'All activities must be taught within a safe environment and children must be made aware of safe practice at all times.' (Page 84)

For WAU activities, we assess and manage risks with reference to the following documents as outlined in the EA Health and Safety Policy.

10. WAU Coordinator/Curriculum Leader Role and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the World Around Us coordinator to

- Draw up an action plan for the development of the World Around Us in our school
- Monitor the running of the World Around Us scheme to ensure continuity and progression throughout the school.
- Negotiate, in accordance with the whole school Learning and Teaching policy, the place of WAU within the SDP and be involved in Monitoring and Evaluating
- Develop and disseminate knowledge and expertise of WAU in the context of the whole school policy on CPD.
- Advise and guide colleagues with regard to appropriate classroom practice.
- Formulate policy / scheme of work in association with teachers and principal, in line with SDP.
- Promote and disseminate the policy within school. Undertake monitoring to include lesson observations, examination of planning, and carry out evaluations.
- Ensure that the area of learning is properly resourced in terms of acquisition, safe storage and access.
- Liaise with appropriate advisory services.
- Incorporate initiatives from the Eco- Schools programme such as Sustrans, Mid-Ulster Council etc. to ensure that environmental topics are being studied in the classroom.
- Provide opportunities to link Eco-schools with curriculum links throughout the school to obtain the Eco-Schools Green Flag Award.

11. Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all teaching staff. Monitoring of the standards of children's work and of the quality of teaching in Geography, History and Science and Technology within the World Around Us is the responsibility of the coordinator.

The work of the WAU coordinator also involves supporting colleagues in the teaching of this Learning Area, being informed about current developments, and providing a strategic lead and direction. There is time allocated for fulfilling the vital task of reviewing samples of children's work and visiting classes to observe teaching in the subject

The WAU coordinator gives the principal and/or the Board of Governors termly logs to ensure suitable targets are being met.

12. Resources

We are currently developing resources for all WAU topics/themes in the school. We keep some essential equipment and practical materials in a central store. Class teachers will supplement these resources with their own (and pupils') materials. The library contains a good supply of topic and reference books and computer access supports children's individual research.

Appendix 2

Stages	Learning Intentions (we are learning...)
Foundation	
	<p>To begin to have a sense of the world around them (BC)</p> <p>To become familiar with concepts such as fair/not fair, the past, my place (MI)</p> <p>To use our senses to find out about our world (TPD)</p> <p>To stop to look closely and carefully (MI)</p> <p>To use a magnifying glass, digital microscope (MI)</p> <p>To record independently in a variety of ways (MI)</p> <p>To make suggestions when planning what to do (BC)</p> <p>To use simple subject specific language (TPD)</p> <p>To begin to have a sense of the passage of time (MI)</p> <p>To be aware of how to find out about the past (TPD)</p> <p>That we can find out by exploring (BC)</p> <p>To begin to ask questions relevant to our explorations (BC)</p> <p>To recognise change in our own lives (MI)</p>

Stages	Learning Intentions (we are learning...)
Key Stage One	<i>As for Foundation Stage and</i>
	<p>To begin to have a sense of how geography, history, science and technology help us to understand our world (MI)</p> <p>To begin to ask more focussed questions around our observations (BC)</p> <p>To make simple predictions and give reasons for these (TPD)</p> <p>To recognise and begin to explain why tests are fair/not fair (TPD)</p> <p>To classify according to simple differences (TPD)</p> <p>To recognise patterns in the natural and built environment e.g. Spring growth, house types etc. (MI)</p> <p>To interpret information from simple maps (MI)</p> <p>To begin to plan what to do (MI)</p> <p>To follow a structured enquiry (MI)</p> <p>That we may use all senses to explore and survey the natural and built environments (MI)</p> <p>To use standard measures when working (MI)</p> <p>That we can record work in a variety of ways (MI)</p> <p>To describe what happens and explain why (TPD)</p> <p>To relate what happened to what we predicted (TPD)</p> <p>To examine evidence and opinions from a range of sources (TPD)</p> <p>To record information using simple timelines (MI)</p> <p>To begin to understand what life was like for older people we know (BC)</p> <p>To be aware of how people's experiences may have influenced how they felt (BC)</p> <p>To identify how life in other time periods is similar to, or different from, the present day (TPD)</p> <p>To begin to identify why events happened in the past (TPD)</p>

Stages	Learning Intentions (we are learning...)
Key Stage Two	<i>As for Key Stage One and</i>
	<p>That history, geography, science and technology help us to understand our world (MI)</p> <p>To use more precise subject specific language (TPD)</p> <p>To suggest subject specific questions using an enquiry-based approach (MI)</p> <p>To record and present information in appropriate formats (MI)</p> <p>To use different ways to find out about our world e.g. exploration, survey, fair test (BC)</p> <p>To make predictions based on previous knowledge (TPD)</p> <p>To design and carry out a fair test (TPD)</p> <p>To make observations noting close detail and to be able to use microscope (MI)</p> <p>To make observations taking account of the need for care and accuracy (SM)</p> <p>To make decisions about what, when and how to measure with increasing accuracy (TPD)</p> <p>To draw conclusions and make comparisons from our work (TPD)</p> <p>To sort and classify according to more complex similarities and differences, offering explanations (TPD)</p> <p>To begin to relate cause with effect (TPD)</p> <p>To structure a simple enquiry (TPD)</p> <p>To investigate an issue from different viewpoints (BC)</p> <p>To develop a sense of place through the use of maps, plans, photographs and atlases etc. (MI)</p> <p>To examine evidence and opinions from a range of sources and distinguish between fact and opinion (TPD)</p>

	<p>To order and sequence information to demonstrate understanding (TPD)</p> <p>To create timelines within a broad historical period (MI)</p> <p>To identify change and continuity within a period studied and suggest reasons (TPD)</p> <p>To appreciate that there may be different points of view / different causes and consequences of an event or situation (BC)</p>
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Acronyms

BC Being Creative (Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities)

KWHL (KNOW, WONDER, HOW AND LEARN)– what the children already know, what they want to learn, how they are going to learn it and finally the learning that takes place.

MI Managing Information- (Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities)

SENDO (Special Educational needs and Disability Order)

TPD Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making (Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities)