



Buick Memorial Primary School

World Around Us Policy

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Introduction

This policy is based on the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum document, which is the starting point for planning a school curriculum that meets the needs of individual children. Within these requirements we at Buick Memorial Primary School, aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum to prepare our children for a rapidly changing world.

Buick Memorial Primary School is situated in the village of Cullybackey. The children come from both rural and village catchments. The school building is set within hard-surfaced areas and a small, enclosed garden with a pond. Within walking distance there are many valuable resources in the local area e.g. churches, shops, businesses, Arthur Cottage etc.

1. What is the World Around Us?

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.

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 the three contributory elements: 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

2. Aims

We, at Buick Memorial Primary School, aim to:

- Development knowledge, understanding and skills for life-long learning and for operating effectively in society.
- Promote understanding, respect and appreciation for the world in which they live in and their immediate environment/community.
- Acknowledge and appreciate a sense of the past, changes which have occurred and how these affect the world today.
- Foster among children a positive attitude towards the scientific, geographical and historical methods of enquiry in the context of the World Around Us.
- Develop in children the skills of enquiry, investigation, analysis, evaluation and presentation.

3. Skills

Through a topic-based approach, using a range of learning styles, and providing learning experiences which are practical and enjoyable, we create opportunities for pupils to engage in active learning contexts and develop Cross-Curricular Skills:

- Communication
- Using Mathematics
- Using ICT

and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities:

- Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making
- Managing Information
- Being Creative
- Working with Others
- Self-Management

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 CCEA and EANI 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.

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.

Connected Learning

Recognising the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, we plan thematically. We emphasise the totality of the children's learning across the curriculum by making meaningful and relevant 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.

STEM

We aim to promote children's engagement with Science, Technology, Engineering (which includes ICT) and Mathematics, and to highlight the links between school-based learning and the world of work. We will endeavour to provide STEM-related topics/activities, which offer many opportunities for children to explore and investigate features of their local area.

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 and local environment, educational visits and visitors to the classroom.
- Progression in key aspects of Geography, History and Science and Technology.

5. Learning and Teaching

In Buick Memorial Primary School, 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. It involves all methods normally used to appraise the children's learning, either individually or in groups. 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's commitment to provide a broad and balanced education for 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 Special Educational Needs legislation and plan pupil's 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 be encouraged to explore the more challenging areas of the WAU.

8. Learning in the Outdoors

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.

Foundation Stage children will have a planned weekly Outdoor Play/Learning session including progressive and tailored activities.

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 'Educational Visits. Policy, Practice and Procedures 2009'.

9. Health and Safety

We enable children 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.

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.
- Negotiate, in accordance with the whole school Learning and Teaching policy, the place of WAU within the SDP.
- Develop and disseminate knowledge and expertise of WAU.
- Advise and guide colleagues with regard to appropriate classroom practice.
- Formulate a policy in association with teachers and principal, in line with SDP.
- Undertake monitoring to include lesson observations, examination of planning, and carry out evaluations, to ensure continuity and progress.
- Ensure that the area of learning is properly resourced in terms of acquisition, safe storage and access.
- Liaise with appropriate advisory services.

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.

The WAU coordinator gives the principal and/or the Board of Governors an annual report in which she evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in this Learning Area.

12. Resources

We are currently developing resources for all WAU topics/themes in the school. Class teachers will supplement these resources with their own (and pupils') materials. The library and ICT Suite contains a good supply of topic and reference books and computer software to support children's individual research. Planning and a School Framework are also in progress.