



Victoria College Preparatory School

Curriculum Policy

October 2023

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Curriculum Policy

The Northern Ireland Educational Order (2006) sets out the minimum requirements that should be taught at each key stage. Our aim is to provide a rich and varied curriculum, carefully designed to benefit the whole child. Within this broad, balanced curriculum a focus on achieving appropriately high academic standards in Literacy and Numeracy will be maintained.

We also actively promote the development of knowledge, understanding and skills across the full range of primary school areas of learning. The content of our areas of learning complies with the current requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Each child will follow areas of learning as set out in the Northern Ireland Curriculum for Foundation (Prep 1-2) Key Stage 1, (Prep 3-4) and Key Stage 2, (Prep 5-7).

The aim of which is “to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible choices throughout their lives.”

Victoria College Preparatory School promotes high achievement, personal development and learning for life and work, by working with children via the Northern Ireland Curriculum to:

- develop thinking and enquiring minds with a spirit of curiosity
- become highly motivated and lifelong learners
- be flexible, adaptable and open to the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of modern life and the world of work
- have high self-esteem – respecting themselves, others and the environment
- be able to work independently and collaboratively
- recognise their capabilities and maximise their individual potential in all areas of the curriculum
- advance and gain confidence in their technological skills
- seek to extend themselves aesthetically, culturally, intellectually, morally, physically and spiritually.

We believe that children will succeed through experiencing quality in:

- a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum, sensitive to the needs of the individual
- a secure, respectful, caring and stimulating learning environment
- an enriching programme of extra-curricular activities and visits
- a rich, varied and up to date range of learning resources
- innovative teaching and an investigative approach to learning
- an ethos of support, encouragement and challenge to succeed
- learning partnerships between school, home and the wider community.

We demonstrate our commitment to working as a learning community by:

- respecting the individual but working collaboratively towards common goals with shared learning outcomes
- constantly monitoring and evaluating our progress – endeavouring to become a self-evaluating school

Our broad aims are:

- to arouse children's curiosity and foster a desire to learn about the world in which they live
- for children to acquire knowledge, skills and practical abilities and the will to use them
- to develop qualities of mind, body, spirit, feeling and imagination
- to appreciate human achievements in art, music, science, technology, literature and sport
- to help children understand the society and environment in which they live
- to help children acquire and develop moral and religious values, and a respect for the beliefs and values held by others
- to prepare for their adult lives at home, at work, at leisure and at large as consumers and citizens
- to develop a sense of self respect, to develop the capacity to live as independent, self-motivated adults and the ability to function as contributing members of co-operative groups - each child will move forward in all these ways according to age and ability
- to provide a framework whereby parents are kept informed about the progress of their children through:
 - a) regular meetings where individual teachers meet individual/groups of parents
 - b) a system of formal written reports from teachers to parents
 - c) a knowledge among parents that teachers are accessible through the principal
- to continue the good working relationships between all Staff, the Board of Governors, Education Authority, DENI, our neighbouring schools and with the community at large.

Specific objectives for our children are:

- to read fluently and accurately, with understanding, feeling and discrimination
- to develop a legible style of handwriting and satisfactory standards of spelling, syntax, punctuation and usage
- to communicate clearly and confidently in speech and writing, in ways appropriate for various occasions and purposes
- to listen attentively and with understanding
- to learn how to acquire information from various sources and to record information and findings in various ways
- to apply computational skills with speed and accuracy
- to understand the applications of mathematical ideas in various situations in the home, classroom, school and the local area
- to observe living and inanimate things, and to recognise characteristics such as pattern and order
- to master basic scientific and technological ideas
- to investigate solutions and interpret evidence, to analyse and to solve problems
- to develop awareness of self and sensitivity to others, acquire a set of moral values and the confidence to make and to hold moral judgements, and to develop habits of self-discipline and acceptable behaviour
- to be aware of the geographical, historical and social aspects of the local environment and the national heritage, and to be aware of other times and places
- to acquire sufficient control of self or tools, equipment and instruments to be able to use music, drama and several forms of arts and crafts as means of expression
- to develop agility and physical co-ordination, confidence in and through physical activity, and the ability to express feeling through movement
- to foster an interest and gain confidence in using Information and Communication Technology
- to include any other subjects which may form part of a future curriculum.

Areas of Learning

The curriculum for the three stages is set out in six Areas of Learning. Although the Areas of Learning are set out separately teachers should, where appropriate, integrate learning across the six areas to make relevant connections for children. Teachers have considerable flexibility to select from within the learning areas those aspects they consider appropriate to the ability and interests of their pupils.

The Areas are:

1 Language and Literacy (including Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing; schools are also encouraged to teach additional languages);

2 Mathematics and Numeracy (focusing on the development of mathematical concepts and numeracy across the curriculum);

3 The Arts (including Art and Design, Drama and Music);

4 The World Around Us (focusing on the development of knowledge, skills and understanding in Geography, History and Science and Technology);

5 Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (focusing on emotional development, social skills, learning to learn, health, relationships and sexuality education and mutual understanding in the local and global community);

6 Physical Education/Development and Movement (focusing on the development of knowledge, skills and understanding through play and a range of physical activities).

The Northern Ireland Curriculum sets out the minimum requirement that should be taught at each key stage this will be followed and used as a starting point for teacher planning.

Religious Education is provided for all pupils and teachers use DE Core Syllabus as their starting point for planning.

Whole School Skills and Capabilities

In Victoria College Preparatory School we place an emphasis on the development of skills and capabilities for lifelong learning and for operating in society. Within lessons we provide the opportunities to engage in active learning contexts across all areas of the curriculum and progressively develop:

Cross - Curricular Skills

- Communication
- Using Mathematics
- Using information and Communication Technology

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

- Thinking, problem-solving and decision making
- Self-Management
- Working with others
- Managing Information
- Being Creative

Breadth in the Curriculum

Breadth in the curriculum will be achieved by ensuring children experience work in each of the areas of study and educational themes. It will also feature within a curricular area, for example, in Communication opportunities exist for talking and listening as well as for reading and writing. The structure of the NIC provides for breadth both within each curricular area and in areas that relate and complement one another (interconnected learning) so that knowledge, skills, concepts and attitudes can be learned and developed right across the curriculum. Outdoor learning will be promoted throughout the school in all areas of learning as will practical activities which develop autonomy, problem solving and higher order thinking skills.

Balance in the Curriculum

Balance in the curriculum will be achieved by making sure time is carefully managed to ensure that appropriate development of each area of study and the educational themes over the course of a school year. Balance will also be sought in:

Teaching organisation – whole class, group, pair and individual provision; and

Teaching approaches – between practical and theoretical work and between knowledge and skills development. Catering for the various learning styles and ensuring work is differentiated to cater for various needs.

Equity of Access

In Victoria College Preparatory School, teachers are aware that pupils have different experiences, interests and strengths, which will influence the way in which they learn.

In planning curriculum and assessment activities, teachers are aware of the requirements of the equal opportunities legislation and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO) 2005 and have high expectations for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, pupils with disabilities, pupils from all social and cultural backgrounds, pupils of different ethnic groups including travelers and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Approaches to learning and teaching provide suitably challenging opportunities for all pupils to take part in lessons fully and effectively. They enable all pupils to achieve. For pupils with special educational needs the staff take account of the type and extent of the difficulty experienced by the child. For those pupils whose attainments fall significantly below the levels expected at a particular key stage, degrees of differentiation of tasks and materials appropriate to the age and requirements of the pupil will be provided. For pupils whose attainments significantly exceed the expected levels of attainment during a particular key stage, teachers plan suitably challenging work by extending the breadth and depth of study across the Areas of Learning.

Monitoring, assessing and recording of work and progress provide useful information to assist in matching work to the needs of the children are suitably challenged or supported.

CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT

The pupils in Victoria College Preparatory School continue to experience a wide range of learning activities in all of the subjects within the curriculum. A variety of teaching approaches is adopted, based on practical experience whenever possible, with children working in class, small group and individual situations.

Teachers continue to monitor, evaluate and review the teaching and learning cycle within their classroom. We have 14 mixed ability classes within the school and 1 MLD Unit. The unit for children with Moderate Learning Difficulties continues to provide a wide range of learning activities, both within school and with our outreach service. The Nursery Unit continues to provide high quality education for children embarking on their school journey at Victoria College Preparatory School.

In every classroom, in addition to the delivery of the curriculum, we endeavour to build self-confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of responsibility and a respect for the feelings of others.

Statutory assessment procedures are in firmly in place with each child receiving an Annual Report, inclusive of levels at the end of Key Stages 1 & 2. The Y7 pupils receive a Record of Achievement at their farewell assembly at the end of June. Y3 – Y7 parents receive the outcomes of their child's Progress Test in both Literacy and Numeracy.

Parents also have an opportunity to meet with their child's teacher on two formal occasions during the school year to discuss progress. Parents are encouraged to maintain contact with their child's teacher and the principal and Heads of Key Stages are happy to meet with parents who may have a concern about their child's progress or welfare.

Homework

Homework is an important element of the Home/School partnership. It gives parents the opportunity to support their children in their learning and enables them to support the work of the school.

Partnership with Parents

We acknowledge that Parents are children's first and most enduring educators, and that when parents and teachers work together, the results have a positive impact on children's learning. We encourage the support of our parents by;

- Showing respect and understanding for the role of the parent in their child's education
- Listening to accounts of their child's development and any concerns they may have
- Being flexible in arrangements for settling children into school
- Making parents feel welcome and by being friendly and approachable
- Inviting Parents to Induction meetings, Information Evenings and school celebrations
- Keeping them informed and up-to-date about the curriculum
- Having welcoming display boards and photographs showing children's learning
- Meeting with parents to discuss pupils' progress
- Having a parent representative on our Board of Governors

Monitoring & Evaluating the Curriculum

Parents likewise are crucial stakeholders of our curriculum. Every year they are invited to participate in a curriculum meeting that looks at all aspects of their child's curriculum. Parents are also encouraged to play an active part in our innovations within Victoria College Preparatory School's Curriculum.

The Governors have a legal responsibility to ensure pupils receive a quality curriculum. They are supported in this role by the school principal. The Governors endeavour to monitor and evaluate a quality curriculum by:

- Engaging in a self-critical and data rich school development plan process.
- Every year every curricular team coordinator presents a written or/and oral report of the progress of their area of responsibility.
- Each year the SLT and Assessment coordinator will compile a School Data Report. This will evaluate the success of the school's work in Literacy and Numeracy.

The principal and the SLT use the PRSD process as a vehicle to monitor the teaching of the curriculum. All teachers are formally observed twice per year. Opportunities are created for dissemination of good practice. Curricular Coordinators will also have termly meetings with their teams. Part of their role is to monitor planners, teachers' evaluations and samples of work/end of year data. Each teacher is professionally accountable for their practice. Our teachers are trained and encouraged to be self-critical. This process is aided by opportunities for dissemination of good practice within year groups, key stages and across the school.

Curriculum Complaints Procedure

In the event of a complaint concerning the curriculum, parents should in the first instance write to the principal. The principal, in liaison with the Teacher, will seek to bring about a resolution of the matter.

If such a resolution does not emerge, parents should write to the Chairman of the Board of Governors. He will raise the matter at the next governors' meeting. He will hand the matter to the curriculum complaints tribunal panel within the Board of Governors. They will arrange a hearing for the complaints and reach a decision on whether or not to uphold a complaint.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years by senior members of staff who will keep Governors informed of any difficulties that may arise.

Date of next review – October 2025