



# Bewcastle Primary School

## Curriculum and assessment policy

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# Successful learning in a happy environment

## **Introduction**

Bewcastle school is unique. We are situated in a rural environment with many opportunities for using our local area to learn about the world. Our aim is to encourage our children to be independent thinkers, enthusiastic learners and responsible citizens, with a global outlook and an excitement about the world around them. Our curriculum reflects this approach, aiming to equip our children with resilience, understanding of the world and the skills to develop as lifelong learners. The whole school curriculum is organised into half-termly topics, each with a different subject focus. Within each half term, children are taught core skills and knowledge and given opportunities to develop their questioning and thinking in all areas. The aim is for a cross-curricular approach to learning, where key skills in mathematics and English can be practised and improved in the whole range of subject areas.

## **Early Years**

Our nursery and reception setting is organised to support all children to become independent and collaborative learners. Our creative curriculum encourages play, developing children's intellectual enquiry and love of learning, through their understanding of the world around them. We have a strong partnership with parents and each child has a key worker who helps them to settle quickly into a nurturing, safe environment. There are daily opportunities to take part in whole school activities, such as singing, assembly time, registration and story and, after a half term of induction, children can stay for lunch.

## **Mathematics** (Subject leader: Ms Harland)

Our key aim in mathematics is to develop an enjoyment of number, pattern, investigation and problem-solving. We use the national curriculum programme of study and plan from our own bespoke 'progression in learning' planning, teaching key concepts, knowledge and understanding in clear 'next steps'. Teaching is targeted for each individual child and questioning is used to develop and deepen children's learning. Children are taught in mixed-ability and mixed-age groups, enabling them to develop

their higher level thinking and learn without boundaries. Mathematics is taught as 'number' and 'applied maths', which enables both teachers to teach all children from nursery to Y6 across the week.

We have termly support from John Goodwin, a mathematics consultant, who advises on planning, assessment, teaching, learning and, above all, having fun in maths. This offers invaluable professional development for us as teachers and teaching assistants, enabling us to reflect on our practice, observe and work with an outstanding practitioner and have time to plan, prepare and assess for targeted teaching and learning.

Mathematics is assessed termly using the Rising Stars tests, which enable us to make a judgement about each child's progress. This is assessed against the end of year expectations and children are either 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding'. Children are assessed where they are in their learning and not according to their chronological age, to ensure that gaps in learning are addressed, and knowledge and understanding are fully embedded.

Mathematics work is planned using a range of resources, focusing particularly on practical activities, problem-solving and investigations. We are developing the use of computers and iPads to enhance our maths teaching throughout 2016. We also use numicon to develop concrete understanding of number in younger children and those who find maths particularly challenging. When individuals need extra support, particularly with number, we use the 'Power of 2' one-to-one program, which is identified in an IEP if appropriate, alongside ongoing small group tuition.

Mathematics homework is set weekly for KS2 children and occasionally where relevant for younger children. It is always linked to work done in class and should be at a level where children can work independently and practise their skills. Parents are encouraged to support and work with their children.

### **English** (Subject leadership: shared)

English is taught daily in mixed-age, mixed-ability groups. Work is planned to support our cross-curricular topics and using particular stories to engage the children's interest. Over the past couple of years, children have

studied, for example, the works of Roald Dahl ('Chocolate'), 'Hetty Feather' by Jacqueline Wilson (Victorians), 'The Iron Man' by Ted Hughes (Space) and 'Varjak Paw' by SF Said. Reading and writing activities are based around these books as well as further work in art, music, dance, computing, science, design and technology, history, geography and R.E.

## **Reading**

At Bewcastle school, we have daily reading sessions, which enable all children to have quiet reading, story time, independent reading, paired reading, reading with an adult one-to-one, guided reading and phonics teaching across the week. We also ensure that every day at 3.00 we sit down for a whole school story and poetry time. Children also listen to stories in regular assemblies, across a wide range of topics. All children are encouraged to read daily at home and have reading record books to monitor this. We take part in 'World Book Day' every year and have a well-stocked and attractive library which all children are encouraged to use daily. We enjoy the termly visits of the library van, which enables us to seek advice from experts and enjoy time browsing. We also take advantage of the termly 'topic boxes' from the school library service, which enhance our school collection.

Reading comprehension skills are taught regularly and assessed termly using the 'Rising Stars' assessments. Teachers use a variety of resources and encourage children to develop their independent thinking skills to enable them to become fluent readers, with a love of books.

Phonics is taught using the Alpha to Omega programme and children are taught in ability groups. Spelling is taught using the '5 times right' method, 'Look, say, cover, write, check', which is supported by daily practice at home. Spellings are matched to each child's ability and taken from the national curriculum and 'letters and sounds'.

## **Writing**

Writing is taught across the curriculum, with an emphasis on topic-related work. From the early years, daily opportunities for 'mark-making' are given. Children are encouraged to develop cursive handwriting and practise handwriting and spelling together regularly, at least once a week.

Teachers model the handwriting style in their written work. Children are encouraged to develop a fluent, individual style and to write with a fountain pen when they are ready. Children are given many opportunities to write for a 'real' purpose, such as 'thank you' letters to visitors or stories for other children to read. Often a 'quick write' enables children to use a music, pictures or objects as stimuli to write independently and imaginatively for fun! Over the last year, we have entered a poetry writing competition and the BBC 500 words story-writing competition. Several children were short-listed for the Wordsworth poetry competition and featured in the local paper. 'Talk for writing' is a key feature of our writing process, with oral rehearsal and re-telling of stories through story-mapping, drama and other imaginative methods.

Writing is assessed formally using the 'Ros Wilson' criteria and exemplars provided by the government and local authority. Teacher assessment is moderated through collaboration with our local cluster and consortium schools to ensure that it meets agreed standards.

### **Cross-curricular teaching and learning**

At Bewcastle, we believe that the creative arts are vital to a child's learning and dance is taught weekly, using themes that link to those being taught across the curriculum. We regularly take part in 'U-Dance' at the Sands centre; performing with many other schools in a large public space is an amazing experience for our children. Music is also central to our teaching, with regular singing and a wide range of opportunities for performance. Over the past couple of years we have worked with: 'The Big Sing' and 'The mini Sing' in the Sage, Gateshead; Blue Jam arts in Penrith; the North Cumbria Transition Choir; Carlisle Cathedral 'Singing Out' and have staged our own performance of 'Joseph and the amazing technicolour dreamcoat' with 25 children, including dance, drama, composition, instrumental performance and singing. We also took part in the Carlisle and District Music Festival, performing formally to a high standard.

Geography, History, RE, Art and Science are all taught in a cross-curricular way, ensuring that key skills and concepts are learnt and children can make links between all areas of learning.

## **PE and sport**

We focus on a different area of PE each term, which enables our children to experience all aspects of PE and sport. We also take part in local events such as sports days, Olympic and Commonwealth games and activities at our local secondary school, William Howard. We have taken part in the Lanercost cross country, Talkin Tarn cross country, Sands centre 5-a-side football, WHS 7-a-side football. We have our own swimming pool, with daily swimming in the summer term. We have recently had our outdoor playground re-furbished with new games, courts and pitches painted.

## **Special Needs (Senco: Jane Howard)**

All children with special needs are fully integrated into the life of the school and take part in the whole curriculum. We invest in technical equipment and any other resources which are required to enable this full participation in school life.

## **Assessment**

While we understand that national testing is important and ensure that our children are fully prepared to take part in statutory tests, we believe that assessment for learning is key and ensure that during each lesson, opportunities for assessing our children's understanding are taken. We have a marking policy, written in consultation with the children, which is simple to understand and enables regular self-evaluation, with 'next steps' for learning. Assessments are all based on the 2014 curriculum and the latest requirements to assess 'without levels'. The head teacher updates termly tracking, which is shared with governors, and teachers ensure that this tracking informs their detailed, individual planning for each child.

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