

World Around Us Policy



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WAU vision...

At Towerview we strive to promote **positive**, **enthusiastic** and **curious** learners through **engaging** and **cross curricular** WAU learning experiences.



The World Around Us Policy

Introduction

This policy is based on the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (2007) which is the starting point for planning a school curriculum that meets the needs of individual children. Within these requirements, we at Towerview Primary School, aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum to prepare our children for a rapidly changing world.

The school is situated in pleasant, landscaped grounds on the edge of the green belt and overlooks open countryside. We are developing our school grounds for Ecological projects, we have an outdoor classroom, vegetable gardens and forest areas. In June 2024 we achieved the Eco Schools Award.

1. What is the World Around us?

Children are naturally curious and often ask questions about themselves and the nature of the world around them. The purpose of teaching the World Around Us is to find age-appropriate answers to some of these big questions from the perspectives of Geography, History and Science and Technology (p.83 NI 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. Towerview Primary School aims to retain the best of the current practice within the three subjects, while developing a topic-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 including Geography, History and Science and Technology.

Key stages One & Two:

The World Around Us through the contributory elements 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

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

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 TV and 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

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.

Towerview Primary School is committed to designing learning experiences within the World Around Us which ensure a balance of these contributory elements through the delivery of the four inter-related strands throughout all the Key Stages.

2. Aims

- To develop knowledge, understanding and skills in the context of the World Around Us.
- To promote understanding, respect and an 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** (p.5 NIC).

At Towerview Primary School we also develop Geography, History and Science skills through the World Around Us (these skills are listed in Appendix 1). While many of the skills will be developed incidentally, we also aim to develop 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, local area and the wider world. All planning is based on the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

When appropriate to the interests and needs of our pupils and teachers and to the relevance of our chosen topics, we will also use the Ideas for Connected Learning, Thematic Units and other guidance material from CCEA and ELB's 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 as we plan **with** the children as part of a plan, do, review in all Key Stages (e.g. KWL).

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' (p.85 NIC).

Connected Learning

Recognising the changes and requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, we have in place detailed topic planning which ensures breadth and balance of knowledge, skills and understanding of the World Around Us and which are flexible to take account of the interests of the children.

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 explore STEM-related topics, 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/local environment**, educational visits and visitors to the classroom.
- **Progression** in key aspects of geography, history and science and technology.

5. Teaching and Learning

In Towerview Primary School, teaching and learning 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.

The varying needs and abilities of the children will be catered for through tasks differing in difficulty and outcome. Appropriate strategies will be employed to meet the needs of all pupils.

In the Foundation Stage children experience much of their learning through 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 as they plan, carry out and reflect on their work within the World Around Us learning area.

Homework

Homework will be given as appropriate to the particular programme being studied and in accordance with the school policy on homework. This may take the form of finding out information, research for a written or oral presentation and extending work commenced in class.

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 Teaching and Learning Policy). It involves all methods normally used to appraise the children's learning either individually or in groups. Evidence will be gathered at the end of each Topic and will then be used to identify the progress which the pupils make.

We take account of Assessment for Learning strategies and allow this 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 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 WAU and increased resources may be required.

8. Learning in the Outdoors

The outdoor area provides children with one of the best environments in which to learn. As Margaret McMillan (c 1925) says,

'The best kept classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky'.

In keeping with this philosophy, Towerview Primary School has developed the potential for outdoor learning through the on-going physical development of learning areas within school grounds. When appropriate, with help from outside organisations/facilitators is used to maximise these opportunities.

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 *SEELB Educational Visits Best Practice (2009)*.

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. However, there will always be elements of risk and uncertainty as children engage in active learning.

On this 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'.
(p.84)**

For WAU activities, we assess and manage risks with reference to the School's Health and Safety Policy.

- ASE: "Be Safe!" - which provides detail on legislation, teacher responsibilities, risk assessment and curriculum activity.
- ELB/ESA: "Out of School" - details statutory obligations of schools when taking children off the school premises.
- CLEAPSS: - providing direct assistance to classroom teachers.

10. WAU Coordinator 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 Teaching and Learning Policy, the place of WAU within the SDP and be involved in the Monitoring and Evaluation.
- develop and disseminate knowledge and expertise of WAU in the context of the whole school policy.
- advise and guide colleagues with regard to appropriate classroom practice.
- formulate policy/Topic Plans in association with teachers and principal, in line with SDP.
- promote and disseminate the policy within the school.
- undertake monitoring of WAU.
- 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 the standard of children's work and 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 reviewing samples of children's work and visiting classes, when viable, to observe teaching in the subject.

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

12. Resources

We are currently developing resources for all WAU topics in the school. We keep essential equipment and practical materials in a central store. Class teachers will supplement these resources with their own (and pupil's) materials.

Class libraries contain a supply of topic and reference books and computer software and the internet is used to support children's individual research. The BASE library service is also available to supplement books related to specific themes at each key stage. Further ICT resources include Interactive Whiteboards, digital cameras and programmable devices. The school is committed to exploring the use of new and emerging technologies to promote learning within the World Around Us.

Appendix 1

Geography, History and Science and Technology skills

Foundation Stage

Learning Intention (We are learning...)

- To begin to have a sense of the world around us.
- To become familiar with concepts such as fair/not fair, the past, my Place.
- To use our senses to find out about our world.
- To stop to look closely and carefully.
- To use a magnifying glass.
- To record independently in a variety of ways.
- To make suggestions when planning what to do.
- To use simple subject specific language.
- To begin to have a sense of the passage of time.
- To be aware of how to find out about the past that we can find out by exploring.
- To begin to ask questions relevant to our explorations.
- To recognise change in our own lives.

Key Stage One

As for Foundation Stage and...

- To begin to have a sense of how geography, history, science and technology help us to understand our world.
- To begin to ask more focussed questions around our observations.
- To make simple predictions and give reasons for these.
- To recognise and begin to explain why tests are fair/not fair.
- To classify according to simple differences.

- To recognise patterns in the natural and built environment e.g. Spring growth, house types etc.
- To interpret information from simple maps.
- To begin to plan what to do.
- To follow a structured enquiry.
- That we may use all senses to explore and survey the natural and built environments.
- To use standard measures when working.
- That we can record work in a variety of ways.
- To describe what happens and explain why.
- To relate what happened to what we predicted.
- To examine evidence and opinions from a range of sources.
- To record information using simple timelines.
- To begin to understand what life was like for older people we know.
- To be aware of how people's experiences may have influenced how they felt.
- To identify how life in other time periods is similar to, or different from, the present day.
- To begin to identify why events happened in the past.

Key Stage Two

As for Key Stage One and....

- To use more precise subject specific language.
- To suggest subject specific questions using an enquiry-based approach.
- To record and present information in appropriate formats.
- To use different ways to find out about our world e.g. exploration, survey, fair test.
- To make predictions based on previous knowledge.

- To design and carry out a fair test.
- To make observations noting close detail and be able to use a microscope.
- To make observations taking account of the need for care and accuracy.
- To make decisions about what, when and how to measure with increasing accuracy.
- To draw conclusions and make comparisons from our work.
- To sort and classify according to more complex similarities and differences, offering explanations.
- To begin to relate cause with effect.
- To structure a simple enquiry.
- To investigate an issue from different viewpoints.
- To develop a sense of place through the use of maps, plans, photographs and atlases etc.
- To examine evidence and opinions from a range of sources and distinguish between fact and opinion.
- To order and sequence information to demonstrate understanding.
- To create timelines within a broad historical period.
- To identify change and continuity within a period studied and suggest reasons.
- To appreciate that there may be different points of view and different causes and consequences of an event or situation.

Appendix 2

Inter-related strands connecting learning

Foundation

Interdependence

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- Who am I?
- What am I?
- Am I the same as everyone else?
- What else is living?
- How do living things survive?

Place

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- Where do I live?
- How have I changed over time?
- What is in my world?
- What is beyond my world?
- How has this place changed?

Movement and Energy

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- How do things move now and in the past?
- Why do things move?
- How do things work?
- Why do people and animals move?
- Where do people and animals move to?
- What sources of energy are in the world?
- How and why are they used?

Change over Time

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- How do things change?
- What kind of changes happen, have happened or might happen?
- How can we make change happen?

Appendix 3

Inter-related strands connecting learning

Key Stage 1

Interdependence

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- 'Me' and the world.
- How plants and animals rely on each other within the natural world.
- Interdependence of people and the natural environment.
- The effect of people and the natural environment over time.
- Interdependence of people, plants, animals and place.

Place

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- How place influences plant and animal life.
- Ways in which living things depend on and adapt to their environment.
- Features of the immediate world and comparisons between places.
- Change over time in local places.
- Positive and negative effects on people and places.

Movement and Energy

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- Sources of energy in the world.
- How and why people and animals move.
- Change in movement and energy over time.

Change Over Time

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- Ways in which change occurs in the natural world.
- How people and places have changed over time.
- Positive change and how we have a responsibility to make an active contribution.

Appendix 4

Inter-related strands connecting learning

Key Stage 2

Interdependence

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- How they and others interact in the world.
- How living things rely on each other within the natural world.
- Interdependence of people and the environment and how this has been accelerated over time by advances in transport and communications.
- The effect of people on the natural and built environment over time.

Place

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- How place influences the nature of life.

- Ways in which people, plants and animals depend on the features and materials in places and how they adapt to their environment.
- Features of and variations in places, including physical, human, climatic, vegetation and animal life.
- Our place in the universe.
- Change over time in places.
- Positive and negative effects of natural and human events upon a place over time.

Movement and Energy

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- The causes and effect of energy, forces and movement.
- Causes that effect the movement of people and animals.
- How movement can be accelerated by human and natural events such as wars, earthquakes, famine or floods.
- Positive and negative consequences of movement and its impact on people, places and interdependence.

Change Over Time

Pupils should be enabled to explore:

- How change is a feature of the human and natural world and may have consequences for our lives and the world around us.
- Ways in which change occurs over both short and long periods of time in the physical and natural world.
- The effects of positive and negative changes globally and how we contribute to some of these changes.