Whitehall School

HAPPINESS AT THE HEART OF LEARNING

Learning & Teaching Policy

Approved by:	Pupils' Committee
Last reviewed:	Autumn Term 2026
Next review due:	Autumn Term 2028

Rationale
At Whitehall School we believe in providing an inspiring environment which stimulates all of our children to acquire the skills, attitudes and knowledge which will foster their development as lifelong learners, from the earliest foundational stages through to the end of Key Stage 2. We acknowledge the importance of a positive learning environment in which effective teaching results in effective learning. We aim for our pupils to become 'masters' in their learning and support our teachers through relevant and high quality CPD.

Intent
Our drive to raise standards and 'close the gap' must focus on the classroom. Continued improvement depends upon raising the quality of learning and teaching that takes place on a daily basis. We expect our pupils to be provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to high levels of achievement (both attainment and progress), especially in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. We seek to promote a lifelong love of learning and for pupils to foster the attitudes and effort that enables this.

We expect every teacher to be a good teacher – no child deserves less.

By adopting a whole school approach to learning and teaching across our school, we aim:
- to support the quality of learning and teaching in the school in order for all children to achieve and make progress.
- to enable children to learn as efficiently as possible.
- to enable teachers to teach as effectively as possible.
- to provide an inclusive education for all the children.
- to foster a positive learning environment.
- to learn from each other - to promote positive attitudes towards other people.

Objectives
These aims will be fulfilled:
- by developing positive relationships across the school.
- by effectively planning to use a range of teaching strategies and promote multi-sensory learning.
- by effective communication within and across year groups.
- by providing high quality training opportunities for all staff.
- by using assessment to identify the needs of all children and build on prior learning.
- by using assessment for learning strategies.
- by regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning across the school.

Implementation - Characteristics of effective teaching
Whitehall School ensures high quality teaching, which enables pupils to learn most effectively in a positive learning environment. When teaching, we focus on motivating our learners and building on pupils' existing skills, knowledge and understanding.

Teachers will achieve this through:
a) developing positive and productive working relationships with pupils.
b) effective planning, including Assessment for Learning strategies.
c) high expectations.
d) a range of teaching strategies and adaptive practice.
e) sound subject knowledge, skill and understanding.

a) Developing positive & productive working relationships with pupils.

Positive classroom relationships are necessary in order to learn. Our motto, 'Happiness at the heart of learning' should be visible in all lessons. Pupils will not learn if they are not in an appropriate state to learn (see also Behaviour Policy). Teachers should:

- create a classroom environment in which pupils feel safe. It should be stimulating, reassuring and well organised.
- deploy support staff appropriately to enhance learning and teaching, recognising the emotional needs of our learners.
- ensure other adults in the room support a child who is not 'ready' to learn.
- greet all pupils with a smile and take an interest in their lives.
- plan for collaborative learning in order to foster cooperation, consideration and respect for one another.
- value pupils' contributions and see mistakes as opportunities to move learning on.
- model our Ready, Respectful, Safe behaviour code.

b) Effective planning

Teachers' planning will show:

- clear learning objectives presented to the children in a way they understand.
- evidence of progression, sequencing and appropriate challenge.
- an awareness of the needs of individuals through adaptation (ordinarily available provision) and a variety of teaching strategies (see SEND Policy).
- carefully considered use of questioning which relates to age and stage.
- well-considered spacing of learning, in order that learning 'sticks'.
- carefully planned for direct teaching and rehearsal of subject specific vocabulary.
- structure and timing of lessons which are conducive to learning.
- clear direction of support staff.
- assessment and feedback.

c) High expectations

Teachers should:

- have high expectations of learning and progress, with a clear overview of progression within the class.
- set and achieve high standards of behaviour and motivation by using praise and positive reinforcement to foster self-esteem, motivation and confidence.
- provide opportunities for children's feedback and independence.
- encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning, including helping each other and working collaboratively.

d) A range of teaching strategies

Using a range of teaching strategies should enable pupils to become independent learners ('Learning Powers' are used within Lower School to promote and scaffold this):

- enquiry-led opportunities to develop curiosity in the Early Years.
- inclusive approaches relevant to all learners' needs.
- teacher directed.
- pupils given opportunities to make their own decisions.
- pupils taking greater responsibility for their own learning, using success criteria, etc.
- problem solving and reasoning (and a sound knowledge base which enables this).
- enquiry based learning from a suggested focus (ask open ended questions to develop curiosity, allowing time for pupils to consider their response).
- independent learning opportunities.

e) Sound subject knowledge, skills and understanding

Teachers should:

- enhance pupils' basic skills, including communication, reading, writing and mathematics.
- consciously show enthusiasm and positivity for subjects.

- have a thorough subject knowledge appropriate to current EYFS Framework and NC requirements.
- make informed assessments of children's needs.
- have an awareness of children's previous experiences and their ability range.
- have knowledge of how children learn.

Characteristics of effective learning
At Whitehall School we aim to encourage a life-long interest in learning through a willingness to ask questions and seek answers.

We believe that effective learning is characterised by pupils who:
- play and explore, are active in their learning and are encouraged to be creative and critical thinkers (as age appropriate, see also 'Development Matters').
- acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding developing ideas and applying them in different contexts.
- make links between previous learning and reflect on their own learning journey.
- apply intellectual, physical and creative effort and interest in their work.
- are able to sustain concentration and think and learn for themselves.
- understand what they are doing, why they have done it and how they can improve.
- are confident as learners and can co-operate effectively, including providing sensitive feedback to peers (as age appropriate).
- recognise the importance of persevering and learning from their own mistakes.
- organise and manage themselves, their time and resources successfully.
- feel that they are valued by teachers and that their achievements are being recognised.
- are given sufficient thinking time when answering questions and building connections.

Speaking and listening
The act of talking helps us to organise our thoughts and so deepens our understanding. Talking and listening is central to learning and language development. Opportunities to develop oracy skills are prioritised. We encourage our pupils to talk with a partner, in a small group and as part of a whole class discussion. The use of talk helps to develop children's learning, demonstrates their understanding, strengthens their ability to learn collaboratively and enables the teacher to monitor and assess progress.

Within the Early Years, the school uses the ShREC approach (share attention, respond, expand and conversation) to develop children's language and communication skills through high-quality interactions.

Feedback
We know from the research of The Education Endowment Foundation that effective feedback is central to pupil progress. Assessment for learning is widely used across our school to ensure that pupils are clear about how they can improve. Teacher feedback books (used in mathematics) and marking show pupils their next steps for development and encourages a two-way dialogue between teacher and pupil/s. Where age appropriate, pupils must be given time to respond to any written feedback (see also Assessment & Feedback Policy). At Whitehall School, we expect all staff to follow our Assessment and Feedback Policy – see this policy for further detail on feedback.

Resources
In order for effective teaching and learning to take place, there will be good organisation and management of resources.

This will be achieved through:
- effective deployment of support staff.
- the use of practical equipment to promote multi-sensory learning.

- enhancing learning through the use of ICT.
- careful, considered timetabling.
- a clear system that enables easy access to planning.
- maximising all learning environments, including the outdoors.

Additional adults should be clearly directed in order that they support learning. Support staff should be fully engaged with pupils, whilst also aware of the children's need to become independent learners. Support staff must be clear about who they are supporting and why, coupled with the desired outcomes. They must be made familiar with the planning before the lesson; this enables them to gather appropriate resources. Support staff are involved in assessing the pupils' understanding and in sharing this information with the teacher so that progress is continually tracked.

Classroom environment
The surroundings in which children learn can influence their performance and well-being in school. An attractive and well organised classroom sends out a visual signal of a teacher's commitment to fostering the best climate for learning. Display boards are used purposefully and in an age appropriate way to enhance learning across the school. We recognise that ensuring classrooms are not over-stimulating reduces the risk of distractions when learning.

Equalities and inclusion
Within our school, the practices, procedures and customs should positively promote equality of opportunity for all. We believe all children, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, ability and socio-economic status should experience effective teaching; which in turn, should lead to effective learning.

Staff must encourage high standards of achievement and behaviour, aiming for ALL children to achieve their full potential. Reasonable adjustments are made to ensure all pupils are able to access learning and make progress.

The role of parents and carers
We believe that good relationships between the school, home and community benefit all children academically and socially. Through a range of planned activities and communications, as well as informal opportunities, we aim to share information which will benefit each child's development. Teachers are also available on the playground on a daily basis, at the end of each day, or they can be contacted via year group email accounts. We believe that parents have a responsibility to support their children and the school.

We inform parents and carers about what and how their children are learning by:
- hosting termly parents' meetings which share targets, discuss progress and suggest ideas for support at home.
- issuing termly 'Attainment and Attitude' record sheets.
- issuing termly curriculum newsletters outlining the content of each term's curriculum, sharing resources.
- providing daily reading liaison through our reading records/pupil planners.
- hosting parent workshops to guide families on aspects of learning and parenting.
- making homework and extension activities available on year group web pages.

We would like parents to:
- ensure that their child has the best attendance rate possible.
- ensure that their child is equipped for school with the correct uniform, PE kit, homework, reading book and reading record/pupil planner.
- read with their child on a daily basis.
- do their best to keep their child fit and healthy and able to participate in school life.

- inform school if there are matters outside of school which are likely to affect a child's performance or behaviour.
- promote a positive attitude towards school and learning and not let any negative school experiences they may have had influence this.
- fulfil the requirements of our Home School Agreement.

The role of Governors

Our Governors determine, support, monitor and review the school policies on learning and teaching. In particular they:

- support the use of appropriate teaching strategies by allocating resources effectively.
- ensure the school buildings and premises are best used to support successful learning and teaching.
- monitor teaching strategies in the light of health and safety regulations.
- monitor how effective learning and teaching strategies are in terms of raising pupil attainment.
- ensure that staff development and appraisal policies promote good quality teaching.
- monitor the effectiveness of the school's learning and teaching policy through the self-evaluation process.

Impact and Review

To ensure that this policy is being followed by all, there will be opportunities for monitoring and evaluation to take place. Effective teaching and learning will be monitored using various strategies. This will be carried out by subject leaders and members of the Senior Leadership Team.

All staff should strive to implement this policy throughout the school. In situations where the policy has not been followed successfully, senior staff should be made aware and appropriate support be provided. We are aware of the need to review the school learning and teaching policy regularly so that we can take account of new initiatives, changes in the curriculum, developments in technology or changes to the physical environment of the school.

'The route to deep learning and expertise is, to quote Tim Oates, 'fewer things in greater 'depth.''
Mary Myatt in 'The Curriculum: Gallimaufry to coherence'

Appendix

Best Practice

Better never stops - Professional learning
'Teachers need to improve. Not because we are not good enough, but because we can be even better.' Dylan Wiliam

Professional Development at Whitehall School is research informed and based on the best theories of pupil learning, pedagogy and teaching effectiveness. Sources include:

- John Hattie's meta-analysis of teaching interventions;
- The Education Endowment Foundation's research into the effectiveness and value for money of various interventions;
- Carol Dweck's work on the development of growth mindsets;
- Alex Quigley's work on the importance of vocabulary (the SEEC model – Select, Explain, Explore, Consolidate);
- Robert Bjork's work in the field of cognitive science (stickability) and;
- Doug Lemov's work on the professional development of teachers.

Growing great teaching - High expectations of teachers and of children
When planning lessons, we should focus on what pupils will be made to think about rather than on what they will do. Learning happens when children think hard about subject content so teachers prepare lessons with this in mind. To develop a learning culture in which pupils produce high quality work:

- Set tasks which inspire and challenge pupils (the 'challenge zone'), and which are predicated on the idea of every student succeeding;
- Develop a sense of whole-class pride in the quality of learning and a sense of peer encouragement;
- Provide pupils with exemplars that show them what a great piece of work looks like, which they can analyse in order to decide what makes them effective and;
- Instil the belief that quality means rethinking, reworking, and polishing so that pupils feel value in returning to work and improving it.

Inclusive Practice
As featured within our policy, there are many elements of practice which contribute to an inclusive approach. These include, but are not limited to: explicit instruction, scaffolding, feedback, positive relationships and the classroom environment. As the Education Endowment Foundation writes in its 'Guide to Inclusive Teaching' (July, 2026): '*Many aspects of universal provision are especially important for pupils with additional needs. For example, a calm classroom environment might help all pupils, but be essential for pupils with additional social and emotional needs. Strengthening and sustaining universal practices that are especially important for pupils with additional needs is likely to benefit all pupils and reduce – though not remove – the need for adaptations or additional targeted support*.'

Explanation

- Does the teacher establish prior knowledge and use this to 'hook into' new knowledge?
- Does teacher's subject knowledge add clarity, depth and breadth to the learning?
- Does the explanation focus on the key learning points and success criteria?
- Are there opportunities to make the explanation more concrete and credible e.g. demonstration, visual, practical appropriate use of analogy, etc.?
- Does the explanation generate curiosity and so 'open up the learning gaps'?
- Is explanation clear and concise, especially when subject matter is challenging?
- Is teacher talk and gesture enthusiastic and inclusive?

- Does the teacher judge carefully when to move from surface learning i.e. key 'bits' of knowledge to deep learning i.e. using, linking and applying that knowledge?

Modelling

- Is work carefully modelled, so that pupils are shown how to use this new knowledge and skills?
- Are exemplary examples of work deconstructed with the pupils?
- Do teachers model 'expert thinking' by verbalising their thought processes?

Scaffolding

Providing various scaffolds which give children the opportunity to master expected concepts is at the heart of effective learning. Underlying misconceptions do need to be worked on, but through appropriate scaffolding, which is withdrawn at the right time, children can master concepts. There are a number of options to choose from when deciding on the scaffolding required:

- Generating and using success criteria;
- Showing excellence before children work;
- Worked examples to support modelling and explanations;
- Partially completed examples for deliberate practice;
- Exploring the concrete and pictorial before working abstractly and;
- Guided groups/use of adults.

Deliberate Practice

- Once pupils have had input from the teacher, are they given time to practise this new knowledge & skills?
- Are pupils made to redraft and improve their work?
- Does the teacher observe for mistakes and intervene when necessary?
- Are mistakes utilised as a key aspect of learning?
- Is practice supported by adaptations and support when necessary?
- Are adaptations and supports removed at the right time to allow for independence?

Questioning

Classroom discussion – best achieved through artful questioning – makes pupils smarter because they make pupils think. Effective use of language is key. Questions should only be used if they cause thinking and/or provide information for the teacher about what to do next. The most common model of teacher talk is IRE: initiation, response, evaluation. But it does not always work very well. A better model is ABC: agree/disagree with, build upon, and challenge, whereby pupils pass questions around the classroom; they can polish each other's answers, refining them and challenging each other's thinking.

- Does questioning involve a wide range of pupils?
- Does questioning both deepen and develop thinking and check for common misconceptions?
- Are pupils given enough time to think about their responses?
- Are reluctant respondents encouraged to respond by careful adaptation?
- Are pupils encouraged to respond to and evaluate the responses of their peers e.g. use ABC questioning – after a response, they need to agree, build on or challenge the response.
- Are pupils encouraged to ask questions?
- Are pupils expected to rephrase answers in Standard English?

Feedback

Feedback works best when it is explicit about the success criteria, offers suggestions for improvement, and is focused on how pupils can close the gap between their current and their desired performance. Feedback can backfire – it needs to cause a cognitive rather than emotional reaction – i.e. it should cause thinking. Feedback can promote the 'growth mindset' if it

is: as specific as possible; focuses on factors within pupils' control; focuses on factors which are dependent on effort not ability; and motivates rather than frustrates pupils.

Self and peer assessment can be effective strategies because they: give pupils greater responsibility for their learning; allow pupils to help and be helped by each other; encourage collaboration and reflection (useful skills for life); enable pupils to see their progress; and help pupils to see for themselves how to improve. The only useful feedback is that which is acted upon – it is crucial that the teacher knows the pupil and knows when and what kind of feedback to give, then plans time for pupils to act on feedback.

- Is our teaching (within and between lessons) and curriculum planning responsive, based on the performance of pupils?
- Do we use a good variety of feedback (including verbal feedback), which encourages pupils to consider – Where am I going? How am I going? Where to next?
- Is feedback encouraging, specific and helpful?
- Is feedback designed to make pupils think?
- Is feedback timed right i.e. are pupils given enough 'struggle time'?
- Are self-assessment strategies, such as proof-reading, editing and redrafting, employed to aid meta-cognition?

What great learning and continuous provision looks like in the Early Years Foundation Stage

High-quality teaching and learning in EYFS continuous provision is intentional, responsive and language-rich, balancing children's self-directed play with well-timed adult teaching. It is the quality of adult interactions and the purpose of the environment that make continuous provision effective.

Carefully chosen resources and experiences – Resources and experiences are deliberately chosen to help children practise, apply and deepen what has been taught, while also introducing new ideas and experiences that children may not encounter independently.

Interactions are rich in language and sustained shared thinking – adults observe, join play, introduce and model new vocabulary, encourage children to explain their ideas, and engage in conversations that go beyond the immediate situation.

Teaching is responsive and appropriately challenging – adults use scaffolding to provide temporary support, adjusting the level of challenge so that children can achieve something they could not yet do independently.

Child-led exploration – high-quality provision does not mean adults directing every activity; instead, children are given time to explore, practise, revisit and apply their learning, with adults knowing when to intervene and when to allow learning to develop independently.

Assessment informs teaching rather than creating paperwork – teachers use their knowledge of each child to identify what they need to learn next, particularly where children need additional support, and then use continuous provision and adult interactions to help them secure that learning.

What great lessons look like (Years 1-6)

Teachers are sensitive to the needs of their pupils and adjust their lessons to the here and now. Children work best for the teachers who respect them, know their subjects, and are approachable and enthusiastic. The most effective teachers are relentless in their pursuit of excellence and are able to explain complex concepts and address misconceptions in a way which makes sense.

- Dweck's idea of a 'Growth Mindset', that pupils are more likely to get better at something if they believe intelligence can be changed through hard work; for example 'I can't do it *yet*'.
- External research and thinking around cognitive science particularly regarding the limits of working memory, encoding in and retrieval from long term memory.
- What our own internal research and findings from monitoring, carried out by our own staff, suggests works within our context.

Learning is invisible and cannot be observed in a single lesson. A lesson does not exist in isolation so it is better to think of a lesson as one learning episode in a long series. Within that series of lessons, there will be stimulating experiences which prompt high quality talk and support the initial encoding of knowledge and concepts into long term memory. There will also be clear explanations, modelling and success criteria to show children how to think about subject content to acquire knowledge and skills.

Desirable difficulties (Bjork) make information harder to encode (learn initially) but easier to retrieve later. This leads to deeper learning. We achieve desirable difficulties by: spacing learning apart with increasingly long gaps; interleaving content; assessing frequently – using low stakes quizzes at the start of topics/lessons to identify prior learning as well as knowledge gaps.

Challenge

As Matt Bromley (education journalist and advisor) says on 'expert teaching', if the work is too easy, pupils will switch off; if the work is too hard, pupils will switch off. Work must be pitched in the 'zone of proximal development' – hard but achievable with support. If something's too easy, we rely on our memory instead of thinking (e.g. 1 + 1 =); if it's too hard, we run out of processing power (e.g. 46 x 237 =) and stop thinking; if it's challenging but achievable and we are successful, our brains reward us with a dose of dopamine which is pleasurable and binds neurones together creating memories. This is learning.

- Are learning objectives concise and challenging for all?
- Are the tasks set going to allow all pupils to be stretched and challenged?
- Is there adaptation in place to allow stuck learners to achieve?
- Does the teacher's knowledge of the pupils they are teaching allow them to be proactive about implementing this support – so that it is seamless and focused?
- Are examples of excellence shared, discussed and deconstructed with the class?

Please read this policy in conjunction with our Assessment & Feedback Policy.

Research Information

The school is research informed. Every teacher has a copy of 'Putting Assessment for Learning into Practice' by David Spendlove. The school pays attention to the work of the Education Endowment Foundation, John Hattie, Mary Myatt, Doug Lemov, Sean Allison & Andy Tharby and Alex Quigley and others.