



TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Chair of Governors:

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Teaching and Learning Policy

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Aims

This policy aims to explain the rationale of Ysgol Bryn Derw for its approach to teaching and learning.

Schools ethos

The ethos and atmosphere nurtured at Ysgol Bryn Derw underpins the aim of the school. In the course of their daily works, staff seek to develop this ethos through providing:

- a calm, quite and effective working environment
- positive role models
- a fair and disciplined environment, in line with the schools Behaviour Management Policy
- purposeful and informative planning, record keeping and assessment systems, in line with school policy
- recognition of pupils' individual needs
- pupils with meaningful purposeful learning tasks
- a culture that values and celebrates pupils' "success and achievements"
- effective management of their time
- effective links with the wider community
- regular review of staff professional development, in order to ensure a high level of professional expertise
- support to colleagues

Equal opportunities

In accordance with the School Equal Opportunities Policy all pupils must be given access to their curriculum entitlement. Staff endeavour to help all pupils to reach their full potential in respect of race, gender, age or disability.

Difficulties in learning - what does it mean?

The term learning difficulties is an umbrella term used to refer to a range of learning needs. According to the SEN Code of Practice a child or young person has learning difficulties, if they:

- a) have significantly greater difficulties in learning than the majority of children of the same age: or
- b) have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of education facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in school within the Local Education Authority.

Significant levels of learning difficulties such as those experienced by pupils at Ysgol Bryn Derw impairs their ability in “learning how to learn”. This has inevitable implications for their learning across and beyond their school. Such difficulties include problems with short, medium and long term memory, in sequencing and organising thoughts and tasks, and difficulties with abstract thought and exist on a continuum of need.

Each level of need contains a wide range of individual differences and drawing lines between each is a matter of judgement and is not a precise science.

The nature of difficulties

A collection of cognitive difficulties faced by pupils with learning difficulties which is useful to consider when planning for pupils learning at Ysgol Bryn Derw

- low efficiency in thinking, as a result of slow speed of mental operations
- long reaction time due to lack of consistency in the pattern of response
- less efficient mental processing at all stages
- poor attention process
- preference for stimuli that have nothing to do with the task
- poor memory (especially short term)
- inability to examine stored contents in long term memory
- poor strategies such as rehearsal (doing something over again to remember it)
- poor generalisation
- a smaller and less well organised knowledge base

It is important to note that these difficulties relate to the process of learning rather than the content of what is learnt. It means that pupils forget a lot of information before any can reach their long term memory. Even if it does a lot can be forgotten from there too.

However, despite the nature and level of difficulties experienced by most pupils at Ysgol Bryn Derw their learning difficulties does not prohibit them learning and achieving. Their achievements are characterised by very small steps in attainment over a significant length of time.

Designing the curriculum

Due to pupils' significant problems associated with the process of learning it is acknowledged that pupils at Ysgol Bryn Derw will struggle to gain and retain the knowledge relating to the content of the Curriculum for Wales Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs). The new Curriculum for Wales has at its heart a focus on the developmental needs of the individual and so will provide the flexibility and opportunities that will benefit our pupils and free them from a rigid curriculum model.

Here at Ysgol Bryn Derw it is our belief that there is an effective balance to achieve in offering the full range of AoLEs which provide a wealth of interesting context's for learning; with a strong emphasis on enabling pupils to develop the process for learning as a priority.

We believe this balance can be best achieved by offering pupils:

- their entitlement to the breadth and balance of the full range of the AoLEs as context for learning
- a strong focus on the teaching of key skills for learning across the curriculum:

Communication/literacy

Numeracy

Problem solving/thinking

ICT

Personal and social skills

Reviewing own performance

For these reasons the school focuses the curriculum on:

- enabling pupils to express preference, communicate needs, make choices, make decisions and chose options that other people act on and respect
- promoting self advocacy or the use of a range of systems of supported advocacy
- preparing pupils for an adult life in which they have the greatest degree of autonomy and support them in having relationships with mutual respect and independence on each other
- increasing pupils' awareness and understanding of their environment and of the world
- encouraging pupils to explore, to question and to challenge
- providing a wide range of learning experiences for pupils in each key stage suitable to their age

Matching teaching to the learning needs of pupils

Data relating to pupil attainment and achievement is regularly gathered by staff and serves to provide a whole school profile of pupils' attainment in AoLEs and key skill development.

On analysis this data supports and underpins the rationale for our school curriculum by providing a profile of pupil attainment.

It demonstrates that the vast majority of pupils perform below level one of the National Curriculum levels and are at early stages of development.

FOUNDATION LEVEL. Within Routes for Learning / 'Pre national curriculum' levels (P-levels) 1 – 3 assessments.

At the first stages of learning the balance of the curriculum constitutes the development of generic skills and individual education plan targets (IEPs). AoLEs are provided as the 'context for learning'.

ACCESS LEVEL. Within P 4 – 7 / Literacy & Numeracy 'next steps ABC' levels.

At the next stage of thinking and learning AoLE thinking is beginning to develop. Key skills and IEP targets continue to dominate the balance of curriculum provision, but some AoLE knowledge is planned by teachers and accessed by pupils in 'outline' not 'depth'.

EXTENSION LEVEL. Within P 7/ 8 and National Curriculum Levels / Foundation Level 1-3

Pupils at this level of development are taught the AoLE content 'in more depth' and are able to access learning and develop concepts, knowledge and skills in AoLEs, be it at a fundamental level. Learning objectives are directly linked to national curriculum programmes – mainly attaining within NC / Foundation level 1+.

The balance of each depends upon the capacity of each individual pupil to develop and extend his or her thinking and learning. Teachers are responsible for assessing pupils learning and differentiating the curriculum to meet their individual needs.

Effective learning

The learning profile of pupils at Ysgol Bryn Derw informs us that they need to learn in the following ways:

- Pairs with peers
- 1:1 work with adult
- Small group work
- Whole class work
- Independent learning
- Solving Problems
- Creative approaches
- Visual approaches
- Play/ Experiment/ Investigating with a range of stimuli
- Talking to others
- Multi-Sensory activities
- Structure – routine and repetition of activities
- Making choices
- Pupil led activities rather than adult led

Teaching strategies

The profile also informs our teaching approach. Staff need to respond to pupils needs by using the following range of approaches;

- Layering – balance of individual self chosen and group staff directed activities
- Total Communication
- Observation
- Pupil centred activities
- Discussion
- Interactive play
- Pupil being active rather than passive
- Demonstration by staff and peers
- Listening
- Mind mapping
- Kinaesthetic approaches
- Repetition
- Sensory approach
- Giving Praise
- Interviewing
- Explanation
- Testing
- Questioning
- Creative Arts
- Attention Autism & Curiosity Programme
- Intensive interaction

Effective teaching at Ysgol Bryn Derw

Teacher are expected to regularly reflect on how they teach and the strategies they use to ensure they respond to the needs of individuals and groups of pupils, rather than depend on their own personal preferred style. Most recently an extensive amount of work has been undertaken to ensure pupils are 'ready to learn.' As a result of this work, every pupil has an individualised Sensory Profile which identifies their sensory needs and enables staff to support pupil regulation effectively. Classes have purchased specific, targeted, specialist resources to support these needs and provide regular sensory breaks to ensure pupils are 'ready to learn.' Where the pupil's sensory needs require additional input beyond the classroom offer, they are signposted to the Pupil Success Group and a sensory rich package is tailored to meet their needs using expertise from around the school, therapies or enhanced interventions.

The teaching approaches they use must accommodate the learning profile of pupils in their classes. The effectiveness of their teaching is affected by the learning environment, the resources available to

support learning, the planning that has gone into the lesson and what the teacher does during the lesson. These are all the responsibility of teaching staff.

The best teaching is likely to occur when:

- the learning experience is appropriate to the pupil's stage of development and maturity
- learning objectives have been clearly identified
- selected teaching strategies are appropriate to the purpose of the lesson
- teachers' planning takes account of the range of ability in the group and their learning styles
- teachers regularly assess and record the progress of pupils to inform future their teaching.
- teachers have clear expectations of pupils and make them explicit
- all adults are confident in their duties and understand their role

Resources and facilities

Each classroom is equipped with a basic set of resources and books appropriate to the class needs. Specialist resources or equipment is located in different areas of the school. These include resources such as trampoline, soft play space, multi-sensory equipment, ICT and outdoor play equipment.

Each class teacher is provided with an annual budget to replenish and extend resources.

Pupils are taught how to care for and use resources. All pupils have access to them, appropriate to their needs. In addition to their class teacher responsibilities, each teacher also has responsibility for managing an AoLE. An annual budget is allocated to each AoLE also, managed by the AoLE manager, to support delivery of Curriculum activities.

Governors role

It is their role to monitor and review this policy and its practice through:

- Visits to classes/school
- Reports from head teacher to the curriculum sub committee and the full governing body
- Presentation to governors by teachers

Review

This Policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body within a 3-year period, or sooner if statutory guidelines change.