APS Teaching & Learning Policy

Avonwood Primary School
The best in everyone™
Part of United Learning

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Teaching & Learning Policy

Avonwood ethos & core values

At Avonwood we see it as our moral imperative for all children, regardless of background, to achieve their very best. We expect teachers to deliver lessons with that fulfil this expectation whilst living up to our ambition of **inspiring wonder and intellectual curiosity.**

We believe it is vital that all children have an understanding of their responsibility as global citizens and our eight Earth Charter principals are referenced throughout our curriculum and daily life. **We are honoured to be the only United Nations Earth Charter Primary School in Europe.**

Avonwood is an exceptionally positive, happy and inspiring place to learn. Children are excited to come to school to discover the rich learning experiences teachers have planned each and every day. **It is this carefully nurtured thirst for learning that we feel makes Avonwood such a unique, academically rich and special place to grow and learn.**

United Learning Framework for Excellence

This framework sets out the 5 principles which all United Learning schools work to. These represent our agreed view of the distinctive approach to education of our group of schools and the characteristics which lead to excellence when exemplified in the right way.

1. The best from everyone: Our aim is to bring out the best in everyone. So we must expect the best from everyone, all the time. Every person is a special individual, capable of extraordinary things. Who can know the limits of any child's potential? So, we expect unreasonably – we constantly challenge children to do what they think they can't, to persist, to work hard and to be at their best.

2. Powerful knowledge: Our most important purpose is to teach young people things they would not learn outside school, which free them to think and act more powerfully in their lives. Words and numbers are our most powerful ways of representing the world. Mastery of language and fluent mathematical skills are therefore our top priority. Worthwhile learning is often hard. Inspiring teaching is what gives access to difficult concepts and the thrill of intellectual discovery.

3. Education with character: Beyond academic success, we also aim to develop character, compassion and service. Young people are expected to contribute to their school and to society; to try things which they think they cannot do; to persist in the face of difficulty; to become resilient in overcoming obstacles; to manage themselves; to work independently on things which challenge them; to work with others and in teams; to be courageous and caring; to lead.

4. Leadership in every role: Our children are leaders of the future. We expect them to start today – taking advantage of structured opportunities to lead and taking responsibility for themselves and others. Every adult in the school is a leader. In every word, tone and gesture, they set direction and expectation. We expect every adult to take responsibility and the initiative to do what is right for the children.

5. Continuous improvement: However good we are, we can be better. We always look at the evidence, and are rigorous in evaluating impact. We stop or change things which aren't working; we improve things which are. We aim for high leverage: high impact for low effort and low cost. We look for ideas for improvement inside the organisation and out; we observe one another; we steal good ideas with pride and look to make them better; we work together to improve.

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The 4 Pillars of Teaching and Learning at Avonwood:

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Pillar 1: Behaviour for learning

1.1 Every Moment Matters

At Avonwood we...

- bring learning to life every day.
- expect teachers to deliver lessons that live up to our ambition of inspiring wonder and intellectual curiosity.
- nurture a thirst for learning.
- teach an understanding of our eight Earth Charter principals which underpins our school ethos.

We believe that...

- every minute of learning matters.
- routines are the bedrock of creating a sense of belonging and this enhances intrinsic motivation.
- the awe and wonder of our curriculum makes Avonwood a unique, academically rich and special place to grow and learn.

The impact is ...

- children are empowered to be the best version of themselves.
- children progress and acquire cultural capital regardless of their individual starting points.
- children are excited to come to school to discover the rich learning experiences teachers have planned each and every day.
- children understand their responsibility as global citizens, caring for our earth community.

References: Peps Mccrea, APS website.

1.2 Positive Relationships

At Avonwood we...

- create equitable classrooms through a supportive environment for learning.
- teach children to form positive relationships through listening to one another's thoughts, feelings, and opinions.
- teach and respect an awareness of what makes themselves and others unique and different.
- build and cherish relationships of trust and respect between children and teachers, and amongst children.

We believe that...

- all children have the right to be listened to and heard.
- motivation is built upon a secure sense of belonging to our school community.
- relationships are the fundamental context for learning to happen resulting in happy children, staff, and parents.
- teachers who have a good knowledge about their children will be better able to teach them.

The impact is ...

- the teaching environment encourages pride and mutual respect through high expectations.
- children feel supported, motivated, and challenged allowing them to take risks and make mistakes.
- children develop a positive attitude towards their learning.
- children show respect, empathy and sensitivity towards each other's needs, emotions, culture, and beliefs.
- children become an outstanding role models.

References Great Teaching Toolkit p 22-26, APS website.

1.3 Self-regulation, Metacognition & Growth Mindset

At Avonwood we...

- nurture self-regulation so that children are ready to learn.
- develop pupils' metacognition skills by promoting thinking about learning through 'plan-do-review'.
- narrate our thinking and decision-making journey to develop our children's awareness of this process.
- celebrate 'marvellous mistakes' as a valuable part of the learning process.

We believe that...

- just like any 'muscle', the brain can be trained and that ability is not 'fixed' or 'set'.
- all children should be taught how to self-regulate.
- 'plan-do-review' are essential facets in the learning process.
- everyone should make informed judgements and challenge their own thinking about their learning.
- achievements should be recognised, celebrated and shared.

The impact is ...

- children are able to talk about their thinking and learning processes.
- children approach each new sessions with an emotional 'clean slate'.
- children recognise that effort is required to improve and progress.
- children enjoy being challenged through tasks that offer 'desirable difficulty'.
- children experience success as a learner, embracing growth mindset and a thirst for knowledge.

References: EEF guide on Metacognition, WalkThrus p82, Dual Coding With Teachers p224

Pillar 2: Understanding the content

2.1 Knowing the Curriculum

At Avonwood we...

- have a deep knowledge and understanding of the subjects we teach and how this builds across the curriculum.
- consider how pupils will interpret and think about knowledge being taught and anticipate misconceptions.
- structure knowledge into an appropriate sequence of learning tasks to aid with understanding.
- present knowledge in an appropriate way (connect verbal and visual stimuli) to aid learning and retrieval.

We believe that...

- staff are all enthusiastic learners and should be experts in our own subjects as well as those that we teach.
- teachers should actively seek opportunities to further their own subject knowledge and use this strong base of the curriculum to carefully anticipate preconceptions.
- the design and layout we use to present knowledge, along with the order in which we teach it to pupils, is vital to successfully building schemas.

The impact is ...

- teachers feel confident and enthusiastic in their teaching which is reflected in the children's attitudes towards their learning.
- pre/misconceptions are successfully anticipated and planned for.
- knowledge is presented to learners in a purposeful and connected way.
- children successfuly build schemas and ensure their learning is retained in the long-term memory.

References: Great Teaching Toolkit - p31, p37; What makes great teaching? (Sutton trust) - p2; Dual coding - p24; Why don't students like school? (Daniel Willingham) - p42

2.2 Explaining Clearly

At Avonwood we...

- follow a clear lesson structure following Rosenshine's principles of I, We, You as an instructional model.
- model worked examples with subject specific vocabulary and language structures such as stem sentences and sentence starters.
- utilise variation theory to provide children with multiple representations and examples of what a concept is and what it is not.

We believe that...

- a backward fading model of I, We, You is an effective instructional method to withdraw teacher input in order to allow a graduated learning process.
- combining conceptual understanding, procedural proficiency and factual recall secures deep and balanced learning.
- using variation theory principles can allow teachers to direct children's attention and anticipate their responses and identify misconceptions.

The impact is ...

- children's cognitive load is reduced allowing them to access new, difficult or unfamiliar concepts gradually.
- children achieve a higher success rate and are confident learners.
- children form deep and long lasting learning.

References: Rosenshine, Cambridge Espresso

2.3 Anticipating Misconceptions

At Avonwood we...

- have a fluent knowldedge and a flexible understanding of the curriculum which allows us to plan for and anticipate misconceptions.
- deliver small amounts of new material at any time and guide student practice of new material.
- regularly question and check for student understanding and facilitate discussion.
- provide varied explanations and multiple representations, analogies and examples.

We believe that...

- considering children's possible misconceptions at the planning stage equips teachers with pre-formed, clear explanations and a range of examples.
- providing guided practice after teaching small amounts of new material whilst checking for student understanding throughout can help limit the development of misconceptions.
- regular verbal feedback feedback ensures that children do not inadvertantly store partial information or a misconception in their long-term memory.

The impact is ...

- children make fewer errors and have a higher success rate.
- children have fewer long term misconceptions.
- where misconceptions arise they are swiftly attended to and dispelled with examples, supplementary examples and counter non-examples in line with conceptual variation.

References: Great Teaching Toolkit

2.4 Scaffolding Difficult Points

At Avonwood we...

- teach to the top by scaffolding access to appropriate and challenging learning objectives.
- identify areas of new learning that will need to be unpicked and explored thoroughly in a variety of ways.
- provide resources to scaffold support for all learners, using them as tools to success.
- build learning in small coherent steps, using appropriate scaffolds which can then be systematically removed.
- explicitly link difficult points and new learning to prior knowledge.

We believe that...

- careful scaffolding fosters confident, independent life-long learners.
- attending to difficult points will enable the children to acquire new knowledge and skills effectively.
- using concrete materials and visual images alongside verbal instruction supports deeper understanding.
- resources and manipulatives provide tangible experiences of abstract concepts and help all learners construct connected knowledge.

The impact is ...

- children's cognitive load is reduced allowing them to access new, difficult or unfamiliar concepts.
- children experience success as a learner, promoting growth mindset and fostering a thirst for knowledge.
- children acquire transferable understanding having used concrete resources and are able to solve problems and apply their knowledge & skills when questions are presented in an abstract form.
- children build connected schemata and have the opportunity to master a subject.

References: Great Teaching Toolkit, WalkThrus, Dual Coding with teachers

Pillar 3: Activating hard thinking

3.1 Connecting Knowledge

At Avonwood we...

- connect new ideas to what has previously been learnt - reactivating and reviewing prior knowledge.
- space out learning to allow for deliberate gaps of forgetting and then reviewing to allow for greater long-term retention.
- coherently sequence knowledge so that learning is full and connections can be made successfully and use appropriate examples to help support children in making and keeping these links.

We believe that...

- sequential knowledge allows children to build connections between their learning.
- learning should be appropriately spaced out and not blocked where possible.
- learning must be coherently planned and sequenced both within and across year groups.
- reviewing prior knowledge allows us to make connections and means that we can learn more.
- learning should be contextualised with appropriate examples to make absorbing new ideas easier.

The impact is ...

- children make connections between new ideas and what they already know.
- children build schemas in their long-term memory and can recall knowledge when it is needed.
- due to the sequence of learning, it is embedded with lots of time to practise until learning is fluent and secure.
- well-structured knowledge across the school allows for long-term retention of knowledge.
- the more knowledge that children have, the more they can gain.

References: Great Teaching Toolkit p31, p33; Desirable Difficulties Perspective on Learning (Bjork and Bjork) p59; Curriculum to Classroom (Lekha Sharma) p18;Why don't students like school? (Daniel Willingham) p42

3.2 Questioning

At Avonwood we...

- use questioning to assess the level of student comprehension.
- use a cold calling (no hands up) approach as part of a teacher-child dialogue.
- use 'think, pair, share' to allow for preparation of responses.
- probe answers to check for deeper understanding and misconceptions.
- give children the opportunity to add detail and accuracy to their own answer.

We believe that...

- questioning should be an inclusive process which engages all children.
- questioning forms part of a dialogue to engage and stretch children.
- providing scaffolding for children's answers helps to ensure success and accuracy.
- children should narrate their own thinking.
- breaking down questions and answers helps to develop confident learners.

The impact is ...

- children are fully engaged in lessons as they are inclusive.
- children strengthen connections between different ideas through rehearsing understanding which improves long-term retention.
- children establish a culture of precision and excellence through maintaining a high standard for verbal answers
- children's understanding is assessed in real time during the flow of a lesson, leading to on-the-spot feedback.

References: Rosenshine p28, 29, 30, 33 and 34; Doug Lemov - TLAC Field Guide p155 and 369; Great Teaching Toolkit p35.

3.3 Checking for Understanding

At Avonwood we...
- use effective questioning to check for understanding.
- circulate around the classroom as children to monitor guided practice.
- give children opprtunities to rehearse thier learning.
- use mini white boards to visually asess learning.
- make the transition from guided practice to independent work when the 80% threshold is achieved .

We believe that...
- ongoing asessment points should form part of daily practice.
- monthly/ weekly/daily reiviews should be used to inform teaching and learning.
- retrieval practice helps reinforce the process transferring of knowledge from the long term memory into the short term working memory.
- reteaching familiar material in order to dispell misconceptions is a key part of the learning process.

The impact is ...
- children are given opportunities to learn from thier mistakes and these mistakes will help them to learn.
- through guided and independent practice children discover if they have got something right or wrong.
- that implicit knowledge is made explicit children as children review their own understanding of a given concept.
- children are able to see where they have made mistakes in the past and are able to rectify these.
- teaching moves learning on at appropriate pace.

References: Roshenshine, Doug Lemov – TLAC, WalkThrus p 88-130

3.4 Promoting Purposeful Discussions

At Avonwood we...
- put discourse at the centre of all our teaching and learning.
- sentence starters and frames to help children develop academic language.
- use discourse to engage students and form connections in learning.
- give children the opportunity to rehearse responses with low stakes.
- use dialogic talk which is both reciprocal and cumulative.

We believe that...
- academic language structures assist children's learning.
- recall is improved when information is said out loud.
- children should have the opportuity to articulate their ideas freely without fear of embarrassment.
- rich discourse and high levels of academic language are crucial in strengthening understanding.
- building upon the ideas of others leads to more coherent lines of thinking and enquiry.

The impact is ...
- children take ownership over their learning through private and paired talk.
- children's learned material is reactivated when asked to verbalise understanding, enabling memory consolidation.
- children's confidence in verbalising ideas increases with structure and rehearsal time.
- children have higher engagement due to rehearsal and low stakes.
- children belong to an equitable classroom where they each have a voice.

References: MARGE p30; STEM: Supporting Mathematics Discourse with Sentence Starters & Sentence Frames by Pam Buffington, Tara Knight, Peter Tierney-Fife; Private talk, public conversation by Mike Askew; Recognising helpful and unhelpful talk handout; WalkThrus p118.

Pillar 4: Optimising progress

4.1 Activating Prior Knowledge

At Avonwood we...

- use daily reviews for activating prior learning in readiness for that day's learning.
- implement retrieval by spacing practice over time with weekly and monthly reviews, attenuating forgetting and strengthening retrieval.
- engage children in daily learning by building confidence through recall of prior learning.
- use questioning during recall to assess for suppressed misconceptions and gaps in knowledge.

We believe that...

- retrieval practice aids later retention.
- retrieval and successive learning identifies misconceptions and gaps in knowledge.
- activating prior knowledge and making links between areas of learning deepens children's understanding.
- reviewing prior knowledge daily strengthens connections between ideas children have learnt and this can then be built upon.

The impact is ...

- children can recall words, concepts and procedures with minimal effort when the material is needed to solve a problem or learn new material.
- cognitive load is reduced enabling the acquisition of new knowledge deployment of critical thinking skills.
- every time a memory is retrieved it becomes deeper, stronger and easier to access in the future which leads to fluent recall.

References: Rosenshine, Bjork & Bjork, John Dunlosky, Kate Jones.

4.2 Practise Makes Progress

At Avonwood we...

- aim for 'desirable difficulty'.
- introduce materials in small steps and spend appropriate time working through examples to ensure we explain our reasoning to serve as a model to the students.
- spend time during guided practice modelling, rephrasing, elaborating and applying new material.
- aid rehearsal by asking questions and probing deeper to ensure that pupils have processed the material.

We believe that...

- those who practice the most, forget the least.
- securing a high level of success during guided practice leads to greater success during independent practice.
- guided practice allows children time to use and apply knowledge, whilst the teacher checks for understanding.
- practice routines help to ensure motivation levels remain high.

The impact is ...

- through practice, factual recall becomes automatic and fundamental skills are congnitively low-friction which frees up space in the working memory.
- practice provides a platform for new learning.
- spaced and distributed practice combats the 'forgetting curve': overlearning protects information from fading.
- practice and repetition lead to a deeper level of understanding which can in turn be applied to a variety of contexts.

References: Rosenshine, Bjork & Bjork, Peps Mccrea.

4.3 Actionable Feedback

At Avonwood we...

- give daily whole class verbal feeback and live mark during lessons.
- ask questions to elicit and check children's understanding.
- assess children's work against success criteria, recognising effort and indicating next steps.
- use marking to give focused feedback in order to inform children of their next steps.

We believe that...

- feedback as an integral part of teaching practice.
- misconceptions and gaps in knowledge can be addressed as a collective.
- asking meaningful questions that target essential learning provides an insight into children's thinking.
- identifying and overcoming misconceptions during the lesson enables high learning outcomes every time.

The impact is ...

- teachers know what the children know already, what they need to know and what is required to bridge that gap.
- curriculum content being taught is adjusted and relevant to the children in each classroom.
- misconceptions can be addressed during each lesson whilst learning content is current: what we learn first we learn most deeply.
- children become reflective learners, being aware of their next steps.

References: John Hattie, Great Teaching Toolkit p30-36.