

Policy Statement for Environmental Studies

RATIONALE

The curriculum area Environmental Studies brings together the main ways in which pupils learn about themselves and the world around them. It provides important opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities, of active citizenship and of the concept of equality.

Pupils will acquire and develop:

- Knowledge and Understanding of the important principles and ideas of social subjects, science and technology
- A Range of Skills that will enhance their capacity for critical thinking and problem solving within social, scientific and technological contexts
- Informed Values and Attitudes towards the environment through relating their learning to the real world and to themselves.

AIMS

All pupils should:

- develop an **understanding** of their environment, their place within it, and the factors, past and present, that have shaped it
- acquire **knowledge** and **skills** that will enable them to interact effectively with the environment in the contexts of home, school and their later working life
- progressively recognise the **knowledge, understanding** and **skills** associated with social subjects, science and technology
- develop **informed attitudes** and **values** relating to the care and conservation of the environment
- gain an **understanding** of **issues** relating to the use of resources and sustainable global development
- become aware of the importance of **active citizenship** in a democratic society

Aims and learning experiences across the curriculum should be appropriate to the needs and interests of all pupils, including those with special educational needs.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMES OF WORK

Programmes of Work for Environmental Studies must be planned in ways that provide:

- **Broad and balanced learning opportunities within and across components**
- **Coherent links and connections**
- **Continuous pathways for learning**

To achieve this in their programmes of work teachers will refer to the National Guidelines, which detail outcomes, strands and targets.

- **Attainment Outcomes** are the main areas of learning e.g. People in the Past (Social Subjects), Earth and Space (Science)
- **Strands** indicate key ideas of skills, knowledge and understanding that should be the focus for teaching, learning and assessment
- **Attainment Targets** help teachers identify pupil achievement and prior learning

The planning process should be simple and manageable and prior learning of all children, including pre-school, must be taken into account.

The attainment targets across strands at Levels A - F, provide a clear indication of a pupil's progress in knowledge and understanding and in skills.

- Knowledge will become more detailed
- Relevant vocabulary will be widened
- The ability to see patterns and to generalise will develop
- New knowledge and understanding and skill development will not only add to but will enrich previous learning
- Understanding of abstract ideas and principles will increase
- The number and range of contexts and examples will widen in space and time
- Pupils will demonstrate increasing independence in their learning

A pupil's development in skills may progress more quickly than their development in knowledge and understanding, or vice versa. In an inclusive curriculum all pupils are entitled to a range of learning experiences in Environmental Studies. Programmes of work should be evaluated and updated on a regular basis to ensure that the 5-14 requirements are being fulfilled in the best possible way

Time Allocation

A minimum of 15% of the curriculum should be spent on Environmental Studies. This could be more if the flexible element is used.
(See: The Structure and Balance of the Curriculum 5-14 National Guidelines)

Programmes of work should be evaluated and updated on a regular basis to ensure that the 5-14 requirements are being fulfilled in the best possible way.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Environmental Studies is taught through the **thematic** approach or as **discrete** subjects.

Pupils will learn in a variety of ways: through **explanation, enquiry, activity** and **discussion**

Teaching and Learning will thrive where it is rooted in:

- Well planned programmes and activities, including effective use of ICT.
- Learning experiences that engage and challenge pupils
- A supportive classroom ethos

Principles of Good Practice are:

- Making the nature and aims of the learning clear for the learner
- Using a variety of approaches to match different learning contexts or purposes
- Giving and receiving clear and regular feedback
- Monitoring progress and attainment in learning

ASSESSMENT

Assessment should be an integral part of the teaching and learning process that is shared between pupil and teacher. ***It should clearly identify for both teacher and pupil what has been achieved and what they need to do next.***

In planning units of lessons or topics, the teacher must be clear about how he or she will **develop** and **assess** pupils' knowledge and understanding and skills. Assessment, *formative* or *summative*, should not become overburdening either for teachers or pupils.

Using the strand descriptors the teacher will identify a manageable number of key ideas for Assessment. *Teachers will not need detailed evidence of pupil attainment of **every individual** bullet point within **attainment targets**.* The individual bullets provide pathways for developing understanding of the key ideas of the strands.

While all strands within a component or outcome should be covered over time, individual topics or studies may not cover every strand or address every bulleted point within attainment targets.

Some forms of Assessment could be:

- Observation
- Question/Answer
- Self Assessment
- Peer Assessment
- Folio Work
- Topic Test/Quiz
- Wall Displays
- Audio/Visual e.g. photographs etc.

In determining levels of attainment, differentiation will generally be seen in the range of pupil responses to a similar task, or in modified tasks for different groups or individuals.

The prime consideration in determining an overall level of attainment is to establish if a pupil has, over the period, demonstrated broad competence in the skills and knowledge and understanding described in the strands.

RECORDING/REPORTING

Recording pupils' individual attainment should be a simple, manageable process. It can consist of the teaching plan, annotated with brief notes and comments about individual pupils' strengths and development needs.

Pupils can also be involved in recording their progress in personal jotters, folders or in a class file. These will provide a useful means of evaluating classroom activities and of deciding 'next steps' in a pupil's learning.

Reporting should be specific and in clear language. It should make reference to particular work but should also provide an overall summary of the pupils' progress and development needs.

Appendices

The following are suggestions only and may be adopted or adapted for use in your school

- 1. Summary of Framework for Environmental Studies**
 - a useful reference for staff.
- 2. Overview of skills in Social Subjects - Enquiry (A-F)**
- 3. Overview of Skills in Science - Investigating (A-F)**
- 4. Overview of Skills in Technology - Designing and Making (A-F)**

Overviews 2-4 allow the tracking of progression through the skills. These skills, when acquired, will allow pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding.

- 5. Assessment sheet for Skills in Science (A-F)**
- 6. Assessment sheet for Skills in Technology (A-F)**
- 7. Assessment sheet for Skills in Social Subjects (A-F)**

Appendices 5-7 are exemplars that could be useful for the assessment of skills. These may be used with individual pupils, groups or whole class.