

BARNS GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Teaching & Learning Policy

OUR SCHOOL VISION

We will help our pupils
We will
We will allow them to
We will help them

Learn
Inspire them,
Flourish and
Excel

These are the building blocks for a successful **LIFE**.

We are a child-centred school. Every decision we make is in the child's interest.

We encourage pupils to become confident learners.

We are all members of a Learning Family and we speak and listen to each other honestly.

We listen especially carefully to our pupils.

We recognise the value of individuality.

We make sure every child can achieve excellence.

We celebrate everyone's success and learn from our mistakes.

Ours is a safe, caring and happy school.

2014

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Introduction

Our pupils deserve the very best start in life. We want to provide them with this.

The people who will make this happen are the Barns Green teachers.

This policy brings together all of the good practice that takes place at Barns Green Primary School. It starts from the assumption that teaching staff are able to deliver a minimum of Good¹ quality teaching. By following the guidance in this booklet, teachers should be confident in their roles and what is required of them.

Any attempt to raise standards in our school must be focused on the classroom. Continued and sustained improvement is dependent upon improving the quality of teaching and learning that is taking place on a daily basis.

Across our school the expectation is that all pupils are provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to consistently high levels of pupil achievement.

By adopting a whole school approach to teaching and learning across our school, we aim:

- To provide consistency of teaching and learning across our school.
- To enable teachers to teach as effectively as possible.
- To enable children to learn as efficiently as possible.
- To give children the skills they require becoming effective lifelong learners.
- To provide an inclusive education for all children.
- To learn from each other, through the adoption of a collaborative, enquiry based approach to teaching and learning, where good practice is shared.

There is no single recipe for improving teaching and learning in a school. However this policy outlines some of the **key elements** which raise standards in teaching and learning. It also sets out a **broad structure** for lessons, based on best practice and research linked to how we best learn.

When reading this policy it is important to remember that adopting a broad template for structuring lessons **does not preclude**:

- Spontaneity
- Creativity
- Imagination
- Individuality

... unless you let it!

¹ As defined by OFSTED

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Lesson structure

All lessons in our school should follow a basic structure made up of four parts.

- Phase One: set the scene, place learning in a wider context, link to prior learning; review previous lesson; provide the 'big picture', share learning intentions.
- Phase Two: pupils receive new information; instruction/exposition; (teaching)
- Phase Three: pupils make sense of information; processing; understanding;(learning)
- Phase Four: review information (plenary).

Precise interpretation of the four phase structure will inevitably be very different in different situations. Age, ability, timing of the lesson, subject area and the particular focus for the lesson will all have a significant impact.

The boundaries between the phases will almost certainly be blurred.

Teachers may well scroll through the phases more than once during the lesson. For example, after a short period of exposition, pupils may be engaged in an activity designed to help them make sense of new material. This may be followed by another period of exposition and an appropriate exercise. (mini plenaries)

The phases are not always sequential. Review, for example, is not confined to the end of the lessons. Good teachers weave review through the entire lesson and know that success criteria are only successful when repeated and referred to throughout the lesson.

Teaching and learning is not the same thing. Encountering information is not the same as understanding it. While the stages are inextricably linked, they are separate processes. This must be reflected in the lesson.

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Phase One – Overview

Although this is relatively short in duration it includes a number of key features. The emphasis on this phase is on;

Creating an appropriate working atmosphere

Pupils will not learn if they are not in an appropriate state to learn. We use a range of strategies to establish a climate conducive to learning including:

- Creating a classroom environment that is stimulating, reassuring and organised,
- Being fully prepared for lessons,
- Ensuring resources are prepared and on tables in advance of lessons,
- other adults to sensitively engage with a pupil who is not 'ready to learn'.
- Greeting pupils with a smile!

Linking the lesson to prior learning

Linking the lesson to prior knowledge, e.g. reviewing previous lesson;

- Think about the three most important things you learnt in the last lesson – now tell your partner.
- In two minutes, I am going to ask you what you learnt last lesson. You may talk to your partner if you wish.
- Today's lesson is about the water cycle. Jot down on your whiteboards what you already know. Work in pairs.

Providing an overview

The brain is more likely to absorb details when it can place them within a wider context. This is often referred to as *'providing the big picture first'*.

Learning walls in all classes include a topic map to enable pupils to see the 'bigger picture'. Pupils add their own questions and answers to the learning map and are encouraged to carry out their own independent research at home.

Sharing learning intentions with pupils

Students must know exactly what they are going to learn and what is expected of them by the end of the lesson.

For learning intentions to be shared effectively, teachers must:

- Move away from saying 'Today we are doing'... and instead say 'By the end of today's lesson you will all know/be able to/understand...'
- Make learning intentions specific
- Use child-friendly language – there is little point in sharing learning intentions if students don't understand what you mean.
- Write them down
- Refer to them: at the start of the lesson, during the lesson and during the review phase.

Triggering the brain

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The brain will tend to notice things if has been primed to look for them.

Beginning a lesson by saying;

'Today when I am reading I want you to listen out for some really powerful adjectives that you can use in your own writing later on' or

'For homework tonight, I am going to be asking you to write down the functions of the different parts of a plant – you will find out what they are in today's lesson'

increases the chances of pupils doing exactly that.

Stimulating curiosity, generating interest and setting the challenge

When we capture the imagination and stimulate curiosity in the first few minutes of the lesson, we go a long way to ensuring a high quality learning experience.

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Phase Two – Receiving New Information

The emphasis in this phase is on:

Providing students with new information or skills.

This is the teaching phase. Although we want all pupils to understand the information as they encounter it, the emphasis during phase two is on providing the new information. New information is delivered in many ways:

- Exposition
- Audio-visual aids – e.g. video clips
- Diagrams, pictures etc.
- ICT –Internet etc.
- Demonstration
- Modelling
- Books

The quality of the input during this phase will have a big bearing upon the extent to which pupils understand information. While high-quality exposition does not guarantee understanding, it does make it significantly more likely.

We use a number of techniques across our school to ensure that the quality of input in phase two is kept high.

Periods of exposition are short

Pupils have limited concentration spans. A widely used and useful rule of thumb is that concentration span will be about *two minutes in excess of chronological age*. Periods of exposition are therefore kept short and punctuated by regular breaks or activities. In general terms, significantly more learning will take place when new information is transferred and explained in three bursts of ten minutes than in one thirty minute session.

More than one 'beginning' is created

Pupils tend to remember more from the beginning of an experience. When exposition is chunked into 10-15 minute slots, a number of *'beginnings'* are created in the lesson. Make the new start obvious. Use phrases such as, *'Now we are moving on to ...'* or *'The next activity we are going to be doing ...'* *'I want you to move back to the carpet for the next part of our lesson.'*

The input phase is punctuated with questions

Although phase two is principally about exposition and delivering new information, it should be punctuated by regular questioning.

Ask regular closed questions during the input. This will keep pupils alert and provide instant feedback as to whether they have heard correctly and have understood – although at a shallow level. Asking too many open questions during an explanation can easily take a lesson off on inappropriate tangents. It also allows an individual to take the lesson off in a direction that causes other students to lose their train of thought.

Ask open questions before and/or after an input. Posing an open question at the start of an explanation will prime the brain to notice detail and begin to form an answer, even at a

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subconscious level, during the input. Asking an open question at the end of an input takes the learning into phase three and is designed to develop and assess deeper understanding.

The input phase is punctuated with activity (model whatever you want the children to do)

Punctuate the input of new information (phase two) with activities designed to help pupils make sense of it (phase three). This kind of integrated, alternating pattern of 'phase two, phase three, phase two, phase three' can often be more effective than an extended period of explanation.

For example, a teacher might be modelling how to write complex sentences. She might ask the children to work with a partner to write one together on a mini whiteboard before continuing with further instruction.

New information is presented in several different ways (VAK)

The fact that people prefer to receive information in different ways demands that information is transmitted in more than one way during phase two. A verbal explanation may well be clear, concise and of high quality. However, two thirds of the class may be working outside of their preferred style or have English as an additional language and struggle to grasp what is being said.

We aim to make learning multi-sensory so that pupils have opportunities to learn from seeing, hearing and doing.

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Phase Three – processing the information

The emphasis in Phase Three is on:

- developing understanding
- demonstrating understanding
- assessing understanding

This is the key phase.

It is the opportunity for pupils to make sense of information. We play a significant role during this crucial phase, encouraging and reassuring at an emotional and guiding level while prompting and challenging pupils towards understanding.

The extent to which pupils will understand information depends on three factors

1. Quality of interactions

It is adults who help pupils make sense of information. The frequency and nature of interactions between teacher and pupils is highly significant. We develop understanding by

- Using open ended questions.
- Providing wait time- pupils need time to think through their answers before replying.
- Providing thinking time by giving an advance warning, such as *'In two minutes I am going to ask you....'*
- Allowing pupils to explore and articulate their thinking by giving them time to discuss their responses in pairs or groups. Pupils then respond with *'We think that...'*
- Ensuring pupils fully understand the question by asking them to say it back or rephrase it.
- Extending and deepening understanding by asking follow-up questions such as *'What made you think that?'*
- Asking pupils to identify three possible answers and then select the best one (so they don't always give you the first answer that pops into their head).
- Scaffolding thinking and answering – for example: *'in 2 minutes I am going to ask you X, but before I do, I'd like you to think about (or talk about) A. Now I'd like you to think about B. Now can you respond to my original question.'*

2. Talking

When we talk we do more than articulate our current level of understanding. The very act of talking forces us to organise our thoughts and so deepens understanding.

It is partly the reason why we remember so much of what we teach to others

At our school we believe that **Talking** is central to learning. All lessons include planned and unplanned opportunities to discuss questions and extend thinking **Think/Pair/Share and Talk to your partner (TTYP)** are regular features in all lessons. Pupils are trained to use appropriate body language when talking to a partner and pupils understand that their TALK is valued as much as their written work.

3. Tasks that engage pupils and challenge them to think

Making personal sense of information involves re-creating and assimilating it into existing understanding. It is an active process and demands that the learner actually does something, not least at a cognitive level. Activities in the third phase;

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- Require pupils to do something at a cognitive level
- Provide a degree of challenge
- Require students to re-create rather than re-produce information
- Develop understanding
- Allow pupils to demonstrate understanding
- Give the teacher an opportunity to assess understanding.
- Encourage pupils to work both independently and collaboratively
- Encourage pupils to work for a sustained period

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Phase Four – Review

The emphasis in this phase is on:

- *Reviewing what has been learned*
- *Reflecting on how it has been learned.*

Review is a key to memory and certainly not confined to the end of the lesson. Good teachers weave review throughout the entire lesson and are constantly referring students back to the success criteria of the lesson, and reinforcing prior learning. Reviewing material is a highly significant part of the learning process, not least because large amounts of information can be forgotten very quickly.

Key features of Phase Four are:

Pupils are actively involved

When teachers summarise what has been learned, the effect on pupils' memories is relatively insignificant. However when the pupils themselves identify what they have learned as the lesson draws to a close, their memories will be given a significant boost.

Refer back to the learning intentions and success criteria.

Encourage pupils to reflect on what they have learned and what has helped them to learn. Use prompts like:

- What did you do today that you found most helpful when you were learning?
- What did you do today that you found less helpful?
- If you had to do the task again, how would you do it?
- If you had to give one piece of advice to someone tackling the same task tomorrow, what would it be?

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Key elements and principles of teaching and learning across our school – a practical guide!

All lessons across our school should include the following key elements to ensure high quality teaching and learning. New teachers to our schools will receive training to ensure they fully understand these elements and to enable them to embed them in their everyday practice.

All lessons have...*Clear Learning Intentions*

- Learning intentions are shared orally and displayed.
- All learning intentions begin with 'At the end of this lesson I will know/be able to/ understand...'
- All learning intentions are written up and shared orally in child friendly language.
- Learning intentions are not muddled up with the context of the lesson.
- Children write the learning intention in their book when they are ready.
- When marking children's work, the main focus is on meeting the learning intention. Evidence of meeting the LI is highlighted.

All lessons have... *Well planned success criteria*

- All pupils are clear about how they will achieve the learning intention.
- Success criteria's are displayed for the children to follow during the lesson or drawn up with the children, e.g. Steps to success.
- Weekly planning includes success criteria for each learning intention.
- Children use the success criteria to self-assess their own or their partner's work.
- Children are reminded of the success criteria during the lesson – often children's work is used to illustrate the success criteria in action.

All lessons are ...*Clearly differentiated to enable all pupils to access learning*

- All learners are challenged appropriately.
- Planning shows clear differentiation.

All pupils are...*Actively engaged in learning*

- Pupils are actively engaged during all parts of the lesson – teachers take into account children's concentration span and ensure pupils are not sitting passively for long periods.
- Opportunities to *Think/Pair/Share* and discussions with a *Talk Partner* are regular features in all lessons. Pupils are trained to use appropriate body language when engaged in discussion with a partner. In Mixed Age classes, older pupils may mentor younger ones.
- Visuals, artefacts, auditory input are all used creatively as a way to enhance learning.

All pupils receive regular and clear ...*feedback which enhances learning*

- Formative assessment practices are embedded in everyday practice and the results are used to inform teaching and learning.
- All pupils are clear about how they need to improve.
- Class targets are set each term for Maths and Writing – these are displayed on the classroom wall and reviewed by the coordinators.

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- Marking is linked to the learning intention and identifies next step prompts
- Pupils are given regular time to address issues raised in marking.

Learning is enhanced through ... *The use of ICT.*

- ICT is used to enhance learning where ever possible. Although ICT is nearly always used at the start of lessons to engage children and in the plenary to consolidate learning, it is also used during the lesson as an aid to learning. ***The use of ICT is highly visible and effective in all teaching and learning contexts across our school and teachers are continually searching for ways to use technology as a learning tool.***

Learning is enhanced through ... *Cooperative Learning*

- Cooperative learning refers to a set of instructional methods in which children work in small, mixed-ability learning teams. The children in each team are responsible not only for learning the material themselves, but also for helping their team learn. Although cooperative learning features primarily in PSHE lessons, it can and should be used across the curriculum.
- Before cooperative learning can be implemented positive teamwork behaviours need to be explicitly taught and reinforced.

Learning is enhanced through the use of... *Consistent classroom management signals.*

Clear management signals are designed to minimise the time spent on behaviour management and maximise the time spent on learning. All our school consistently follow the same signals.

Learning is enhanced through the ... *Effective use of additional adults*

- Additional adults are clearly directed to support learning.
- They are clear about who they are supporting and why.
- Planning is shared in advance with teaching assistants.
- They sit next to the pupil/pupils they are working with, quietly engaging the pupils, explaining the task or using other resources, e.g. number line to facilitate learning.
- They are involved in assessing pupil's understanding, recording observations and feeding assessments into teaching records.