



St. Comgall's Primary School  
23 Brunswick Road  
Bangor  
Co. Down  
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ST COMGALL'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, BANGOR

# WORLD AROUND US POLICY

(INCLUDING STEM, LOCAL ENVIRONMENT & GLOBAL LEARNING)



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## Introduction

This policy is based on the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum document (2007) which is the starting point for planning a school curriculum to meet the needs of individual children.

Within these requirements we at St Comgall's Primary School aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum to prepare our children for a rapidly changing world.

**St Comgall's Primary School** is a co-educational maintained school in the coastal town of Bangor. The school is located on a site adjacent to St Comgall's Church on the **Brunswick Road**. We have approximately 300 pupils.

### 1. What is the World Around Us?

Children are naturally curious and often ask profound questions about themselves and the nature of the world around them. The purpose of this area of learning is to find age appropriate answers to some of these big questions from the perspectives of Geography, History and Science and Technology. (P83 N.I. Curriculum document)

The World Around Us is one of the six Areas of Learning in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. It focuses on the development of knowledge, skills and understanding in Geography, History, Science and Technology. St Comgall 's aims to retain the best of current practice within the three subjects, while developing a topic/theme based approach in this area of learning.

The statutory curriculum for World Around Us is structured as follows:

**Foundation Stage:** The World Around Us including Geography, History, Science and Technology

**Key Stages One & Two:** The World Around Us through the contributory elements of Geography, History, Science and Technology

The **World Around Us** is presented as four inter-related strands that connect learning:

- **Interdependence (I)**
- **Place (P)**
- **Movement and Energy (M&E)**
- **Change Over Time (COT)**

### Three Contributory Elements within the World Around Us

**Geography** explores the relationship between the Earth and its people through the study of the environment, place and space. It develops knowledge of places and environments throughout the world, an understanding of maps and a range of investigative and problem solving skills both inside and outside the classroom.

Children should develop knowledge and understanding of their place in the world, other places, and the processes which affect the people, conditions and life in that place.

They should explore ideas about people, jobs, the weather and the environment both locally and globally and begin to consider their part in maintaining a sustainable world.



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**History** is concerned with the concepts of sequence and time and with evidence which allows us to find out what happened in the past. The concepts of chronology, change/continuity, empathy and cause and effect will be developed through investigation of life in the past.

Children should gain an awareness of their past and changes which have occurred over time through examining evidence, looking at photographs, watching TV and multimedia clips and listening to stories.

Children will recognise the importance of evidence in giving a picture of the past but will understand that there can be different interpretations of this depending on how it is viewed.

**Science and Technology** aims to stimulate a child's curiosity in finding out why things happen in the way they do. It teaches methods of enquiry and investigation to stimulate creative thought. Children learn to ask scientific questions and begin to appreciate the way science will affect their future on a personal, national, and global level.

Children should have opportunities to develop the skills of Science and Technology and to develop awareness of the relevance and importance of Science and Technology in everyday life in finding out about themselves, the environment, the material and physical world.

## 2. Aims

- To develop knowledge, understanding and skills in the context of the World Around Us
- To promote understanding, respect and appreciation for the world in which they live and their immediate environment
- To acknowledge and appreciate a sense of the past, changes which have occurred and how these affect the world today
- To develop an appreciation of the relevance and importance of Science and Technology in everyday life
- To develop in children the skills of enquiry, investigation, analysis, evaluation and presentation

## 3. Skills

'At the heart of the curriculum lies an explicit emphasis on the development of skills and capabilities for life-long learning and for operating effectively in society.

Through opportunities to engage in active learning contexts . . . children should develop **Cross-Curricular Skills** (in Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT) and **Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities.**' (P5 NIC)

At St Comgall's we also develop Geography, History and Science skills through the World Around Us. (These skills are listed in Appendix 1)

**Links with the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities Framework have been highlighted to enable teachers to cross reference both.** While many of the skills will be developed incidentally, we also plan for the development of subject specific skills when appropriate.



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#### **4. Planning Approaches**

The WAU programme will be implemented at a level appropriate to the needs of the children in the context of our school and will also provide opportunities for pupils to explore their world in the context of home, school, the local area and the wider world. All planning is based on the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. We will also use the Ideas for Connected Learning, Thematic Units and other guidance material from CCEA and DE in our planning. Whilst initial planning is **for** the pupils, at all stages children will be encouraged to become active participants in the planning/ learning process.

#### **Planning for Progression and Continuity**

Planning for the WAU builds on the earlier experiences of children and continues to help them to explore the world they live in. At Foundation Stage, skills and concepts are developed through play and other planned activities relevant to the children's interests and experiences. Careful observation informs the planning of future learning experiences within the World Around Us.

We ensure that the overall programme of learning in any one year group and across the key stages, is broad and balanced and that there is continuity and progression in children's learning.

#### **Connected Learning**

Recognising the changes and requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, we have begun to plan thematically. We emphasise the totality of the children's learning across the curriculum by making meaningful links across the learning areas. We encourage children to transfer understanding and skills from one context to another, allowing them to practise and apply the skills they have gained.

Our planning for WAU aims to promote:

- Good investigations and the development of children's enquiry skills.
- Good use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Effective use of the school/local environment, educational visits and visitors to the classroom.
- Progression in key aspects of Geography, History and Science and Technology.

#### **5. Learning and Teaching (see St Comgall's Learning and Teaching Policy)**

In St Comgall's, learning and teaching approaches provide suitably challenging opportunities for all pupils to take part in lessons fully and effectively. Learning experiences are active, practical and enjoyable. We make use of a wide range of teaching methods balancing whole class, group and individual activities to engage children in effective learning.

In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 children experience much of their learning through well planned and challenging play. Children have opportunities to make choices and decisions, developing their own ideas and interests, either as starting points for learning activities or pursuing a topic in more depth. They are supported in their efforts to succeed and are actively involved in planning, carrying out and reflecting on their work within World Around Us learning.



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## 6. Assessment

Assessment in WAU, as in all areas of learning, will be used to promote, enhance and deepen the children's learning. (Refer to school Learning and Teaching policy). It involves all methods normally used to appraise the children's learning, either individually or in groups.

The outcomes from these assessments can then be used to identify the progress which pupils make in relation to the processes, skills, understanding and knowledge outlined in the NI Curriculum.

We take account of Assessment for Learning strategies and allow this formative assessment to help and guide planning. The key reasons for assessment within WAU will be to:

- enhance performance, self-esteem and self-confidence
- promote greater resilience when faced with challenges
- increase independence
- develop a positive climate for learning

## 7. Inclusion

In our school the World Around Us forms part of the school curriculum policy to provide a broad and balanced education for all children. Through our teaching we provide learning opportunities that enable all pupils to make progress. We do this by setting suitable learning challenges and responding to each child's individual needs.

The teachers are aware of the requirements of SEND and plan pupil experiences accordingly.

Children will be helped to access this Learning Area using a range of learning styles, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. They are able to record and demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways according to their learning needs and preferences.

## 8. Learning in the Outdoors

The outdoor area provides children with one of the best environments in which to learn.

As Margaret McMillan (circa 1925) says,

***'the best kept classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky'.***

Our pupils have opportunities to develop skills and concepts in an outdoor learning environment where they will:

- Become more aware of, more observant in and more responsive to their surroundings.
- Develop an approach to careful observation, accurate recording and thoughtful analysis.
- Explore interests in environmental issues.
- Foster a sense of wonder and discovery.
- Enjoy a sense of Emotional Wellbeing – connected to nature.

Children should have the opportunity to study aspects of their own immediate world, including different features of town and countryside and make comparisons between local and wider world issues.



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All educational visits will be undertaken in accordance with ***'Educational Visits Policy, Practice and Procedures 2009'***.

## **9. Health and Safety**

We enable pupils to have access to the full range of World Around Us activities.

There will always be elements of risk and uncertainty as children engage in active learning. The NI Curriculum document states:

***'All activities must be taught within a safe environment and children must be made aware of safe practice at all times.'*** (Page 84)

For WAU activities, we assess and manage risks with reference to the following documents as outlined in the whole school Health and Safety Policy.

Appropriate Risk Assessment Plans are drawn up/reviewed in partnership with the Designated Teacher (Vice-Principal Anne Higgins).

- ASE: *'Be Safe!'* which provides detail on legislation, teacher responsibilities, risk assessment and curriculum activity
- EA: *'Out of School'* details statutory obligations of schools when taking children off the school premises.

## **10. WAU Coordinator Role and Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the World Around Us coordinator to

- Draw up an action plan for the development of the World Around Us in our school.
- Monitor the running of the World Around Us scheme to ensure continuity and progression throughout the school.
- Negotiate, in accordance with the whole school Learning and Teaching policy, the place of WAU within the School Development Plan (SDP) and be involved in Monitoring and Evaluating.
- Develop and disseminate knowledge and expertise of WAU in the context of the whole school policy on Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
- Advise and guide colleagues with regard to appropriate classroom practice.
- Formulate policy / scheme of work in association with teachers and principal, in line with School Development Plan.
- Promote and disseminate the policy within school. Undertake monitoring to include lesson observations, examination of planning, and carry out evaluations.
- Ensure that the area of learning is properly resourced in terms of acquisition, safe storage and access.
- Develop an inventory of essential equipment and practical materials.
- Liaise with appropriate advisory services or external agencies which may enrich pupil learning etc.



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## **11. Resources**

We are continually developing resources for all WAU topics/themes in the school. We keep essential equipment and practical materials in the Key Stage 2 STEM store room. Class teachers will supplement these resources with their own materials. Our school library provision contains a good supply of topic and reference books and both iPad & computer software is available to support children's individual and collaborative research. We also avail of project packs from the Library Service.

## **12. Links to Eco-Schools & FairTrade Committee** – with InterGenerational/PTA Partnership

Our school takes seriously its duty to the environment and our Eco-Schools Committee help to ensure that pupils and teachers act responsibly. We are very proud to have been awarded Green Flag Status and the FairTrade Fair Achiever Award. The Eco-Schools programme provides an ideal way for fostering environmental awareness in the entire school in a way that links to many curriculum subjects. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in initiatives and campaigns to make a change to the world such as our Fair Trade campaigns and our Intergenerational Partnership.

## **13. Global Learning:** Local Environment, Visitors, Outdoor Learning, Connecting Classrooms & STEM

In St Comgall's our children learn to respect diversity and different traditions and cultures. We are part of the Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning programme which helps schools across Northern Ireland bring global learning into the classroom, teaching children about a fair and sustainable world and giving them the tools to be active citizens in our ever changing world.

Within each World Around Us topic, we plan for real life outcomes alongside exciting trips and specialist visitors. These enhancements bring learning to life and make it meaningful for our children. The pupils also gain a more in depth learning experience through the use of our local environment. We visit local glens, parks and beaches to enhance pupils' understanding of their local environment and the area they live in.

Through the promotion of STEM investigations, we aim to broaden the children's scientific view of the world around them whilst promoting a love for enquiry and exploration. Practical hands on activities and experiences develop a curiosity in our pupils that will encourage them to ask questions, observe, think critically and investigate.

## **14. Monitoring and Review**

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all teaching staff. Monitoring of the standards of children's work and of the quality of teaching in Geography, History and Science and Technology within the World Around Us is the responsibility of the coordinator.

The work of the WAU coordinator also involves supporting colleagues in the teaching of this learning area, being informed about current developments, and providing a strategic lead and direction.

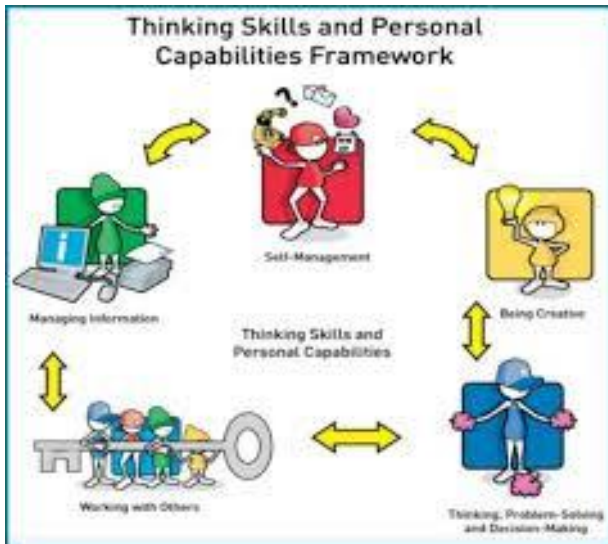
The WAU coordinator gives the principal an annual evaluation in which s/he evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in this Learning Area.



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## Appendix 1:      Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities (TSPC) Framework



**Self Management (SM)**

**Being Creative (BC)**

**Thinking, Problem-Solving & Decision-Making (TPD)**

**Working With Others (WWO)**

**Managing Information (MI)**

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**This renewed Policy was:**

Written by Co-ordinator - **Mrs Charlene Lavery – September 2019**

Ratified by the Board of Governors of St. Comgall's Primary School on: **16<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

**Next Review Date:              September 2021**