



St Mark's C of E Junior School

Growing together, becoming all we are created to be

Teaching and Learning Policy

This policy is under review while the school considers the implications of the latest DfE guidance and inspection framework. Whilst the key Teaching and Learning principles at St Mark's remain at the heart of our approaches, adaptations in some areas will be made to ensure the new guidance is reflected within this policy. (Autumn 2025)

Living our Vision

The **FACE** of St Mark's: **F**orgive, **A**spire, **C**ompassion, **E**ngage

*We, at Mark's C of E Junior School, are a community of learners. We show **aspiration** in every aspect of our learning: aiming high to achieve the very best we can and actively encouraging others to do the same. Learning more about ourselves, others and our world is seen as a joy and a huge privilege.*

*Through our learning, we deepen our relationships with one another, showing our Christian Values, and specifically **compassion** and **forgiveness**, in all that we do.*

*We **engage** in our learning as we embrace challenges, learn from and with each other and celebrate the success of others which leads to the mutual flourishing of all.*

Our Teaching and Learning approach at St Mark's is inspired by the 'Learning Rainforest' metaphor (*The Learning Rainforest, Tom Sherrington*), and this 'tree analogy' below is a direct reference back to our logo: the school's willow tree and the school's Vision. At St Mark's, we recognise that we all need each other to learn and **grow together** as we aim high and reach out. This rationale is explained below:

Each tree in a forest has three interconnected components that are necessary for its existence:

The Roots: Establishing Conditions - tapping into a nutrient-rich soil providing the conditions for healthy growth; the nurturing environment in which each individual feels they belong and has their basic needs met

The Trunk and Branches: Building the Knowledge Structure - providing the structure that allows the tree to reach great heights before branching off; this represents knowledge in all its forms

The Canopy: Exploring Possibilities - this springs out in different directions, responding to the motivational stimulus of sunlight; the range of ambitions and learning possibilities

Fundamentally, as is the case in a 'Learning Rainforest', each one of us at St Mark's supports each other. None exists without the others and strength in one allows strength in the others.

This approach is the foundation of our practice at St Mark's. As we begin to implement this whole school approach (September 2020), the expectation and aspiration is that this model will be increasingly evident across all aspects of our teaching and learning.



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This image represents the key elements of St Mark's Teaching and Learning Policy and approach. It is displayed in poster form in all classes and referred to as an integral part of all Teaching and Learning. This will enable all learners (children and adults) to have a clear understanding of which part of the 'learning journey' is in focus, clarifying learning behaviour expectations.



During 2020-2021, the key areas (in bold below) will form the basis of whole school focuses. Many of them, teachers will have some familiarity with but this policy has been written to ensure all stakeholders interpret the language the same way so we maintain a consistent understanding of the approach to Teaching and Learning at St Mark's C of E Junior School. The tree imagery serves as a way of capturing the overarching three elements that, if applied effectively, we believe constitutes great teaching and learning. The Vision of St Mark's is clearly embedded within each aspect of our approach; this policy is a clear reflection of our school's Vision in action through high quality teaching and learning.



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In Summary

The Roots: Establishing Conditions in a nutrient rich soil

Children need to foster positive learning attitudes and habits in order to achieve excellence. Effective behaviour routines and systems, strong personal relationships with staff and active engagement in their learning will build confidence. A coherently planned, rich, challenging curriculum, where knowledge and skills are structured purposefully, will allow meaningful connections to be made. Therefore, the key elements in focus are:

- **Environment for excellence**
- **Active listening**
- **Collaboration**
- **New Material in small steps**

The Trunk and Branches: Building the Knowledge Structure

Effective instruction will support the children to build their knowledge through clear explaining, modelling and questioning. Probing questions will allow effective formative assessment to take place and support children with the next step in their learning. Therefore, the key elements in focus are:

- **Try It, Secure It**
- **Vocabulary**
- **Probing Questions**
- **Check understanding**

The Canopy: Exploring Possibilities

Children will have opportunities for purposeful, authentic learning experiences with open-ended outcomes as they become increasingly independent. These opportunities will allow the children to apply what they know and are likely to happen alongside more direct, instructional teaching (within the above 2 elements). Although they might occupy less time overall, they are still vital. Therefore, the key elements in focus are:

- **Organisation of Knowledge**
- **Deepen It**
- **Challenge**
- **Ambition**

All three areas of learning support the others. This is not a simple linear sequence but all three areas interact fuelling the growth of the others.



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In More Detail:

The Roots: Establishing Conditions in nutrient rich soil

- **Environment for Excellence:** The class **environment** is warm and welcoming where the children feel safe, supported and inspired to achieve. **Misconceptions** are celebrated errors are valued learning points. There is a calm working atmosphere where there is a sense of satisfaction and excitement in achieving the outcomes; work is challenging, yet achievable. The children are supported to improve their resilience and independence. The staff and children are familiar with '**Movers and Blockers**' in learning and can confidently identify what supports or inhibits their learning. Reference will be made to the '**5 Point Plan**' to help children grow in independence in their leaning.
Classroom management and organisation will allow children to effectively access the materials and resources they need in order to independently manage their learning.
'**Ready in 5**' provides an opportunity for children to stop and be ready to listen. (**Signal, Pause, Insist**). Once all children are showing their full attention, further instructions or directions can be given.
- **Active Listening:** – Staff and children who are actively listening will question what they told in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the material. Children and staff will give their full attention to the content of the discussion. Children will be able to clearly define helpful talking in the classroom. Effective TA deployment will allow children to develop independence and resilience, thus not encouraging them to be over reliant on staff repeating instructions. Teachers' succinct, purposeful **explaining and modelling** will allow more active participation in lessons and maintain the engagement of pupils in their learning. By breaking down direct instructions into smaller increments provides opportunities for children to be 'hands on' with the material, thus encouraging engagement.
- **Collaboration/Relationships:** There needs to be positive, warm connections between staff and children that foster social interaction and establish a nurturing environment of trust and support. Genuine mutual respect will allow and encourage **active participation** and **collaboration**. Active participation requires that *every* child participates, not just the ones who readily volunteer. It also requires for children interact with each other, instead of simply speaking in succession. There is a shared passion for expectations of behaviour and outcomes, where mediocre work is not accepted. Learning must be a rewarding and enjoyable experience for all.
- **New Material in small steps:** (*reference to Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction*) Planning will take account of children's prior learning; formative assessment will be at the heart of moving children's learning on. High expectations will be in place for all, as the basis of inclusion at St Mark's. Lessons are meaningful where there are clear outcomes for each lesson. Planning should show how a new fact or idea links into the bigger picture. Formative assessment on INSIGHT will support staff to identify the next steps in learning. Summative assessment (also on INSIGHT) will be used as just one evidence base for progress and attainment judgements.



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The Trunk and Branches: Building the Knowledge Structure

- **Checking Understanding/Explaining Concepts:** Regular reviews of learning will allow teachers to plan next steps in the children's learning. Key concepts will become embedded in their long term memory and children receive clear guidance on how to improve. When checking for understanding, teachers might ask a child to recap on the instructions or concept (as opposed to asking 'if they're OK' or 'if everyone understands'! Regular reviews, daily, weekly, monthly will help to strengthen children's capacity to remember what has been learnt (p219 LR) Children must act on feedback to redraft/ improve work so that it meets the expected standard.
When explaining concepts, they might be supported through storytelling, models, images, analogies and taking the learners' perspective (p191 LR)

- **Probing Questions:** Probing questions are a series of questions that require the students to go beyond their first response and subsequent teacher questions are based upon the response of the children. Questions will support children to discuss their personal opinions and feelings and promotes critical thinking. The responses will allow staff to **determine** how well material has been understood. (Some suggested questions p196-198 LR)

Strategies include:

1. Using open ended questions.
2. Providing wait time- (3-5 seconds) as pupils need time to think through their answers before replying.
3. Providing thinking time by giving an advance warning, such as 'In two minutes I am going to ask you.... '
4. 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...'
5. Ensuring pupils fully understand the question by asking children (at random) to explain (possibly choosing from ideas from above pages)
6. Identifying misconception (possibly through 'hinge questions') and being ready to address them 'in the moment' if necessary or in the next sessions, as appropriate

- **Vocabulary:** All staff must have strong subject knowledge which allows the children to be provided with appropriate vocabulary. Children need to be able to confidently access the language and apply it with confidence across all curriculum subjects in context. '**Talk like a specialist**' / '**Say it better**' strategies might be used to introduce the children to new vocabulary by using the technical vocabulary associated with the topic that they are learning. Teachers repeat things that the children say, replacing words with technical vocabulary, scaffolding their understanding of new words.

Working Walls: To include new, topic specific vocabulary to give the children an accessible, vocabulary-rich environment. It should be updated regularly, reflecting the children's learning but being careful not to overload it. **Use new learned vocabulary in context e.g.** 'words of the week' to introduce the children in our classes to a range of new vocabulary. Children should be using that vocabulary within their lessons to embed it. Therefore for the words should be linked to the topic in focus or being regularly used in classroom dialogue for the vocabulary to becoming part of their long term memory. *(See ANNEX A for more Vocabulary strategies)*



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- **'Try It' & 'Secure it':** The try it and secure it activities will be a combination of practising a new concept and activating prior knowledge. Focused guided pupil practise along with appropriate scaffolding and working walls will provide the confidence for children to progress. They should be able to make references to previous learning to support their next steps

The Canopy: Exploring Possibilities

- **Challenge:** Pupils should be challenged and have the aspiration to develop and progress their knowledge of tasks, strategies and themselves as learners. As children increase their resilience, they will relish a challenge and gain a greater satisfaction from their learning. Open ended tasks along with children making choices about taking on 'Deepen It' activities creates a sense of shared responsibility for the learning. Children must have opportunity for 'hands-on' experiences with authentic activities and tasks.
- **Organisation of knowledge:** Children will be given the freedom to choose an appropriate way to organise and present their work which will enable them to effectively demonstrate and apply their understanding. In order for work to be effective, knowledge must be secure and content given due weight. The work needs to be rigorous and demonstrate their understanding. Whilst effective use of mind mapping will allow every child to have some independence, it must not allow pupils to produce work which is below expectations or limits the quantity of text recorded. E.g. always presenting work through a poster. Children should be able to monitor, direct and review their own learning and take responsibility for the outcomes of their work. '*It's not what you do for your children but what you have taught them to do for themselves, that will make them successful human beings.*' Ann Landers
- **Deepen It:** This requires that children not only *hear* or *see*, but also *mentally manipulate* the information—considering its implications and significance, comparing it to what they already know, synthesizing and digesting it, and sharing it with others. Challenges should be genuinely demanding or may be a task that requires multiple steps with sustained focus and independent thinking
- **Ambition:** Staff will provide a rich learning process where the children are confident enquiring learners that are self-motivated. In order to develop this ambition, children need to be taught how to become independent learners. E.g. information searching, use of class resources, note taking, skimming and scanning, task planning, proof reading etc.

For further details regarding our Curriculum content and Teaching and Learning in specific subjects, please refer to our Curriculum page on our website



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Cultural Capital

According to their school inspection handbook, Ofsted's definition of cultural capital is:

"As part of making the judgement about the quality of education, inspectors will consider the extent to which schools are equipping pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. Our understanding of 'knowledge and cultural capital' is derived from the following wording in the national curriculum: 'It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.'"

Cultural Capital - St Mark's Approach

Cultural capital is the accumulation of knowledge, behaviours, and skills that a child can draw upon and which demonstrates their cultural awareness, knowledge and competence; it is one of the key ingredients a child will draw upon to be successful in society, their career and the world of work.

Cultural capital promotes social mobility and success.

Cultural capital gives a child power. It helps them achieve goals, become successful, and rise up the social ladder without necessarily having wealth or financial capital.

Cultural capital is having assets that give children the desire to aspire and achieve social mobility whatever their starting point.

At St Mark's, we recognise that for children to aspire and be successful academically and in the wider areas of their lives, they need to be given rich and sustained opportunities to develop their cultural capital.

The school recognises that there are six key areas of development that are interrelated and cumulatively contribute to the sum of a child's cultural capital:

1. Personal Development
2. Social Development, including political and current affairs awareness
3. Physical Development
4. Spiritual Development
5. Moral Development
6. Cultural development

*For further information, please refer our Cultural Capital Policy in **ANNEX B** of this policy*



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SEND at St Mark's

The SEND Code of Practice states that:

All children and young peoples are entitled to an appropriate education, one that is appropriate to their needs, promotes high standards and the fulfilment of potential. This should enable them to:

- Achieve their best
- Become confident individuals living fulfilling lives and
- Make a successful transition into adulthood, whether into employment further or higher education or training.

At St Mark's, we have developed an SEND Handbook to provide a pathway for all staff as we begin to understand the needs of **each** child and how best to meet their needs; as individual needs are unique to each child with SEN, therefore our approach is tailored to each specific child.

Where a child is identified as having SEN, to enable the child to participate, learn and make progress, we will take action to:

- **Ensure appropriately high expectations for all children**, through High Quality Teaching (HQT), building confidence in each child, supporting and challenging them
- **Remove barriers to learning**, through a clear understanding of what the child's needs are and possible (recommended) strategies to enable learning
- **Put effective special educational provision in place**, through carefully planned scaffolding and / or additional intervention (new material in small steps)
- **Build positive relationships with parents** to allow effective, regular communication; to promote and support additional provision beyond the classroom

Within our SEND Handbook, for each of the 4 areas of need (Communication and Interaction; Cognition and Learning; Social, Emotional and Mental Health; Sensory and/or Physical), a **description of each difficulty** is outlined, what the **signs** are that child might be displaying, **strategies** to be used as part of the High Quality Teaching and Learning and any **additional interventions** that might be considered.

The Handbook gives further information about how we work towards 'inclusion', to enable all children to achieve their best.



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ANNEX A

Examples of other helpful strategies to embed the meaning of vocabulary:

Exploring the root of words - Foster deep vocabulary knowledge (this can work especially in science) by looking at sounds that relate or link particular words. For example: the word 'optic' is the root of optical and optics. This relates to looking or seeing. Or the word 'psyche', which is the root word for 'psychological' or 'psychosis'. This relates to how the brain works.

Word building (using prefixes and suffixes) - We can help the children in our classes develop 'word consciousness' by explicitly teaching prefixes and suffixes. Using common prefixes like 'un', 're' and 'dis' can encourage a fun and creative engagement with words that proves a handy strategy for when children encounter new and complex words.

Encouraging Debate - In class talk activities can be very effective: By using 'Talk for Learning' strategies, using sentence stems and vocabulary lists, we can set up debates that help extend and explore vocabulary choices. Debating and talking aloud using a range of vocabulary can help embed language being discussed in class.

Axis of intensity: One way to help extend vocabulary could be to encourage the children to find and order synonyms in terms of their intensity. It is proven that categorising words is a key way that children can learn new vocabulary. This is also a good way to encourage children to increase the quality of their word choices. Another, similar strategy is called 'Meaning lines': By choosing two words like 'lay' and 'stand' and putting them on either side of a line, the children can add words in between to convey shades of meaning. For example: crouch, hunch, stoop, and squat.



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ANNEX B

What is Cultural Capital?

Cultural capital is the accumulation of knowledge, behaviours, and skills that a child can draw upon and which demonstrates their cultural awareness, knowledge and competence; it is one of the key ingredients a child will draw upon to be successful in society, their career and the world of work.

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Policy Rationale

At St Mark's, we recognise that for children to aspire and be successful academically and in the wider areas of their lives, they need to be given rich and sustained opportunities to develop their cultural capital.

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Summary of the key areas of coverage for each area of Cultural Capital Development:

Personal development

1. Values based learning
2. Personal, Social and Health Education provision (through HeartSmart);
3. The school's wider pastoral framework;
4. 'Growth mindset' support – through Teaching and Learning policy;
5. Transition support (Year 2/3 and Year 6/7);
6. Work to develop confidence through positive relationships (Behaviour and Personal Development Policy);
7. Activities focused on building self-esteem (through HeartSmart);
8. Mental Health & well-being provision.

Social Development

1. Personal, Social and Health Education provision;
2. Volunteering and charitable work – eg. raising funds for charities (Local, National and Global charities chosen by school communities ; links with Wittington House Residential Home
3. Pupil Voice –School Council, House Captains
4. Child and Family Support Worker support;
5. Provisions linked to working towards school's accreditation of the Mental Health Award
6. Pastoral support from all staff



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Physical Development

1. The Physical Education curriculum;
2. Healthy Eating policies and catering provision;
3. Anti-bullying and safeguarding policies and strategies, including the child-friendly policy
4. The Health Education dimension of the PSHE programme, including strands on drugs, smoking and alcohol;
5. The extra-curricular clubs related to sports and well-being (Outdoor Learning);
6. The celebration of sporting achievement including personal fitness and competitive sport (Sports Awards);
7. Activity-based residential visits.
8. Design and Technology units related to food preparation and nutrition;

Spiritual Development

1. The Religious Education Curriculum;
2. Our Acts of Collective worship Class Worship
3. Mirrors, Windows, Doors Reflection (spirituality book)
4. Support for the expression of individual faiths;
5. Inter-faith and faith-specific activities – Major Christian, Jewish, Islam, Hindu festivals taught marked
6. Visits to religious buildings and centres, including regular visits to St Mark's C of E church

Moral Development

1. School's Christian Values Led Approach
2. The Religious Education Curriculum;
3. The school's Behaviour policy;
4. Contributions to local, national and international charitable projects.

Cultural Development

1. Commitment to focusing on Global issue within each topic (Global Neighbours)
2. Citizenship education through PSHE;
3. Arts education including Music and Drama;
4. Access to the languages and cultures of other countries through the Geography and MFL curriculum;
5. Promotion of racial equality and community cohesion through the school's ethos, informing all policy and practice.

Each curriculum area makes its own contribution to children's cultural capital development and supports SMSC across the school.



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References used in this policy

Making Good Teaching Great – Chris Quigley p10, p28-p34

Towards Successful Learning – Di Pardoe

Mind Maps - Tony Buzan

Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction: <https://teacherofsci.com/principles-of-instruction/>

https://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/teaching-strategies-deeper-learning.shtml deeper learning

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/metacognition-and-self-regulated-learning/> - MetaCognition Education Endowment Foundation – [Click here for Summary](#)

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/> - Teaching and Learning Toolkit

<https://exceedacademiestrust.co.uk/vocabularygap/> -

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/dylan-wiliam-collaborative-learning/> - Collaborative Learning

<https://learningpowerkids.com/challenging-learning/> - Challenge

<https://teacherhead.com/2018/06/10/exploring-barak-rosenshines-seminal-principles-of-instruction-why-it-is-the-must-read-for-all-teachers/>



http://www.deansforimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/The_Science_of_Learning.pdf

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<https://teacherhead.com/2017/09/06/the-learning-rainforest/>

Signed:  (Headteacher)

Date of this Policy: Autumn 2025

Responsibly: SLT & Full Governing Board

Next Review: Autumn 2026