JOHN BALL
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Torridon Juniors

Environment for Learning Policy
September 2015

"Have nothing in your house that is neither useful nor beautiful."

William Morris

"If you put people in world-class environments, they'll give you world-class behaviour to go along with it."
Bill Strickland

"Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren't used to an environment where excellence is expected."
Steve Jobs

1. Basic Principles underpinning this policy

We firmly believe that the environment drives behaviour and that we cannot separate ourselves from it. Our commitment to developing and maintaining the highest quality environment is a central strategy in our effort to raise standards within the context of a rich and varied curriculum.

People tend to respect and look after an environment that has a pleasant, orderly and cared for appearance, and one that they or their peers have helped to create. Adults and young people have a right to the best that can be provided.

In our schools we aim to create a learning environment both within and out with classrooms that stimulates and promotes learning at all times. All staff should regularly review the learning environment they are responsible for to ensure that it supports and promotes learning and doesn't in fact prove to be a barrier to children's learning.

All resources in classrooms, corridors and shared areas should promote or support learning; they should aim to raise self-esteem and they should show respect for learning and for learners. In all cases these resources should be useful, informative and attractive.

2. Purpose of the policy

- To make clear to all members of the school community that the visual appearance of the school contributes to its image and ethos and directly effects the quality of learning and behaviour

- To make clear how all members of the school community can contribute to providing an environment where pupils and staff feel safe, secure and confident in classrooms and around the school premises.

- To make clear the basic conditions and non-negotiables for an effective classroom.

3. Objectives of the Policy for the Learning Environment

- To enable the learning environment to give positive messages to young people. This includes messages about equality of opportunity, the value of learning, collective responsibilities, cultural diversity and the importance of quality. In brief, the learning environment should reflect the school code of conduct.

- To provide a safe, caring, comfortable, welcoming atmosphere and a challenging, attractive and well-maintained environment in which we can stimulate, maintain and develop lively enquiring minds.

- To ensure that equality of opportunity is reflected in the learning environment.

4. An effectively organised space for learning will:

- Be well organised, clean and tidy. When someone walks into the pace their eyes should be caught by engaging spaces with great learning on display.

- Have surfaces that are clear unless used for display or storage of resources

- Have no piles of paper etc

- Have clear and definable areas for the core subjects and main topic focus that contain appropriate resources and display areas

- Have tables that are arranged so that all pupils can learn collaboratively and can access the whiteboard and learning walls

- Have equipment that is stored appropriately in middle of tables in tidy boxes etc

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- Have exercise book stored centrally or in trays

- Have trays and resources that are labelled clearly and accessible for all children

- Have art equipment that is stored neatly and is accessible for children

- Have clear pathways so that children can circulate easily

- Ensure technology is available for integrated learning

5. **Display in classrooms and common areas**

Displays perform a number of functions:

- The quality of display work within a school reflects the values and ethos of the school. It can give powerful messages about the value the school places on learning and learners, about equality of opportunity, cultural diversity and the importance of quality.

- Displays reflect back what students have achieved and show what is possible. They can give positive recognition for a quality piece of work and as such are seen as rewarding and affirming of a young person's worth.

- Displays can arouse curiosity or stimulate enquiry.

- They can provoke discussion and questioning.

- They can give students a chance to grasp visually an explanation they might not have understood aurally.

- Displays allow spatial learners an opportunity to look at diagrammatic representations.

- They enable students who have missed parts of a topic to catch up without feeling awkward, (possibly with the help of a friend).

- They can provide step-by-step explanations of a long process

- Displays can help in re-orientating those students for whom school life is just an intermittent interruption to a distracting or threatening outside life.

- Displays can reinforce the school's Equal Opportunities policy by acknowledging and celebrating the richness and diversity of society.

- They can make the environment attractive, and can be enjoyed and appreciated.

6. Procedures and protocol for display

- At the beginning of a school year, when you are getting to know a class, it is important to make sure that the classroom is a lively and visually stimulating place. The first displays will be your displays. Remember, nursery and primary classrooms should be visually rich environments. Particularly for students straight from primary school, a bare looking classroom with no display sends a powerfully negative message – learning will be dull from now on.

- As soon as you have your class established, you will want to get examples of students' work up on the walls. It is a good idea to do some art work with pupils quickly at the start of the year and display it effectively to show pupils how much you value their work.

- Ensure that displays and presentations are non-discriminatory and represent the full range of role models. Displays should reflect and celebrate the diversity of our school community.

- The quality of students' work on display should be high and should come from a range of pupils with various levels of ability.

- Displays should be well maintained, and modified or dismantled when they have 'run their educational course', rather than being allowed to 'age' or disintegrate. They should be removed immediately if they have been damaged.

To ensure displays are of the highest quality, all staff will:

- Move beyond the board so that displays are an intrinsic part of the learning process e.g. tables or surfaces in front of the display to show resources, artefacts and books

  Choose colours carefully so that they complement each other and display the learning at its best. Deep, rich colours are best and support the learning rather than detract from it

- Work should be trimmed and mounted carefully; otherwise it shows little respect for the time and effort put into it by the pupils. Work for display in classrooms and corridors should be double mounted, black first to create effect. Only use Pritt Stick so that learning does not bubble, glued to the edge so that learning doesn't curl.

- Do not include too much material in your display but do not leave the wall looking bare; this lessens impact and effectiveness.

- Displays usually require some explanation. Labels and captions should be carefully prepared and positioned. These should be a mix of computer generated text (Primary Sassoon or comic sans are best) or handwritten by staff to exemplify the good models.

- Displays should not be stuck on to newly painted or plastered walls.

Highly effective displays promote learning by:

- Having questions or thought bubbles; children's comments and thoughts should be included

- Including word banks / key vocabulary

- Including connections and thought lines

- Including photographs of the children taking part in the learning that the display is about

- Including artefacts to evoke curiosity

The majority of what is on display should be children's work and not a display of adult or commercially produced products. These can be used as part of display. Teachers might produce such a display to start off a topic but quickly the work of children should be displayed.

7. Book areas and libraries

Every classroom will have a book area that promotes the centrality of reading and literature in our curriculum and support children in developing a love of reading. Exploring books gives children the opportunity to develop their vocabulary, enter imaginary worlds and answer their many questions

Book areas need to be bright, stimulating and accessible. There should be a variety of seating such as chairs, sofas, bean bags and cushions. Carpets or rugs add comfort and help the area to be welcoming. Strategically placed bookshelves and canopies can help to create a feeling of "quiet escapism".

All books should be of good quality. They should always be displayed with the title showing either cover forwards our spine out. Books can also be stored in baskets where shelf space is limited.

8. Interest tables and interactive displays

Interest tables and interactive displays support children in developing the basis for questioning that enable them to develop lines of inquiry and themes for investigation. By displaying a range of books and resources, alongside questions, prompts and explanations, staff can support children in developing an overview of the broad themes and concepts within a given area of study. By stimulating children's interest and curiosity in the world around them, develop skills that will support children as learners.

In setting up interest tables and interactive displays, staff will:

- Include a selection of books that provide good models of authorship and engage readers

- Include physical resources that children can pick up, explore and use

- Include questions and explanation prompts that encourage "looking" and also model good handwriting

- Use material / fabrics to create an attractive and engaging display

- Includes child's written responses, questions and hypotheses related to the theme

- Ensure they change regular and reflect current learning

9. Learning Walls

Learning Walls are the "brain on the page" for the whole class and reflect the current thinking and learning. They provide support for children as they engage in independent learning.

Learning walls should be positioned around and close to the focal teaching point e.g. IWB, so that they can be sued interactively as the class engages in learning. Whilst learning walls are necessarily a "work in progress", they should be sufficiently organised so that children can easily access the thinking, modelling and conjecturing they contain.

Quality indicators of effective learning walls:

- They reflect the ideas, strategies and skills being developed of the week / half term

- They celebrate ideas and connections being made

- They contain rough notes, diagrams, labels, pictures, photographs and questions

- The contain modelled learning

- They support learning by acting as a reference point for independent learning and self-assessment

- They reflect learning from across the curriculum

- They contain hypothesis and conjecture

- They contain thought and mind maps

- They contain "things" that children have added independently

- They contain "live" maths thinking and problem solving

- They contain key vocab, sentence and text structures

10. Health and safety

- **Appropriate ambient temperature.** Check the ventilation in the room. Is it too hot or too cold? Sometimes a simple thing like increasing the ventilation can cure the unrest that goes on when a class is hot and tired.

- **Lighting and glare.** Check the vision in the room. Is the board/whiteboard easy to read? If curtains or blinds are damaged, contact the Premises Manager immediately.

- **Health and safety.**
  - ➔ There should be no trailing or taut wires across areas that adults or students walk through.
  - ➔ Damaged or dangerous equipment should be removed immediately and reported to the Premises Manager.

Evaluate your classroom

Staff may find it useful to use the following checklist at the start of the year and indeed throughout the year, to ensure the learning environment is meeting the needs of all pupils at all times.

The aspects highlighted in yellow and the non-negotiables of this policy.

	CRITERIA	YES	NO	COMMENTS / ACTIONS
1.	HAS THE TEACHER ORGANISED THE SPACE AVAILABLE? • Is the classroom an attractive and stimulating place in which to learn? • Has space been allocated to different aspects of curriculum with headings eg: 1. Maths display area 2. English display area inc reading corner promoting love of reading 3. Science display area 4. Theme display area / World map 5. French words on display 6. A copy of the topic or curriculum overview and class timetable for the term should be clearly displayed • Has a working wall for both literacy and numeracy with frequent changes to vocabulary and models/images/examples of scaffolding /shared writing etc. • Have unwanted, unsuitable, out-dated, non-working, irreparable items of furniture (e.g. pianos, free-standing black boards, cupboards!) been removed? • Have the outdoor clothes/school-bag/lunch-box problems been solved and labeled? • Is furniture of a comparable size and style?			
2.	IS THE CLASSROOM CLEAN AND SAFE? • Is the classroom safe e.g. plugs, cables, flooring, pegs, school bags? • Are the fire exits and notices obvious and readable? • Is the classroom clean and tidy? • Do children have their own desk or labelled drawers for equipment and resources? • Are the children's desks or drawers tidy? • Does the provision and organisation of furniture take account of children's size and safety?			

3.	ARE THERE EFFECTIVE ROUTINES FOR • Giving out and collecting work • Undertaking a series of tasks without interruption? • Moving from one activity to another? • Ensuring children get help without disrupting the work of the class?			
4.	DOES THE TEACHER CREATE SPACE? • To allow pupils to work individually without undue disturbance? • To allow pupils to work together on more space-intensive practical activities? • To allow pupils access to suitable materials and resources-have these available on table surfaces? • To enable adults to move from child to child? • To allow the storage of key equipment? • To give everyone some 'personal' space?			

5.	ARE THERE SPECIFIED AREAS FOR?
	• Formal work?
	• Storage of belongings/ resources/jotters etc?
	• Specific activities as necessary:
	  • discussion/oral work-prompts displayed?
	  • book corner?
	  • collector's/messy/practical area(s)?
	  • art equipment/display/ activities			

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6.	USE OF CLASSROOM FIXTURES • Has good use been made of natural lighting? • Does the artificial lighting affect white, where pupils do close work etc? • Is there an appropriate temperature? • Is appropriate use made of different floor coverings?			
7.	ARE WALL DISPLAYS USED TO: • Enhance the achievements of all pupils? • Give guidance and information to pupils and their parents? • Clarify assessment criteria? • Provide an attractive work environment, often hiding unattractive areas? • Provide a stimulus for further work? • Designate storage areas? • E.g. timetables, groups (lit/num/reading), days for PE/HW,			
8.	DO WALL DISPLAYS: • Contain at least 50% of pupils' work? A judicious use of commercial products such as Sparklebox is made • Involve the pupils in presentation? • Show pupils' names, titles etc? • Comments from pupils (speech bubbles) • Relate to current/recent class work? • Captions of learning experiences • Labels of learning outcomes • Use photographs to show learning happening • Relate to several areas / components of the curriculum? • Denote the class's territory • Illustrate clean, well-presented and attractive work? • Progress with the learning – reflect process i.e. planning (KWL), carrying out tasks, reporting back • Teacher modelled writing on sugar paper for ref. area. • Prompts for SEN children eg visual timetables			

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9.	ORGANISATION OF RESOURCES? • ==Are materials and equipment are in good order, labelled, tidily stored and accessible to children?== • ==Are resources limited to those needed every day? Those needed frequently? Those needed once or twice a term?== • ==Are all other resources removed?==			
10.	HAS THE TEACHER • Made explicit what children can and cannot use: safety, age and experience of pupils, scarcity, cost etc? • Put resources on show where pupils can see them and get them? • Labelled the resource, the box, the number and the place where it is stored e.g. 20 pairs of scissors? • Explained the layout of resources to pupils? • Delegated responsibility to individual pupils for the smooth running of the classroom and trained these pupils?			
11.	HOW ARE THE CHILDREN ORGANISED AND WHY? • Individuals • Group • Class • Social/mixed attainment groups • Attainment			