



# **Dissemination of Good Practice Policy**

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## **Policy Rationale**

‘As we teach we learn’. This motto reflects a core value of Whitehouse Primary School and Nursery Unit. If we teach effectively we will also learn from our practice. The best practitioners are those who plan carefully, monitor their progress systematically and evaluate their work robustly. This changes their future practice and promotes quality learning for their pupils.

This cycle is powerful for individual teacher’s performance. If all teachers, however, are involved in such reflective practice the combined effect on learning across the school will be significant.

If, however, teachers are willing to share their successes and challenges then powerful whole school learning can be achieved. This ‘multiplier effect’ is an aspiration of all ambitious schools.

We believe this model of professional development can be facilitated by a Dissemination of Good Practice Policy. This policy needs to be drafted as an agreed document. The Governors, Principal and the SLT must also be prepared to facilitate this process through their leadership, resourcing and encouragement.

### **What is dissemination of good practice?**

It describes the process by which professionals work collaboratively to share their combined experience, knowledge and skills to improve performance.

This sharing can be between two colleagues or across a department, Key Stage or the whole school. It can even be sharing with other schools, sectors or even internationally.

At its best, it is a collaborative and voluntary process entered into by professionals who want to improve their best practice.

Dissemination of good practice, if really profitable, needs to have an impact on future performance. When we disseminate good practice it should have a goal of improving the work of teachers and the learning of pupils. Schools can share practice without it being properly utilised.

We feel that dissemination requires the sharing to be clear, honest and combined with practical suggestions. Those receiving the information must be willing to develop, have the opportunity to reflect upon learning and the resourcing to implement real innovation.

### **Why do we disseminate good practice?**

- ✓ To improve the learning of individual pupils and the school as a whole.
- ✓ To increase the effectiveness of individual staff and the school as a whole.
- ✓ To affirm the practice of individuals and the staff as a whole.
- ✓ To facilitate subject development and the monitoring of curricular development.
- ✓ To maintain an 'open classroom' culture and promote whole school change.
- ✓ To maximise the value for money of staff training investments.
- ✓ To facilitate the development of staff as leaders and 'expert' practitioners.

### **What facilitates the effective dissemination of good practice?**

- ✓ Its implementation needs to be intentional and linked to the school's strategic vision.
- ✓ The Governors and SLT must plan for it systematically and resource it adequately.
- ✓ There must be a policy and associated protocols that are 'owned' by the staff.
- ✓ Staff members need to feel valued and know that their development is a priority.
- ✓ Feedback on practice shared must be respectful, professional and constructive.
- ✓ Shared practice must have a meaningful purpose and audience. It must never be done as an exercise or a 'tick box' process.
- ✓ Its successes are recognised and celebrated.

### **How do we disseminate good practice?**

- ✓ We value the everyday sharing of good practice and resources that happens organically. Our school culture is built around care of individuals and a desire to do our best for the children. This creates an openness that encourages staff sharing their ideas and work freely.

Every week teachers are provided with time to work in their year groups. This allows time for systematic evaluation on the previous week's teaching and the planning ahead for the coming week/s. We believe this is a valuable opportunity for quality and meaningful sharing.

- ✓ We feel that as a staff we have informal networks of support. Teamwork is a core value. As a staff we are committed to helping each other. This means we are open to others asking for our advice and willing to approach others for their help. There is a recognition that asking for the experience of others is a sign of strength and confidence.

Our more structured methods for disseminating good practice include:

- ✓ In November and February the Communication Team and the Using Mathematics Team evaluate teachers' work. This may include planners and evaluations, pupils' books, sampling of certain activities or tracking certain pupils' progress.

The team leaders create a portfolio of good practice (with comments why the samples have been selected), a list of strengths and areas for future development. These materials are shared at a staff meeting and the portfolios distributed. It is a stimulus for dynamic discussion as well as an affirming experience.

When the next cycle is repeated the team leaders will assess if progress has been made on the areas of development.

- ✓ Upon the completion of every half-term topic teachers complete an evaluation of their work. They reflect on both their successes and challenges. They also consider their future plans.

The heads of Key Stage will read the evaluations and assess the quality of the process. The heads of department will then discuss the obvious strengths and areas for development in this process of evaluation.

After every cycle the SLT will issue a summary of the feedback from teachers' evaluations. It will also highlight areas of good practice to be considered by others. Staff will also be asked to consider perceived areas of weakness in the process.

- ✓ Classroom Visits:

We encourage an 'open door' culture. Individuals are free to request the opportunity to visit other teachers' rooms and even other setting to learn how to enrich their practice. By the use of internal cover and, if required, additional substitute teachers the SLT is enthusiastic to allow for this form of dissemination. There is no rigid timetabling for this process. It is provided when required.

If teachers visit other rooms/settings they are required to list it on their training log and reflect upon it in their learning journal. After the visit the observer is encouraged to give positive feedback to the host teacher. This should be done at a mutually agreed time. A maximum of five working days should elapse before this is completed. The principal only requires a form to be completed dating the observation, its purpose and the general success of the visit. If agreeable to all involved, a brief list of learning points and future actions may be listed.

In addition to these flexible visits we have our regular P.R.S.D. observations. These usually occur in November and March. Though individuals are able to select their own development targets teachers generally opt for a minimum of two that are shared. These targets are linked strongly to the SDP targets.

After these observations are completed teachers will get individual feedback. The observers will also make a list of strengths they observed during their classroom visits. At a staff meeting after the P.R.S.D. feedback is completed teachers will meet in their departments. The head of Key Stage will discuss the good practice witnessed during their visits. These will not single out individual teachers but rather describe the types of strengths observed. It will be a stimulus for discussion as well as a way to affirm good practice. Teachers are encouraged to engage in debate. The intention is that teachers will voluntarily share and reflect on their practice. These general discussions will be noted and recorded in Key Stage minutes.

The P.R.S.D. process is a statutory scheme that is rightly protected by the rules agreed by unions and the Department of Education. Confidentiality is a key principle of these rules. This process was suggested by our staff in response to discussions instigated by the SLT. If, however, any member of staff feels uncomfortable that their practice is shared in this way they have the right to be excluded from the report of strengths. This will be regularly reviewed and will be adjusted if required.

Prior to June of each year we ask all staff to engage in a voluntary observation. They select a colleague they wish to observe and an aspect of their practice they wish to develop. We encourage staff to try and agree on common areas of interest if possible.

Before the observation the teacher will explain their lesson and their learning intentions. The observer will visit the class for between fifteen and thirty minutes. After the lesson they will meet within five working days to discuss the lesson. The observer will record their visit in their training log and note their observations in their learning journal. The teacher observed will be affirmed by strengths noted by their colleague.

At a subsequent Key Stage meeting the teachers will be encouraged to share learning from their visits. The feedback shared will be based around the strengths provided at the interview after the observation. The minutes of the Key Stage meeting will note general strengths shared and any changes that the department intend to implement as a result of the dissemination meeting. It must be stressed again that these strengths will only be shared if the teacher observed gives their permission during the feedback interview.

If we wish to accommodate this type of professional development it must be resourced. Time must be provided for the meeting prior to the observation, release time for the observation and feedback interviews. Professional development is valuable but it requires investment.

### **Code of Practice for Classroom Voluntary Observations:**

1. Being invited into a colleague's classroom is a privilege that must be valued.
2. We must always be respectful and polite.
3. Confidentiality must be honoured.
4. Practice shared with other staff needs the explicit permission of the colleague observed.
5. Classroom visits should last no longer than 30 minutes.
6. Feedback should be given within five working days.
7. Learning journals and training logs must be updated after visits within five days.

### **Collaboration with other settings**

**Local Schools** - The school encourages partnerships with other schools to develop future practice. Our school engage in the Family Connection Cluster of schools as well as a very significant cross-community link with St. James's Primary School and Nursery Unit. This includes joint projects and combined training. A very key example is the combine SLT training conference every June.

**Local Clusters** - There is recognition that with the reduction of CASS that need to evolve new partnerships. Most recently we helped form the N.E.E.P. (Newtownabbey Pre-School Cluster.) This involves visits to each setting and combined training conferences. At leadership level we are very active in the Newtownabbey Primary Principals Group. This allows great opportunities for combined learning and cooperation.

**International Links** - The Governors value the use of international links to share good practice. Individual staff and departments are encouraged to pursue Erasmus+ grants to pursue profession development. These opportunities must be feed into the SDP and the learning/research shared with the relevant staff and Governors.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

After every cycle of classroom visits a brief staff questionnaire will be conducted. The SLT will review this for pointers or issues for development.

This policy will come into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015. It is due to be reviewed and updated by April 2017.