

June 2023

Arnage School Improvement Plan 2023-24

Dear Parent/Carer,

Every year we complete a new school improvement plan to detail our priorities for whole school developments over the coming year. This year we have focused on the three areas of:

* Vision, Values and Aims
* Skills for learning, life and work
* Improving attainment in Writing

Vision Value and Aims

Hopefully, all of you are aware of the work have been doing over the last few years around our vision, values and aims. We have our new vision, values and aims all written up and on display in the school. All the children know our values and we celebrate them regularly. They are less certain about our vision so this term the pupil council are running a competition for every child in the school to learn the school vision off by heart.

Skills

Our improvement work on Skills started this year. Mrs McKeitch and I have been undertaking training on how to develop skills in a primary school setting. All children in Scotland follow the Curriculum for Excellence, one of the core entitlements within this is: *opportunities for developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work*. Of course, our children pick up many skills in their time at Arnage, but it isn’t something that we feel we have been teaching explicitly enough. As a result, though children do have many skills, they find it very difficult to recognise and talk about them. Being able to demonstrate transferrable skills such as communication and team working skills is something that is highly valued by employers across Scotland.

This year we have adopted a new skills progression which details a range of skills and expectations at different stages of a pupil’s development. For example, within the general area of Social Intelligence we will be explicitly teaching Collaboration Skills and we will be looking for learners to show collaborating by:

* listening to others in a group, by the end of P1
* becoming more adept at taking turns and working within a group to complete a task, by the end of P4
* sharing, explaining and justifying their views and beginning to use language to influence others, by the end of P7

We have formulated a timetable for teaching these skills over the course of a year and starting next term we are going to have a Skill of the Month that we will focus on across both classes.

This year we have also taken part in the STEMazing project with our P4s and P5s – this was led by a woman who works in the Petro-chemical industry to inspire boys and girls to get into a career in science and technology, and to look at the skills needed in that industry. We also ran the Farmvention Challenge with the P5-7 class, this was based around the cattle/dairy farming industry. More recently the whole school have been taking part in the MacDuff Marine Aquarium project with two practitioners in the creative industries.

Writing

We are also one year into our improvement work on improving attainment in writing. We reviewed our assessments in writing over recent years. We have evaluated the way we currently teach writing and got feedback from the children on their feelings about writing. From this we developed a new grammar progression that allows us to accurately track and measure children’s progress right through from P1 to P7. We have also started to increase our use of technology to help with writing with some of our learners in P1-4 and all of the P5-7 class. This is enabling children to become more independent writers and increasing their skills in self-assessing and correcting their work. We have also undertaken training within our staff team around dyslexia friendly approaches to writing so that we are more skilled and better able to support our dyslexic learners. All teaching staff have undertaken training with leading educationalists around effective teaching practice and we are starting to incorporate our learning from this into how we plan, teach and assess writing lessons. We have also taken part in a moderation exercise across the cluster, working with other teachers to compare writing pieces and agree on standards.

Suggested Priorities for Next Year

Skills and Writing

For Skills and Writing we are keen to build on the progress from this year and take it into our improvement plan for the coming academic year. In writing we want to look at how we teach different genres and make sure we are planning well so that we cover all the different areas. We are also looking to research a new writing program called Talk-For-Writing which has been proving very successful in some other schools in the Ellon area who introduced it last year. With our skills work we need to roll out our skill of the month and really start embedding skills teaching into our everyday practice so that the children are starting to become much more aware of their skills and start using the language of skills to talk about their strengths. We would also been keen to invite parents and others into the school to talk about their work and the skills they use every day.

Quality of Teaching

Whilst there are bits and pieces we still need to do from this year’s plan around our Vision, Values and Aims, we feel that we have come a long way with this and it is becoming embedded in the school, so we are looking to move on to a new priority for next year. Learning Teaching and Assessment is one of four priorities highlighted by Aberdeenshire Council Education Services; *the right for every child to benefit from the highest quality learning and teaching, and to have opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to adapt, think critically and flourish in today’s world*. With this in mind, for our third priority, we are thinking of focusing our efforts on improving our quality of teaching. Researching and reflecting on how we teach the curriculum to make the learning of all the children in Arnage School as engaging and effective as possible. This year we have already made a start on creating a ‘what makes a great lesson’ statement, this followed on from Aberdeenshire sponsored training by world renown educators, which all our teachers attended. We are keen to engage with this in much more depth to really focus in on and improve the areas of teaching practice that have the greatest impact on our learners. We also want to work more closely with the children to find out what they think makes great teaching and learning.

Other Areas

Other things that we will be working on next year but that may not make it into our improvement plan as the focus will not be as sustained are:

Outdoor learning – we are hoping to undergo training on offer from Ellon Cluster that will give us good ideas for taking the learning outdoors. Katie Watson did an amazing job transforming our outdoor classroom into a much more inviting learning space in May and we have been using it every day since then. I am in the process of putting in an order, funded by the parent council, for an outdoor group shelter kit (a tarp and some ropes!) that will allow us to take the learning outside in all weathers next year.

Pupil Groups – We’re planning on continuing with our Eco, Rights Respecting and Charities groups as these have been so successful this year with so many achievements and such a high level of pupil engagement and ownership of the planning and learning.

Reading – We will be revamping our reading resources (reading books and support materials) for younger children and children with additional support needs. We’ll also be working on reading moderation with other small schools in the cluster to look at how we assess reading and agree on standards.

Your Thoughts and Ideas

The information above details the thoughts and ideas of staff in the school around what we think is important for our learners. But what are your thoughts and ideas? Below is a link to a form for you to have your say. We’d like to know what you think of the priorities we are proposing and also any other thoughts you have? What is important to you? Our plans come out of data we have collected, observations and chats with the children over the year, but if you want to talk to them about this as well and add any of their comments on the form that would be even better.

<https://forms.office.com/e/jC9PScMWM8>

Kind regards,

Mike Craig

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