



Personal Development & Mutual Understanding (PDMU) Policy

March 2025

RATIONALE

This policy has been produced to:

- Promote a high standard of excellence and consistency of approach amongst all staff;
- Communicate the main features of the teaching and learning of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) within our school; and
- Form a reference document for all staff members.

CONSULTATION

On-going self-evaluation is a key aspect of Botanic Primary School. When developing and drafting this policy, staff and the Board of Governors were consulted.

INTRODUCTION

Botanic Primary School is committed to promoting the holistic wellbeing and development of its pupils through PDMU. This policy outlines the organisation, teaching and management of PDMU at Botanic Primary School.

The policy is based on the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (2007) which is the starting point for planning a school curriculum that meets the needs of individual children.

WHAT IS PDMU?

According to the Northern Ireland Curriculum (2007), Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) is one of the six key Areas of Learning. PDMU focuses on 'emotional development, social skills, learning to learn, health, relationships and mutual understanding in the local and global community.' (Page 2, NIC, CEA, 2007)

As per the curriculum, teachers at Botanic Primary School should and can 'integrate learning across the six areas to make relevant connections for children. Teachers have considerable flexibility to select from within the learning areas those aspects they consider appropriate to the ability and interests of their pupils.' (Page 2, NIC, CEA, 2007)

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The statutory curriculum for PDMU is structured into two strands as follows:

Personal Understanding and Health addresses personal and emotional issues and health, wellbeing and safety matters.

Mutual Understanding in the Local and Wider Community examines personal and social relationships and the need for tolerance and respect.

The themes which make up these strands are:

Strand one: Personal Understanding and Health

- Theme 1 – Self-awareness
- Theme 2 – Feelings and Emotions
- Theme 3 – Learning to Learn
- Theme 4 – Health, Growth and Change
- Theme 4a – Safety

Strand Two: Mutual Understanding in the Local and Wider Community

- Theme 5 – Relationships
- Theme 6 – Rules, Rights and Responsibilities
- Theme 7 – Managing Conflict
- Theme 8 – Similarities and Differences
- Theme 9 – Learning to live as members of the community.

The minimum content for Personal Development and Mutual Understanding is set out below. Teachers at Botanic Primary School should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in:

Foundation Stage

Personal Understanding And Health

- themselves and their personal attributes;
- their own and others' feelings and emotions;
- their dispositions and attitudes to learning; and
- the importance of keeping healthy and how to keep safe in familiar and unfamiliar environments.

Mutual Understanding in the Local And Wider Community

- their relationships with family and friends;
- their responsibilities for self and others;
- how to respond appropriately in conflict situations;
- similarities and differences between groups of people; and
- learning to live as a member of a community.

Key Stage 1

Personal Understanding And Health

- their self-esteem and self-confidence;
- their own and others' feelings and emotions and how their actions affect others;
- positive attitudes to learning and achievement; and
- strategies and skills for keeping themselves healthy and safe.

Mutual Understanding in the Local And Wider Community

- initiating and developing mutually satisfying relationships;
- responsibility and respect, honesty and fairness;
- constructive approaches to conflict;
- similarities and differences between people; and
- developing themselves as members of a community.

Key Stage 2

Personal Understanding And Health

- their self-esteem, self-confidence and how they develop as individuals;
- their management of a range of feelings and emotions and the feelings and emotions of others;
- effective learning strategies; and
- how to sustain their health, growth and well being and coping safely and efficiently with their environment.

Mutual Understanding in the Local And Wider Community

- initiating, developing and sustaining mutually satisfying relationships;
- human rights and social responsibility;
- causes of conflict and appropriate responses;
- valuing and celebrating cultural difference and diversity; and
- playing an active and meaningful part in the life of the community and being concerned about the wider environment.

BOTANIC PRIMARY SCHOOL AIMS FOR PDMU:

In line with our school mission statement that our children delight in achievement, effort and respect, we aim:

- To provide a broad and balanced approach to the two strands within PDMU;
- To develop knowledge, understanding and skills across the two strands within PDMU;
- To develop Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities (TSPC) and social and personal skills within and through PDMU activities; and
- To provide a continuous and progressive approach to the teaching and learning of PDMU.

BOTANIC PRIMARY SCHOOL HOPES THIS WILL:

- Support the pastoral and behavioural aims of our school;
- Develop pupils' emotional development, health and safety, relationships and the development of moral thinking, values and actions;
- Develop the foundations for healthy, safe and fulfilled lives;
- Develop confident and responsible citizens who make informed and considered decisions; and
- Develop life-long mutual understanding and respect for others and the environment.

This will complement our school ethos that our children are encouraged, seen and valued.

CHILD CENTRED PROVISION

Inclusion

We aim to include and support all children so that they reach their full potential across all Areas of Learning including PDMU. Through our teaching of PDMU, we aim to provide learning opportunities that help pupils progress according to individual abilities, skills and experiences. We do this by setting suitable learning challenges and responding to each child's needs.

The teachers are aware of the requirements of Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (NI), and their pupils' abilities and so should plan pupil experiences accordingly. This may include following medical advice and advice from other relevant experts. Similarly, if a child is not progressing emotionally or socially as expected, there may be special educational needs, and so action must be taken to meet their needs. Where appropriate, children with special educational needs may have specific targets relating to PDMU.

Teachers will use a variety of teaching strategies, including whole class teaching, co-operative small groups, teamwork and individual skill progression. This may involve differentiation by outcome, grouping, activity, resources and/or support. This will happen most naturally by using open-ended PDMU activities. Activities can be adapted for challenge or to support.

Pupils will be assisted to access PDMU using a range of learning styles: visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. They may record and demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways according to their learning needs and preferences, including through the use of technology.

The teaching of PDMU can involve drawing on a broad range of real-life situations. Teachers should make every effort to consider the past experiences of the pupils they are teaching and possible sensitivities, especially of those on the Child Protection Register or with social services involvement. Of course, at times, these experiences may not be known to the teacher or adults involved.

Pupil Voice

When and where appropriate, pupils should be involved in the development of PDMU. Teachers are encouraged to find out what pupils know and at the end of lessons, what else they would like to know.

In Botanic Primary School, pupil voice is increased through the School Council and Wellbeing Champions. Each class also has a class suggestion box and a further school suggestion box is located in the main corridor. These initiatives support much of the formal and informal elements of PDMU.

As part of developing an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of the child, each class will create a class charter/contract. As pupils will have negotiated the content with their teacher, it gives them ownership and an understanding of the boundaries and expectations for a successful environment.

Extra-Curricular Activities

We recognise the importance of extra-curricular activities for personal development and encourage pupils to participate through a diverse range of opportunities.

HIGH QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

In Botanic Primary School, the teaching and learning of PDMU provides suitably challenging opportunities for all pupils to take part in lessons fully and effectively. Learning experiences should be active, practical and engaging. We make use of a wide range of resources and teaching methods to engage children in effective learning.

Subject Organisation

We recognise that a sound underlying organisation and management of PDMU is crucial to promote, support and encourage learning and the development of skills. Organisation will vary to suit the purpose, activity, skills being taught and children involved. Therefore, a range of organisational strategies are essential:

- High quality teaching of PDMU will follow a 'Plan. Do. Review' model;
- Activities will be differentiated according to maturity levels, behaviours demonstrated, age and learning style;
- Classroom assistants (if available) will be used with individual children and small groups, under the direction of the class teacher;
- At least one slot of PDMU will be timetabled in each class per week; and
- Teachers will submit their PDMU planners and evaluations five times a year. The PDMU coordinator will monitor these plans and evaluations.

Planning

Planning for PDMU is most often completed on a half-termly basis. Where there is a job share, classroom assistant or another teacher taking the class, they are made aware of the activities and skills being taught. Planners are shared on a planning folder on the school's network.

Planners will outline the day-to-day teaching including the learning intentions, activities and resources required. Teachers should refer to the statutory requirements of the NI Curriculum whilst writing their planners.

Whilst initial planning is **for** the pupils, at all stages children will be encouraged to become active participants in the planning/learning process.

It is expected that teachers will evaluate and modify their planning according to the needs, interests and perhaps cultural diversity of the pupils. Evaluations should happen on a half-termly basis, with the exception of only one submitted evaluation in term 3.

The PDMU coordinator has responsibility for overseeing and monitoring half-termly plans and evaluations. They will monitor the standard of children's learning by means of observations and photographic evidence. Teachers are encouraged to share good practice in PDMU, to promote annual events (as a class or as part of a whole school approach) and to make links to current world affairs/stories that have relevance to the pupils or have piqued their interest.

Planning for Progression and Continuity

Planning for PDMU builds on the earlier experiences of children and continues to help them as they progress through the school.

We ensure that the overall programme of learning in any class, and across the key stages, is broad and balanced across the two strands of PDMU and that there is continuity and progression in children's skill development and knowledge.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities (TSPC)

‘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 and TSPC.’ (Page 5, NIC, CEA, 2007) Therefore, through the teaching and learning of PDMU, Botanic Primary School aims to develop links with the TSPC framework.

Connected and Cross Curricular Learning

Recognising the requirements of the NI Curriculum, teachers are encouraged to make meaningful links between PDMU, other areas of learning and TSPC being taught. When planning for PDMU, teachers should consider the themes/topics of the class, experiences at that ages, pupil interests and annual and current events. This can create a broad, connected and meaningful programme.

Resources and Teaching Strategies

As much as possible, teachers should make use of a range of active learning strategies and resources that engage pupils and create a positive learning environment. This may include circle time, play, mindfulness, class contracts, talking objects, drama, case studies, debates, paired/group work, apps, websites, leaflets, activity-based learning, books, stories, puppets, games, songs and videos.

Lessons may also be taught from, or inspired by, the Living. Learning. Together scheme, NSPCC PANTS and CEA’s online hubs. In all cases, resources and lessons will be vetted by the teacher before use to ensure they are consistent with the school’s policy and ethos, and are factual and up-to-date.

The use of external organisations such as PSNI, Relax Kids, school nurses, NI Assembly and Love for Life can add value to the PDMU programme at Botanic Primary School. If education and/or health professionals from statutory or voluntary organisations are invited into the school, the activities which the agency or individual provide will complement the on-going programme within the school. Care will be taken to ascertain that they have read and are willing to comply with the school policy, that they know what has been taught in preparation for their visit and what will be done as follow-up.

Whole School Approach

School assemblies will be used to enhance the school’s PDMU programme.

Throughout the year, we may celebrate and promote events such as Anti-Bullying Week, Odd Sock Day, Children’s Mental Health Week and various cultural events.

Monitoring and Assessment

Assessment within PDMU will be used to promote and enhance pupils’ learning and skill development. It can also develop a positive learning environment, increase independence, and monitor pupils’ TSPC within a relevant context.

Assessment within PDMU involves any method used to appraise the children’s learning or skills, either individually or in groups. It will generally take the form of Assessment for Learning, following the belief that ‘assessment which is explicitly designed to promote learning is the single most powerful tool we have for raising standards.’ (Beyond the Black Box, Assessment Reform Group, 1999)

In line with CEA's document, Assessment for Learning in Key Stage 1 & 2 (Page 15, 2007), quality feedback is essential for effective learning and teaching within the curriculum. 'Feedback can motivate pupils by building self-esteem and reinforcing the positive...' Formative feedback:

- is timely;
- relates to the focus of the learning (learning intention);
- identifies where success has occurred;
- identifies where and how improvement can take place;
- allows time for improvement; and
- is accessible to the pupil in terms of meaning/vocabulary.'

Other forms of assessing PDMU which teachers may use include observations, class discussions, oral/written/visual or physical demonstrations, projects, homework, independent and group tasks and self-assessment.

Teachers are encouraged to upload photographic evidence of pupils' learning to the school website and create PDMU displays. This serves as an evidence bank and promotes the teaching and learning of PDMU.

The role of the teacher is:

- To increase pupil voice and become aware of the interests, cultural diversity and needs of pupils so that a relevant, engaging environment is created for the teaching and learning of PDMU;
- To be sensitive in approaches and embed active approaches to the teaching PDMU which are suitable to the learners;
- To use a range of teaching strategies;
- To follow a Plan. Do. Review model;
- To follow whole school frameworks and relevant PDMU policies including Botanic Primary School's RSE framework, Period Dignity Policy and Drugs Education & Management policy;
- To update PDMU schemes and resources as appropriate, whilst communicating changes with the PDMU coordinator;
- To plan a PDMU scheme of work which has effective cross-curricular links (where appropriate), is age-appropriate, relevant, progressive and continuous;
- To help children feel confident and comfortable within the environment through careful monitoring, observations and class agreements;
- To build secure relationships with pupils within a positively affirming environment which supports pupils' emotional development, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- To use effective questioning, praise and feedback to promote PDMU and to encourage pupils whilst also giving pupils time and space to ask questions;
- To teach PDMU in a way which highlights a passion, knowledge and excitement for the subject;
- To promote TSPC which are supported within a meaningful context;
- To embed assessment for learning within PDMU, feeding this information into future planners and evaluations;
- To evaluate PDMU planners half-termly; and
- To direct classroom assistants to work with individuals or small groups (when available).

Role of the Classroom Assistant

Classroom assistants can provide valuable assistance to the teacher in supporting the development of PDMU (formally and informally) within Botanic Primary School.

Confidentiality and Safeguarding

Due to the nature of PDMU and the topics discussed, the likelihood of noticing a safeguarding concern may increase. Staff should be aware of this when teaching PDMU lessons. Staff cannot give a guarantee of confidentiality to pupils around issues relating to safeguarding. If details are revealed that would lead staff to suspect that there is a safeguarding issue, the teacher must follow the safeguarding procedures outlined in that policy.

The child's right to privacy must be respected at all times by both the teacher and all other pupils in the class. At all times, Botanic Primary School seeks to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in an age-appropriate way.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Role of the PDMU Coordinator

In Botanic Primary School, all teachers accept shared responsibility for promoting PDMU throughout the school. However, one teacher has designated responsibility for overseeing this work. The PDMU coordinator is responsible for leading and directing the subject development, in consultation with the principal, teachers, parents and governors and in accordance with the school's development plan. It is the responsibility of the PDMU coordinator to:

- Draw up, monitor and evaluate a yearly action plan for the development of the PDMU in Botanic Primary School;
- Negotiate, in accordance with the whole school, the place of PDMU within the School Development Plan and be involved in monitoring and evaluating;
- Develop and disseminate knowledge and expertise of PDMU including new resources, schemes, and relevant organisations;
- If and when appropriate, organise relevant staff training;
- Advise and guide colleagues regarding required updates on planners;
- Oversee the progression and continuity of planners throughout the school;
- Formulate, review and update the school PDMU policy in association with pupils, parents, teachers and principal;
- Promote and disseminate the policy within school;
- Formulate, review and update the school Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE), Drugs & Harmful Substances Education & Management, Anti-Bullying and Cyberbullying, and Period Dignity policies in association with pupils, parents, teachers and principal;
- Monitor and review the teaching and management of RSE, period dignity and drugs;
- Undertake monitoring including lesson observations, reviewing photographic evidence, and examination of planning and evaluations;
- Help ensure that classes are properly resourced for effective teaching of PDMU;
- Promote the teaching and learning of PDMU through events;
- Organise partnerships and communicate with appropriate agencies;
- Commit to their own on-going professional development and subsequently inform the rest of the staff of recent curriculum innovations and research in the area of PDMU; and
- Maintain contact with all concerned: principal, senior management team, teachers, other staff, parents and pupils.

A CONNECTED SCHOOL

In Botanic Primary School, we believe that the education of our pupils is a collaborative enterprise involving teachers, classroom assistants, parents, pupils, external agencies and the wider community. In the case of PDMU, it does not begin or end in Botanic Primary School but feeds into family life and the community.

During the academic year, parental and community involvement in PDMU is promoted in a variety of ways:

- School performances and events;
- PTA events;
- Homework activities;
- Information sessions (at the start of the year and letters from the principal);

- Parent-teacher meetings. At these parents can discuss their child's progress in all aspects of the curriculum including PDMU; any problems the child may be experiencing; how the parents can help at home; and teaching methods employed in school;
- A formal report of a child's achievement and progress is issued in June;
- Visitors to the school (school nurse, PSNI etc.);
- School trips;
- Teachers receive and take account of educational information provided from pre-school / other schools when children enrol at the school;
- Teachers provide relevant information when pupils transfer to post primary/other schools;
- Shared Education partnership with Holy Rosary Primary School; and
- Use of the school website.

CONCLUSION

This policy will be in line with other school policies including:

- All Curriculum Policies;
- RSE Policy;
- Drugs & Harmful Substances Education & Management Policy;
- Period Dignity Policy;
- Pastoral Care Policy;
- Safeguarding Policy;
- Anti-Bullying & Cyber-bullying Policy;
- Positive Behaviour Policy; and
- Shared Education Policy.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY

Although the overall aims for PDMU teaching and learning are likely to remain fairly consistent, the practices will evolve over time as the school progresses in its development of PDMU.

The PDMU Policy is:

- Agreed with the Board of Governors;
- Shared with parents via the school office and website; and
- Regularly reviewed and updated in consultation with school stakeholders: staff, children, parents and governors.

Policy written by: H.Barnes (PDMU Coordinator)

Date for the policy to be reviewed: March 2028

