



St. Mark's Primary School

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy

At St. Mark's, our vision is to inspire success, as a community of faith and love, where high-quality relationships lead to high quality learning.

Curriculum for Excellence cannot be delivered without high quality learning, teaching and assessment. Fundamental to this are good relationships within a positive ethos and a climate of mutual respect and trust based on our shared values.

This policy outlines high quality practice in Learning and Teaching. The strategies should be used by staff working with children in order to enhance Learning and Teaching.

Updated March 2025

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Introduction

All staff at St. Mark's R.C. Primary School are committed to raising standards in achievement and attainment through effective learning and teaching.

This policy has been developed with staff and everyone with responsibilities for learning and teaching in our school is expected to be fully conversant with its contents and to make effective and consistent use of it in all relevant aspects of their work.

This policy provides the framework for effective learning and teaching across and within the 4 contexts of Curriculum for Excellence;

- Curriculum areas and subjects
- Interdisciplinary learning
- The ethos and life of the school as a community
- Opportunities for personal achievement

Aims

The aims of our Learning and Teaching policy support the school vision and aims and are based on the principles and practices of A Curriculum for Excellence. Our Learning and Teaching Policy is also linked to and supported by our Relationships, Learning and Behaviour Policy.

Both policies are aligned to and reflect the approaches and practices within the Edinburgh Learns Frameworks

Key Features

In our school the key features of effective learning and teaching are;

- Effective planning
- Effective teaching
- Effective learning
- Effective assessment and evaluation
- Effective feedback and identification of next steps
- Effective reporting to learners, parents and others

Curriculum for Excellence

4 Capacities

Responsible Citizens Effective Contributors

Confident Individuals Successful Learners

8 Curricular Areas

Languages

Maths and Numeracy

Health and Wellbeing

Religious Education

Sciences

Technologies

Social Studies

Expressive Arts

7 Principles of Curriculum Design

Challenge and Enjoyment

Breadth Depth Progression

Personalisation and Choice

Coherence Relevance

4 Contexts for Learning

Ethos and life of the school as a community

Curriculum areas and subjects

Interdisciplinary Learning

Opportunities for Personal Achievement

The 4 Part Lesson Structure

'maximise attainment and achievement'

Before the lesson, plan the tools you will use to maximise thinking, remembering to use ICT where appropriate. Make links to learning, life and work.

What will be memorable about this lesson?

Overview Phase

Ensure an engaging, high quality introduction at the start of the lesson.

- Share **Learning Intention**, process and sell the benefits (what, how, why?)
- Link to **previous learning**, in the same or different curricular areas
- Connect to the learners own **contexts and experiences**
- Engage pupils in identifying what success will look like (**Co-Constructed Success Criteria**)

Input Phase

Discussion throughout this phase. More pupils, less teacher.

Activate new learning through:

- Using a variety of learning styles to suit the pupils
- Ensuring a brisk **pace** where pupils are **supported and challenged**
- Tackling concepts in small steps
- Observing and listening to pupils: guiding and coaching them to **meet individual needs**
- A variety of **questioning** techniques and tools to promote thinking.

Processing Phase

Every child can demonstrate their learning (content and/or process) to partner, small group or whole class.

Demonstrate learning through:

- Enabling **personalised feedback** and/or self and **peer assessment**
- 'improving' rather than just 'proving' – get learners to fine tune, adapt and make changes during the lesson
- Reviewing aims, key words. Teachers elaborate, enhance and exemplify.
- Offering multiple ways of demonstrating learning

Plenary Phase

Plenary activities to reflect on learning, transfer, connect, think of magic moments.

Consolidate learning through:

- **Structured active reflection** on content & process (learning intention)
- Seeking **transfer of skills** and knowledge to other areas
- Seeking feedback from learners on the **quality** of today's lesson
- Review this lesson (**success criteria**) and **identify next steps**.

Assessment

We use a range of assessment strategies in order to determine the progress that our learners are making, and to enable us to put relevant strategies in place, in order that we can most effectively meet our learners' needs. The assessment strategies that we use include formative assessment, summative assessment and diagnostic assessment.

We incorporate a range of formative assessment strategies into our everyday teaching and learning experiences, in order to actively engage children in their learning experiences, and to check for understanding throughout (**See Appendix**).

All teachers use summative assessments to determine children's progress against the benchmarks across the curriculum (**See Appendix**). Teachers use a range of summative assessments including national standardised assessments, City of Edinburgh Council Assessments, and assessments developed by the teaching staff.

We use summative assessment data that we gather to track pupil progress, and in a formative way, to inform the necessary next steps in teaching and learning. Our teaching and Early Years staff engage in regular moderation dialogue, to help to develop a shared understanding of what 'secure' looks like at the Early, First and Second levels of the curriculum.

We plan for ongoing opportunities for staff to engage in moderation dialogue at development sessions throughout the year, and there are opportunities to engage in cluster wide moderation dialogue.

Staff are encouraged to plan and reflect on teaching and learning experiences in collaboration with colleagues, on an ongoing basis. On an annual basis, staff will engage in a 'peer learning observation' and shared teaching experience.

Staff assess spelling and reading using the SWST and SWRT in June from P3 to P7. This information supports initial groupings for literacy, and identification of pupils for literacy interventions for the upcoming academic session. Children undertake a range of planned assessment across the curriculum, which inform next steps in learning and support reporting to parents. The children capture their learning during these assessment stops in their learning journals which allows pupils, parents and staff to record their progress across a level and throughout their time at school.

Learning and Teaching Approaches

'Learning should be constructed to challenge and motivate learners, help them take responsibility for their own learning and develop new thoughts and ideas.'
(Education Scotland)

Developing a Learning Culture

At St. Mark's all staff have high expectations and aspirations for all of our pupils. At the heart of this is developing an inclusive and supportive school ethos, and a culture of learning.

Mixed Ability Learning

At St. Mark's we know the importance of discussion and learning from others. Talk partners, shoulder partners and learning partners are some of the terms which describe pupils discussing together, planning together and cooperatively improving each other's learning together.

Established Literacy Interventions

We provide literacy interventions at St Mark's through Read Write Inc and Fresh Start. These interventions support our transient and EAL population, as well as those pupils experiencing ongoing difficulties with literacy.

Throughout their school day children have opportunities to learn in a range of situations and settings. This is dependent on the task or outcome and includes ability and social groups, individuals, pairs and trios, whole class or vertical groupings.

Teaching staff are aware of the range of preferred learning styles and individual learning and social needs of their pupils and within a school day are expected to use a variety of strategies and approaches to accommodate those which will include:

Mind mapping

Brain breaks

Investigative

Carouselling

Think, pair, share

Role play

Cascading

Scaffolding

Demonstrating

Experiential

Modelling

The learning environment, whether inside or out, must be one which provides conditions where children feel safe and secure, valued and confident in order to attempt new challenges.

It is the responsibility of the class teacher to know pupils as individuals and establish and build a positive relationship with each child and their family.

An active, challenging and personally relevant programme which involves and interests the children and takes account of their prior learning is provided.

Digital technologies will be used throughout learning opportunities as and when appropriate.

It is the responsibility of the class teacher to meet the learning needs of all of the pupils in the class. For almost all children, the mechanism for this is through an appropriately differentiated curriculum.

When a child continues to struggle to achieve despite appropriate differentiation, the class teacher will seek the advice and support of the Additional Support for Learning Service.

In order to best meet the differing needs within each class, pupils may receive additional support from either a Pupil Support Assistant or Additional Support for Learning teacher and these arrangements will be regularly reviewed. Where children are not given an allocation of time, the Additional Support for Learning teacher may support the class teacher with suggestions of suitable resources and approaches.

Class teachers are expected to support **all pupils** in their class to:

- Review their learning and plan their next steps,
- Provide differentiated activities to meet their needs,
- Prepare and support their pupils through changes and choices,
- Plan opportunities for personal achievement.

There are mechanisms in place to collect information about interests and achievements to support effective learning in school and to build on opportunities for personal achievement.

Contextualised and appropriately differentiated learning experiences are required to motivate the children and facilitate real understanding.

Within St. Mark's R.C. Primary, pupils have opportunities to work in teams to develop a range of skills. Such opportunities enable the children to develop the attributes of Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors through work in areas such as Junior Road Safety Officers, Eco group, Safe Includers Group, Reader Leaders, Rights Respecting Group, Enterprise Committee, Sports Committee, Digital Leaders, House Captains and Pupil Council.

Creativity

Creativity is a higher order thinking skill, which can help learners not only survive, but to thrive in our fast changing world. Creativity skills help learners to be:

- Motivated and ambitious for change;
- Confident in their capabilities and the validity of their own viewpoint;
- Able to transfer their creativity skills to other contexts;
- Able to lead and work well with others.

Creativity can be the hook which engages learners, influencing their attainment and achievement. In addition, as they are core to employability, creativity skills can help learners not only prepare for the world of work but also to shape their own future job opportunities.

Teaching staff signal clearly to learners where creativity skills are being developed within learning activities. In order to further the development of creativity skills, teaching staff actively explore ways of giving learners more responsibility for planning and managing a creative project, making learning activities more open ended and providing effective coaching support to learners as they develop their ideas. Teaching staff ensure that all children and are supported to develop creativity skills in ways which build on their personal strengths, whether as individuals or in group activities.

To further enhance our creativity skills, we use the **Edinburgh Creativity Skills framework** as well as developing strong creative partnerships with a range of partners.

ICT to Support and Enhance Learning

We aim to place ICT at the core of St. Mark's Primary School, providing a range of technologies, capabilities and the creativity for transformative, lifelong learning in the classroom, across the school and in the community.

In order to best prepare our learners for success in tomorrow's rapidly evolving and digital world, St. Mark's is aiming to deliver two key objectives:

- ICT is routinely and effectively embedded in all aspects of learning and teaching.
- Learners and teachers have personal access to ICT whenever and wherever it benefits learning and teaching.

Ongoing Digital Learning helps meet these objectives by:

- Providing access to up-to-date, authentic information from a huge variety of sources
- Allowing us to personalise and transform learning and teaching using a wide range of digital tools
- Allowing us to extend learning, collaborate and publish beyond the classroom
- Helping develop the learning, thinking and digital literacy skills vital for success in today's rapidly evolving, technology rich society.

Pupils in P6 and P7 with access to 1:1 devices will:

- Have access to ICT whenever and wherever it is beneficial to support learning in school.
- Make effective use of online learning resources and tools and a wide range of ICT applications to demonstrate and improve their learning across the whole curriculum.
- Develop safe and responsible attitudes and aptitudes relating to technology that will enable them to engage effectively in lifelong learning and the world of work.
- Agree to a code of conduct for the use of ICT within the school.

Staff will:

- Raise the achievement of all pupils through the development of ICT and the effective deployment of a range of stimulating and creative technologies for learning across the whole curriculum and age range.
- Continue to improve their ICT capabilities through the school and local authority CLPL programme.

Parents will:

- Access information about the life and work of the school via the school website.
- Work in partnership with the school to support learning.

Active Learning

Active learning is learning which engages and challenges children and young people's thinking using real-life and imaginary situations. It takes full advantage of the opportunities for learning presented by:

- spontaneous play
- planned, purposeful play
- investigating and exploring
- events and life experiences
- focused learning and teaching.

All active learning opportunities are supported through considered intervention, to support and extend learning. All areas of the curriculum, at all stages, can be enriched and developed through an active approach.

Children learn by doing, thinking, exploring, through quality interaction, intervention and relationships, founded on children's interests and abilities across a variety of contexts. All combining to building the four capacities for each child.

Practitioners plan for child-centered learning experiences and environments, which support and enable children to build on from previous experiences. Children are actively engaged in their learning experiences, and are involved planning and evaluating their learning.

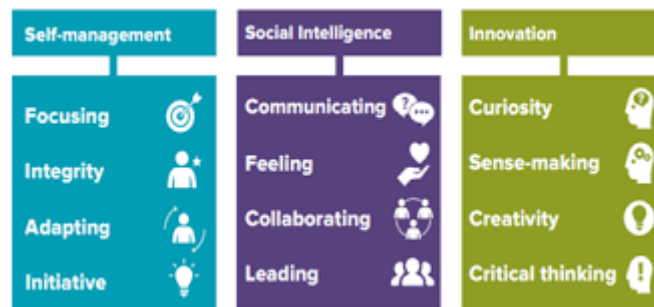
Skills progression

We offer a wide variety of learning experiences that require pupils to develop their skills in different curricular areas as well as transferring skills to different situations.

Across Early Level we have a skills progression that we share with parents. This helps parents/carers prepare their child for P1 and beyond. These skills are mainly life skills and will promote independence for our youngest learners.

Interest Centres provide our P4 to P7 pupils with a variety of opportunities to develop skills on a 3-4 weekly basis which. Pupils choose which Interest Centre they want to explore; this could be anything from running to knitting, and try to

develop their skills. We follow the Meta-Skills Progression Framework which focus on the following skills:



Interdisciplinary Learning

Interdisciplinary Learning, based upon groupings of experiences and outcomes from within and across curriculum areas, provides relevant, challenging and enjoyable learning experiences and stimulating contexts to meet the varied needs of children.

Revisiting a concept or skill from different perspectives deepens understanding, and can also make the curriculum more coherent and meaningful from the learner's point of view.

Interdisciplinary learning can also take advantage of opportunities to work with partners who are able to offer and support enriched learning experiences and opportunities for young people's wider involvement in society.

Effective interdisciplinary learning at St. Mark's:

- can take the form of individual one-off projects or longer courses of study
- is planned around clear purposes
- is based upon experiences and outcomes drawn from different curriculum areas or subjects within them
- ensures progression in skills and in knowledge and understanding

The curriculum includes space for learning beyond subject boundaries, so that children can make connections between different areas of learning.

Interdisciplinary learning is an important element within Curriculum for Excellence. It constitutes one of the four contexts for learning in 'Building the Curriculum 3'.

Outdoor Learning

Curriculum for Excellence offers opportunities for all children and young people to enjoy first-hand experience outdoors. Such experiences motivate our children and young people to become successful learners and to develop as healthy, confident, enterprising and responsible citizens.

Well-constructed and well-planned outdoor learning helps develop the skills of enquiry, critical thinking and reflection necessary for our children and young people to meet the social, economic and environmental challenges of life in the 21st century.

Outdoor learning connects children and young people with the natural world, with our built heritage and our culture and society, and encourages lifelong involvement and activity in Scotland's outdoors. The core values of Curriculum for Excellence resonate with long-standing key concepts of outdoor learning. Challenge, enjoyment, relevance, depth, development of the whole person and an adventurous approach to learning are at the core of outdoor pedagogy.

The outdoor environment encourages staff, pupils and parents/carers to see each other in a different light, building positive relationships and improving self-awareness and understanding of others.

We plan for all children, from nursery to P7, to engage in regular outdoor learning experiences, within our school grounds, local community and further afield. Our yearly program of outdoor learning experiences includes: a residential trip for P6 or P7 pupils, Forest Schools for targeted children and termly Woodland Explorers outings for our nursery children. We also engage in the RSPB Wildlife Challenge in P4 and the John Muir award at P5.

These experiences contribute to the wellbeing of our children, and enables them to become resilient, responsible citizens and successful lifelong learners, who value our landscape and culture and contribute effectively to our local and global society.

Cooperative Learning

In cooperative learning, pupils work together in small groups on a structured activity. They are individually accountable for their work, and the work of the group as a whole is also assessed. Cooperative groups work face-to-face and learn to work as a team.

In small groups, pupils can share strengths and also develop less established skills. They develop their interpersonal skills and learn to deal with conflict. When

cooperative groups are guided by clear objectives, pupils engage in numerous activities that improve their understanding of subjects explored.

In order to create an environment in which cooperative learning can take place, three things are necessary. Firstly, pupils need to feel safe, but also challenged. Secondly, groups need to be small enough that everyone can contribute. Thirdly, the task pupils' work together on must be clearly defined.

Cooperative learning provides an opportunity where:

- Learners actively participate;
- Teachers become learners at times, and learners sometimes teach;
- Respect is given to every member;
- Projects and questions interest and challenge students;
- Diversity is celebrated, and all contributions are valued;
- Pupils learn skills for resolving conflicts when they arise;
- Members draw upon their past experience and knowledge;
- Goals are clearly identified and used as a guide;
- Research tools such as Internet access are made available;
- Pupils are invested in their own learning.

Appendix 1- Learning and Teaching Policy

Formative Assessment

Learning Intentions

A learning intention is a description of what you want your pupils to know, understand or be able to do by the end of a lesson. It tells pupils what the focus for learning is going to be, and should be based on prior learning and understanding and put into the wider context to explain why we are learning this.

Discussing learning intentions helps focus you and the pupils on the learning rather than the activity.

- Should be child friendly
- Use learning language
- Use positive language
- Set challenging expectations.
- Focus on generic, transferable skills (decontextualised)

- Should be shared with pupils at the beginning of every lesson
- Displayed during lesson and referred to throughout

Good examples

- **We are learning to work effectively in groups**
- **We are learning to use evidence to support an opinion**
- **We are learning to carry out a fair test**
- **We are learning to interpret data**

Appendix 2- Learning and Teaching Policy

Formative Assessment

Success Criteria/Steps to Success

- Are linked to the learning intention
- Are specific to an activity
- Are **discussed and agreed** with the pupils prior to beginning the learning activity (overview phase)
- Scaffold and focus pupils while they are engaged in an activity
- Are used as the basis for feedback and for self and peer assessment
- Clearly displayed so that the children can refer to it throughout a lesson(s) to self/peer assess

A good example

LI: I am learning to write a story in a specific genre

or

LI: We are learning to write a specific type of story

Activity: Ghost Story

SC: I will be successful if I -

Set the scene in the opening paragraph

- Use descriptive language to build up tension/suspense
- Use spooky adjectives and powerful verbs to create atmosphere
- End with a cliff hanger

Appendix 3- Learning and Teaching Policy

Effective Questioning

High quality interactions between learners and staff lie at the heart of assessment as part of learning and teaching. These interactions should promote thinking and demonstrate learning and development. They should be based on thoughtful questions, careful listening and reflective responses and effective feedback strategies. Conversations about learning between practitioners and children, among practitioners and among learners should be part of the planned activities or experiences.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Practitioners use Bloom's Taxonomy as a framework for planning and reflecting on the range of questions that are used to stimulate thinking and learning across the curriculum. (See appendix)

From the earliest stages, children are exposed to a wide range of higher order questions, which they are supported to understand and formulate answers to. Children are also supported to create and ask their own questions, to help them to develop their understanding of what they are learning, and to support them to take their own learning forward.

Children are given regular opportunities to engage in open-ended learning tasks, which allow them to demonstrate their developing understanding in different areas of learning.

- Thinking time / Wait time
- Children are offered extended time to think, before being asked to answer a given question.
- No hands up Classroom Culture
- In order to ensure that *all children* are actively engaged in class discussions, all children are required to consider possible answers to questions posed. This can be achieved through the use of 'ask anyone' lollipop sticks. Any child can be chosen at random to answer at any time, which creates the possibility of any child being required to share their ideas with the class.

- Alternatively, questions can be posed to 'talk partners', requiring all children to share their thoughts, and in turn, listen to the thoughts of their partner.
- Talking partners
- Randomly generated Talk Partnerships will be created on a regular basis. Working in their talking partnerships, the children will have the opportunity to answer questions posed by the teacher, and to formulate and ask their own questions.

Appendix 4- Learning and Teaching Policy

Formative Assessment

Effective Feedback and Next Steps

Pupils at St. Mark's R.C. Primary receive regular and timely feedback on their learning.

Teaching staff are aware of their responsibilities to be both sensitive and constructive in their feedback where the main focus is on the learning intention.

Wherever possible, feedback is given during the lesson so that the children can act on this immediately, making such feedback more meaningful for pupils. This also picks up the pace of the learning.

Prompt feedback gives the pupil a sense of what has been achieved as well as highlighting those areas where improvements can be made.

Feedback is expected to encourage the development of a growth mind set.

Teaching staff understand that mechanical marking of written work does not help children learn and at St. Mark's marking focusses on the success criteria /steps to success, with appropriate time built in for children to read and reflect on those written comments in order to be able to improve their work.

At each stage personal achievements are celebrated and shared.

Review/Plenaries

- Pupils are actively engaged in the review process to inform next steps
- Explicit reference is made to learning intention(s) and success criteria.
- Pupils are encouraged to reflect on how they have learned in order to stimulate thought before future learning.
- Higher order questions are used to check a range of understanding.
- Support pupils to put learning into the wider context. 'Why am I learning this?'

Some suggestions for reflective plenaries are:-

Shorter Reviews

Plenary discussions/dice:

1. What did I learn today?
2. What did I find most difficult?
3. What could I learn next?
4. What did I find most helpful?
5. How did I achieve what I was asked to do?
6. How can I improve next time?

One Minute Challenge

With a partner talk for 1 minute about everything you remember about the lesson and share.

Review LI/SC

With teacher/group/elbow partners

Mid Length Reviews

Alien to the classroom

What would you tell an alien about what you have learned?

Puppet mistakes

Puppets make deliberate mistakes - spot them, correct them, explain why.

True/False

Teacher writes 3 true and 3 false statements. Pupils say which true/false.

Longer Reviews/End of sequence reviews

Vocabulary Challenge

List vocabulary used/learned in lesson, add to display.

Top Tips

List 3-5 top tips covered in the lessons. Compare lists with peers.

Quiz

Create a quiz for class, group. Complete a quiz in pairs, groups.

Review race

Groups/teams take part in a learning relay race. One team member records as much as can about a topic on a large sheet of paper (pinned up) before passing pen to next person.

Appendix 5- Learning and Teaching Policy

Formative Assessment

Teacher's Toolkit

- Think / Pair / Share Traffic lights
- Thumbs Show me five/fist of five
- Lollipop Sticks LI/SC (shared/created with children)
- 2 * and a wish Self / peer assessment
- Thinking Time H.O.T. Questioning
- KWL grids Mind Maps
- Assessment toolkits Mild/Spicy/Hot (Challenge Levels)
- Mini whiteboards/show me
- Green for Go! Pink to Think Feedback
- No hands up (if my hand is up I have a question)
- Child Friendly Scottish Criterion Scale (in Big Writing Folder on shared drive)

Appendix 6- Learning and Teaching Policy

Formative Assessment

Self and Peer Assessment

Early Level

- Use success criteria as feedback
- Strategies from Teacher's Toolkit
- Plenary discussions
- Partner feedback - 2 stars and a wish (verbal)

First and Second Level

- As above
- Checklists
- Cheers - pupils choosing a 'cheer' when they have been successful during a task
- Perfect partner - pupils are given a card when they show good partner or group work skills
- Traffic lights (coloured cups, cubes, fans) to be used throughout the lesson
- Writing partners
- Modelling - verbal feedback
- Ipad used to record and watch presentations to help with self and peer assessment
- Setting and monitoring own targets Partner feedback.

Appendix 7- Learning and Teaching Policy

Learning Environment

All classrooms are set up in an inclusive, engaging and stimulating manner following clear guidance from the CIRCLE document, which provides our children with an environment that supports and stimulates learning.

We use boardmaker across the school from early to second level as part of the Visual Support Project to label classroom and school areas. Every class has a visual timetable to support learners with their daily timetable and routine.

Children's work is celebrated and displayed in an attractive manner. Classroom displays are interactive, and adapted and changed over time. Classrooms displays

contain a carefully balanced mix of learning aids and examples of good work. An explanation of learning should be included as part of displays of children's learning.

Families receive feedback in a variety of ways, including the following:

- Regular Newsletters
- Class Assemblies/Learning Show Cases are held where learning is shared all families are invited.
- Use of school private Facebook group.
- Parental Consultation discussions twice a year.
Next steps are agreed between teaching staff and pupils, recorded appropriately and reviewed regularly.
- Annual Reports on Achievement and Attainment

Specific arrangements are put in place for individuals as required and may include telephone discussions, written communications, a range of meeting opportunities and home/school diaries.

Effective Reporting to Learners, Parents and Others

Parental consultation meetings are held twice a year.

Early in the new session parents are invited to meet class teachers informally at our 'Bring and Adult to school 'evening'.

In October and March consultations focus on the child's progress and next steps. pupils can attend those meetings with their parents.

During the school session discussions are held, as appropriate, with parents of learners whenever this is required.

Parents and pupils are encouraged to respond to all written information provided during the course of the school year and all comments are noted by staff with follow up action as required.

Quality Assurance

This policy on Learning and Teaching is evaluated to measure the impact it is having on continuous improvement.

This is a continuous process which takes place in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

The range of approaches taken are outlined in our Quality Assurance calendar which is agreed annually at the beginning of each school session.

The Head teacher is responsible for reviewing and updating this policy which is carried out every 3 years.

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