Teaching and Learning Policy

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Teaching and Learning

Our ambition is to create learning environments where students are inspired by the teaching they receive, are empowered to take advantage of the opportunities they are presented with and, ultimately, achieve excellence in their learning, thriving in all aspects of their development.

Our approach to teaching and learning is supportive, developmental, and collaborative, aiming to enable all our students to access high quality learning that fosters growth, engagement, and excellence in every aspect.

We encourage all staff to teach with creativity and flair guided by key teaching and learning priorities and high-quality professional development, to ensure consistently high expectations, support and challenge.

Core tenets of our teaching practice include:

- Developing and nurturing mutually respectful relationships.
- Inclusive and challenging curriculum planning.
- High expectations for all students, at all times.
- Regular engagement with metacognitive processes, for example retrieval practice, to ensure the long-term retention of knowledge.
- Clear identification of necessary learning objectives and outcomes.
- A broad range of teaching and learning strategies to support learning.
- Engagement with pedagogical and research-led initiatives to ensure practice reflects the best of what has been said and done.

The effectiveness of teaching is regularly monitored through our quality assurance processes. This ensures that strategic development priorities are identified, and relevant support implemented so that our students' needs are met.

Assessment

The overriding functions of all assessment is to allow students and teachers to evaluate progress made so far and to identify where gaps in knowledge or skills may exist, and to allow teachers to provide feedback on progress to allow opportunities for students to reflect and improve.

Our assessment methodology relies on a range of assessment, including both formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment should be seen in every lesson through questioning, discussion and review of work. This is likely to lead to instant verbal feedback and the frequency, specificity and immediacy of this assessment feedback is essential to learning.

Assessment of work should be in line with each department's scheme of work to ensure that students from comparable cohorts are being assessed using a common framework. We do not expect staff to mark all book work, only those pieces of work that have been identified within the schemes of work. All assessment pieces should be designed to assess understanding of specific knowledge or skills and should, over time, build an accurate picture of the learning that has built up cumulatively. On these pieces of work or assessments, students should expect to receive feedback in line with this policy.

Assessment outcomes are reported to students/families three times each year. This is to balance the need for accurate assessment information with workload for teaching staff. This means that some assessment information, particularly where used diagnostically, will be for the benefit of students and teachers but will not be reported directly to families.

For KS3, reporting of achievement is in the form of percentages achieved on common assessments. This provides clear and objective information that students and families can use to gauge their child's understanding of a topic. They are also provided with a 'cohort average' showing the average percentage achieved by all students within the same ability groups, which gives them a reference point to compare to.

At KS4 and KS5, student achievement is reported in terms of GCSE/A-level grades (as appropriate) and allows families to understand average achievement relative to ambitious target grades that are set and reported for each student using a range of indicators at KS4, and GCSE average point scores at A-level . Where necessary, these targets are increased to ensure the school reaches the ambitious achievement targets it sets for itself.

Importantly, both summative and formative assessment information leads to action. Whether that action is a deviation from the planned next task within a lesson, direction towards additional learning materials, feedback through 'next steps' or further support or challenge, there is purpose to all assessment for both students and teachers. We refer to this as 'responsive teaching'.

Feedback

Written feedback should be provided for identified tasks within a scheme of work so they are part of the formative assessment processes evaluating student progress and the development of student knowledge and understanding. All written feedback should be in the format of 'Next Steps' or 'NS'.

Effective 'Next Steps' should be personalised and challenging for individual students and provide a specific task for them to undertake immediately to improve their work or develop their understanding.

Examples of tasks that could be effective next steps are:

•   Rewrite your 1st paragraph to explain how…

•   Write a further paragraph to discuss…

•   Explain 3 advantages/disadvantages of….

•   Provide a further 3 examples of….

•   Demonstrate your understanding of….. by answering this…..

Students are given time to act upon 'Next Steps' so they can develop the quality of their work and improve their understanding. By engaging with 'Next Steps' in this way, we believe students can make rapid progress in their learning at a personalised level.

In addition to this, feedback can take other forms, including:

- Verbal feedback (whole class or personal)
- Modelling of excellent practice or exemplar material
- Peer or self-assessment against set success criteria
- Re-teaching of or addressing collectively common misconceptions/errors derived from in-class assessment
- Use of whole class feedback forms (example found within Team staffroom area above)

Students should expect to be held to account for the presentation of their work, either verbally or in writing, as it is one of our three non-negotiable expectations.

In order to ensure that students are rewarded and feel their efforts are valued, all staff should seek opportunities to praise students both verbally and in writing wherever possible. This should always be authentic and specific, so students are made aware of good practice.

Monitoring Teaching and Learning

Quality Assurance

The School's Quality Assurance processes provide a method for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school and within faculties to ensure high quality Teaching and Learning. The process provides opportunities to highlight areas of excellent practice which can be shared and disseminated across the school. The quality assurance process also provides opportunity to review school priorities and identify areas for development.

The schedule works on a termly cycle across the academic year and includes:

- Book reviews
- Homework reviews
- Learning walks
- Student focus discussions
- Completion of Faculty evaluation (summarising all the information gathered within faculties)
- Time for subjects to work upon actions generated through QA.

In addition to this, formal lesson observations and annual curriculum reviews add further opportunities for evaluation of teaching and learning.

Lesson Observations

Lesson observations are central in establishing a developmental ethos for staff members to take responsibility for developing their own practice through professional 'coaching' conversations with other colleagues. These conversations allow for challenge and reflection in order for teachers to continually develop their practice.

Teachers are observed twice each academic year:

First Observation: The first observation is joint between the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Head of Subject (HoS) or Head of Faculty (HoF). This joint observation ensures the standardisation of processes and facilitates discussions about teaching and learning within the school. If the lesson does not meet expectations, a re-observation process will be implemented. These expectations are based on the entirety of the lesson seen, not just the developmental target.

Second Observation: The second observation is conducted individually by members of the SLT and HoF. This observation focuses more on development, and the lesson should be chosen by the observee in alignment with their developmental target. If the lesson does not meet expectations, further coaching may be suggested.

Feedback will be delivered in a coaching style, focusing on self-reflection and professional development. Feedback is expected to last for approximately 30 minutes to ensure that the observer has time to ask guiding questions in a 'coaching' centred conversation to help identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Each observation will be for a minimum of 30 minutes and will be followed by feedback within 48 hours of the observation (wherever possible).

Expectations for Paperwork: Teaching colleagues only need to fill out the front sheet of the lesson observation proforma. Space is provided for the observee to include any contextual information they may deem necessary or helpful to the observer, however, this is not required. Colleagues are still required to provide a seating plan, tracking data, and a scheme of work (SOW). This ensures the observer has all necessary context to provide meaningful feedback.

To ensure a cohesive approach to professional development and lesson observations, at the start of the year, staff will choose a target from a range of options that align with the CPD focus and will become the focus of their first observation.

At the end of their first observation, teachers will agree on a more nuanced target related to their CPD focus for the year.

To support the exploration of their chosen focus, teachers will participate in three paired observations with colleagues from their CPD group. These informal observations will allow colleagues to collaboratively explore and refine their targets.

CPD

High-quality teaching is one of the main determinants of achievement. Therefore, we invest continually in teachers to ensure they are supported to deliver high-quality learning. We are committed to delivering effective, sustainable CPD for staff members and establishing an ethos whereby staff members take responsibility for their own professional development.

The key aims for our CPD provision are:

- To have a lasting impact on student outcomes through improved teacher practice;
- To establish professional development for every member of staff as the core of our school ethos;
- To create a shared sense of purpose;
- To tailor teaching and learning CPD to individual staff needs;
- To establish a developmental, supportive, collaborative ethos*.*

Our CPD programme is split into different areas:

- Teaching & Learning Pathway Groups – *to engage colleagues with evidence-based pedagogy focusing on areas for improvement within the academy improvement plan. Sessions are led by teaching staff.*
- Paired observations using the Drop-In function on Step Lab - *Teaching colleagues are paired with another member of their CPD pathway. Each pair will complete three Drop-Ins on one another throughout the academic year, supported by three structured coaching sessions. This provides an opportunity for colleagues to engage in professional dialogue, reflect on their practice, and support one another in improving teaching and learning.*
- Whole school delivery – on different focus areas.
- Curriculum Planning Sessions – *to give departments curriculum development time to embed CPD learning.*
- Enhanced Induction for new staff – *to enable new colleagues to quickly establish themselves within the school*

- Professional Qualifications eg: National Professional Qualifications – *to support the career development of established colleagues*
- Bespoke external Inset