

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Last update: April 2017

Introduction

The first statement of the aims of Katharine Lady Berkeley's school is to ensure that students are happy at school where they can be inspired to do their best as confident learners in an emotionally and physically safe environment.

This policy covers teaching and learning in its broadest sense: personal; social; academic; practical; physical. Through the development of these aspects of learning, we aim to enable all students at this school to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

The focus for teaching and learning will vary from lesson to lesson and from subject to subject but across the curriculum, three distinct but inextricably linked aspects to learning will be evident:

- The development of attitudes and attributes to support young people to be, for example: determined; adaptable; confident; risk-taking; enterprising.
- The development of skills, for example: literacy; numeracy; ICT; linguistic; technological; investigative; artistic and musical
- The development of knowledge and understanding, for example: scientific; cultural; historical; geographic.

In order to inspire students, we also recognise the importance of developing teachers as learners through their own professional development in order to ensure that we continually monitor, review and develop our own practice.

The policy consists of the guiding principles of effective teaching and learning and a list of the key features of effective teaching.

The policy is supplemented by an appendix which is designed to give teachers a more detailed understanding of the principles contained in the policy.

1 Guiding Principles

These are attributes that all teachers should seek to make evident in all lessons. The following inform the development of teaching and learning at Katharine Lady Berkeley's School:

- There is no one right way to teach, but teachers enhance their effectiveness when their teaching is purposeful, efficient, clear, structured and adaptive.
- Appropriately high expectations by teachers are of paramount importance.
- Effective teaching involves more than just exposition and arranging activities; the nature of the interaction is carefully designed, with differentiation matched closely to students' actual abilities and needs.
- Effective teaching is more than mere transmission of subject knowledge; it establishes active links with the rest of the curriculum and contributes to the development of all students' key skills.
- The effective learning environment is orderly, stimulating, attractive, safe and supportive.
- The effective teaching atmosphere encourages learners to value and draw on their own experience.
- Effective lessons are carefully planned and involve student participation as often as possible.
- Students need to learn how to learn in order to help them to use their initiative and to develop a capacity for independent work.
- Effective teaching and learning regularly features a suitable balance between whole class, small group and individual work.
- Effective learning occurs when students are given opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills they are taught.
- Effective learning design allows students to summarise what they have experienced and to reflect carefully on this experience.
- Effective teaching is complemented by fair discipline, positive reinforcement and explicit formative feedback.

2 Effective Teaching

All teachers will take note of the following elements and seek to make them evident in their lessons:

- The teacher has established positive and constructive working relationships with the class
- Superb subject knowledge to stretch students
- Interest and enthusiasm for learning
- Clear and explicit purpose
- High expectations of all students
- Systematic and effective checking of students' understanding throughout lessons
- Effective interventions which match students' needs and impact on the quality of learning
- Excellent classroom management
- Student participation and involvement
- Positive atmosphere, including the effective use of praise to reward good contributions and progress
- The use of a variety of teaching styles to meet the needs of all learners
- Confidence to make mistakes and learn from them
- Trust and safety
- Use of humour
- Effective differentiation in order to accommodate the needs of all learners
- Challenge to stretch students
- Stimulating classroom environment
- Appropriate pace of learning
- Punctuality at the start of lessons
- Well prepared lessons
- Innovation to meet the challenge of change
- Supportive and challenging questioning
- The effective use, where available, of teaching assistants and other adults
- High quality marking and constructive feedback

3 Monitoring, evaluation and review

Heads of Department and SMT will be well-informed about the school's teaching and learning strengths through the Teaching and Learning Review Days and through department self-evaluation. External judgements, such as those made by OFSTED and the School Improvement Partner, will also contribute to the evaluation of the quality of Teaching and Learning. These judgements will be shared with the Governing Body. The review and self evaluation processes will consolidate strengths and effect any necessary improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning takes place through a range of mechanisms including the regular observation of lessons which form part of the performance management and the Teaching and Learning Review Day. Lessons are graded by SMT using clear criteria which have been agreed with the teaching staff on the OFSTED scale of 1 (outstanding) to 4 (inadequate). Lesson observation feedback and analysis is focussed on the principles described in this policy. The proportions of lesson in each category are reviewed on a regular basis.

Heads of department will review with their SMT link and departmental team the quality of teaching and learning in their department. This review will be based upon lesson observations; achievement and attainment data; and work scrutinies. Performance management targets and CPD will be informed by this.

SMT will review annually the quality of teaching and learning across the school through department and year reviews and achievement and attainment data.

The policy will be reviewed every two years by the Governors' Teaching and Learning Committee.

Related policies:

Curriculum policy

Special Educational Needs

Single Equality Scheme

Homework Policy

Assessment and Reporting Policy

Please note that this policy incorporates the school's policy on Able, Gifted and Talented students

Discussed by Teaching and Learning Committee: April 2017

Approved by full Governors: 17 May 2017

Next review: Spring 2019

Appendix

This appendix gives further guidance and detail and is meant for teachers as a supplement to the principles and key features contained in the policy.

1 Questioning

Effective interactions between the teacher and groups of students or individual students are essential aspects of how a teacher enables students to make progress. Questioning students may arise as a part of developing new ideas, helping students when they are unsure of their work, or as a result of the teacher's observation of students' work. Questioning is also a key mechanism for a teacher to check the understanding of a student or a group of students so that subsequent teaching can be adjusted accordingly.

Skilful questioning involves listening carefully to a student's response and then, frequently, following that up with further questioning which enables the student to extend their own learning or to confirm their understanding.

2 Planning

Good teaching and effective learning at Katharine Lady Berkeley's School are not produced by accident. Planning is key to creating the conditions for effective teaching and learning. The National Curriculum and Examination Board specifications inform planning. These, in turn, influence schemes of work in each department. These schemes are held at department and individual level. They will act as a vital part of the induction procedures for new teachers and give direction to departmental and individual Continuing Professional Development plans.

From these schemes of work, subject teachers produce individual lesson plans. A school pro-forma document is available to assist teachers in planning lessons in accordance with the principles of this policy.

3 Assessment for Learning

Assessment for learning involves the use of classroom assessment to improve learning. Effective formative assessment should be embedded in the teaching and learning process and it is a key factor in raising students' standard of achievement. The key features of assessment for learning are:

Involving students in their learning

Lessons are better focused when teachers share objectives for a lesson with the students.

Modelling quality: showing students the learning strategies and goals

Assessment criteria are often defined in formal language that may not be clear to the student. It is important that teachers share with their students examples of work so that they can see the standards they are aiming for. Students who study the completed work of others will develop reflective skills and find out what it is like to take an active part in the assessment process.

Giving feedback to students on their work

Feedback is an essential element in assessment for learning. Effective teaching includes methods to interpret and respond to assessment information in a formative way. It is important that teachers build safe and secure relationships so that trust is established between teacher and student, prior to giving feedback.

Students benefit from opportunities for formal feedback through group and plenary sessions. Where this works well, there is a shift from teachers telling students what they have done wrong to students seeing for themselves what they need to do to improve and discussing it with the teacher. Giving feedback involves making time to talk to students and to teach them to be reflective about both the learning objectives and their work/responses.

Self and peer assessment

If students are to learn effectively, they need to identify any gaps between their actual and optimal performance. Students need to be able to work out why these gaps occur and they need to identify the strategies that they might use to close the gaps. This is something that has to be done by the students and cannot be done for them by the teacher, although the teacher's interchange is crucial to the student's understanding of what needs to be done next.

4 Differentiation

Differentiation is the matching of work to the differing capabilities of individuals or groups of students, including the most and least able, in order to extend their learning. Effective differentiation is essential when supporting the learning of any group of students to ensure that each student is able to make the best possible progress.

Whether a class is setted or mixed ability, it will have a range of different abilities. In their published reports OFSTED have made it clear that differentiation involves recognising the variety of individual needs within a class, planning to meet those needs, providing appropriate delivery and evaluating the effectiveness of the activities in order to maximise the achievements of individual students.

The traditional, and simplest, way of thinking about this aspect of teaching and learning is by considering two main types of differentiation:

- Differentiation by Task
Students of different abilities are set different tasks which provide each student with a level of stretch and challenge which is appropriate to their ability. For example, in a mixed ability group for mathematics, some students might be asked to solve simple missing number questions while others solve relatively complex, abstract, algebraic equations.
- Differentiation by Outcome
Students of different abilities are set the same task, but they will complete it in different ways according to their ability, for example, a mixed ability group of students could all be asked to write about the importance of going to school but the outcomes would vary greatly.

In practice, it is helpful to be aware of and to consider a more detailed range of approaches to differentiation which may be used as listed below. In all lessons, teachers would be expected to use a combination of the strategies described as appropriate to the subject area and the nature of the lesson:

- Differentiation by Questioning
When introducing new, or developing, ideas with a group, teachers often address questions to the whole group. In most cases, this will provide opportunities for differentiation through the targeting of questions at particular students and the opportunities provided through follow up questioning for individual students or groups of students to extend their own learning.
- Differentiation by Content
The students study different materials within the same topic area but do the same activities.
- Differentiation by Negotiation
The students study different materials within the same topic area and also do different activities. Teachers help students to select appropriate materials.
- Differentiation by Role
The students carry out different activities depending on the role they are playing in a simulation. The roles are matched to the abilities, aptitudes and needs of the student.
- Differentiation by Activities
The students study the same content but do different activities.

- Differentiation by Support
The students study the same materials, do the same activities, but receive different amounts of support from the teacher or from extra printed information.
- Differentiation by Gradation
The students are given the same information and activities. The activities become progressively more difficult. The students work through the activities at different rates and therefore only the more able do the more difficult tasks.
- Differentiation by Extension
The students study the same materials and do the same activities. Extension work is given to the most able after they have finished the basic activities.
- Differentiation by Response
The students are set open-ended assignments that can be interpreted at different levels.
- Differentiation by Group Work
The students work in mixed ability groups. Students help each other by working together and interpreting the tasks at different levels.

In working with any group of students, teachers must take into account and cater for the range of abilities and aptitudes in the group by the use of appropriate methods of differentiation.

5 Homework

Homework provides set learning activities outside normal lessons. It provides for curriculum enabling skills, enrichment and extension. There is evidence that regular homework makes a significant contribution to raising standards of achievement. The school's strategic approach to homework is identified in the Homework Policy.

6 Personal Learning and Thinking Skills

The development of Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) should be evident in teaching and learning across the curriculum. The development of these skills provides support to all aspects of learning and essential preparation for further and higher education and for employment.

Independent enquirers

Students process and evaluate information in their investigations, planning what to do and how to go about it. They take informed and well-reasoned decisions, recognising that others have different beliefs and attitudes.

Creative thinkers

Students think creatively by generating and exploring ideas, making original connections. They try different ways to tackle a problem and work with others to find imaginative solutions.

Reflective learners

Students evaluate their strengths and limitations, setting themselves realistic goals with criteria for success. They monitor their own performance and progress, inviting feedback from others and making changes to further their learning.

Team workers

Students work confidently with others, adapting to different contexts and taking responsibility for their own part. They listen to and take account of different views. They form collaborative relationships, resolving issues to reach agreed outcomes.

Self-managers

Students organise themselves, showing personal responsibility, initiative, creativity and enterprise with a commitment to learning and self-improvement. They actively embrace change, responding positively to new priorities, coping with challenges and looking for opportunities.

Effective participators

Students actively engage with issues that affect them and those around them. They play a full part in the life of their school, college, workplace or wider community by taking responsible action to bring improvements for others as well as themselves.

7 ICT and Learning

Information and communication technology prepares students to participate in a rapidly changing world in which work and other activities are increasingly transformed by access to varied and developing technology. Students use ICT tools to find, explore, analyse, exchange and present information responsibly, creatively and with discrimination. They learn how to employ ICT to enable rapid access to ideas and experiences from a wide range of people, communities and cultures.

Increased capability in the use of ICT promotes initiative and independent learning, with students being able to make informed judgements about when and where to use ICT to best effect, and to consider its implications for home and work both now and in the future. The programme of study for the development of students' ICT capability ensures coverage of the key ICT skills.