

St. Kevin's College

Teaching & Learning Policy



September 2017

Rationale

Continued and sustained improvement is dependent upon improving the quality of teaching and learning that is taking place on a daily basis. Our expectation is that all pupils are provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to consistently high levels of pupil achievement and skills for life.

Aims

By adopting a phased way to teaching and learning across St. Kevin's College, we aim:

- to provide consistency of teaching and learning across every year group and class;
- to enable teachers and support staff to teach as effectively as possible;
- to outline some of the **key elements** which are crucial to raising standards in teaching and learning.
- to set out a **broad structure** for lessons, based on best practice and research linked to how we best learn.

Key Elements and Principles of Effective Teaching and Learning

All lessons across St Kevin's College should include the following key elements to ensure high quality teaching and learning. New teachers to our college will receive training to ensure they fully understand these elements and to enable them to embed these strategies in their everyday practice. The key elements and principles are all underpinned by excellent AfL (Assessment for Learning). Both formative and summative assessments play a key role in AFL. AfL is the process of identifying what the learner has or has not achieved in order to plan the next steps in the teaching or learning. It involves using assessment in the classroom to raise

- to share the non-negotiables of the NI Curriculum's & Exam Board Specifications related expectations for specific year groups to help discuss individual's progress and levels of attainment;
- to enable children to learn as efficiently as possible;
- to foster a love of learning;
- to give pupils the skills and knowledge and promote the understanding they require to become confident, disciplined and effective lifelong learners;
- to value and respect all cultures;
- to provide a safe and happy learning environment;
- to raise levels of achievement for all pupils, enabling them to achieve their personal best;
- to learn from each other, through the adoption of a collaborative, enquiry based approach to teaching and learning, where good practice is shared;
- to operate a "no shouting" policy. In the same way adults are expected to be calm when interacting with pupils, children are encouraged to communicate calmly with each other;
- to manage transitions quietly –pupils move around the school building quietly

There is no single recipe for improving teaching and learning in classroom. However, this policy outlines some of the **key elements** which are crucial to raising standards in teaching and learning. It also sets out a **broad structure** for lessons, based on best practice and research linked to how we best learn.

Key Elements and Principles of Effective Teaching and Learning

All lessons in our college should include the following key elements to ensure high quality teaching and learning. The key elements and principles are all underpinned by excellent AfL (Assessment for Learning). Both formative and summative assessments play a key role in AFL. AfL is the process of identifying what the learner has or has not achieved in order to plan the next steps in the teaching or learning. It involves using assessment in the classroom to raise children's achievement and is based on the idea that children will improve most if they understand the aim of their learning, where they are in relation to the aim and how they can achieve the aim.

Planning

Individual lessons should be carefully prepared with all required materials and resources to hand before the lesson begins, ensuring a prompt start. Visual aids should be prepared and clearly displayed to aid the learning process. A teacher's planning is their most important tool. Consistently high standards of teaching can only be achieved if teachers are properly planned and prepared. Teachers plan on a 6 weekly basis using agreed planning proforma (Appendix 2). As lessons are completed, teachers evaluate whether the learning objectives have been achieved, this can be annotated on the planning. To ensure consistency and quality, teachers' planning is carefully monitored by the Head of Department. It is the class teacher's responsibility to ensure plans are made available to Heads of Department and teacher covering release.

Planning matches teaching to the different learning needs of the children (ie through differentiation). Teachers may differentiate the curriculum by: task, pace, outcome, time, teacher/adult support and will make it clear in the planning, how different groups are catered for through differentiation, for example by highlighting in a different colour, SEN, EAL, HA, LA G&T in the planning proforma, etc.

Learning objectives are shared orally and displayed:

All learning objectives are either typed on AfL proforma / written clearly in books. Learning objectives are skills based and not connected to the context of the lesson (eg: to be able to write complex sentences in my writing). Children are taught to recognise the difference between a task and its learning objective (separating what they have to do from what they will learn). When marking children's work, the main focus is on meeting the learning objectives.

All pupils are clear about how they will achieve the learning objective through clear success criteria and all pupils must know exactly what they are going to learn and what is expected of them by the end of the lesson. Learning objectives are the same for all pupils. We want all our children to access the same learning and it is through

the use of materials/apparatus that may differ from pupils to pupils. The Success Criteria should be recorded in the pupils books at the start of each topic or unit of learning.

To involve pupils fully in understanding learning outcomes, teachers will

- Explain clearly the reasons for the lesson or activity in terms of the learning objectives/intentions.
- Move away from saying 'today we are doing'and instead say 'by the end of today's lesson you will all know/be able to/understand....'
- Make learning objectives specific, eg: use of Bloom's Taxonomy.
- Use pupil-friendly language, there is little point in sharing learning objectives if pupils do not understand what you mean.
- Refer to them at the start of the lesson and during the lesson.
- Share the specific assessment criteria with pupils-verbally or written.
- Help pupils to understand what they have done well and what they need to develop. Looking at a range of other pupil's responses to the task set can help pupil's understand how to use the assessment criteria to assess their own learning.

Success Criteria (SC)

The recipe to successful criteria will link directly to the learning objective. It is displayed for the children to follow/typed or created with the children during the lesson or start of the topic; often the most successful approach when the children are actively involved in producing them. This can be achieved at the start of a unit of work or during it, after the pupils have gained skills and knowledge. Always refer back to the learning objectives and SC by encouraging pupils to reflect on what they have learned and what has helped them to learn.

- ✓ Pupils use the SC to self-assess their own or to peer-assess their partner's work.
- ✓ Pupils are reminded of the SC criteria during the lesson – often children's work is used to illustrate the SC/S2S criteria in action during mini plenaries.
- ✓ All learners are challenged appropriately.
- ✓ SC should be visible in planning record.

Use prompts like: (see **Appendix 1**)

What did you do today that you found most helpful when you were learning?

What did you do today that you found less helpful?

If you had to do the task again, how would you do it?

If you had to give one piece of advice to someone tackling the same task tomorrow, what would it be?

Something I can do now that I couldn't do before the lesson is....

At the start of the lesson, I didn't know....

Feedback and Effective Marking (see Marking M Leydon) is embedded in everyday practice and is used to inform teaching and learning. Pupils benefit from opportunities for formal feedback through group and plenary sessions. Feedback enables children to understand their strengths and weaknesses demonstrated in their work. Marking or oral feedback explains what the next steps should be and if effective, pupils will make excellent achievements by building on previous learning.

- Oral- making time to talk to pupils and teaching them to be reflective about the learning objective and about their work and responses.
- Self/Peer-marking- pupils will be encouraged to see for themselves what they need to do to improve and discuss it with an adult/partner or work it out independently.
- All pupils are clear about how they need to improve.

Marking is linked to the learning intention, reflects learning expectations and identifies, next step prompts and/or challenges to develop pupil's thinking further. Pupils are given regular time to address developmental areas raised in marking.

Pupil Self/Peer-Assessment

Opportunities and evaluation may be evident in planning or may be used during lessons when relevant. Once pupils understand how to assess their current knowledge and the gaps in it, they will have a clearer idea of how they can help themselves (and their peers) to progress. Pupils can look at examples of other children's work that does and does not meet the assessment criteria as this can help them to understand what was required from a task and to assess the next steps they might need to take and therefore set new targets. It is often helpful if the work is from children they do not know or work the teacher has made up. Self-assessment phrases are on display in all classrooms (**Appendix 1**).

Effective Questioning

Means challenging children to deepen their thinking. Teachers take time to plan effective questions which go beyond straight recall with strategies such as:

- Giving a range of answers for discussion.
- Turning the question into a statement.
- Finding opposites, why does one work/one doesn't?
- Giving the answer and asking how it was arrived at.
- Asking the question from an opposing standing.

Using questions to find out what pupils know, understand and can do in order to target teaching more effectively. Analysing pupil's responses in order to find out what they know, understand and can do. Using pupil's questions to assess understanding

Lesson Structure

St Kevin's College has different approaches to teaching, but teaching where pedagogy is sound and where there is accepted good practice. The structure of a lesson can differ within each class and the structure should differ for each lesson, if appropriate and this could be dependent on AfL approaches. The following are examples of sound pedagogy:-

Creating an appropriate working atmosphere:

Pupils need to be in an appropriate state to learn. St Kevin's classrooms should be stimulating, engaging, reassuring and organised; teachers and support staff are fully prepared for lessons, ensuring resources are prepared and on tables in advance of lessons; adults may need to sensitively engage with a pupil who is not 'ready to learn'

Linking the lesson to prior learning:

reviewing the previous lesson. Eg: *'Think about the three most important things you learnt in the last lesson – now tell your partner..... In two minutes, I am going to ask you what you learnt last lesson. You may talk to your partner if you wish.....Today's lesson is about the Weimar Republic. Jot down on your whiteboards what you already know and work in pairs.'*

Providing an overview:

The brain is more likely to absorb details when it can place them within a wider context. This is often referred to as *'providing the big picture first'*. Eg: Maths and English Learning Walls should display relevant materials, such as WAGOLLS (*what a good one looks like*) that the pupils can use to improve their independence. IPC displays in all classes include a topic map to enable pupils to see the 'bigger picture'. Pupils add their own questions and answers to the learning map (as the unit develops) and are encouraged to carry out their own independent research at home.

- **Sharing learning objectives with pupils:**

Pupils must know exactly what they are going to learn and what is expected of them by the end of the lesson. For learning objectives to be shared effectively (see above).

- **Short periods of exposition:**

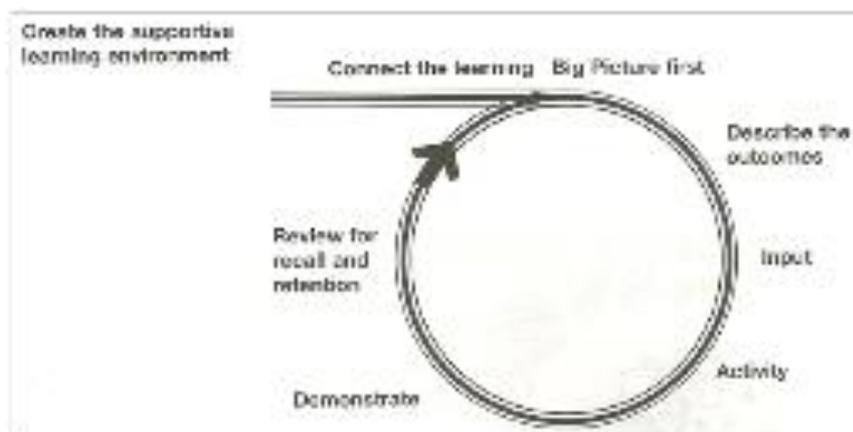
Pupils have limited concentration spans. A widely used and useful rule of thumb is that concentration spans will be about two minutes in excess of a chronological age eg for a 13 year old this will be around 15 bursts etc. Significantly more learning will take place when new information is transferred and explained in three bursts of ten minutes, punctuated by activities (such as modelling, regular closed questioning), than in one thirty-minute session. This will keep pupils alert and provide instant

feedback as to whether they have heard correctly and have understood. Asking too many open questions during an explanation can easily take a lesson off on inappropriate tangents.

Quality of interactions:

The frequency and nature of interactions between adult and pupils is highly significant. We develop understanding by: using open ended questions; providing wait time- pupils need time to think through their answers before replying; providing thinking time by giving an advance warning, such as '*In two minutes I am going to ask you....*'. These responses could be explored in pairs or groups. Pupils could then respond with '*We think that...*'. Extending and deepening understanding by asking follow up questions such as '*What made you think that?*'

Review information and plan next steps: for example, is not necessarily confined to the end of the lesson. Successful teachers weave review through the entire lesson and know that SC/S2S are only successful when repeated and referred to throughout the lesson



Learning Processes

Children learn in different ways and at different rates of progress. In the course of learning children develop their skills through a variety of processes. These include:

- Investigation
- Experimentation
- Listening • Observation
- Set groups
- Co-operative learning
- Talking, discussion, group work
- Asking questions
- Practical exploration and role play
- Research and discovery

- Debates and presentations
- Imagining
- Repetition
- Problem-solving
- Making choices and decision-making
- Use of ICT

Record-keeping and Assessment:

Regular summative and formative assessments establish the level of pupil's attainment and track their progress. These assessments are used to inform future planning. Record-keeping and assessment procedures are defined in the Assessment Policy and Marking Policy. Assessments are recorded in SIMs and progress is analysed regularly by class teachers, head of department and the SLT assessment leader