

TEACHING & LEARNING POLICY

1 Rationale

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- * ensure that the students at our school are provided with high quality learning experiences that lead them to consistently high levels of achievement;
- * identify and meet the various learning needs of each and every student whilst ensuring that we continue to oversee their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within a Christian framework;
- * guide what we all do at Saint Aidan's to create an effective and well-managed learning environment in which the needs of all learners and teachers can be met;
- * provide a common understanding of what makes highly effective teaching within a Secondary learning framework;
- * strive to achieve excellent teaching in all lessons at Saint Aidan's.

We believe that this Teaching & Learning Policy should be:

- * applied consistently by all colleagues but be flexible enough to accommodate alternative styles, ideas and approaches which are recognised as effective;
- * a user friendly advisory tool to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the whole school, a subject area and/or an individual teacher's classroom;
- * used as a reference document by staff, students and parents;
- * an organic document which not only challenges both teachers and learners but also reflects the unique nature of Saint Aidan's ethos.

2 From a student's point of view, what are the characteristics of an excellent teacher?

We asked both students and teachers to consider what the characteristics of an excellent teacher were. Here are the summary points from their feedback:

An excellent teacher is:

- * *Engaging*
- * *Motivational*
- * *Challenging*
- * *Inspirational*

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- * *Supportive*
- * *Approachable*
- * *Firm but fair*
- * *Consistent*
- * *Organised*
- * *Flexible*

An excellent teacher also:

- * *Has high expectations*
- * *Has the confidence to try different things*
- * *Possess in-depth subject knowledge*
- * *Enthuses about their subject*
- * *Communicates at the appropriate level*
- * *Knows their students' strengths and weaknesses*
- * *Manages a classroom and students within it effectively*
- * *Uses praise appropriately*
- * *Maintains a good sense of humour*
- * *Feeds back progress regularly*

3. From a teacher's point of view, what are the characteristics of an excellent learner?

We asked both students and teachers to consider what the characteristics of an excellent learner were. Here are the summary points from their feedback:

An excellent learner is:

- * *Engaged*
- * *Determined*
- * *Curious*
- * *Motivated*
- * *Enthusiastic*
- * *Aspirational*
- * *Organised*
- * *A good communicator*
- * *An active learner*
- * *Well behaved*

An excellent learner also:

- * *Has high expectations of themselves*
- * *Sets high standards for others to follow*
- * *Brings all the correct equipment*

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- * *Works well independently*
- * *Is flexible enough to learn in different ways*
- * *Works well with peers*
- * *Evaluates their own work*
- * *Responds positively to feedback*
- * *Has good attendance and punctuality*

The students and teachers at Saint Aidan's clearly feel that in order to maximise our effectiveness as a school we need to maintain a strong spirit of mutual respect between all members of our community.

4 Improving Teaching

We asked all teaching staff at Saint Aidan's to consider how they would advise a colleague on how to improve their lessons. Here are the summary points from their feedback:

4.1 Understand the judgments

- * Identify the key areas of your lesson that are the focus for improvement;
- * Ask the observer for their opinion on these areas;
- * Arrange to observe other colleagues in the school (or beyond) whom you know are teaching at a consistently high standard.

4.2 Planning

- * Start to use a common planning format to achieve consistency;
- * Plan to include at least three transitions within the lesson;
- * Restructure the framework of your lessons ensuring the starter does not drag and there is appropriate time for a plenary;
- * Aim to sustain student engagement by ensuring that there is a variety of tasks within a lesson or series of lessons;
- * Plan to overtly include progression in your lesson;
- * Utilise appropriate pairs or groups to enhance interactivity;
- * Aim to gain a greater level of pupil involvement (more learning and less teaching);
- * Ensure that Teaching Assistants are appropriately prepared for the lesson.

4.3 Differentiation

- * Recognise that all students need to be challenged;
- * Attempt to match all materials to the needs of all the learners;
- * Use differentiated learning outcomes so that judgments on the progress of all can be made during the lesson and at the end of the lesson;
- * Use differentiated resources and activities;

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4.4 Assessment For Learning

- * Reassess the quality of your objectives and learning outcomes so they become focused and where possible leveled or graded;
- * Ensure objectives/outcomes are clear and understood so that students know what you are aiming for;
- * State the “Big picture” at the start of the lesson by putting the lesson into context;
- * Improve your assessment of students’ progress;
- * Attempt to show that progress has been made by all students in the lesson;
- * Wherever possible get the students to self-assess or peer-assess the progress made;
- * Consider using regular reviews to assess, evaluate and feedback the progress made during the lesson (mini-plenaries);
- * Be flexible – Show that targets can be adjusted during the course of a lesson.

4.5 Communication

- * Improve instructions – make them clearer and more concise;
- * Improve Question & Answer sessions so that they assist learning more;
- * Explain the “Big picture” more precisely and more often;
- * Explicitly state the literacy and numeracy opportunities whenever they appear;
- * Provide clear written feedback on any work that is assessed (WWW – What went well and EBI – Even better if).

4.6 Pitch and pace

- * Consideration needed of what level the students are working at (KS3 or KS4);
- * Ensure that the tasks are appropriate to the ability of the students;
- * Push for a good pace to ensure good progress using short sharp tasks with slick and effective transitions.

4.7 Classroom management

- * Establish a professional yet approachable relationship with all students;
- * Establish clear routines;
- * Quell negativity and in its place actively promote positivity and solid Christian values;
- * Adopt a firm yet fair approach to all disruptions and ensure that you always follow the school’s behaviour policy;
- * Strive to remain calm and have a balanced perspective at all times;
- * Ensure that all resources are used appropriately;
- * Use praise and rewards consistently and appropriately.

4.8 Support

A programme of coaching may be implemented where lesson observations, learning walks and faculty reviews suggest that further support to improve the quality of teaching is needed. This process will include opportunities for the colleague to identify and develop areas for improvement by:

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- * working with a member of the SLT or a Lead Practitioner;
- * peer and team teaching with colleagues in their faculty;
- * observations of other successful teachers at Saint Aidan's and beyond.

5 What constitutes a highly effective lesson?

An excellent lesson at Saint Aidan's may contain some of the following:

- * All students are challenged and make good progress, including those at the ends of the ability range and those who lack confidence (through well differentiated work and excellent use of Teaching Assistants). Some students make exceptional progress and a lot of ground is covered in the lesson but stragglers are not left by the wayside;
- * Enthusiasm and enjoyment pervade the classroom and all relationships are excellent;
- * The differentiated success criteria for the lesson are linked to the "Big picture";
- * The teaching is exciting and interesting. The resources are stimulating. Teaching may be inspired, although it doesn't have to be. The teacher is flexible and can accommodate changes in direction;
- * All students are actively involved in the lesson and all contribute in some form. A mixture of pair/group and independent work is used. Questioning is deep and/or provocative. Kagan structures are used to activate learning;
- * Teaching methods are very well matched to the content and to all learners;
- * The teacher checks progress throughout the lesson using a range of methods. Assessment is regular and helpful and there is clear evidence of excellent written feedback on assessed work;
- * Students evaluate their own progress and the progress of others accurately and constructively in a supportive atmosphere;
- * All students know how to improve as a result of regular and constructive feedback. Where appropriate this is linked to levels, grades or examination requirements;
- * The teacher overtly develops students' Literacy skills and other cross-curricular skills (numeracy, Information & Communication Technology and Personal Social Health Education);
- * Students have access to, and make use of, additional resources which they use independently to support or enhance their learning;
- * Students provide mutual support for each other. There is the opportunity to explore distinctively Christian values including spiritual reflection;
- * The classroom environment is a safe, lively and interesting place.

6 What should the ideal learning environment look like?

6.2 The learning environment's physical appearance

It should not matter whether a teacher's learning environment is a classroom, a laboratory, a studio, a computer suite, a workshop, a gymnasium or a playing

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field. Whatever the environment, teachers aspire to maintain the following physical attributes:

- * Clean, tidy and bright
- * Well organised
- * Well resourced
- * Fit for its primary focus
- * Adaptable and flexible layout
- * Contain “Zoned areas” where necessary
- * Good quality seats, desks and equipment for every student (and teacher)
- * Appropriate Information & Communication Technology facilities
- * Adequate storage
- * Well-kept and well-marked exercise books
- * Tidy resources (inc. clean textbooks)
- * Comfortable all year round - Able to cope with the extremes of heat and cold
- * Stimulating up to date wall displays including:
 - * Quality student work (with exemplar “Green pen” feedback)
 - * Celebrate achievement
 - * Inform about subject content
 - * Learning displays (e.g. word walls)
 - * Relevant Health & Safety and school standards notices
 - * Form notices

6.2 The learning environment's atmospheric appearance

The physical appearance of a classroom only contributes to one aspect of the learning environment. The aim is to create an environment which has the correct atmosphere for learning. Teachers aspire to create these conditions as frequently as possible:

- * All students are more than just participating in the designated task. They are all engaged (if not engrossed) in their work;
- * There are excellent working relationships with the students showing exemplary behaviour;
- * There is a general “Buzz” associated with a “Hive of activity”;
- * There is a tangible Christian spirit towards all interactions;
- * The health and safety of all has been taken into consideration;
- * A ‘can do’ approach has been adopted by the member of staff and as a result the students are gaining in confidence. [“If the teacher believes, the students will achieve”].

7 Monitoring and evaluation

It is vital that teaching & learning provision at Saint Aidan's is monitored as an on-going process. In order for the school to make progress in this area, the quality of this teaching & learning provision needs to be accurately and regularly evaluated.

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The responsibilities of the various staff involved in this process are explained below.

7.1 Faculty Directors of Teaching & Learning

A Faculty Director is ultimately responsible for the quality of teaching & learning in their subject area. Their role is to monitor standards of teaching, evaluate measures of student achievement and set targets for improvement. This is achieved by:

- * informally monitoring the teaching of their subject(s) and the planning of lessons and using this analysis to identify and share effective practice and to lead action for improvement;
- * leading from the front on all present and future teaching & learning initiatives within their subject (e.g. peer observations, Learning to Learn etc.);
- * ensuring curriculum coverage, continuity and progress for all students;
- * establishing and implementing clear policies and practices for assessing, marking, feeding back, recording and reporting on student progress;
- * setting targets for further improvement in line with whole school policies;
- * analysing and interpreting data on students' performance against school expectations and other comparative data and setting targets and implementing actions for underachieving individuals and key groups (e.g., gender groups, C/D exam borderline students/groups looked after children and those students on free school meals or Pupil Premium);
- * monitoring students' work through the regular scrutiny of classwork/homework and gauging students' attitudes and opinions in order to ensure a consistency in quality and to implement strategies for improvement;
- * more formally observing teachers regularly (and giving constructive feedback) to evaluate the progress of teaching and learning targets in their departmental development plan whilst also helping to inform the Appraisal process by matching staff to personalised Continued Professional Development programmes, peer observations and/or other training opportunities.

7.2 Heads of Year

A Head of Year is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the overall experience of groups and individuals in their year group. This is achieved by:

- * monitoring the progress and potential of the year group and using student data to identify and set targets for specific students according to their needs;
- * maintaining an overview of the experience of students in their year group and their attitudes to learning by monitoring attendance & punctuality, the number of rewards & consequences, the frequency of Student Support Centre and Internal Exclusion Unit attendees and the number of students attending extra-curricular learning activities;

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- * reporting back to the Senior Leadership Team and to staff whenever required.

7.3 Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for:

- * setting whole school teaching and learning priorities and targets for improvement based upon evidence gained from “Faculty Reviews”, formal lesson observations and line managing the Faculty Directors of Teaching and Learning;
- * leading from the front on all present and future teaching & learning initiatives within the school (e.g. peer observations, Learning to Learn etc.);
- * ensuring that “Faculty Reviews” and formal lesson observations are positioned appropriately in the school calendar;
- * reviewing and acting upon the feedback from teachers, students, teaching assistants, technicians and work scrutiny during the “Faculty Review” process and the feedback from student & parent questionnaires;
- * facilitating the opportunity for teachers to share practice through observing their peers;
- * facilitating external links with other schools / departments / agencies/ SLEs etc where necessary for the further development of teaching and learning in specific areas of the curriculum;
- * providing data to assist “Target setting”;
- * providing appropriate analysis of tracking data to assist teachers and Faculty Directors to assess current progress towards achieving targets;
- * providing data on the current underachievement of individuals and groups and leading on any appropriate intervention strategies to address the associated issues (e.g. gender groups, looked after children and those students on free school meals or Pupil Premium);
- * tracking progress made towards achieving the teaching and learning targets on the School Improvement Plan;
- * providing the opportunity for colleagues to voluntarily observe their peers;
- * ascribing the appropriate internal and external Continued Professional Development to individual teachers or groups of teachers to maximise the short and long term improvement of teaching and learning at Saint Aidan's.

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