



# SILCOATES

Independent education for boys and girls aged 3-18

## Teaching & Learning Policy (Senior School)

### Introduction

This document is intended to encourage colleagues to reflect continually on what constitutes best practice. It also sets out the expectations for teaching and learning at Silcoates School and aims to inform discussions between teachers about lesson observations and professional development.

The four principles that underpin our approach to Teaching & Learning are described by the acronym FACE:

- Feedback (i.e. assessment)
- Autonomy (i.e. independent learning)
- Challenge
- Enjoyment

### Defining Learning

Learning is defined as the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience or being taught. For effective learning to take place, pupils need to:

- access the learning;
- engage actively with the learning;
- seek and secure connections;
- structure and apply meaning for themselves.

It therefore follows that we should try to avoid lessons that simply involve the transfer of information. Pupils learn more effectively when they are:

- interested in what they are doing;
- asking questions rather than just answering them;
- receiving individual help and attention to optimise progress.

Teachers should plan lessons which ensure that pupils are able to access the learning and also have ownership of their learning. Assessment underpins both these aims: it should be

formative and diagnostic, enabling pupils to understand how to improve, and it should inform future planning.

Consequently, lessons should have the following key elements:

- **Lesson Structure:** lessons should be carefully structured to build towards new learning, to fit in with what has already been learned and to connect with what will be learned.
- **Enjoyment:** lessons should be enjoyable, with engaging and interesting pupil-centred activities.
- **Participation:** lessons should be planned so that all pupils fully participate. Learning should be active, with pupils thinking and reasoning.
- **Differentiation:** lessons should suit the abilities and learning styles of all pupils, and also stretch and challenge all pupils.
- **Guided Independent Learning:** as teachers, we should try in lessons to incorporate some form of independent learning, so that pupils develop their skills in this area.
- **Assessment:** assessment should enable pupils to learn how to improve, as well as informing teachers' understanding of the level and progress of every pupil.

## Effective Teaching

Lessons **must** have:

- high expectations of learning and behaviour;
- a positive environment and atmosphere in which pupils have a good rapport with each other and the teacher;
- a focus on learning which enables appropriate progress and attainment;
- learning opportunities that favour different learning preferences;
- the opportunity for individual attention.

Lessons **should** have:

- a clear statement of the **aims** of the lesson;
- variety – of delivery, tasks, assessment methods and resources;
- active pupil participation.

Lessons **could** include/have:

- pupils designing or leading their own learning;
- pupil collaborative learning;
- opportunities and inspiration for pupils to extend their study independently.

In short, lessons should be **challenging, rewarding and fun**.

## Key Elements

### Lesson Structure

The structure of a lesson might be:

- **starter;**
- **introduction:** outline of aims; links to previous learning; modelling of new learning;
- **development:** main activities which enable, reinforce and consolidate learning;
- **plenary:** crystallisation of what has been learned and links to future learning.

Whatever the structure, it is particularly important that the lesson is **well paced**.

**Learning aims** should always be very clear. The teacher should understand how learning aims are subdivided into **objectives** (measurable outcomes, e.g. state, explain, outline, describe, etc.) according to pupils' individual needs.

## Enjoyment

Pupil enjoyment of a lesson derives from the variety of engaging activities, the demeanour of the teacher and pupils' ownership of their learning. Therefore:

- The menu of planned activities must be challenging, varied and enjoyable, including, for example, discussion, the solving of interesting problems, creative work, debate, investigations, presentations, quizzes, games, ICT, making plays and videos, media clips or music, etc.
- The teacher's demeanour should be friendly yet purposeful, exuding energy, establishing a good rapport, rewarding positive behaviour and celebrating pupil success so that pupils feel good about their achievements
- Pupils will own the learning if it is well directed with clear and achievable outcomes, if they have choice, and if they can succeed at the tasks and **build their confidence**.

## Participation

We should aim to maximise the participation of all pupils in every lesson. We should therefore avoid:

- extended teacher talk;
- lengthy teacher-pupil question-and-answer sessions where it is possible for some pupils to switch off;

Instead we should try to:

- use timed challenges, flashcards, snowball techniques, directed questioning and other methods to ensure all pupils answer class questions;
- set pupil-centred work, so that all pupils are actively engaged, allowing the teacher to move around the room, managing, motivating and differentiating;
- use varied individual, pair and group settings for practicals, projects, problem-solving, drama, discussions and debating as appropriate, with organised division of labour and feedback requirements.

## Differentiation

Curriculum objectives, teaching methods, assessment methods, resources and learning activities are all planned to cater for the needs, abilities and learning styles of individual pupils. The content and delivery of the curriculum and its assessment should be **pupil-centred**, including the following:

- **Assessment for Learning:** This informs long, medium and short-term plans, with teachers taking account of individual differences and preferred learning styles.
- **Resources:** Questions and tasks are tailored to individual needs, and scaffolding is implemented where necessary. Teachers plan accessible tasks and activities of an open-ended nature to enable learners to maximise knowledge, understanding and the acquisition of skills. The classroom environment celebrates and caters for difference, with teachers recognising and praising effort and achievement, and finding time to listen to individual pupils.

- **Classroom practice:** The layout of the classroom, the seating arrangements and the pairing or grouping of pupils are all designed with each pupil's needs in mind. Teachers should include both individual and collaborative learning and could try to involve pupils in planning the learning process. Good quality outcomes are modelled as something to aspire to, though pupils could be encouraged to choose their own entry levels.

It is important that teachers and pupils are **ambitious** and have **high expectations**.

Subject-specific guidelines on differentiation are provided in departmental handbooks. The Head of Learning Support is able to guide departments on the development and implementation of effective differentiation techniques.

### **Guided Independent Learning**

It is important for pupils to become independent learners who are able to take responsibility for their own learning, to motivate themselves and to use their study and research skills to learn effectively.

To guide and encourage pupils to develop independent learning skills, we:

- teach study skills not only within lessons but also as dedicated stand-alone sessions, for example the Tree of Knowledge sessions;
- develop in pupils organisation skills through the use of planners, exercise books and files;
- set longer-term tasks which require project management with time-planning, interim goals, record-keeping and self-evaluation;
- put pupils in situations where they are required to think and act for themselves;
- encourage pupils to become interested in learning and enquiry through directed reading, open-ended lessons, societies, curriculum enrichment activities, trips and visits, guest speakers and groups such as the Chanteys.

### **Resilience**

In order to prepare pupils for the wider world of education and employment, it is essential that we help them to develop resilience. Pupils should have access to challenging learning activities and must be given opportunities to make mistakes in a secure and non-judgmental environment. They must also be provided with a secure learning forum in which to reflect upon errors and misconceptions. Time should be allowed within lessons for activities such as re-drafting or re-working solutions, as appropriate to the subject, in order to consolidate pupils' learning.

### **Assessment For Learning (AFL)**

Assessment for Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.

The central idea is that with careful guidance pupils should be fully involved in their own learning/assessment; take more responsibility for the setting, monitoring and achieving of their own specific targets; become more interested in learning; improve their attainment.

In practical terms, the following guidelines suggest what Assessment for Learning might look like in the classroom:

- lessons are carefully planned/structured;
- the atmosphere allows pupils to feel confident about expressing themselves and listening to others;
- the teacher identifies and shares with the class learning outcomes which are specific enough to allow evidence of achievement to be identified within the lesson;
- pupils are made aware of what is expected of them via feedback and assessment throughout the lesson;
- the teacher uses different types of assessment during lessons to check whether pupils can recall facts/are developing understanding of concepts;
- the structure of the lesson allows time for pupils/teacher to reflect together on progress towards learning outcomes;
- the learning is modified throughout the lesson as a result of assessment and/or reflection;
- there is a plenary session where the pupils/teacher share/promote what pupils have achieved, with as many pupils participating as possible;
- teachers use the outcomes of assessment when planning the next lesson.

In terms of assessing written work:

- pupils should be made aware of the different grade descriptors/criteria for assessed work/homework, e.g. essays, practical write-ups, controlled assessments, non-examined assessments, exam questions (analysing examples of work of different standards can illustrate this);
- with this knowledge, pupils should self- and also peer-mark and be able to establish specific targets for improvement, with guidance from their teacher.

### **Attitude To Learning (ATL)**

Basic expectations for attitudes to learning should be displayed in every classroom (see Appendix 1) and teachers should regularly reinforce these expectations with pupils.

The standards are linked to pupils' reports, with ATL grades from 1-4. A pupil fulfilling all the basic expectations on the ATL poster should achieve an ATL grade 2. Teachers should clarify with pupils what additional learning behaviours (e.g. undertaking wider research on a topic; preparing additional learning materials for oneself and others) would lead a pupil to achieve an ATL grade 1 in a particular subject.

The following ATL grade descriptors provide a guide for pupils, parents and staff about a pupil's attitude to learning:

- 1 - exceeding expectations;
- 2 - fulfilling expectations;
- 3 - failing to fulfil expectations;
- 4 - regularly and repeatedly failing to fulfil expectations.

Date of last review:	September 2017
Reviewed by:	R.L. Dews - Deputy Head (Academic)