

Learning and Teaching Policies at The Cherwell School

Executive Summary

1: The Learning and Teaching Policy

The Learning and Teaching Policy at The Cherwell School explains the key principles which we refer to when working at The Cherwell School. It also articulates the core elements of effective teaching, to which we pay attention when planning lessons and learning over time.

Principles for Professional Learning

1. As teachers, we are also learners.
2. We focus our attention as learners on aspects of practice which make the most difference to student learning
3. We value autonomy and individuality, and do not seek to impose a particular style of lesson delivery

Core Elements of Effective Practice

- 1 - Setting clear and appropriate learning intentions
- 2 - Designing tasks, discussions and activities which help students make progress towards the learning intentions
- 3 - Setting Success Criteria and using Models
- 4 - Providing effective feedback which shows learners how well they've done, and structures their next steps
- 5 - Teaching inclusively and focusing on all groups

2: The Literacy Policy

Key Principles:

1. We are committed to developing the literacy skills of all our students
2. Literacy is needed for all subjects; therefore all teachers are teachers of literacy
3. The effective and explicit teaching of literacy is of central importance when supporting inclusion and achievement for all

General Expectations

- Teachers are expected to explicitly teach the literacy needed for excellence in their subject areas
- Teaching of literacy should pay attention to the 'Core Elements of Effective Practice' in the Learning and Teaching Policy
- Feedback to students in particular should bring attention to and give guidance on student literacy
- Display should be used to support the teaching of literacy

3: The Marking and Assessment Protocol

Marking and Assessment should be:

- Regular, aiming for a marking intervention for every 6 hours of tuition provided.
- Positive, reflective and constructive
- Focused on the specific learning intentions for the work being marked
- Include formative, summative and acknowledgement marking where required
- Be accompanied by tasks through which students put the advice into action



Introduction

Our aim is to provide the best possible opportunities for student achievement, progress and learning. We also believe that the promotion of excellence in learning gives students the best opportunities to grow as individuals, to make positive contributions to communities, and to find success in their lives. Furthermore, we recognise that the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom is the most influential factor in student success and achievement. As a result, we constantly aim to improve our practice in the classroom and are open to feedback, and to learning new approaches and adopting new techniques.

Key Principles for Professional Learning at The Cherwell School

- 1) As teachers, we are also learners. We are reflective on our practice and actively look for ways to improve.
- 2) As learners, we focus our attention on those aspects of practice which make the most difference to student achievement and progress
- 3) As a community of professionals, we respect autonomy and the individual, recognising that different styles and approaches to teaching are valuable. There is no prescribed style or format of lessons which must be adhered to.

Core elements of Classroom Practice

We value the fact that teachers are unique individuals, all of whom bring their own strengths, creativity and preferred approaches to the classroom. At the same time, there are some features of practice which research and experience suggest make the most difference to student learning. Therefore, it is important that, as individuals and as a team, we give prominence to these features in our thinking, planning and practice. Rooted in the formative assessment process, they represent the framework within which teachers at The Cherwell School are encouraged to work. These principles are detailed here:

1) Setting clear and appropriate learning objectives

All lessons and units of learning should be planned with clear, focused learning objectives. These objectives should be used by the teacher as a starting point for planning, and should articulate clear, challenging, important and achievable goals for the students.

Possible Strategies / points to note:

- Ensure that the **students understand the learning objective** at some point in the lesson – often this will be at the start, but doesn't have to be
- Ensure that **Learning Objectives express the skills / knowledge** that students will learn in the lesson, not a description of tasks to be completed
- Ensure that **Learning Objectives are sufficiently challenging** for the range of students in the group
- **Avoid over-complicating Learning Objectives** or including too many in one lesson – simply-expressed objectives which are then explored in depth tend to generate most effective learning

2) Designing tasks, discussions and activities which help students make progress towards the learning intentions

Tasks, discussions and activities which allow students to make progress towards the learning objective are essential. Therefore, these tasks, discussions and activities need to be carefully planned, in order to ensure that they are purposeful in helping students acquire the knowledge or develop the skills that they need to achieve the learning goals. Tasks, discussions and activities should therefore be explicitly developmental, with outcomes which give students the opportunity to work towards the learning objective.

Possible Strategies / points to note:

- **Questioning** students is a key area to reflect on. Teachers are advised to use a range of strategies, and avoid relying on IRE (Initiation, Response, Evaluation) for long periods. Instead, structured group and paired discussion is likely to generate higher levels of participation and engagement from students – training is available on this.
- **Effective direct instruction** from the teacher is a valuable, high-impact strategy, but it is difficult to sustain its effectiveness for long periods. It is therefore advisable that direct instruction is well-judged in terms of timing and focus.
- Tasks should be **low access / high challenge**. This means that all students need to be able to attempt the task meaningfully, whilst there needs to be sufficient challenge for higher-attaining students. Thoughtful use of Success Criteria is an efficient way to achieve this – how do students complete this task in order to show that they have learned really well?
- **Creativity** is to be valued in task setting, but be aware that, in order to learn, students need to think about the learning objective and the underlying purpose in the task. Therefore, clear structure and purpose is needed in creative tasks in order to help students make progress.
- The **quantity** of tasks in a lesson is important to get right; if too many tasks are provided, student engagement can be superficial. Setting up substantial, well-constructed tasks is key to helping students learn.
- **EWAP** is a useful reminder – Everything With A Purpose. This means making sure that any tasks which are provided make a real contribution to helping the students to learn.

3) Setting Success Criteria and using Models

Whenever students are given any substantial tasks, discussions or activities to undertake, it is important that they are made aware of the indicators of success or quality that will represent progress. In some activities, these criteria might describe a process or method which the students are asked to follow (process success criteria). In others, success criteria may focus more on the qualities which student work should aim to display (qualitative success criteria). Modelling of successful work is also an essential tool, through which students can be shown the process or qualities for which they should aim. Furthermore, success criteria and modelling provide a useful framework for peer and self-assessment, teacher feedback, and for enabling the students to feel that they are independent and in control of their learning.

Possible Strategies / points to note:

- Use Models and Success Criteria to **make quality / success explicit** to all students, being mindful of the fact that students arrive to use with widely differing extents of prior knowledge / understanding of how to produce successful work.
- Using **models of work at different levels** can be effective in helping students to see the way that a skill can develop.
- Asking students to **annotate and assess** models helps them to understand and engage with the success criteria.
- Skilful teaching in this area will **move beyond simply providing** models / success criteria, by encouraging students to work closely with them and **making them central** to the lesson.

- Models can be **provided for any task**, not just written work. It's often sensible to provide / generate models of part of a task, rather than a completed task, to help students get started.
- Asking **students to generate their own** success criteria for a task can help them to engage closely with the purpose of and learning in a task.

4) Providing effective feedback which shows learners how well they've done, and structures their next steps

The quality of feedback students receive on their work is a highly-influential factor on their learning. Teachers should aim to provide clear, focused commentary on student progress, showing the student where and how they have met success criteria and made progress towards the learning objective. Feedback should also indicate to students the next steps they might take to improve further. Crucially, it is the teacher's role, when giving feedback, to then design activities which ask the student to engage with the feedback and put the guidance into action. Other forms of feedback include self and peer assessment, both of which are powerful only when clear learning objectives and success criteria are in place.

Possible Strategies / points to note:

- Aim to **include follow-up tasks with feedback**, which ask students to immediately engage with the advice they've been given. It's important also that time is given in lessons for students to complete follow-up tasks.
- Providing feedback which is **closely tied to the success criteria** helps keep marking manageable and effective – resist the temptation to mark everything in every piece of work.
- Use the **school marking code** and guidance for Literacy when assessing longer pieces of writing, and ask KS3 students to 'green-pen' their own work for sentence accuracy / word choice before handing it in.
- **Avoid 'hanging targets'**, where students are set targets or given advice, but with no opportunity or requirement to do anything with the target.
- Use feedback to **inform the planning** for your next lesson / series of lessons with that class. Therefore, it's important to plan formative marking at times other than at the end of the course.
- See further guidance on Feedback in the school **Assessment and Marking protocol**.

5) Teaching inclusively and focusing on all groups

As a comprehensive school, it is essential that we are actively addressing the range of needs within our classroom; the progress of all pupils is the responsibility of the subject teacher. TAs are valuable additions to your classroom but should not be directed to work exclusively with students with SEN/D. It's important that the teachers work with all groups of pupils so that we can be clear about the next steps in their learning.

Possible Strategies / points to note

- Rotate focus for support so that all students get specific teacher-time
- Actively plan for your TA – be clear about the key questions they should ask, the success criteria for the pupils they are working with and any additional resources they may need to use.
- Use feedback from TAs to match the Learning and Teaching to the needs of the pupils
- Develop independence by giving all pupils 'hard work they can do' without the intervention of a TA