



“Christ’s ministry, as recounted in the Gospels, and the values he promoted through his teachings are fundamental to the life of our school in fulfilling its purpose as a Catholic institution.” (Mission Statement)

Teaching and Learning Policy

Aims and Purposes

Continued and sustained improvement is dependent upon improving the quality of teaching and learning. At St. Aidan’s, our expectation is that all pupils are provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to consistently high levels of pupil achievement.

We expect every teacher to be a good teacher – no child deserves less.

By adopting a whole school approach to teaching and learning we aim:

- To provide consistency of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- To enable teachers to teach as effectively as possible.
- To enable pupils to learn as efficiently as possible.
- To give pupils the skills they require to become effective lifelong learners.
- To provide an inclusive education for all pupils.
- To learn from each other, through the adoption of a collaborative approach to teaching and learning, where good practice is shared.

This policy outlines some of the key elements to raise standards in teaching and learning. It also sets out a broad structure for lessons, based on best practice and research linked to how we learn best.

When reading this policy, it is important to remember that adopting a broad template for structuring lessons does not preclude:

Spontaneity, Creativity, Imagination, Individuality

Principles of Children’s Learning

At St. Aidan’s we believe pupils need the opportunity to:

- Experience things first-hand e.g. investigation, problem solving.
- Know how well they are doing and be supported towards their targets.
- Work together with others, as well as on independent tasks.
- Be challenged to develop their potential and aim high.
- Work in a stimulating, happy and secure environment.
- Access good quality teaching resources.
- Experience a variety of creative teaching methods and approaches.
- Be supported by a partnership between home, school and parish.

Key Elements and Principles of Teaching and Learning at St. Aidan's

Summary

All lessons should include the following key elements to ensure high quality teaching and learning. New teachers will receive training to ensure they fully understand these elements and to enable them to embed these strategies in their everyday practice.

Clear Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are shared orally and displayed in child-friendly language.

- All learning objectives begin with 'To be able to.....'
- Pupils write the learning intention in their books according to their age and ability.
- When marking pupils' work, the main focus is on meeting the learning objective.

Well Planned Success Criteria

- All pupils are clear about how they will achieve the learning objective.
- Success criteria are displayed for the pupils to follow during the lesson or drawn up with the pupils, e.g. Steps to Success.
- Pupils use the success criteria to self assess their own or their partner's work.
- Pupils are reminded of the success criteria during the lesson – often pupils' work is used to illustrate the success criteria in action.

Clearly Differentiated

- All learners are challenged appropriately. It is the entitlement of every child to have his/her learning needs and abilities catered for.
- It is the responsibility of the teacher to find effective ways of managing pupils' needs and abilities and to match them to appropriate and effective learning styles.
- Differentiation needs to be planned for and should be explicitly clear in the weekly plans.
- Learning may be differentiated by support, outcome, ability, interest, task, text or resources.

Active Engagement in Learning

- Pupils are actively engaged during all parts of the lesson – teachers take into account pupils' concentration span and ensure they are not sitting passively for long periods.
- Opportunities for paired or group discussions feature as appropriate.
- Mini whiteboards are used as appropriate for short bursts of activity, to develop understanding and to ensure pupils are active and engaged during the lesson.
- Visuals, artefacts and auditory input are all used creatively as a way to enhance learning.

Feedback which Enhances Learning

- AfL and quality marking is embedded in everyday practice and is used to inform teaching and learning.
- All pupils are clear about how they need to improve.
- Marking is linked to the learning intention and identifies next step prompts as outlined within the School's Marking Policy.
- Pupils are given time to address issues raised in marking.

The use of Digital Literacy

- All classrooms are equipped with whiteboards. ICT is used to enhance learning wherever possible and relevant.

Effective use of Additional Adults

- Additional adults are clearly directed to support learning.
- They are fully engaged with pupils on the carpet and tables during lesson times.
- They are clear about who they are supporting and why.
- Planning is shared with them in advance.
- They sit next to the pupil/pupils they are working with, quietly engaging the pupils, explaining the task or using other resources, e.g. number lines to facilitate learning.
- They are involved in assessing pupils' understanding, recording observations and feeding assessments to the teacher.

A Guide to a Basic Lesson Structure

All lessons should follow a basic structure. This is an example structure but in ways definitive:

Phase One – set the scene, place learning in wider context, link to prior learning; review previous lesson; provide the 'big picture; share learning intentions.

Phase Two – pupils receive new information; instruction/exposition.

Phase Three – pupils make sense of information; processing; understanding.

Phase Four – review information and plan next steps.

Within or as part of each phase, strategies including mini-plenaries and other AFL strategies will be implemented.

Precise interpretation of the four phase structure will inevitably be very different in different situations. Age, ability, timing of the lesson, subject area and the particular focus for the lesson will all have a significant impact.

Teachers may well scroll through the phases more than once during the lesson. For example, after a short period of exposition, pupils may be engaged in an activity designed to help them make sense of new material. This may be followed by another period of exposition and an appropriate exercise (**mini plenaries**).

The phases are not always sequential. Review, for example, is not confined to the end of the lessons. **Good teachers weave review through the entire lesson and know that success criteria are only successful when repeated and referred to throughout the lesson.**

Teaching and learning are not the same thing. Encountering information is not the same as understanding it. While the stages are inextricably linked, they are separate processes. This must be reflected in the lesson.

Phase One – Overview

Although this is relatively short in duration, it includes a number of key features. The emphasis on this phase is on:

Creating an appropriate working atmosphere

Pupils will not learn if they are not in an appropriate state to learn. To establish a climate conducive to learning we:

- Create a classroom environment that is stimulating, reassuring and organised.
- Are fully prepared for lessons.
- Ensure resources are prepared and on tables in advance of lessons so that lessons can start promptly. Additional resources which pupils may wish to use are accessible.
- Ensure other adults sensitively engage with any pupils not 'ready to learn'.
- Set expectations for noise levels and responding to questions.
- Greet pupils with a smile!

Linking the lesson to prior learning

Linking the lesson to prior knowledge e.g. reviewing the previous lesson:

- *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 water cycle. Jot down on your whiteboard what you already know. 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 bigger picture first**'. Topic maps can help pupils to see the 'bigger picture'. Pupils can add their own questions and answers to the learning map.

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 intentions to be shared effectively, teachers must:

- Say 'By the end of today's lesson you will all know/ be able to/ understand....'.
- Make learning objectives specific e.g. *Use Bloom's Taxonomy.*
- Use child-friendly language – there is little point in sharing learning objectives if pupils don't understand what you mean.
- Refer to learning objectives: at the start of the lesson *and* during the lesson.

Triggering the brain

The brain will tend to notice things if it has been primed to look for them. Begin a lesson by saying:

'Today when I am reading, I want you listen out for some really powerful adjectives that you can use in your own writing later on' OR

'For homework tonight, I am going to be asking you to write down the functions of the different parts of the plant – you will find out what they are in today's lesson'.

Phase Two – Receiving New Information

The emphasis in this phase is on:

Providing students with new information or skills

This is the teaching phase. Although we want all pupils to understand the information as they encounter it, **the emphasis during phase two is on providing the new information.** New information is delivered in many ways:

- Exposition
- Audio-visual aids e.g. video clips
- Diagrams, pictures etc.
- ICT –Internet
- Demonstration
- Modelling
- Books

The quality of the input during this phase will have a huge bearing upon the extent to which pupils understand information. While high-quality exposition does not guarantee understanding, it does make it significantly more likely.

Periods of exposition are short

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. Periods of exposition are therefore kept short and punctuated by regular breaks or activities. In general terms, significantly more learning will take place when new information is transferred and explained in three bursts of ten minutes rather than in one thirty minute session.

More than one 'beginning' is created

When exposition is chunked into 10-15 minute slots, a number of 'beginnings' are created in the lesson. Make the new start obvious. Use phrases such as, 'Now we are moving on to...', 'The next activity we are going to be doing...' or 'The next steps in our learning are...'.

The input phase needs to be punctuated with questions

Although phase two is principally about exposition and delivering new information, it should be punctuated by regular questioning.

Questioning is one of the most effective means of developing critical thinking and establishing whether pupils' grasp of a concept is secure.

Ask regular closed questions during the input. This will keep pupils alert and provide instant feedback as to whether they have heard correctly and have understood– although at a shallow level. Asking too many open questions during an explanation can easily take a lesson off on inappropriate tangents. It also allows an individual to take the lesson off in a direction that causes other students to lose their train of thought.

Ask open questions before and/or after an input. Posing an open question at the start of an explanation will prime the brain to notice the detail and begin to form an answer, even at a subconscious level, during the input. Asking an open question at the end of an input takes the learning into phase three and is designed to develop and assess deeper understanding.

The input phase is punctuated with activity (model whatever you want pupils to do)

Punctuate the input of new information (phase two) with activities designed to help pupils make sense of it (phase three). This kind of integrated, alternating pattern of 'phase two, phase three, phase two, phase three' can often be more effective than an extended period of explanation.

For example, a teacher might be modelling how to write complex sentences. She might ask pupils to work with a partner to write one together on a mini whiteboard before continuing with further instruction.

New information is presented in several different ways (VAK)

The fact that people prefer to receive information in different ways demands that information is transmitted in more than one way during phase two. A verbal explanation may well be clear, concise and of high quality. However, two thirds of the class may be working outside of their preferred style or have English as an additional language and struggle to grasp what is being said.

We aim to make learning multi-sensory so that pupils have opportunities to learn from seeing, hearing and doing.

Phase Three – Processing the Information

The emphasis in Phase Three is on:

- Developing understanding
- Demonstrating understanding
- Assessing understanding

This is the key phase.

The extent to which pupils will understand information depends on:

Quality of Interactions

It is adults who help pupils make sense of information. The frequency and nature of interactions between teacher and pupils is highly significant. We develop understanding by:

- Using open ended questions.
- Making sure pupils are giving time to think by giving an advance warning, such as '*In two minutes I am going to ask you...*'
- Providing waiting time – pupils need time to think through their answers before replying.
- Ensuring pupils fully understand the question by asking them to say it back or rephrase it.
- Extending and deepening understanding by asking follow-up questions such as '*What made you think that?*'
- Asking pupils to identify three possible answers and then select the best one (so they don't always give you the first answer that pops into their head).
- When a pupil does not respond to the original question, ask a simpler question that leads to the answer to the original question.
- Make sure questions include ALL pupils.

At St. Aidan's, we believe that **talking, thinking and interaction** are central to learning. All lessons include planned and unplanned opportunities to discuss questions and extend thinking.

Phase Four – Review

The emphasis in Phase Four is on:

- **Reviewing what has been learned**
- **Reflecting on how and why it has been learned.**

Review is the key to memory and certainly not confined to the end of the lesson. Good teachers weave review throughout the entire lesson and are constantly referring pupils back to the success criteria of the lesson, and reinforcing prior learning. Reviewing material is a highly significant part of the learning process, not least because large amounts of information can be forgotten very quickly.

Pupils are Actively Involved

When teachers summarise what has been learned, the effect on pupils' memories is relatively insignificant. However, when the pupils themselves identify what they have learned as the lesson draws to a close, their memories will be given a significant boost.

Always refer back to the learning objectives and success criteria.

Encourage pupils to reflect on what they have learned and what has helped them to learn.

Use prompts like:

- 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?

Classroom Environments

The surroundings in which children learn can greatly influence their academic performance and well-being at school. The better the school looks, the more it inspires the people inside it. A well-cared for classroom and school can make pupils feel that what they achieve, and how they themselves are perceived, is important.

We aim to ensure that all classrooms, group learning areas and whole school areas, are spaces that everyone can use to learn and be proud of.

At St. Aidan's, we believe that classrooms should be bright, well organised learning spaces. Pupils need to know how to access resources and respect the classroom environment. To ensure a sense of security and consistency, the points below need to be taken on board in all classes:

- Class rules/code of conduct, a visual timetable, weekly planning and groupings are on display in the classroom.
- Due regard should be given to the amount of noise generated by the pupils. Some noise may be related to the task in hand but too much noise can be a distraction for other pupils.
- Classrooms are tidy, labelled and organised. Pupils take responsibility for ensuring their classroom is a pleasant and safe place to learn.
- Pupils are taught to respect equipment and resources.
- Basic equipment (pens/pencils/ruler...) is out on tables – pupils do not have to waste time getting these from trays. In KS2, reading and spelling books should also be on tables.

- The classroom has only the amount of furniture that is functional and does not contain useless or non-essential furnishings.
- Careful consideration should be given to where pupils are sitting e.g. some may need to sit further to the front of the classroom.
- A prayer table/shelf should provide a focal point for collective worship.
- An attractive, tidy book corner should be available, which includes books made by the children/class. Depending on space, an area with soft furnishings should be provided to sit comfortably and read.
- Depending on space, a role play corner and/or writing table can be set up, providing a range of writing stimulus and a variety of pens and types of paper.
- For additional guidance, see 'Classroom Policy'.
- Displays are a learning resource – they are not just a reflection of previous learning. All displays should be labelled and changed regularly. For further information, refer to the School's Display Policy.

Feedback and Marking

Marking has the potential to be the most powerful, a manageable and useful diagnostic record of achievement. Shirley Clarke, 2001

Feedback may take a number of forms – oral, written, formal and informal – and may be given on a group basis as well as an individual one. The nature of marking influences and encourages pupils and gives them the confidence to take another learning step. For further detail, see the School's Marking Policy.

Monitoring of Teaching and Learning

The quality of teaching and learning is monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and Subject Leaders via lesson observations, learning walks, book scrutiny, discussion with pupils and planning scrutiny.

Teachers plan for all areas using the schemes of work as advised by Subject Leaders. Teachers of classes in the same year group should work together to prepare their plans and in the setting of homework, to ensure consistency in what is being taught.

If a gap in resources is identified, or teachers have any uncertainties regarding planning, teachers should liaise with the relevant Subject Leader.

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