

## TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

*Non Sibi Sed Aliis*

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.  
Psalm 119, vs 105

"For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge  
and understanding."  
**Proverbs 2:6**

This policy document and the content contained therein remains the responsibility of the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school. No amendments can be made without their express instructions and they remain the final arbiters in any matters relating to it.

Review Date: Summer Term 2025

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Reviewed By: Mrs S Thomasson

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APPROVED BY THE HEADTEACHER – Summer Term 2025

## Purpose of the policy

- To ensure that the students at Balshaw's have high-quality learning experiences that lead to consistently high levels of student achievement.
- To provide a common language and understanding of what high quality teaching and learning should look like at Balshaw's.
- To ensure that each individual is given every opportunity to achieve academic excellence using the talents God gave us to the full.

## Rationale

The following policy is underpinned by research taken from the EEF and the Great Teaching Toolkit.

*The best available evidence indicates that great teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve pupil attainment.*

*It is important that schools consider how children learn, how they develop knowledge and skills, and how they can be supported to lay firm foundations for later learning.*

*Teaching approaches that ensure long-term retention of knowledge, fluency in key skills, and confident use of metacognitive strategies are crucial.*

*Approaches such as explicit instruction, scaffolding and flexible grouping are all key components of high-quality teaching and learning for pupils.*

*Teachers should be mindful of the differing needs within their classes – it is just as important to avoid over-scaffolding as it is to ensure all pupils are adequately supported.*

*(EEF High Quality Teaching)*

At Balshaw's most classes are taught in mixed prior attainment groups. We have a tight but loose approach to teaching and learning.

Tight: we require teachers to 'Teach to the Top' with Quality First Teaching. We have **High Expectations** for how classrooms are organised, and clear expectations for **Learning**.

Loose: There is teacher autonomy over the delivery of lessons. Teachers are the professionals and understand the needs of their classes.

This policy details the main principles which underpin teaching and learning at Balshaw's. The quality of teaching is hugely important to the outcomes of students and all students have a right to experience quality first teaching. *'Raising the quality of teaching within existing schools is probably the single most effective thing we could do to promote both overall attainment and equity'.* (Wiliam, 2018)

Staff receive regular updates on the teaching and learning priorities in the T&L newsletter and in Spotlight Briefings, as well as whole school CPD and the opportunity to discuss pedagogy and approaches to assessment in department meetings.

A summary of our **High Expectations at Balshaw's** and **Learning at Balshaw's** can be found on the next two pages, followed by further detail outlining how this is achieved.

# High Expectations

## Meet and Greet

There are clear and established routines at the start of lessons to promote a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Students are greeted at the door with a smile, and starter/do now activities enable a prompt start.



## Quality First Teaching

The strong subject knowledge of teachers at Balshaw's is used to foster and maintain students' interest. Tasks are explained with clarity. Instructions are front loaded, clearly communicated and understanding is checked.



## Exit & Routine

Lessons end in a calm manner. Students are provided with an opportunity to reflect on their learning. Students stand quietly behind chairs, uniform is checked, and they are dismissed in an orderly fashion.



## Home Learning

Regular home learning is set to extend, enhance or consolidate learning that has taken place in the classroom. Tasks are set around the 3Rs – Reading, Retrieval and Recall. Teachers record home learning on Synergy with a description of the task and deadline.



## Know Students

Teachers know their students and will plan seating, questioning and challenge based on that knowledge. Information in pupil passports, pastoral broadcasts and reading passports are used by teachers to inform their actions.



## Classroom Culture

A positive classroom culture is fostered through praise, encouragement and challenge to maximise progress and achievement for all. Learners are motivated through feelings of competence and aspiration.



## Standards

Teachers challenge all students to be the best they can be. Literacy marking codes and self-check sheets are used. We have high expectations for the presentation of work. Students are ready to learn, arriving fully equipped and with laptops charged.



## Learning Environment

Presentation of information on power points and worksheets are designed to prevent cognitive overload. Tasks are carefully planned, and teachers allow time for pupils to complete work independently without distractions.



# Learning at Balshaw's



## Engage all

No hands up is used to ensure all students are engaged and are thinking in the lesson. The teacher can check for understanding of all. Magenta is used to encourage students to think hard and engage with their learning.



## Check for understanding

Probing questions are used throughout the lesson. At Balshaw's we don't let "don't know" be the end of the conversation. EFA strategies are used including mini whiteboards to check the understanding of all.



## Recap and Retrieval

Content previously taught is regularly recapped to deepen understanding, challenge misconceptions and aid long term memory retention. Lessons often begin with a retrieval task to check prior learning and to facilitate students to build their schema.



## Questioning

Questions are planned, targeted and probing to challenge all. Wait time provides students with thinking time, allowing them to structure their best answer. Used along with no-hands up means questioning is inclusive.



## Model

Teachers routinely model their thoughts and processes and provide worked examples to support students to produce high quality work. At Balshaw's we use a range of strategies to support our students' metacognition.



## Challenge and Scaffold

Teachers teach to the top and lessons are scaffolded to stretch and challenge students, ensuring progress for all. For those students with SEN, support is well targeted, including the appropriate deployment of TAs.



## Feedback

We provide feedback that moves learners forward. This feedback is provided regularly and MAD time is planned, giving students the opportunity to reflect and act on feedback.



## Literacy and Oracy

Students should be encouraged to answer in sentences and "speak like an expert". High quality talk should be well structured and modelled by the teacher. Reading strategies should be used regularly and made explicit to students to help them develop reading skills.



## **HIGH EXPECTATIONS**

### **Meet and Greet / Exit and Routine**

Leaders and teachers must develop and implement effective and efficient classroom rules and routines. There will be clear and established rules at the start of all lessons to promote a calm and purposeful atmosphere.

Students should be greeted at the door with a smile and starter / do now activities enable a prompt start to the lesson. Lessons will end in a calm manner and students should be provided with the opportunity to reflect on their learning.

At the end of the lesson students will stand quietly behind chairs so uniform can be checked, and they are dismissed in an orderly fashion.

### **Quality First Teaching**

There must be the efficient use of time and resources, teachers will plan activities and resources so that everything runs smoothly. Settling down time at the start of a lesson, or after a transition, is minimised so students get started on meaningful work straight away and work right up to the end of the lesson. Students must be given clear and simple instructions so they know exactly what they should be doing. Teachers will explicitly teach and use routines to make transitions smooth.

Directed time is provided for staff to meet with their department to collaboratively plan and evaluate schemes of learning. During this time, they may take the opportunity to define excellence, pre-plan assessments for learning milestones and end points, and structure and sequence the teaching programme into coherent schema. Department meeting time should also be used for the discussion of knowledge and common misconceptions within a subject and how these may be best addressed through subject based pedagogy.

All teachers are expected to have knowledge of the requirements of curriculum sequencing and dependencies in relation to the content and ideas they are teaching. Collaborative planning of schemes of learning should take place during directed time where colleagues can identify where knowledge built can be built on prior attainment, and where gaps in learning will be addressed. Directed time with departments must also be used to plan new schemes where teachers will reflect on what they want students to learn in a particular topic and what skills must they already have to enable this new learning. Quality discussions should take place considering scenarios such as: If a student is struggling with a particular idea or technique, what kind of gaps in underpinning knowledge might be the explanation? For each new idea, what connections do learners need to make with previous knowledge?

There are a range of professional development opportunities through which teachers can focus on their professional learning and practice. Teachers will receive feedback on key aspects of their pedagogy that is highly effective as well as aspects which require further development. This will occur during the QA process and following formal appraisal lesson observations. In addition to this there are informal opportunities to receive feedback during lesson drops ins and through TLC partnerships.

Teachers at Balshaw's will have a deep and flexible understanding of the content they are teaching. In addition to subject knowledge, they will also have knowledge of relevant curriculum tasks, assessments and activities and their diagnostic and didactic potential. Teachers are able to justify the sequence of composite knowledge that forms the curriculum and explain the component knowledge that enables pupils to progress successfully through the curriculum.

Teachers must have knowledge of effective teaching strategies and common misconceptions in relation to the content they are teaching. Approaches to the teaching of common misconceptions should be considered in discussions during the collaborative planning of schemes of learning.

Teachers must continually strive to improve the quality of classroom instruction. Explanations should be clear and concise. Teachers are required to present new material and communicate new ideas clearly with concise, appropriate, and engaging explanations.

## **Home Learning**

Teachers must set regular home learning tasks which extend, enhance or consolidate the learning that has taken place in the classroom. Tasks will be set around the 3Rs (Reading, Retrieval and Recall) and it must be recorded on Synergy. Further details can be found in the Home Learning policy. If home learning is not set students should be encouraged to work independently at home reflecting on the work that has been covered in school. Study skills lessons will provide students with further guidance on how this can be achieved. Assemblies before key assessments at KS4 also reinforce the message.

## **Know Students**

Teachers must provide targeted support for pupils with acute or chronic social or emotional difficulties to increase their resilience.

Teachers will know their students and information in pupil passports and pastoral broadcasts are used by teachers to inform their actions and where available, will appropriately deploy Teaching Assistants. The five EEF strategies to support students with SEND should be in the repertoire of all teachers these are: scaffolding, explicit instruction, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, flexible grouping and the use of technology. Further guidance can be found in the EEF report <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/five-evidence-based-strategies-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-send>

There must be a seating plan for all classes, these held on Synergy. Seating plans will consider the needs of the students (SEND, AGT, disadvantaged, reading ages and behaviour issues).

Based on the knowledge of individuals in the class teachers must plan questioning to stretch and challenge all students.

## **Classroom Culture**

Teachers at Balshaw's must recognise that intelligence is malleable and is enhanced by high quality teaching, care, guidance, and support particularly for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, or who experience barriers to their learning. For most lessons students are taught in mixed attainment groups, teachers are required to teach to the top and there is no ceiling on learning.

There must be significant teacher clarity around learning intentions and success criteria which represent next level challenge in the classroom; teachers should use their knowledge gained from the EFA project to achieve this.

Teachers must be aware that learning is a relatively long-term change in what students can do, so cannot judge learning in the lesson. Teachers should be aware that if students can do something by the end of the lesson but have forgotten it two weeks later, it shouldn't be called learning.

Teachers will promote learner motivation through feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Teachers should be aware that students who are motivated to study, learn, engage, and succeed are more likely to do so.

All staff must consistently and fairly apply Balshaw's behaviour policy. Teachers should ensure the rules and expectations in their classroom are clearly understood and accepted by all students. When violations do happen,

teachers must respond fairly, appropriately, and as consistently as possible so that students know predictable consequences will follow.

## Standards

Teachers promote and plan for the use of technology as a tool to enhance learning both in the classroom and at home. All students have access to a laptop in school to support their learning in the classroom.

Teachers must promote interactions and relationships with all students that are based on mutual respect, care, empathy, and warmth. They should avoid negative emotions in interactions with students; being sensitive to the individual needs, emotions, culture, and beliefs of students.

Teachers are expected to create a classroom environment where students respect and pay attention to each other's thoughts and feel safe to express their own thoughts. Students cooperate with each other effectively and benefit from learning interactions with their peers.

There should be enriching relationships between pupils and staff which build people's confidence, commitment and ability both inside the classroom and as part of extra-curricular provision.

## Learning Environment

Teachers must create a climate of high expectations with high challenge and high trust, so students feel it is okay to have a go. Teachers must demand high standards of work and behaviour from all students and be careful not to convey lower expectations for any sub-group, especially one where a common stereotype may be negative. Teachers should not lower their expectations, even when this may be conveyed with good intentions, for examples praising students for poor work to encourage them or helping less confident students sooner when they are stuck.

Teachers are expected to routinely model their thoughts and processes and provide worked examples to support students to produce high quality work.

Teachers must draw attention to their own planning and self-regulation when they model the process of completing tasks, and similarly encourage students to 'self-explain' their thinking. *Interventions to promote the use of meta-cognitive strategies are among those with the largest effects on attainment, and strategies to help students plan, monitor and evaluated should be explicitly taught and supported* (EEF, 2018).

Teachers must ensure students adhere to the *Laptop Use in Classroom* rules at all time, these are displayed in all classrooms and students are reminded regularly in assemblies and tutor time.

Teachers must implement consistently the Balshaw's Behaviour Policy to provide a learning environment in which whole class teaching, independent work and co-operative learning can occur effectively.

## LEARNING AT BALSHAW'S

### Engage all

No hands up should be used frequently to ensure all students get the opportunity to respond and ensure they are all engaged and are thinking in the lesson, and to allow teachers to check the understanding of all. At Balshaw's we don't let "don't know" be the end of the conversation.

Teachers should always require pupils to think hard about what they are learning, for example by use of the Magenta Principles, which challenge students to think and interact with information. Teachers should encourage students to be resilient, resourceful and reflective when work is challenging.

## Recap and Retrieval

New ideas need to be connected to what has previously been taught and that prior knowledge should be checked through regular retrieval. Teachers are expected to use examples, and non-examples, appropriately to help learners understand and build connections.

## Questioning and Check for Understanding

There should be the effective use of questioning in the classroom, to develop and advance learning.

Questions must be planned, targeted and probing to challenge all. Questions and dialogue should be used to promote elaboration and connected, flexible thinking among students e.g. Why? 'Compare' etc. Wait time should be the norm in the classroom to provide students with thinking time allowing them to structure their best answers.

Questioning should be used as a tool to promote deep and connected thinking and be used as part of a dialogue in which students are engaged and stretched. Teachers should prompt students to give explanations and justifications for their answers, or just to provide an initial response, to describe their thinking process, to elaborate their answers or to make connections with other ideas.

Teachers should use strategies to check the understanding of all such as mini whiteboards.

## Model

There should be the effective use of modelling in the classroom, to develop and advance learning.

Teachers must use modelling to demonstrate new skills or procedures with appropriate scaffolding and challenge and should use worked and part worked examples.

Teachers are expected to share learning aims with their students in ways that help students to understand what success looks like. Teachers should provide examples of the kinds of problems and tasks students will have to do as well as examples of work that demonstrates them. Teachers are also expected to help students to understand why a particular activity is taking place and how current learning fits into the wider structure.

Teachers should explicitly develop pupils' metacognitive skills. This should be achieved by helping students to plan, regulate and monitor their learning by progressing appropriately from structured to more independent learning as students develop knowledge and expertise. When teachers teach new ideas, it is appropriate to be directive: presenting structured content explicitly, directly teaching what needs to be understood. However, over time teachers should wean them off this dependency on the teacher, encouraging them to become independent.

## Challenge and Scaffold

There should be the effective use of scaffolding in the classroom, to develop and advance learning.

Teachers are expected to 'teach to the top'. Scaffolding and supporting will be used to make tasks accessible to all but should be gradually removed so that all students succeed at the required level. Scaffolding will be used to provide a gentler entry for some students, but the destination should remain the same, as the scaffolding is taken away the complex tasks are accessible to all.

All staff having must high aspirations and expectations; wanting the best for every child and providing high challenge by teaching on the key conceptual frameworks within the subject. Tasks must present an appropriate level of difficulty for each student, hard enough to move them forward, but not so hard that they cannot cope. *Tasks must also promote deep rather than just surface-level thinking* (Hattie, 2012).

## Feedback

There should be the effective use of feedback to pupils in the classroom to develop and advance learning.

MAD (make a difference) time marking must be used to provide the opportunity for in-class and peer learning, and it should be underpinned by effective evaluation of impact on pupil outcomes. Students should be given more responsibility to help advance their own learning and other students' learning so they can recognise where they are in their learning; decide where they want to go and identify a way to close the gap. The resources and ideas from the EFA project should be effectively used by teachers to achieve this, and directed time in departments and TLCs should be used to share good practice.

Teachers must use assessment data for feedback to plan and evaluate the impact of schemes of learning and pedagogy to inform practice. Assessments should be discussed at department meetings to allow staff to identify target groups that require further support and to identify and plan for next steps in teaching.

Directed time, including meeting time, should be used for discussion of knowledge and common misconceptions within a subject and how these will best be addressed through subject based pedagogy. Marking standardisation is calendared departmentally and follows key assessments.

Pupils are required to respond with commitment to verbal and written feedback to improve the standard of their work. All teachers and departments should plan for MAD time during which time students should receive and act on actionable feedback to guide their learning. For further information please see the Balshaw's Formative Assessment and Feedback policy.

## Literacy and Oracy

All subjects must take responsibility for developing literacy and numeracy. Students should be encouraged to answer in sentences and "speak like an expert". High quality talk must be well structured and modelled by the teacher.

Reading strategies should be used regularly and made explicit to students to help them develop reading skills. Further information and guidance can be found in the Literacy and Numeracy Policies.

Teachers should take reading ages into account when creating seating plans.