Teaching and Learning Policy (NS-11)

Approved by Governors:	Mr A Rankin, Chair of Governors
Signature:	
Date:	November 2025

Ratified by SLT:	Mr R J King, Headteacher
Signature:	
Date:	November 2025

Committee Responsible:	Quality of Education
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02	24/12/2021	Marking codes and other minor updates	MHI
03	17/01/2024	Minor updates	MHI
04	18/11/2025	Whole policy update	MHI

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1.   Introduction

At Cockermouth School we aim for an exceptional learning experience for each and every one of our students; to achieve this our teaching staff need to work with rigour and consistency, in sync with whole school priorities, processes and values. The School Development Plan sets out an ambition for the universal provision of the highest quality of education, through exceptional teaching and learning in Whole School Priority 1 (WSP1). Whole School Priority 2 (WSP2) maps out the additional support in place for vulnerable students so that they can access exceptional universal provision with their peers. The Teaching and Learning Policy is a core mechanism for the delivery of the School Development Plan's WSP1.
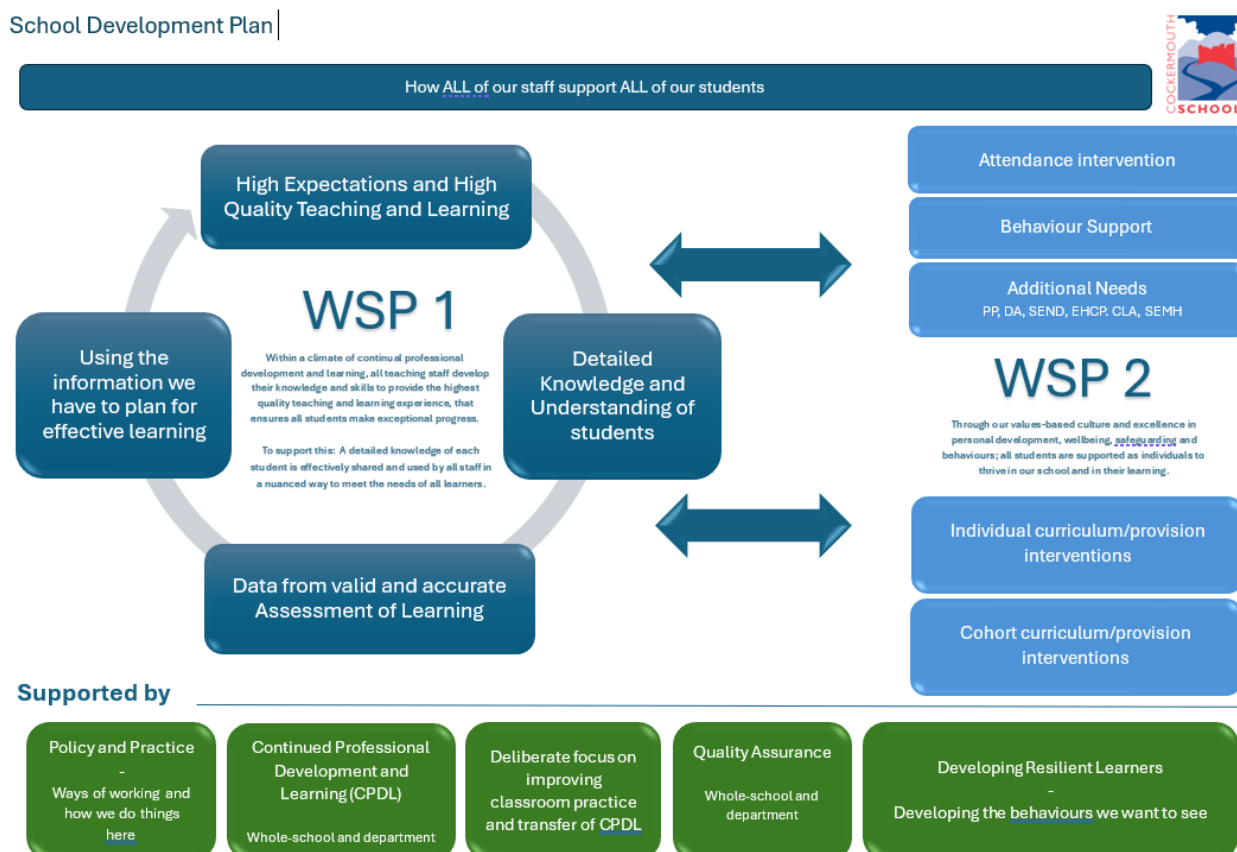
Four principles embody the Teaching and Learning Policy:

Evidence-informed implementation: we will not be distracted by gimmicks or fads. Think 'assess, plan, do, review' and insist on behaviours from staff and students which ensure exceptional learning for every child, every lesson

Establish the right habits from the start: effective routines and systems should be established at the start of the year and maintained so that energy and attention is focused on learning

Know your students: from 'meet and greet' at the start of every lesson, to knowing barriers that individual students face, to implementing strategies, every member of the teaching staff should know the individual learners they teach and respond to them as individuals

Better practice, not more: all teachers should deliberately focus on classroom practice to ensure its impact is as strong as it can be. Continued teacher development is the expectation irrespective of role or experience.

It is the responsibility of teaching staff to read and follow the practice set out in this policy. It is the responsibility of Heads of Department/Directors to ensure their department practices follow this policy. It is the responsibility of SLT to ensure that this policy is implemented across all subject areas.

2.   Curriculum

In every subject there must be an ambitious curriculum which shows cumulative progression in knowledge, understanding and skills over 5 or 7 years. It will be at least as ambitious in breadth and depth as the National Curriculum, for all students. This curriculum will be broken down into year groups and there will be medium-term schemes of learning that guide progress on a sequential unit or termly basis as appropriate. Department Leaders should ensure that the curriculum allows enough time for teaching, practising and revisiting content, and for addressing gaps in students' knowledge.[1] All teaching staff will be able to explain what they are teaching, where it features in the sequencing of curriculum and why any given topic or skill is being taught at that point. Departmental consistency is key. Resources should be shared across departments so that all students have equal access to the curriculum. Curriculum maps should be accurate and available on the school website.

3.   Inclusive teaching and learning: Access and challenge

As a principle all students should be accessing the full curriculum. In practice, the inclusive teaching of students with SEND and/or disadvantage is the responsibility of every teacher. Any adaptations should be made carefully to avoid limiting expectations for disadvantaged students or those with SEND. These students are statistically more vulnerable to attaining less well than their peers.

SEND: As the EEF states, 'to a great extent, good teaching for pupils with SEND is good teaching for all. Searching for a "magic bullet" can distract teachers from the powerful strategies they often already possess.'

All teaching staff should read and use the SEND and literacy information for all students in their classes; this can be accessed on ClassCharts with EHCPs available via the Learning Support Google Drive. They should apply the advice and guidance issued by the SENCo in their day to day practice. Teaching assistants should supplement, not replace, teaching from the classroom teacher.[2] Teachers should work in tandem with Teaching Assistants to create fully inclusive classrooms. This includes clear direction for deployment and provision of materials to support the needs of both Teaching Assistant and students. Deliberate communication between the Teaching Assistant and teacher must be routine practice in all supported lessons.

Disadvantaged Students: the School's Pupil Premium Strategy prioritises quality first teaching and CPD to support that being delivered by every teacher. The School Development Plan facilitates this strategy with the attainment of vulnerable students central to our focus. It is the responsibility of teaching staff to know the students in their classes with Pupil Premium status and to subsequently plan, teach and use assessment to support the specific needs of these students.

Challenge: all students should be challenged by the ambitious curriculum in each subject area. Teaching staff will need to adapt to the individual strengths of their students and ensure they continue to progress at the rate appropriate to their ability.

4.   Literacy

'Literacy is the key to academic success across the curriculum.' (Sir Kevan Collins). All students benefit from the explicit teaching of subject-specific literacy and the consistent use of strategies proven to enhance the ability to understand text and articulate oneself. All teaching staff should model clear and correct spoken and written English. Across all subjects, reading and writing should be developed through high-quality texts, deliberate practice of writing and broad and ambitious vocabulary. Accurate spelling should be promoted in a subject-specific context.

Screening indicates that at Cockermouth School we have a cohort of students who need additional intervention to improve their decoding skills, fluency and/or comprehension skills. All teaching staff should be aware of the literacy ability of their students, should plan their approaches in light of this information and
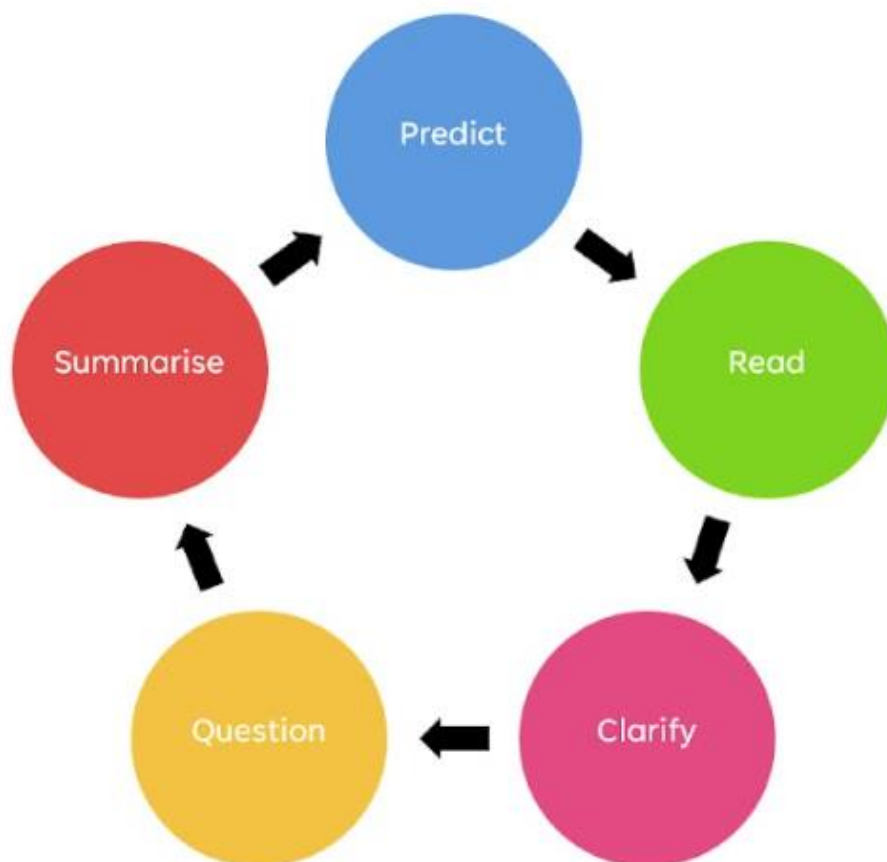
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[1] Ofsted. *School Inspection Toolkit*. Draft for consultation 2025.
[2] EEF. *Deployment of Teaching Assistants*. Guidance Report. 2025

ensure that in their lessons they consistently model literacy techniques shared at a whole-school level e.g. Reciprocal Reading and the Freyer Model.

5.   Effective Teaching

We use the Great Teaching Toolkit[3] to outline our principles for teachers.

A Model for **Great Teaching**

1. Understanding the content

1 Having deep and fluent knowledge and flexible understanding of the content you are teaching

2 Knowledge of the requirements of curriculum sequencing and dependencies in relation to the content and ideas you are teaching

3 Knowledge of relevant curriculum tasks, assessments and activities, their diagnostic and didactic potential; being able to generate varied explanations and multiple representations/analogies/examples for the ideas you are teaching

4 Knowledge of common student strategies, misconceptions and sticking points in relation to the content you are teaching

2. Creating a supportive environment

1 Promoting interactions and relationships with all students that are based on mutual respect, care, empathy and warmth; avoiding negative emotions in interactions with students; being sensitive to the individual needs, emotions, culture and beliefs of students

2 Promoting a positive climate of student-student relationships, characterised by respect, trust, cooperation and care

3 Promoting learner motivation through feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness

4 Creating a climate of high expectations, with high challenge and high trust, so learners feel it is okay to have a go; encouraging learners to attribute their success or failure to things they can change

3. Maximising opportunity to learn

1 Managing time and resources efficiently in the classroom to maximise productivity and minimise wasted time (e.g., starts, transitions); giving clear instructions so students understand what they should be doing; using (and explicitly teaching) routines to make transitions smooth

2 Ensuring that rules, expectations and consequences for behaviour are explicit, clear and consistently applied

3 Preventing, anticipating & responding to potentially disruptive incidents; reinforcing positive student behaviours; signalling awareness of what is happening in the classroom and responding appropriately

4. Activating hard thinking

1 Structuring: giving students an appropriate sequence of learning tasks; signalling learning objectives, rationale, overview, key ideas and stages of progress; matching tasks to learners' needs and readiness; scaffolding and supporting to make tasks accessible to all, but gradually removed so that all students succeed at the required level

2 Explaining: presenting and communicating new ideas clearly, with concise, appropriate, engaging explanations; connecting new ideas to what has previously been learnt (and re-activating/checking that prior knowledge); using examples (and non-examples) appropriately to help learners understand and build connections; modelling/demonstrating new skills or procedures with appropriate scaffolding and challenge; using worked/part-worked examples

3 Questioning: using questions and dialogue to promote elaboration and connected, flexible thinking among learners (e.g., 'Why?', 'Compare', etc.); using questions to elicit student thinking; getting responses from all students; using high-quality assessment to evidence learning; interpreting, communicating and responding to assessment evidence appropriately

4 Interacting: responding appropriately to feedback from students about their thinking/knowledge/understanding; giving students actionable feedback to guide their learning

5 Embedding: giving students tasks that embed and reinforce learning; requiring them to practise until learning is fluent and secure; ensuring that once-learnt material is reviewed/revisited to prevent forgetting

6 Activating: helping students to plan, regulate and monitor their own learning; progressing appropriately from structured to more independent learning as students develop knowledge and expertise

Lesson requirements:

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[3] Evidence Based Education, *Great Teaching Toolkit, Evidence Review*. June 2020.
https://2366135.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/2366135/Great%20Teaching%20Toolkit%20Evidence%20Review.pdf

- **Teacher planning**: lessons must be planned to meet the needs of the students on that day
- **Seating plans**: teaching staff direct the seating plan for each class with a clear rationale for learning and they change seating in-line with need and to ensure equity of provision over a year; seating is not fixed.
- **Meet and Greet**: students at the classroom door at the start of each lesson
- **Equipment:** students should be in the routine of automatically getting out their equipment as soon as they enter the room
- **Do Now**: a purposeful task for students to engage with immediately
- **Teacher input**: instruction, modelling, explanation to aid learning
- **Checks for understanding**: mini whiteboard use, intentional monitoring (teacher moves around the room), questioning, cold-calling (no hands up with name at the end of the question), cold calling (telling students in advance they will be called upon to contribute)
- **Application of learning**: deliberate practice and deployment of knowledge and skills (all lessons should include silent time to facilitate concentration, hard thinking and practice)

Efficiency of language: Teaching staff should use succinct standard school phrases to support consistency and means of participation:

- Front load the means of participation e.g. "pick up your pens and", "silently think of…", "without calling out…", "when I say go, turn to your partner and tell them…"
- Silent and solo (individual and independent work)
- Think-pair-share
- Turn and Talk
- Eyes on…
- I do – we do – you do (scaffolding and modelling to independent practice)
- Mini whiteboard routine: "pose question, pause-go, hover, 321 "show me"

Quality of work

Quality of work covers all tasks set by teaching staff and includes written work, products, performances and verbal activities. Clear and well-presented work can be read by teachers and examiners, and for students to revise from. Through an emphasis on presentation, students are being encouraged to take pride in their work. Neat work does not, however, equate to depth of understanding. The following guidance should be shared with students. Teachers are to set out these expectations for tasks in lessons and at home.

Guidance:

- All work should have an appropriate title; this may be given as a key question.
- Use a ruler to underline the title or heading.
- The date should be clearly written at the start of the piece of work (short date is acceptable).
- HW should be written in the margin if the piece of work is homework.
- Write only in blue or black pen. Red pen must be used to respond to teachers' comments.
- Graphs, diagrams or illustrations will generally be done in pencil.
- Trim and stick sheets into exercise books whenever used.
- File all sheets in folders, in the order directed by the teacher
- Care of exercise books and folders should be taken. Graffiti and doodles on work will be sanctioned.

Marking and feedback

Feedback is essential to help students to improve. It is information that fills the gap between what a student currently understands and what is aimed for them to understand. The EEF outlines three key principles for feedback from teacher to student and these will underpin our whole school approach:

1. As teachers we need to lay the foundations for effective feedback by ensuring high quality initial instruction
2. Feedback needs to be appropriately timed and focused on moving learning forward
3. Ensure that we plan for how students will *receive* and use feedback in order to close the feedback loop with the aim that over time, feedback will support students to monitor and regulate their own learning.

Department procedures should identify the most appropriate method of feedback and the frequency for their subject(s) and this should be clearly communicated to and understood by all teachers of that subject. Feedback must be given for all homework; this might include automated, self and peer marking or whole class feedback depending on the nature of the task. Beyond this, class teachers should use their professional judgement to determine what additional feedback is required. Feedback must be timely with as little delay as possible between students completing a piece of work and receiving feedback on it. Students must be given time to act on feedback for identified pieces of deliberate practice. This is known as Directed Improvement and Reflection Time (DIRT). Students must use red pen when marking or improving work.

Verbal feedback is an important means of swiftly identifying next steps for students to act upon. There is not a requirement to evidence verbal feedback in books. However, it is important that students understand the role of verbal feedback, that they act upon it to further their learning and that they can articulate how teacher feedback helps them to improve their learning.

Overall marking requirements

Marking has several purposes: students act on feedback to make progress over time; students see their teachers notice the quality of their work; and it informs future planning and teaching because it provides feedback to the teacher as to whether students have learned what they have been taught. To ensure that marking is effective teachers must have a secure overview of the starting points, progress and context of all the students they teach. It must also be '**meaningful, manageable and motivating'** (DfE Workload Report, March 2016).

A.I. has the potential to transform how teachers engage with marking. As a school we will explore these possibilities. Staff should feel empowered to explore new technology associated with their subject and liaise with line manager so that there is a school awareness of changing practice. Appropriate data and online security is a prerequisite.

All marking by the teacher must be done in green.

Types of marking will include book checks, homework and deliberate practice. It is likely that deliberate practice tasks will require the greatest investment of time. Not every piece of classwork needs to be marked and teachers should use their professional judgement in deciding this; the emphasis should be on quality of feedback rather than quantity and the focus being on what will help students to make the most progress. Literacy codes should be applied to all marked pieces of extended writing and students should correct highlighted mistakes (see the Marking Code below). Frequency of marking will be proportionate to curriculum time.

Students must feel that their work is checked and marked in the same way across all subjects. Symbols relating to literacy marking should be written clearly in the margin as appropriate; the key is that students can clearly see where they are making mistakes and know how their work needs to be improved.

Teacher comments should avoid excessive use of written praise (e.g. well done, very good) without identifying what has been done well. Acknowledgement marking must not be used (i.e. tick and flick).

Teachers may use **whole-class marking and feedback**, whereby they make minimal interventions in books, but make notes on common issues e.g. misconceptions, errors, keywords and spelling etc. Subsequent lesson time will include feedback being shared with the group and students being given time to act upon that feedback in red pen or with a DIRT task as appropriate.

Lesson time should be used to check students' work; teachers should circulate and interact with students.

Marking Codes

✓	Correct/good point/well-written. **This symbol must be linked to a specific part of the student's work and used sparingly**. Tick and flick must not be used as a method of marking – it is better to leave work blank.
✗	Incorrect/inaccurate point. This symbol must be linked to a specific part of the student's work to identify clearly where an error has been made.
Sp	Correct a spelling mistake. Student may be shown the correct spelling of any new specialist terminology, otherwise a dictionary should be used.
P	Correct your punctuation
CAP	Use a capital letter
^	You need to add a word
//	You need to start a new paragraph
?	This does not make sense/handwriting or sentence needs to be clearer. Reword, rephrase or rewrite neatly.
T	You need to use the correct verb tense
e.g.	Provide example(s)
AP	Achievement point awarded
KW	Incorrect use / omission of keyword

Examination board marking codes can be used to annotate work at Key Stages 4 and 5 and teachers may find it useful to familiarise themselves and students with these early on during the course.

5.   Assessment and reporting

As outlined above, on-going low-stakes assessment is what drives learning. We need to gauge what students have learned, correct misconceptions and fix what they cannot do. Alongside this frequent and formative assessment, sits higher stakes and more formal assessment.

Students in all year groups will have a minimum of two reports in a school year. The report will share information about academic performance based on formal assessments which have been sat by the whole cohort. Data submitted by teachers for reports should be consistent with prior feedback to the student and family, as well as consistent with Class Charts and communication with families; no surprises is our mantra.

For each subject, students will receive a mark in the following areas:

Organisation

Engagement and Resilience

Home and Independent Learning

Acting on Feedback

The purpose of this emphasis is to explicitly promote awareness of self-regulated learning characteristics to students and parents. Furthermore, the intention is to create a dialogue between tutors and students, so that students can articulate how to improve their attitude to learning in different subjects.

6.   Learning Behaviours

We are committed to explicitly teaching students how to manage themselves and their learning behaviours through the use of self-regulation, the C-system and considered, flexible seating plans.

Self-regulated learning is an umbrella term incorporating metacognition, motivation and self-regulation. Every subject has specific ways of learning and success relies on specific methods being taught in those subjects. Opportunities to enhance students' ability to self-regulate should feature routinely in lessons and instructional material. To support an ongoing dialogue between students and their teachers, attitude for learning descriptors should be referred to frequently to help students recognise their strengths and be supported to improve areas of weakness in terms of self-regulated learning. These descriptors are split into key areas: engagement and resilience, achievement and outcomes, home and independent learning, organisation and acting on feedback.

The C-system exists to help establish high expectations and should be used to set the right conditions for learning in classrooms so that positive attitudes and achievements are rewarded and no student is permitted to disrupt learning for others. Clear behavioural expectations should be established in September and rigorously maintained throughout the year. **Off-task talk is not permitted in any lesson**. The C-system also provides a positive way of engaging parents and carers in the education of their children and we should be proactive in highlighting successes as they occur.

In line with Teacher Standards, teachers are responsible for behaviour in their classes. Department Leaders are responsible for behaviour across their team. They should monitor, support and intervene as appropriate. The expertise and support of the Behaviour Team may be accessed to improve the behaviour of individual students, specific cohorts and classes.

7.   Monitoring

Monitoring by Department and Senior Leaders will be used to ensure the intentions of this policy are enacted in practice consistently across all areas of the curriculum. On a daily basis, the long-standing practice of open doors and informal leadership team drop-ins will continue. The 4 key aspects of monitoring are: lesson drop-in, work sampling, student voice and student achievement data. We monitor using a triangulation model involving lesson visits, student interviews and work scrutiny. We look for day-to-day consistency of practice, adherence to the department's curriculum, a deep knowledge of students as learners and the development of long-term learning amongst students. Staff do not need to prepare for monitoring activities and they should not feel anxious about being caught out. We ask teaching staff to follow this policy, practise the agreed department curriculum, know their students and engage meaningfully in CPD.

Department and Senior Leaders monitor provision on a half-termly basis and chose priorities based on the School Development Plan, Teacher Standards and contextual relevance. Feedback should be shared constructively and promptly with staff; there should be no surprises in appraisal meetings.

8.   Home Learning

Work that is set for students to complete outside of lesson time (e.g. at home or during independent study at KS5) can improve outcomes in secondary education. The quality of such learning opportunities and how this relates to main class teaching is more important than the amount set. Evidence suggests that homework is more effective when it is an integral part of learning, rather than an add-on. To maximise

impact, it is important that students are provided with high quality feedback on their work. Some studies indicate that there may be an optimum amount of homework of between one and two hours per school day (slightly longer for older pupils), with effects diminishing as the time that students spend on homework increases beyond the optimal level.

Based on this evidence our whole-school expectations for home learning are as follows:

- Tasks should be purposeful and play a meaningful part in the delivery of subject curriculum and therefore should show consistency across the department. These might include reviewing learning, testing knowledge or developing knowledge.

- Tasks should promote autonomous, self-directed learning. Independent work is more effective than that supported by parents. This will require teachers to carefully choose tasks and consider how these can be supported remotely.

- Tasks must be set on Firefly so that students and parents have a single source of information. The format: **Homework - subject - task type - time expectation or outcome** (e.g. Homework - Geography - Exam question - 15 minutes), should be used for students to easily identify work in their task list.

- Tasks must be set to appear in Firefly on the day the homework is set; this will help students to manage and organise their work.

- The average allocations should be followed (see table below) and this should be consistent across the department. It is not a target.

- Students must be allowed a realistic time to complete the work; 24 hours is not sufficient.

- Plan for timely feedback as part of the home learning process. The method of feedback will vary (e.g. whole-class, automated, self-marked, peer-marked, teacher-student) depending on the task set.

Key Stage 3 Homework – Average allocation in minutes per two week cycle

Subject	English	Maths	Science	History	Geog	Comp	MFL	Food/DT	Art	PD
Year 7	120	80	60-105	20-30	20-30	20-30	60	20	45	20-30
Year 8	135	80	75-120	30-45	30-45	30-45	80	20	45	30-45
Year 9	155	80	90-135	45-60	45-60	45-60	60	20	45	46-60

Key Stage 4 Homework – Average allocation in minutes per two week cycle

Subject	English	Maths	Science	Preferences
Year 10/11	170 – 180	100	90-225 (Triple) 90- 180 (Double)	90 - 120

Sixth Form

Sixth Form students have periods of supervised private study and periods of unsupervised study, during which they are expected to organise their time appropriately. Independent study is an intrinsic part of the course in the Sixth Form. Students are expected to spend a minimum of 18 hours a week on homework and other independent study such as consolidating notes, checking understanding and reading around the subject. It is expected that students will do this work both in school and at home. Teachers should direct independent study: Independent study – Subject – task – time. This work does not need to be marked and should direct students to engage meaningfully in preparation, review, practice and revision.

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