Teaching and Learning Policy (NS-11)

Ratified by Governors:	Mr A Ward, Chair of Quality of Education Committee
Signature:	*award*
Date:	30 January 2024

Ratified by SLT:	Mr R King, Headteacher
Signature:	*signature*
Date:	30 January 2024

Committee Responsible:	Full Governing Body
Author:	Dr M Henley
Complies with Equality Scheme:	Yes
Date of Review:	January 2024
Date to be Reviewed:	January 2026
Version Number:	03

Version	Date	Comments	Author
02	24/12/2021	Marking codes and other minor updates	MHI
03	17/01/24	Minor updates	MHI
04			

Contents

An exceptional learning experience for all
aspire · enjoy · include · respect · community

1.   Introduction

At Cockermouth School we aim for the highest quality of learning for each and every one of our students. To achieve this we need to be greater than the sum of our parts; this means that our plans and processes are joined up, rooted in evidence and that our teaching staff act with consistency at both the whole school and departmental level.

In emerging from the disruption to education throughout 2020 and 2021, there are three overarching principles to have at the forefront of our minds:

Fundamentals are key: we will not be distracted by gimmicks or fads. Think 'assess, plan, do, review' and insist on behaviours which ensure excellent 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.

Before reading on, it is important to share two key messages. The first is that this Teaching and Learning Policy is much more than a set of pedagogical ideas and strategies. It deliberately ties together the academic and pastoral dimensions of our school to enable a stronger and more holistic approach to learning. Second, to ensure staff feel supported to successfully implement this policy a significant change has been made to the way we approach Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Through regular CPD sessions we will ensure that sufficient time is given to delivering high quality training along with follow-on support for staff so that implementation of whole school areas of focus is sustained and practices are embedded successfully.

2.   Curriculum

In every subject there should be a curriculum which shows progression in knowledge, understanding and skills over 5 or 7 years. This curriculum will be broken down into year groups and there will be medium-term schemes of learning that guide progress on a unit or termly basis as appropriate. 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. Consistency is key. Resources should be shared across departments so that all students have equal access to the curriculum. Moreover, day-to-day teacher planning time is best spent focusing on the needs of students rather than creating new and bespoke resources.

3.   Access

SEND: As the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) point out, '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 know the SEND and literacy background for all students in their classes. They should apply the advice and guidance issued by the SENCo in their day-to-day practice. As a principle all students should be accessing the full curriculum. In practice this means that we 'scaffold up' rather than 'differentiate down'. Teaching Assistants should supplement, not replace, teaching from the classroom teacher. Teachers should be working 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. Effective communication between the Teaching Assistant and teacher is routine practice in all supported lessons.

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.

Additionally, screening indicates that at Cockermouth School we have a cohort of students who need additional intervention to improve their decoding skills 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 ensure that in their lessons they consistently model literacy techniques shared at a whole-school level.

4.   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 to master, and success relies on specific methods being taught in those subjects whilst being underpinned by a common language that is used and understood across the school (e.g. plan, monitor, evaluate). Opportunities to enhance students' ability to self-regulate should feature routinely in lessons and/or instructional material. To support an ongoing dialogue between students and their teachers we have a set of attitude to learning descriptors. These should be used and/or 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 five 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. 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.

Seating arrangements in classes should be carefully considered and groupings can be changed regularly to avoid the perception that groups are fixed. This relates to both in-class arrangements and where subjects are set.

5.   Effective teaching

The evidence base for what constitutes effective teaching has been strengthened over the last five years and offers much greater clarity as to the 'best bets' for successful learning. The general principles below have been drawn from this. The key ambition is for all teachers to provide high quality instruction and create a supportive environment for learning in their classroom. The principles should not be seen as a checklist of expectation against which isolated lessons are planned or judged, but are likely to be evident in a sequence of lessons within a scheme of learning. Subject-specific content and pedagogy are equally important and should be shared and understood by all teachers of a subject so that the 'what' and the 'why' of learning can be articulated to learners.

Lessons at Cockermouth school will aim to ...

- Build on students' prior knowledge and experience, and activate thinking.
- Avoid overloading students' working memory by breaking down complex material into smaller steps and reducing distractions that take attention away from what is being taught.
- Encourage the retention of learning through the use of repetition, practice, and retrieval of critical knowledge and skills.
- Follow a carefully-sequenced curriculum which teaches essential concepts, knowledge, skills and principles. Such sequences should include opportunities to review and practice key ideas and concepts over time.
- Use powerful analogies, illustrations, concrete examples, explanations, comparisons and demonstrations.

- Make students aware of common misconceptions and prepare strategies to counter them. Making mistakes and learning from them are key to building resilience and perseverance in learning.

- Be planned effectively, making good use of modelling, explanations, and scaffolds to support learning.

- Adapt teaching in a responsive way to support struggling and excelling learners while maintaining high expectations for all.

- Ensure students have relevant domain-specific knowledge to enable them to think critically and apply knowledge and skills to other contexts.

- Promote self-regulated learning by providing students with the tools and strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning.

- Include formative assessment strategies to set learning intentions and to assess learning gaps.

All teachers should 'meet and greet' their students at the classroom door at the start of each lesson. There should be a purposeful activity for students to begin immediately. The nature of this task is not prescriptive.

6. 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 policy 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. Beyond this, individual class teachers should use their professional judgement to determine what additional feedback is required. Such decisions should consider the four areas of content, people, methods and time, as detailed below. Any abbreviations used in written feedback must be explained to students.

CONTENT [12]

The content of feedback may focus on:

- the particular task that a pupil has undertaken;
- the underlying processes related to a specific subject; or
- a pupil's self-regulation.

PEOPLE

Feedback may be directed towards different people, be that:

- to the whole class;
- to specific groups; or
- just to individuals.

METHODS

Feedback may be delivered via different methods:

- Verbally—this could be detailed conversation or quick verbal comment; or
- written—this may be written comments, written marks, scores, or a combination.

TIMES

Feedback may be delivered at different times, be that:

- during a lesson;
- immediately after a lesson; or
- sometime after a lesson.

7. 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 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.

We have an enhanced focus on attitude for learning. 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.

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 also appears to be 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.

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 appropriate 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 time/frequency allocations should be followed (see table below) and this should be consistent across the department.

Students must be allowed a realistic time to complete the work; 24 hours is not sufficient and we encourage staff to allow 5 working days where possible to enable students to plan their time effectively.

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 Home Learning – *Average* allocation in minutes per two-week cycle

Subject	English^	Maths	Science	History	Geog	Computing	MFL	Food/ DT	Art	PD*	Drama*
Year 7	180	120	60	30	60	20	60	20/30	60		
Year 8	180	120	60	30	60	30	80	20/30	60		
Year 9	180	120	80	50	60	30	60	20/30	60		

^Time includes 'Reading for Pleasure'

*Homework in PD and Drama will depend on the nature of the topic and therefore will not be set formally every fortnight.

Key Stage 4 Home Learning – *Average* allocation in minutes per two-week cycle

Subject	English	Maths	Science (Triple Award)	Science (Double Award)	Options (all other subjects)
Year 10	240	120	180	120	120
Year 11	240	180	180	120	120

There might be an increase in some of the timings in Year 11 once exam preparation and programmes formally commence.

Alongside timetabled lessons, Sixth Form students will have some periods of supervised private study and some 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 20 hours a week on homework (directed independent study) and other independent study (self-directed learning) 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.

9. Continuity of education

We have learned from the period of school closure during the pandemic that we can and must ensure that learning continues in spite of the circumstances. Teaching staff have been equipped with iPads to both enhance the quality of instructions, but also so that they can work remotely if necessary. If a teacher has a pre-planned absence, they should leave high quality cover which could include video instruction so that learning is not disrupted.

10. Quality Assurance

The quality of education provided to our students is something we should be proud of at Cockermouth School. To repeat the sentiment from the introduction, we can and want to be greater than the sum of our parts. To do this we need to monitor that the intentions of this policy are enacted in practice consistently across all areas of the curriculum. On a daily basis, we have a long standing practice of open doors and informal leadership team drop-ins. We will not return to formal lesson observations as a quality measure. Instead, we will use a triangulation model involving lesson visits, student interviews and work scrutiny. We will not be looking for one-off lessons with new and exciting approaches. We will be looking 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 quality assurance visits and they should not feel anxious about being caught out. We ask teaching staff to follow this policy, practice the agreed department curriculum, know their students and engage meaningfully in the CPD plan.

Headteacher:
Mr R J King

Chair of Governors:
Mr A Rankin

Cockermouth School · Castlegate Drive
Cockermouth · Cumbria · CA13 9HF

Tel: 01900 898888

www.cockermouthschool.org
reception@cockermouthschool.org