2026

Teaching & Learning Policy

SOUTHCHURCH
HIGH SCHOOL

Review Framework:

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1. Purpose

This policy sets out what excellent teaching and learning looks like at Southchurch High School. It gives every member of staff a shared language and a shared set of expectations, so that students experience consistently high-quality teaching in every classroom, whatever the subject, key stage or teacher.

The policy is built on six fundamentals: **explicit instruction, modelling, questioning, feedback, collaboration and challenge**. These are not a checklist to be ticked in every lesson. They are the core professional practices that we expect all teachers to understand deeply, apply with judgement and keep refining throughout their careers.

2. Our ethos and how it shapes teaching

Southchurch is **a community of opportunity, learning and aspiration**. Each part of that ethos has direct consequences for what happens in the classroom.

Opportunity. Every student, regardless of starting point, background or need, is entitled to a rich, ambitious curriculum and to teaching that gives them genuine access to it. Opportunity is created when teachers explain clearly, model expertly, check understanding carefully and refuse to let any student fall behind.

Learning. Learning is a change in long-term memory: students know more and can do more over time. We design lessons around what students need to learn and remember, not simply what they will be doing. We value effort, practice, mistakes and revisiting, because that is how knowledge becomes secure.

Aspiration. We hold high expectations of every student and every colleague. Aspiration is not just a message on a wall. It shows up in the challenge we set, the standards of work we insist on and the belief we communicate that every student can succeed.

Community. The word *community* matters. Students learn with and from each other, teachers learn with and from each other, and the school works in partnership with families. Our practice is shared, open and collaborative.

3. Guiding principles

1. **Every lesson is part of a carefully sequenced curriculum.** Teachers know where a lesson sits in the learning journey, what came before and what comes next.

2. **High expectations for all.** We teach to the top and support so that all students can reach it, rather than lowering the ceiling.

3. **Knowledge matters.** Secure subject knowledge underpins thinking, creativity and application.

4. **Teaching is a craft that improves with deliberate practice.** We draw on research evidence, such as the Education Endowment Foundation guidance and cognitive science, alongside professional experience.

5. **Consistency with professional judgement.** The fundamentals are common to all; how they look in a Year 7 science lesson, a Year 10 drama lesson and a Year 11 history lesson will differ, and that is as it should be.

6. **Positive relationships and a calm, purposeful climate** are the foundation on which effective teaching rests.

4. The six teaching and learning fundamentals

4.1 Explicit instruction

What it is. Teachers deliberately and clearly teach the knowledge and skills students need, in carefully sequenced steps, rather than expecting students to discover them unaided.

Why it matters. Students have limited working memory. Clear, well-structured teaching reduces cognitive overload and gives every student, especially those with the least prior knowledge, secure access to the content. This is how we turn opportunity into reality.

What this looks like at Southchurch:

- Lessons have a clear, specific learning focus linked to prior and future learning.
- Retrieval at the start of lessons revisits previously taught knowledge, using low-stakes quizzing, questioning or short tasks.
- New content is broken into manageable steps, with concise, well-prepared explanations and careful use of examples and non-examples.
- Dual coding, such as diagrams, visuals and models alongside spoken explanation, is used where it aids understanding.
- Teachers check for understanding frequently before moving on, and respond to what they find.
- Students move from guided practice to independent practice only when they are ready, with sufficient success to build confidence.
- Knowledge is revisited over time through spaced and interleaved practice.

4.2 Modelling

What it is. Teachers make expert thinking visible by demonstrating how to approach a task, solve a problem or construct an answer, and by showing students what excellent work looks like.

Why it matters. Students cannot hit a target they cannot see. Modelling demystifies success, builds independence and shows students that high standards are achievable.

What this looks like at Southchurch:

- Teachers live-model processes, such as writing a paragraph, working through a problem, planning an experiment or analysing a source, narrating their decisions aloud.
- Worked examples are used to show each step, gradually faded as students gain confidence.
- Success criteria are drawn from models of excellent work and made explicit to students.
- Common errors and misconceptions are shown and discussed, so students learn what to avoid and why.
- Students are given the chance to compare strong and weaker examples and explain the difference.
- Teachers model not only the product but also the habits of a successful learner, including perseverance, self-checking and responding to feedback.

4.3 Questioning

What it is. Purposeful, carefully planned questioning that checks understanding, deepens thinking, surfaces misconceptions and ensures all students are thinking hard.

Why it matters. Questioning is one of the most powerful tools a teacher has. It reveals what students actually know, strengthens memory through retrieval, and builds the reasoning and articulation that underpin academic success.

What this looks like at Southchurch:

- Key questions are planned in advance, including questions designed to expose likely misconceptions.

- All students are involved: teachers use techniques such as cold call, no hands up, think-pair-share and mini-whiteboards so that participation is not left to the willing few.
- Teachers allow thinking time and use wait time, and expect answers in full, well-formed sentences using subject vocabulary.
- Questions move from checking recall to probing reasoning, such as "Why?", "How do you know?", "What would happen if...?" and "Can you build on that?"
- Incorrect answers are treated as useful information. Teachers respond by probing, rephrasing or re-teaching rather than moving on.
- Responses from students shape what the teacher does next in the lesson.

4.4 Feedback

What it is. Information that tells students where they are, where they are aiming to get to, and what to do next, given in a form they can act on.

Why it matters. Done well, feedback is among the most effective ways to accelerate progress. Done badly, it consumes teacher time with little impact. Our approach prioritises feedback that changes what students know and can do, over marking for its own sake.

What this looks like at Southchurch:

- Feedback is purposeful: it is linked to the learning focus and aimed at improving the student's next piece of work, not just justifying a grade.
- Feedback happens in the moment wherever possible: live verbal feedback, circulating the room, targeted intervention and whole-class feedback.
- Whole-class feedback is used to identify common strengths and errors, with follow-up teaching and improvement tasks. Individual written comments are used where they will have the most impact.
- Students are given time to respond. Feedback that is not acted on is wasted.
- Feedback focuses on the task and the process, and is specific, accurate and kind. It communicates belief in the student's ability to improve.
- Assessment is used formatively to inform planning, and summative assessment is used carefully and sparingly, with results analysed to shape future teaching.
- Marking and feedback practice follows departmental guidance within the principle that workload must be proportionate to impact.

4.5 Collaboration

What it is. Structured opportunities for students to learn with and from one another, and for staff to learn with and from colleagues.

Why it matters. Talk and shared thinking deepen understanding. Collaboration builds communication, respect and teamwork, qualities at the heart of our community. For staff, collaborative professional learning is the most reliable route to better teaching.

What this looks like at Southchurch (students):

- Collaborative tasks are purposeful and structured, with clear roles, clear outcomes and clear individual accountability. Group work is not a default and is used when it will improve learning.
- Paired and small-group talk is used to rehearse ideas, test reasoning and build on each other's thinking, usually after students have secure knowledge to talk about.
- Students practice academic discussion: listening, disagreeing respectfully, building on and challenging ideas using subject-specific language.
- Peer feedback is taught explicitly and guided by clear criteria and models.
- Groupings are flexible and chosen deliberately by the teacher.

What this looks like at Southchurch (staff):

- Departments plan collaboratively, sharing resources, explanations, models and assessments.
- Colleagues observe one another in a supportive, developmental way, and share what works.
- Professional development is regular, focused and rooted in the six fundamentals.
- Strong practice is celebrated and shared across the school community.

4.6 Challenge

What it is. Setting ambitious, demanding goals for every student, and providing the teaching and support needed to reach them.

Why it matters. Challenge is the expression of our aspiration for every young person. When students are stretched appropriately, and supported to succeed, they develop resilience, confidence and a genuine sense of what they are capable of.

What this looks like at Southchurch:

- All students access the same ambitious curriculum. Challenge is built into the core of the lesson, not reserved for "extension" tasks for a few.
- Teachers use scaffolding to enable access to challenging content, such as sentence stems, worked examples, structured organisers and chunking. Scaffolds are adjusted and withdrawn as students become more secure.
- Tasks require students to think hard: to explain, justify, evaluate, apply knowledge to unfamiliar contexts and make connections across topics.
- Students are introduced to and expected to use Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, reading demanding texts and writing at length with accuracy.
- Teachers set and maintain high standards for the quality of work, behaviour and effort, and do not accept less than a student's best.
- Mistakes and struggle are normalised as part of learning, and students are encouraged to persevere.
- The most able students are stretched through greater depth, breadth, complexity and independence, not simply more of the same.

5. Putting the fundamentals together

The six fundamentals work as a system. A well-taught lesson will typically include elements of all six, in a sequence that fits the content:

1. **Retrieve** prior learning and review key knowledge.
2. **Teach** new content explicitly, in carefully chosen steps.
3. **Model** the thinking and the standard of work expected.
4. **Question** to check understanding and deepen thinking throughout.
5. **Practice** collaboratively and independently, with appropriate challenge.
6. **Feedback** during the lesson and adapt teaching in response.
7. **Review** what has been learnt, and plan for it to be revisited.

This is a flexible framework rather than a rigid lesson template. Teachers are trusted to use their professional judgement about how best to apply the fundamentals for their subject, their students and the learning at hand.

6. Inclusion and adaptive teaching

At Southchurch, all students are entitled to high-quality teaching. We believe high-quality teaching is the most effective way of supporting students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), students who are disadvantaged, students with English as an additional language and students who are particularly able.

- Teachers use adaptive teaching: they keep expectations high while adjusting support, scaffolding, pace and questioning in response to what students need. They do not create entirely separate tasks or lower the ambition of the curriculum.
- Teachers use information in pupil profiles and SEND support plans to anticipate barriers and plan for them.
- Teachers work in partnership with the SENDCo, learning support staff and pastoral teams, and make sure additional adults are deployed to promote independence and not dependency.
- Disadvantaged students are prioritised in questioning, feedback and checking for understanding.
- Literacy and vocabulary development are the responsibility of every teacher.

7. Curriculum, homework and assessment

- **Curriculum.** Subject leaders are responsible for a coherent, sequenced and ambitious curriculum which identifies the key knowledge, skills and vocabulary to be taught and remembered.
- **Homework.** Homework is purposeful and manageable. It consolidates, practices and revisits learning, and does not introduce entirely new content.
- **Assessment.** Assessment is used to understand what students know and to improve teaching. It is planned into the curriculum, and its data is used to adapt teaching and to support intervention.

8. Roles and responsibilities

Classroom teachers are responsible for planning and delivering lessons which apply the six fundamentals, for knowing their students well, for reflecting on and improving their practice, and for engaging in professional development and collaboration.

Heads of department and subject leaders are responsible for curriculum design, for ensuring the fundamentals are interpreted well in their subject, for coaching and developing their teams, and for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their area.

Senior leaders are responsible for setting the strategic direction for teaching and learning, ensuring staff have the time, training and support to do it well, protecting staff workload, and evaluating the impact of this policy.

Governors are responsible for holding school leaders to account for the quality of teaching and learning, and for supporting the school's ethos and vision.

Students are expected to engage with their learning, to give their best effort, to respond to feedback, to support one another and to contribute positively to the learning community.

Parents and carers are invited to support their children's learning by encouraging effort and aspiration, supporting routines such as homework and attendance, and working in partnership with the school.

9. Professional development and support

We are committed to the continuous professional growth of all staff. Our approach includes:

- A programme of regular, evidence-informed professional development focused on the six fundamentals.
- Coaching and instructional feedback for all teachers, including early career teachers, is developmental and not judgmental.
- Opportunities to observe colleagues, within and beyond the school.
- Time to collaborate in departments and cross-school groups.
- Induction and mentoring for trainee and early career teachers, aligned to the Early Career Framework and the Teachers' Standards.

10. Monitoring and evaluation

We monitor teaching and learning to understand what is working and where support is needed, not to judge individuals. Evidence will be gathered through a range of sources, including:

- Learning walks and short, frequent lesson visits.
- Coaching conversations and peer observation.
- Sampling of student work and books.
- Student voice and staff voice.
- Analysis of assessment outcomes and progress data.
- Review of curriculum plans and resources.

Findings will be used to shape professional development priorities and school improvement planning. Monitoring will be proportionate, supportive and transparent, and will respect staff workload and wellbeing.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, in consultation with staff, students and governors. It will be amended as needed in light of evidence about what is most effective in helping our students to learn.

Appendix A: The six fundamentals at a glance

Fundamental	In one sentence	Link to our ethos
Explicit instruction	We teach clearly, in well-sequenced steps, and check that every student has understood.	**Opportunity**: every student gets secure access to the curriculum.
Modelling	We show students what excellent thinking and work look like.	**Learning**: success is demystified and independence is built.
Questioning	We use planned questions to check, probe and deepen thinking for all.	**Learning**: retrieval and reasoning strengthen memory and understanding.
Feedback	We tell students what to do next to improve, and give them time to act on it.	**Aspiration**: students are supported to close the gap to excellence.
Collaboration	Students and staff learn with and from one another.	**Community**: we grow together through shared thinking and practice.
Challenge	We set high expectations and support every student to meet them.	**Aspiration**: we believe all students can achieve ambitious goals.