



BALLYCASTLE HIGH SCHOOL

Learning and Teaching Policy

- *Approval by the Board of Governors: **June 2016***
- *The implementation of this policy will be monitored by: Senior Management Team*
- *This policy will be reviewed every two years*





INTRODUCTION

Ballycastle High School recognises that learning and teaching is the core activity of our community. A culture of continuous improvement exists with reflective practitioners monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching and this enables realistic and challenging expectations to be set.

This document is a statement of aims, principles and strategies for learning and teaching at Ballycastle High School. The Learning and Teaching policy lays the foundations for the whole curriculum, both formal and informal and, along with our School Aims, forms the context in which all other policy statements should be read.

AIMS

This policy aims to

- ❖ Establish high expectations for learning and teaching;
- ❖ Address the needs of all pupils and raise their attainment;
- ❖ Create and maintain a common and consistent approach to effective learning and teaching;
- ❖ Outline methods of self-evaluation, monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching in Ballycastle High School.

OBJECTIVES

This policy will help teachers to:

- ❖ Consider what the key characteristics of high quality learning and teaching are;
- ❖ Reflect on their current teaching and assessment strategies;
- ❖ Ensure their teaching engages and motivates pupils;
- ❖ Ensure that best use is made of resources whether related to teaching materials, accommodation, timetabling or professional development;



EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Ballycastle High School strives for high quality learning and has high expectations of its pupils. It is therefore our expectation that:

- ❖ Pupils attend school regularly and be punctual to class;
- ❖ Come to school prepared to learn – with a positive, growth mind-set;
- ❖ Build positive relationships with staff – teaching and non-teaching;
- ❖ Be organised by bringing the correct books and equipment to class and making appropriate use of student planners;
- ❖ Display self-motivation and openness to challenge;
- ❖ Understand their own learning styles;
- ❖ Be responsible for their own learning;
- ❖ Make measurable progress in skills, knowledge and understanding;
- ❖ Develop skills to be independent and life-long learners.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING

At Ballycastle High School we believe that the quality of teaching is crucial in promoting effective learning in schools. Effective teaching requires individuals who are committed, academically able and care for the well-being and achievement of pupils. As the Department of Education has noted in their policy for school improvement, *Every School a Good School*, "...improvement comes first and foremost through high quality teaching from committed and professional teachers." The statements below reflect the indicators of high quality learning and teaching as detailed in ESAGS (2009).

Effective teachers will:

- ❖ Plan and prepare thoroughly using clearly defined learning objectives;
- ❖ Make learning intentions and success criteria explicit;
- ❖ Prepare and make use of high quality resources which meet the learning outcomes intended;
- ❖ Use adaptable, flexible teaching strategies that respond to diversity in the classroom;
- ❖ Match planned tasks to pupil ability and needs; seeking to actively involve pupils in the learning process;
- ❖ Make connections between lesson content and pupil experience – building upon prior learning;
- ❖ Encourage pupils to think critically;
- ❖ Promote pupil participation through problem solving, effective questioning and discussion;
- ❖ Allow thinking time for questions;
- ❖ Encourage pupils to evaluate what they have learnt, encourage pupils to peer-assess;
- ❖ Use systematic assessment and feedback to promote improvement.



Effective teachers also:

- ❖ Are informed about educational change, relevant legislation and seek further professional development;
- ❖ Engage in rigorous self-evaluation and use objective data which leads to sustained self-improvement;
- ❖ Reflect on their own work and the outcomes of individual pupils;

Personal qualities of effective teachers:

Research shows that pupils respond positively to the following qualities in their teachers:

- ❖ Approachable: pupils feel that they can ask them for support;
- ❖ Aspirational: genuinely believe that the pupil can succeed;
- ❖ Assertive: decisive and confident but firm and fair;
- ❖ Encouraging: positive and supportive;
- ❖ Enthusiastic: believe in the value of learning, in what they are teaching and enjoy their job;
- ❖ Humorous: show humour naturally and put pupils at ease;
- ❖ Open: prepared to challenge their own learning and admit that they might be wrong or do not know;
- ❖ Respectful: treat their pupils with respect and prioritise their well-being and learning. They do not use sarcasm or humiliation;

Lessons

Teachers will seek to create a positive learning environment which creates a 'motivated classroom'.

Classrooms are characterised by high quality display materials and celebrate pupils' work and achievement. All lessons should be planned carefully as part of an overall scheme of work produced by each department.

Characteristics of effective lessons:

- ❖ Lessons start promptly and attendance is recorded;
- ❖ The classroom environment is efficiently managed and organised;
- ❖ Lessons have a clear structure – introduction/starter, learning activities and a plenary;
- ❖ Lessons have pace and challenge;
- ❖ The use of high-quality resources;
- ❖ Use of objectives and targets to inform pupils clearly of what is expected from them in terms of learning intentions and the success criteria;
- ❖ Use effective questioning techniques, eliciting fuller responses and prompting further enquiry;
- ❖ Teaching strategies take account of a variety of learning styles (visual, auditory and kinaesthetic) leading to high levels of engagement;

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- ❖ Have clear and high expectations of pupil achievement and challenge underachievement;
 - ❖ Recognise and celebrate pupil achievement;
 - ❖ Differentiate appropriately to meet the needs of pupils – SEND, Newcomers and ‘Gifted and Talented’;

The Learning Environment

The environment impacts on learning. Teachers should recognise the importance of organisation and visual and emotional factors and should take responsibility for the learning environment. Teachers might consider the 5 - S - test - Safe, Stimulating, Supportive, Secure, Self Esteem, when reviewing the impact of the learning environment so that:

- a) the physical environment is stimulating, colourful, comfortable, well-resourced and flexible and respected by all.
- b) contributions by pupils are valued and respected by teachers and by other pupils.
- c) there are displays of pupil work throughout the school.
- d) teacher pupil relationships are positive, supportive and professional:
 - a. praise and rewards are used
 - b. pupils work in a positive atmosphere
 - c. there is a purposeful working environment
- e) effective classroom management produces a positive environment for learning.

Special Educational Needs

Ensuring that children with special educational needs have a positive experience of school and progress with their learning is vitally important. The school’s SEND policy links to the learning and teaching policy in outlining how the needs of these pupils are to be met.

Literacy and Numeracy

As outlined in DE’s *Count Read: Succeed* document, “The skills of literacy and numeracy are so essential to delivering the curriculum that helping children and young people to develop and improve them can never be seen as something additional, rather it is at the heart of what good teachers do every day.”

Teachers are central in raising standards of literacy and numeracy and tackling underachievement in these areas. In Ballycastle High School, the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators lead the teaching staff in raising standards of literacy and numeracy and the sharing of good practice across departments.



Professional development

School development planning is achieved through whole staff participation and school leaders providing opportunities for development of:

- ❖ learning processes
- ❖ teaching strategies
- ❖ assessment methods
- ❖ target setting

Staff are encouraged to review and reflecting on their practice through the following:

- ❖ PRSD;
- ❖ Sharing of good practice within departments and with other colleagues;
- ❖ Training and/or Inset days which provide opportunities to focus on the planning and delivery of structured lessons and to consider different learning styles and teaching strategies;

Classroom Observation

- ❖ Classroom observation is an important tool for improvement and helps to support self-evaluation;
- ❖ Observation should be viewed as a non-threatening, positive and supportive process which leads to the sharing of good practice and professional development;
- ❖ Classroom observation within and across departments will be encouraged.

Homework

Homework is an integral part of the learning process and should link to the learning and teaching in class providing an opportunity for consolidation and further learning. The school's approach to homework is outlined in the Homework Policy. Each department will also develop its own homework policy within the context of the whole-school policy.



Feedback

Recent research shows that the most powerful single factor that enhances pupil achievement is feedback. This should be regular and should be positive and encouraging, but also honest and realistic. Feedback should refer to the success criteria for the task.

In verbal feedback, teachers focus on the strengths of the answer and then use further questioning to steer the pupil in the right direction or to encourage higher level cognitive skills.

Written feedback should be given in pupil-friendly language. “Two stars and a wish” is a helpful model for many contexts. Pupils should be aware of how to improve the quality of their work through feedback which is clear and specifically targeted.

Feedback is an integral aspect of formative and summative assessment as indicated below.

Assessment

Definition

Assessment is the process of obtaining, analysing and interpreting evidence by both pupils and teachers to enable the review, planning and improvement of learning. It is fully integrated with the delivery of the curriculum and is an essential component of effective classroom practice.

The Department of Education has provided the following quality indicators for effective assessment:

- ❖ *Teachers use an appropriately wide range of assessment for learning strategies, including, self and peer-assessment, and formative use of summative assessment outcomes;*
- ❖ *The pupils' work is marked regularly, frequently and consistently in ways which highlight the strengths and give feedback on what the pupil needs to do in order to improve;*
- ❖ *Pupils identify personal learning targets;*
- ❖ *Appropriate and realistic targets are set, monitored and tracked for individual pupils for learning, and attainment in end of key stage assessments and public examinations;*
- ❖ *The school communicates to parents the pupils' progress and achievement.*

Together Towards Improvement. DE (2010).

In line with these indicators, the School policy is that:

- ❖ Pupils' work should be regularly marked; attainment should be recorded and fed back to pupils, in accordance with each department's assessment policy;
- ❖ Marking should be standardised and moderated within the department;



- ❖ Assessment for learning is a key component of pupil success. As stated, feedback should be informative and in pupil-friendly language. Pupils should be clear and confident about how to improve their work;
- ❖ Assessment may be formal or informal and will be carried out in a variety of ways, including self-assessment, peer-assessment and teacher review;
- ❖ Assessment may be formative and/or summative.

Monitoring and Review

Learning and teaching is monitored by:

- ❖ Regular and continuous analysis of results of internal and external examinations;
- ❖ Monitoring of pupil progress against targets set;
- ❖ Participation in planned classroom observation with constructive feedback;
- ❖ Departmental meetings where learning and teaching is discussed and good practice is shared;
- ❖ Schemes of work are working documents which are regularly reviewed within the Department.
- ❖ The Head of Department / Subject Co-ordinator monitors and evaluates schemes of work and the learning and teaching in the Department. Roles and responsibilities are further detailed in Appendix 1;
- ❖ Departmental Development and/or Action Plans contain targets for learning and teaching which have clear success criteria against which progress with implementation can be monitored and evaluated;
- ❖ Agendas and minutes of Department meetings are passed to SMT;
- ❖ Head of Department and SMT Link meetings;
- ❖ Observation of the quality of pupils' work and their achievements by Heads of Department / Subject Co-ordinators and SMT
- ❖ PRSD Observations
- ❖ ETI visits and inspections.

The Learning and Teaching Policy must be reviewed regularly so that we can take account of new initiatives in learning and teaching; changes in the curriculum; developments in technology or changes in the physical environment of the school.



Appendix 1

Roles and responsibilities

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors have responsibility for all matters pertaining to school governance. Learning and teaching is the core purpose of the school. The Governors have responsibility for:

- ❖ Managing the financial resources of the school efficiently in order to facilitate high quality learning and teaching;
- ❖ Appointing teaching staff to fulfil the learning and teaching needs of the school;
- ❖ Having a consultative role on the School Development Plan and ensuring targets for learning and teaching are in place.

The Principal

- ❖ Has ultimate responsibility for learning and teaching;
- ❖ Sets the strategic vision for the school in which learning and teaching is a key element;
- ❖ Leads School Development Planning to support learning and teaching;
- ❖ In partnership with the Board of Governors appoints teaching staff;
- ❖ Ensures staff are deployed effectively to support learning and teaching.

Vice Principal / Senior Teacher (Curriculum Responsibilities)

- ❖ Provides strategic leadership for curricular matters including learning and teaching;
- ❖ Liaises with the Senior Teacher with responsibility for learning and teaching to establish targets on the School Development Plan for learning and teaching;
- ❖ Leads school self-evaluation of learning and teaching;
- ❖ In consultation with SMT, Heads of Department, Subject Co-ordinators and teaching staff establishes priorities for the strategic development of learning and teaching; Sets targets on the School Development Plan for learning and teaching;
- ❖ Produces an action plan to implement, monitor and evaluate and review the targets for learning and teaching.

Heads of Department / Subject Co-ordinators

- ❖ Lead the learning and teaching within their departments;
- ❖ Use self-evaluation to determine the learning and teaching priorities for their department;
- ❖ Contribute to consultation on the learning and teaching targets for the School Development Plan;

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- ❖ Produce Departmental Development and Action plans which set targets for learning and teaching within their departments which link to the School Development Plan;
 - ❖ Monitor and evaluate the learning and teaching within their departments.
 - ❖ The SENCO has responsibility for leading and managing their area in an effective manner which supports the learning of those pupils who are believed to have or are identified as having a special educational need. These responsibilities are further details in the SEN policy.

Subject Teachers

- ❖ Put in place teaching strategies and resources to ensure high quality learning and teaching;
- ❖ Hold realistically high expectations of their pupils, and encourage them to achieve their full potential
- ❖ Work to incorporate the SDP targets for learning and teaching into their classroom teaching;
- ❖ Work to meet the targets set in their Departmental Development plan;
- ❖ Assessment of pupil learning – both formative and summative and using assessment as a tool to improve their pupils' learning;
- ❖ Report to parents on their child's progress both in written reports and in person at parents' meetings;
- ❖ Provide stimulating, secure learning environments in which pupils feel valued and confident, in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- ❖ Ensure that they are secure in their knowledge of the curriculum and of learning processes.
- ❖ Adopt a consistent approach based on established ground rules for behaviour, health and wellbeing.

Parents/Carers

- ❖ Are kept informed about their child's progress to enable them to support the learning process by:
 - a) sending reports to parents in which we explain the progress made by their child.
 - b) explaining to parents how they can support their children with home study.
 - c) holding parents' meetings where their children's work can be reviewed and their progress discussed.
- ❖ Are encouraged to promote the aims and ethos of the school through regular contact and updates;
- ❖ Should communicate effectively with the school, and in particular inform the school of problems which may become barriers to their child's learning;
- ❖ Should provide a suitable learning environment at home for study;



- ❖ Are encouraged to support their child's learning through checking that homework and revision are completed. Where requested, student planners should be signed each week;
- ❖ Are asked to ensure that their children have the best attendance record possible.
- ❖ Are asked to ensure that their children are equipped and well prepared for school each day.
- ❖ Are expected to support actions taken by the school to address underachievement or other factors which are barriers to learning.

Pupils

- ❖ Take responsibility for their own learning;
- ❖ Attend regularly and punctually with the correct materials and equipment;
- ❖ Complete classwork and homework to the best of their ability and meet deadlines set by their teachers;
- ❖ Should be willing to participate by asking questions and contributing to class discussions.
- ❖ Avoid over-reliance on the teacher.
- ❖ Should participate in peer-assessment, self-assessment and self-reflection.
- ❖ Review their own performance.
- ❖ Set personal goals and targets.
- ❖ Show tolerance and respect the rights of others to learn.