

The Link Secondary School

Teaching and Learning Policy

For review September 2021
Written by Hannah Wallwork

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

• Introduction	• Responding to need
• Aims and Objectives	• Assessment for learning
• Effective learning	• Progress reporting
• Effective teaching	

Introduction:

The Link Secondary School works with children and young people aged 11-18 years in actively embracing their own needs, talents, motivations and possible barriers to learning to develop their confidence and academic prowess and ultimately find their place in society as a whole. We have a strong emphasis on teaching and learning as having a crucial part to play in this and recognise the need for motivational pedagogy and high standards inside and outside of the classroom. Our students deserve excellent teaching practice and a stimulating curriculum offer delivered by a passionate team of teachers, SSAs and therapists. Our belief for teaching and learning is that it should be exciting and bespoke for individuals to be able to be stretched in a safe environment without causing anxiety or stress. Staff acknowledge that it is a fine balance to stray into new skills, knowledge and experience and yet to feel able to cope with these unknowns and are fully equipped to guide students through this. We have a firm focus on literacy and numeracy progression alongside the development of life skills embedded within a rounded and varied range of subjects and therapies. We believe this is key for students to achieve success and mature in their school careers and on into the world beyond The Link.

Aims and objectives:

Our day to day practice at The Link Secondary School is cemented in seven core values; kindness, charity, courage, resilience, positivity, fairness and success. Our students are being continuously steered towards demonstrating these values in all aspects of their experience here including teaching and learning outcomes. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is woven into the whole curriculum offer and our teaching practice must be diverse and far reaching to encompass this. Strong positive relationships and a varied range of tasks and activities are necessary to ensure maximum engagement and maximum accomplishment. We want our learners to feel the effects of a calm, thought-provoking environment, making lessons a happy and safe place to be.

We believe our students are entitled to the opportunity to achieve external accreditation regardless of need or ability. Our staff have extensively researched an array of appropriate qualifications and courses, liaising with exam boards and tailoring course delivery to meet the needs of all students and ensure every young person leaves us with not just some form of certification but an entire bank of qualifications. Only this would reflect the effort, work and pride our students put into their own success, something which needs to be recognised for the admirable achievement it is.

- To clearly outline the entitlement of all students
- To ensure teaching is of a high standard and learning is effective
- To provide a guide for teaching practice and encourage innovation
- To ensure all students leave with accreditation via high quality teaching
- To reflect on current practice and strive to develop as professionals
- To demonstrate the consistency of expectation
- To create a baseline for monitoring teaching and learning
- To become a centre for personalised learning

Effective learning:

We acknowledge that people learn in many different ways and we recognise the need to develop strategies that allow all children to learn in ways that best suit them. The psychologist Howard Gardner identifies seven main areas of intelligence: linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal/group working,

and intrapersonal/reflective. We take into account these different forms of intelligence when planning teaching and learning styles.

We offer opportunities for children to learn in different ways. These include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practice of physical life skills • research and finding out; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whole class work; • questioning; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • watching television and responding to musical or tape recorded material; • debates and oral presentations;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group work; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of ICT and computing skills; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • designing and making things;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pair work; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fieldwork and visits to places of educational interest; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation in physical activity;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • independent work; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creative activities; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflecting on what has been learned

Effective teaching:

When teaching we focus on motivating children and building on their skills, knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. We use a range of resources to provide a well-balanced and broad curriculum.

We believe children learn effectively when the teacher provides:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thorough preparation; • shared learning objectives which are understood by the pupils; • clear expectations of what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of the session; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an atmosphere where children feel secure to question and answer • innovative teaching; • appropriate pace to the lesson; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lessons where children's previous learning and interests are built upon, through purposeful application of knowledge to different situations; • opportunities to review and reflect on the learning; • thinking time before answering questions
---	--	---

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> open-ended, thought provoking, challenging questions of the children; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lessons where children's understanding is developed through active, practical experiences involving individual and collaborative talk, exploration, questioning, prediction and investigation, so that the lesson makes a difference; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developmental feedback and constructive criticism of pupil's work;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least two tasks per lesson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a planned programme of educational visits to reinforce and stimulate learning; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> high levels of differentiation by learning objective, support level, questioning, task and outcome

Responding to student needs and behaviour for learning:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of needs of all individual students using EHCP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note things which may trigger anxiety and avoid these in lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model appropriate 'small talk' to help students with social interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> movement breaks at beginning or end of lessons where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students accompanied by class SSA between lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a bank of strategies for individual students learning and behavioural barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use Blooms questioning to draw on existing knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Break down instructions very clearly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use timer for learning breaks as required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with therapy team, and SSAs to share strategies for individual students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seating plan in place when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind students of school values and behaviour for learning expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send post cards to students for displaying school values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow behaviour policy and use on call rota 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use sensory strategies when appropriate

Moving towards becoming a centre for personalised learning:

As we move forward into 2020 and beyond we are taking steps to ensuring that all teaching and learning is based around personalised strategies for all students. Beginning with an audit completed collectively by all school staff, students' individual barriers to learning are identified and strategies developed to help students to overcome these difficulties. This will ensure that our strategies are not simply based on the common barriers according to diagnosis of need but actually based on highly personal, individual barriers so all students have their own Link Priority targets to work towards as well as their more academic targets taken from their SOLAR assessment data.

Assessment for learning:

Student progress is of utmost importance. We ensure progress is not only tracked according to outcomes but also built into planning by way of learning objectives.

Using SOLAR assessment tracking software all students are baselined against 'Link Steps' for each subject, these are subtly incremental statements indicating performance, meaning that the picture of a student's achievement is very detailed and bespoke. Teachers include these performance indicators in the learning objectives which are then relayed in the medium term plans and the lessons themselves. When it comes time to assess students at the end of every half term, teachers will be able to clearly see the extent to which the learning objectives have been met for each student and subsequently fed back into SOLAR.

All students are entered for external accreditation across a range of exam boards and subjects. At key stage 4, SOLAR statements are used directly from the external accreditation specification.

Formative assessment; questioning and feedback is necessary at regular intervals throughout lessons. We encourage a learning dialogue at all times.

All marking and feedback follows the whole-school marking policy and includes next steps, student comments and codes to assess whether or not the learning objective has been met.

Progress reporting:

Recognising the progress made by students is as important as the attainment itself. It is necessary that students are given credit in a way that is sincere and appropriate to their age and need as well as the tools to further develop their skills and knowledge.

Every half term a report detailing progress on SOLAR is sent home. This report also details the number of achievement postcards received by each child.

Progress data is collected and analysed according to group, ethnicity, gender and pupil premium status every half term. This is analysed by SLT to identify any gaps.

Intervention programmes are then tailored according to individual need and performance.