

# TEACHING & LEARNING POLICY AND PRACTICE

This is one of the College's keystone policies that sits above more detailed and technical policies. Like all such documents, it will have most benefit if those concerned work to apply it together, as well as individually. Ultimately, the teaching, student, agent, MDM and parent bodies share responsibility for its application. Curriculum Directors are accountable for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of specific responsibility. The College's SLT is responsible for directing, supervising, appraising, re-sourcing and supporting this work and for the professional development of staff. As subject and class teachers, our mission is to encourage, enhance and facilitate learning, in the broadest sense of the word. Some elements of our work will be formal and orthodox, common to any good school, and particular to our subject, while others will properly derive from the distinctive ethos that an International School like ours has naturally.

## Aims and Objectives

Central to this policy is the principle of aiming to create independent, lifelong learners who can take ownership of their learning and enjoy it. Simultaneously, the College aims to create a supportive, stimulating and inclusive environment for learning, designed to maximise student attainment. All stakeholders should clearly understand how to ensure the provision of a quality learning experience at the College. Therefore, all College staff will:

- Be made fully aware of the content of this policy;
- Recognise that quality teaching and learning is the result of careful planning;
- Implement the policy while planning their lessons.

The aims of our teaching are summarised as follows:

- To deliver Programmes of Study and the wider curriculum effectively, acquiring appropriate skills and knowledge
- To help students enjoy and succeed at learning academically, exploring and extending their academic and intellectual potential and in so doing to become 'learners for life'
- To nurture students' self-confidence and social skills
- To help them practice cooperation and collaboration with others, based upon tolerance, mutual appreciation, empathy and respect
- To cultivate their literacy and articulacy, numeracy and study skills
- To practice making choices and decisions as individuals and within groups
- To cultivate breadth of outlook, tolerance, independence and open-mindedness so that students are equipped to succeed in a rapidly changing world
- To learn the virtues of: dedication, good humour, tenacity, endeavour, application, commitment, patience, initiative, rigour and self-discipline
- To develop in them the means of balancing activities and time between study, leisure and recreation

The College recognises **EFFECTIVE LEARNING** takes place when students:

- Understand how they can make progress
- Extend their subject knowledge and deepen their understanding
- Develop positive attitudes towards learning – theirs' and others'
- Learn how to question, think critically and solve problems for themselves
- Accept responsibilities for their studies, including setting their own academic goals
- Endeavour to develop skills of research, analysis, reflection and enquiry
- Make discerning use of evidence
- Ultimately recognise the problematic nature of much knowledge
- Learn collaboratively and co-operatively, as well as independently

- Make best use of the resources available
- Take care of, and pride in, the appearance of and quality of their work
- Feel valued as individuals
- Remain open-minded towards new ideas and challenges

The College recognises elements of **EFFECTIVE TEACHING** to include:

- Clear planning and structure
- Explicit aims and goals, which are shared with classes
- Regular and timely assessment of learning (both summative and formative) in-line with the Assessment and Reporting Policy and the development of a culture where individual feedback is regularly given, leading to the creation of specific targets which are agreed, shared and recorded
- The employment of a variety of teaching styles and techniques, as appropriate
- Appropriate elements of pace and challenge
- Confident classroom management with high and consistent expectations of behaviour
- Differentiation, grounded in an understanding of the needs of individual students
- Structured homework which enhances learning
- Good relationships with students which cultivate a collaborative and co-operative atmosphere, one in which exploration and making mistakes is seen constructively
- A stimulating learning environment
- Regular review methods, evaluation of progress and student feedback as part of a culture of improvement
- Effective use of resources, such as ICT, to enhance the learning environment
- The patient support of individuals who need help
- A healthy dialogue with Personal Tutors, Curriculum Directors and House Staff
- Close liaison with the SENCO, where appropriate
- Good teamwork with departmental colleagues, sharing resources, initiatives, problems, Schemes of Work, etc.
- Taking an interest in the wider lives of students in the boarding community, so as to better motivate and connect with them
- Upholding the College's expectations, including in matters of behaviour, conduct, attendance and relationships
- Making opportunities for learning to be topical
- Making opportunities to stimulate students' spiritual, moral, health, personal and social development
- Encouraging students' initiative and independence
- The public displaying of strong, up-to-date examples of high quality work by students to act as exemplar pieces
- Managing and simplifying material to facilitate assimilation of essentials
- The discerning use of the College's rewards and sanctions systems
- The appropriate sharing of information with parents and via the College's Shackleton system and central information/communications system

The following guidance is offered to College staff as practical steps to integrate this policy into practice:

### **Subject Knowledge**

Teachers should prepare subject material in advance in line with Schemes of Work. This will include thinking about the different explanations, questions and language development issues that they will encounter with an international class. They should also keep their subject knowledge relevant and up to date.

### **Pace of Lessons**

There should be enough material prepared for a full 60 minute lesson; it is better to prepare too much material than to have too little. It is essential that the material has the right types of challenge present.

### **Knowing the Students**

It is good practice to address students by their preferred names and this is best achieved by having an established seating plan – particularly at the beginning of the academic year. Teachers will need to use their judgement in determining which groups of students work well together. The seating plan should be flexible to allow for different groupings depending on the activity. These seating plans should be changed on a regular basis.

### **Getting to know students abilities and progress level**

This is essential to Assessment for Learning and once a teacher has determined how students are dealing with a topic, they should consider how the material needs to be uniquely adapted. Hence lesson planning must be based upon the prior learning of students.

### **Maintaining an Academic Atmosphere**

This occurs when a teacher is confident in front of a class and the first key to this is meticulous preparation. Once a class realises that a teacher is in control of their material, they will naturally have confidence in the teacher. A lesson should be constructed so that tasks and activities do enable times of silence, preferably before paired or collaborative work is used in the first instance.

### **The start of the lesson**

A teacher would normally expect to ask students to enter a class and then seat them where requested as per the seating plan. Students should be registered within 5 minutes of arriving.

### **Lesson plans**

Lesson planning should be discussed with the relevant CD. It is often not necessary to have plans written out, if they are, they should be produced succinctly so that the objective of a lesson is in a teacher's mind, alongside the learning outcomes involved. It is crucial that students are aware of what they need to know over a series of lessons. Hence a lesson objective may run over a number of lessons being informed by AfL, the learning needs of the student and language development.

It is important that it is the students who are doing most of the work and therefore the learning. It is best practice to ensure that a variety of tasks are used in one lesson. However, it may well be that engagement in a lesson is sustained through relevant questioning or through a high level challenge rather than a change of activity. The sequence of lessons for a topic can also be the vehicle through which a variation of activity is delivered.

### **Questions to consider when planning a lesson at CATS College**

- What are the key objectives of the lesson?
- What are the key outcomes of the lesson?
- What is the main language development that will take place using the subject content?
- How will this language development occur?
- How will this language development be assessed through the subject content?
- How will the students prior learning inform your planning?
- What questions have been planned for the lesson?
- What silent activity is to be used?
- What paired activity is to be used?
- What group activity is to be used?
- What differentiated tasks have been considered?  
Has time been given to reviewing homework by students in response to teacher feedback?
- Is homework to be used in consolidating knowledge and understanding or as a preparatory task to explore the next topic?
- Is the level of challenge appropriate for this class?
- Have enough materials been prepared for a 60 minute lesson?

### **Homework/Prep**

A homework task needs to be carefully thought through and time given to explaining the purpose and nature of the task in lesson. This can be the type of task that consolidates or enhances learning. Finishing off a task started in class is usually not an acceptable use of homework time. The task should enable a teacher to assess the understanding and progress of the student. This assessment of homework should then be used in the planning of future lessons. The teacher should give appropriate time to explaining the nature of the task.

### **Questioning**

This is a fairly straightforward fashion of ensuring student engagement with a subject. Naturally there will be times when some questioning is spontaneous. However, the best questions are planned in advance and may need to be student specific. There is little point in asking the easiest question to the brightest student or vice versa. Supplementary questions or different questions need to be thought through. A no-hands-up policy or the use of the lollipop sticks ensures that students are more engaged as random questioning of students keeps them concentrating, although this is not prescriptive.

### **Students' Self-Esteem**

We need to show care for - and have sensitivity regarding - students' self-esteem. This is best undertaken by avoiding commenting before the whole class on the ability or performance of a student. Comments on a student's work should be framed in a positive and constructive fashion. Differentiated activities will ensure that students are set up to succeed in a lesson. We should refrain from making jokes or comments at a student's expense and from sarcasm. This of course does not mean we lack any humour with students, but should remain on a formal relationship with them.

### **High-Quality Teaching**

By conducting lessons in a business-like and challenging manner teachers can engender a sense of learning for its own sake. Students respond to subject knowledge developed interestingly in a

positive atmosphere by using tasks with the right level of challenge. A sense of satisfaction should be felt by students and teachers alike in knowing that their partnership has enabled learning and progress in the lesson. The passion and enthusiasm of a teacher for their subject is crucial to a sense of enjoyment in lessons.

### **Language Development**

CATS College is an international college and with this in mind, all teachers need to cater for their students' language needs in class. All teachers must understand the importance of exploiting language development opportunities as much as possible in their subject classes. Teachers must strive to strike a balance between teaching content to a high standard whilst making sure that students have an appropriate grasp of the language involved and are able to successfully associate it with the taught content. This will ensure that students are able to access syllabus and specification fully. Teachers are supported in this by the EAP Department, through ongoing advice and INSET sessions organised throughout the year. Departmental training will also take place to demonstrate possible ways in which to implement language into classes. The CATS College error correction code will also be standard procedure across all subject classes for assessed pieces of work (available here: <G:\CATS London\Teaching & Learning\English Correction Codes>).

### **The Learning Environment**

The classroom should be a place conducive to learning where students desire to learn and are motivated by their surroundings. The classroom teacher is responsible for maintaining an environment which fosters students' interest in their subject. Classroom displays should be appropriate and updated on a regular basis.

### **Use of ICT**

Schemes of Work and Planning should make reference to ICT opportunities such as appropriate websites, software or interactive resources. Members of staff should, where possible, use new technology to enhance the delivery of their Curriculum. The aim is to provide an improvement upon other methods of teaching and learning.

### **Ethos and Values, SMSC and British Values**

Lessons will encourage respect for other people paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Equalities Act. Students should receive an effective preparation for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British Society. Students will be taught in ways which do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.