The Royal School, Armagh

Learning & Teaching Policy

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1. AIMS

The aim of this Learning and Teaching policy is to establish the foundation for the learning environment we strive to create at the Royal School Armagh. While this document does not cover every detail, it is intended to promote good practices and consistency, enabling the wider school community to recognize a shared framework for meeting the expectations of our pupils, caregivers, teachers, and other stakeholders.

At the Royal School we aim to inspire motivation and support the growth of all pupils. We not only wish to impart knowledge but to empower our pupils with the skills to learn effectively.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To deliver a tailored learning experience for each pupil, addressing his/her unique needs and aspirations.
- To nurture active and self-reliant learners who strive for excellence in every educational setting and carry this drive throughout their lives.
- To ensure that pupils attain high levels of literacy and numeracy, applying their skills and knowledge to diverse situations for success both in school and beyond.
- To consistently enhance the standards of learning and teaching within the school, motivating and inspiring both pupils and staff.
- To identify and disseminate effective teaching practices across all subjects.
- To establish guidelines for learning and teaching, ensuring clear criteria for best practices and consistency.
- To elevate levels of achievement and attainment as a direct result of these efforts.

3. CONNECTION TO SCHOOL MISSION

The school ethos and mission reflect the unwavering commitment of all stakeholders to achieving the highest standards of learning and teaching. This policy, as an extension of our ethos and mission, aims to provide a framework for best practice.

While the school recognises that a common approach to learning and teaching benefits our pupils, caregivers, and the wider community, the strategies and approaches presented here are tailored specifically to our school and are not intended for universal application.

Teachers will use their professional judgment to guide their daily planning, ensuring the best outcomes and support for all pupils. This approach demonstrates our collective role in fostering happy, fulfilled, lifelong learners.

4. DEFINITION OF LEARNING

At The Royal School Armagh, learning is a dynamic and continuous process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. It involves active engagement, critical thinking, and reflection, enabling individuals to grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Learning at our school is student-centred, fostering curiosity, creativity, and a lifelong passion for discovery. It prepares our students to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world with confidence, resilience, and a commitment to excellence.

At The Royal School Armagh, we view learning as an enduring journey where individuals actively interact with and reflect on information and experiences. This process helps them to build new understandings or reshape existing ones. It also involves cultivating and applying essential skills and personal qualities, equipping learners to thrive and make meaningful contributions in a constantly evolving world

5. BELIEFS ABOUT LEARNING AT THE ROYAL SCHOOL ARMAGH

"The teacher's task is to design opportunities for learning that are rich enough, deep enough, and complex enough to challenge every student and stretch their capabilities." Dylan William

At the Royal School our beliefs about learning are deeply informed by the unique context of our school, As a historic institution with a long standing tradition of academic excellence we value a holistic approach to education that combines rigorous intellectual development with personal growth. With an international boarding department, we recognise the importance of creating an inclusive learning environment. Additionally, our role as a school that admits pupils from, local post primary schools into sixth form requires us to be adaptive and responsive to the varying academic needs and backgrounds of our pupils. These factors shape how we approach learning.

At The Royal School Armagh, we believe that:

- intentional formative assessment is the cornerstone of authentic pupil learning. This approach, grounded in the influential work of Dylan Wiliam, is essential for fostering an environment where pupils can thrive academically and personally.
- formative assessment is not merely about measuring pupil progress; it is a dynamic and continuous process that actively involves pupils in their own learning journey.
- by integrating Wiliam's formative assessment strands into our teaching practices, we ensure that our educators can provide timely and meaningful feedback, adapt instruction to meet the diverse needs of our learners, and cultivate a classroom culture that prioritises growth and understanding. These strategies are pivotal in

helping each pupil realise their full potential, making learning a more engaging, more reflective, and a more effective experience.

The five strands of formative assessment which underpin our beliefs about learning are:

1. **Clarifying, Sharing, and Understanding Learning Intentions and Success Criteria**

   - Learning is purposeful: Pupils learn best when they understand the goals and the criteria for success.
   - Transparency enhances learning: Clearly communicated learning objectives and success criteria help pupils focus their efforts.
   - Shared understanding promotes engagement: When teachers and pupils have a common understanding of what is to be learned, pupils are more engaged and motivated.

2. **Engineering Effective Classroom Discussions, Tasks, and Activities That Elicit Evidence of Learning**

   - Assessment should be integrated with instruction: Formative assessment is most effective when seamlessly integrated into daily teaching activities.
   - Active participation is crucial: Pupils learn more when they are actively involved in classroom discussions and activities that reveal their thinking.
   - Evidence of learning informs teaching: Ongoing collection of evidence helps teachers adjust their instruction to better meet pupil needs.

3. **Providing Feedback That Moves Learners Forward**

   - Feedback is essential for growth: Effective feedback provides specific, actionable information that helps pupils improve.
   - Timeliness and relevance matter: Feedback is most effective when it is timely and directly related to the task at hand.
   - Positive and constructive feedback builds confidence: Feedback should highlight strengths and areas for improvement to encourage a growth mindset.

4. **Activating Learners as Instructional Resources for One Another**

   - Peer learning enhances understanding: Pupils learn effectively when they teach and assess each other.
   - Collaboration fosters deeper learning: Working together, pupils can tackle complex problems and learn from diverse perspectives.
   - Accountability and responsibility are key: When pupils take responsibility for each other's learning, they become more engaged and accountable.

5. **Activating Learners as Owners of Their Own Learning**

   - Self-regulation is a critical skill: Pupils learn best when they take charge of their own learning process.

- Goal setting and reflection promote autonomy: Encouraging pupils to set their own learning goals and reflect on their progress fosters independence.
- Intrinsic motivation drives learning: When pupils are motivated by their own goals and interests, they are more likely to persevere and succeed.

Teaching Strategies that promote and embed formative assessment within the learning environment

At the Royal School we use a range of High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS) to support learning and to ensure Formative Assessment lies at the heart of how we check for learning and modify our instructional strategies accordingly

- **Explicit Teaching**: Clearly explain and demonstrate concepts and skills.
- **Feedback**: Provide timely and specific feedback to guide student improvement.
- **Questioning**: Use open-ended and probing questions to stimulate thinking and discussion.
- **Differentiated Instruction**: Tailor teaching to meet the diverse needs of students.
- **Scaffolding**: Support students progressively as they develop new skills and knowledge.
- **Collaborative Learning**: Encourage group work and peer learning.
- **Formative Assessment**: Use regular, informal assessments to inform and adjust teaching.
- **Metacognitive Strategies**: Teach students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning.
- **Worked Examples**: Provide step-by-step demonstrations of processes or problems.
- **Goal Setting**: Help students set and work towards clear, achievable learning goals.

6. EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING

Expert Teaching

The Royal School encourages its teachers to regularly self-reflect as a crucial step towards becoming expert educators. The Royal School believes that while not all characteristics will be evident all the time, expert teachers typically demonstrate the following traits:

Path: The expert teacher:

- Has excellent subject knowledge
- Thinks about progression and linking learning e.g., between subjects and also between year groups - building on pre-known concepts etc. curriculum mapping/planning
- Recognises that learning should be lifelong and will not just teach pupils to pass an examination but to investigate, challenge/interrogate, apply, etc.
- Recognises that pupil learning comes with time
- Embeds TSPC into curriculum planning and into lessons

Passion: The expert teacher:

- Has a strong passion for their subject
- Has a passion for stretching and challenging pupils through a range of different strategies
- Possesses a strong desire for **CPD.**
- Shows commitment
- Has a passion for sharing best practice and collaboration

Pupil & Pastoral – The expert teacher:

- Allows pupil ownership
- Has knowledge of what pupils know and don't know
- Knows the pupils, including a knowledge of what pupils know and don't know, as well as any pastoral concerns which might impact classroom learning
- Is aware of common obstacles to progress & has a desire to help pupils overcome these.
- Recognises that different T&L strategies are needed for different topics, subjects and learners and offer a range to engage and support
- Creates a safe, supportive, positive learning environment

Pedagogy – The expert teacher:

- Has a knowledge of how learning works and how to catalyse it.
- Adopts a range of T&L Strategies e.g., Magenta Principles
- Includes effective questioning to promote understanding and critical thinking
- Uses Blooms Taxonomy to ensure that questions require more than recall of knowledge
- Provides concrete explanations and contextualises learning
- Facilitates meaningful discussion
- Provides feedback that moves learning forward and upon which pupils can action
- Challenges pupils
- Supports underachievers and Gifted and Talented pupils e.g., differentiation, support classes, etc.
- Embeds retrieval practice in lessons

Expert Learning

At the Royal we expect every pupil to strive to be an expert learner

- Be Inspired: Engage in all school activities, both inside and outside the classroom, fostering a passion for learning that shapes them into curious and engaging individuals.
- Be Individual: Recognize and develop their unique talents, striving to be the best version of themselves rather than imitating others.
- Be Resilient: Approach academic challenges and extracurricular activities with determination, building the resilience that will benefit them throughout their lifelong learning journey.
- Be Inclusive: Practice kindness daily and believe in their ability to make a meaningful impact, both locally and globally, regardless of their age.
- Be Self-Aware: Understand and leverage their strengths while adapting to and improving upon their weaknesses.
- Pupils are responsible for arriving to all classes, at the right time, with the right resources and with the right attitude for learning.

Without the above attributes even the most effective educator and support system around a pupil will struggle to make progress and fulfil the potential of the young person.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Classroom Teachers

1. **Planning and Delivery**: Design and deliver engaging, differentiated lessons that meet the diverse needs of students.
2. **Assessment and Feedback**: Conduct regular assessments and provide constructive feedback to support and enhance student learning.
3. **Classroom Management**: Maintain a positive, inclusive, and safe learning environment that encourages student participation and respect.
4. **Professional Development**: Engage in continuous professional development to refine teaching practices and stay current with educational advancements.

Heads of Department

1. **Curriculum Leadership**: Oversee the development and implementation of the curriculum within their department, ensuring it aligns with school policies and standards.
2. **Support and Guidance**: Provide support and guidance to department members, including mentoring new teachers and facilitating professional development.
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Regularly monitor teaching practices and student performance within the department to identify areas for improvement.
4. **Resource Management**: Manage departmental resources effectively to support teaching and learning activities.

Senior Leadership Team

1. **Policy Development and Oversight**: Develop, implement, and review the school's learning and teaching policy to ensure it aligns with the school's vision and educational objectives.
2. **Strategic Planning**: Set strategic goals for teaching and learning and ensure that the necessary resources and support systems are in place to achieve these goals.
3. **Quality Assurance**: Monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning across the school, using data and feedback to drive continuous improvement.
4. **Professional Development**: Promote a culture of continuous professional development, ensuring that all staff have access to relevant training and development opportunities.

Board of Governors

1. **Governance and Oversight**: Provide strategic oversight and governance for the school's learning and teaching policy, ensuring it meets regulatory requirements and aligns with the school's mission.
2. **Resource Allocation**: Approve and allocate resources to support the effective implementation of the learning and teaching policy.
3. **Accountability and Reporting**: Hold the senior leadership team accountable for the implementation and outcomes of the learning and teaching policy and review regular reports on progress and performance.
4. **Community Engagement**: Engage with the wider school community, including parents, students, and local stakeholders, to gather feedback and ensure the policy reflects their needs and aspirations.

Linked Policies

Tracking Policy

Homework Policy