



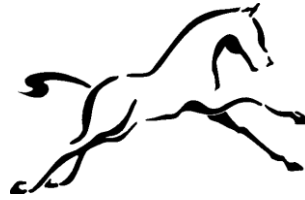
*Inspiring Learners for their future*

# **TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY**

**UPDATED MAY 2011**

## Consultation History

<b>Governors/staff/parents/students</b>	<b>Date</b>
Executive (Leadership Group)	
Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff	
Curriculum Committee	
Full Governing Body	
Next Review of Policy	



## The Ridgeway School & Sixth Form College Teaching and Learning Policy

### 1. Linked Policies

Homework; Marking and Assessment

### 2. Policy Statement

Teaching and learning at The Ridgeway School and Sixth Form College is aimed at enabling young people to become:

- successful students who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve;
- confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives;
- responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

Underpinning these aims is the school's ambition to *Inspire Learners for their Future* and the belief that there is no ceiling to achievement and intelligence can be developed.

### 3. How the Policy is Implemented

#### 3.1 Lesson Planning

With the school's teaching and learning aims in mind, teachers plan their lessons around progressively sequenced learning activities which typically involve a connection to prior or forthcoming learning by means of a starter activity, two or more subsequent related activities and a plenary where learning is drawn together sometimes through a teacher led question and answer interlude or a final student based activity. Lessons are designed with the intention of encouraging students to:

- be creative, resourceful, solution focused and generative in their thinking;
- have enquiring minds, think independently and process information using reason, evaluation, synthesis and inference;
- communicate effectively in a range of ways;

- reflect upon how they learn;
- understand that feedback is value neutral and a necessary part of learning;
- be choiceful in the strategies they use to learn.

Students are at the heart of the learning process. Lessons and the activities therein are framed around enabling students, over periods of time, to:

- seek and secure connections;
- engage with and use a variety of thinking tools;
- engage with high cognitive challenges and take risks;
- work towards realizable goals;
- use all of their senses;
- receive immediate feedback and have time for reflection;
- believe that they can improve their intelligence;
- work in safe, stimulating, stress-free environments;
- collaborate and negotiate with other learners;
- talk with their peers for the purpose of speculating, analysing, evaluating and synthesising;
- take an active part in the assessment of their own and others' work;
- reflect on and discuss their learning and understand how they learnt;
- enjoy praise.

### 3.2 Student Management and Development

- Learning objectives and outcomes are displayed and made clear at the beginning of lessons and referred to throughout. Students know *what* it is they are aiming to achieve, the *benefit* of achieving it, *how* the gains fit in with the bigger picture of their learning and *how* they will know when they have achieved the objectives.
- Teachers and students share assessment criteria so that lessons can focus on specific knowledge and skills and thereby enable students to plot their own progress towards objectives and so become conscious of what they do well and what they need to do to make further gains.
- Students are aware of their current attainment levels/grades – *where they are* – and their target grades – *where they need to get to*.
- Teachers aim to engage students and their thinking throughout the course of lessons. As well as using specifically designed activities to do this, teachers also make use of thinking tools such as *Thinking Maps*, De Bono Six Hat Thinking and *Disney Strategies* as integrated parts of what they do to achieve their identified student outcomes.
- Differentiation is a pivotal structural element of lessons so that *all* students can benefit from a classroom experience. Teachers use a variety of means to differentiate including: grouping, task, adapted resources, seating, questioning and assessment. There is organisational differentiation as well given that students follow banded curriculum pathways.

- Teachers model learning behaviours and share with students the thinking processes that lead to projected outcomes. Thinking out loud at the whiteboard, asking a student *And how did you think of that?* or engaging in a verbal exchange makes explicit valuable cognitive patterns and strategies.
- Students' responses are valued and praised and so, too, are their positive learning behaviours e.g. being ready to begin the lesson, getting into groups with minimum fuss etc. Positive, compliant learning behaviours are acknowledged at every opportunity. The informing presupposition for staff is *What you focus on is what you get.*
- Students are rewarded with house points for their positive contributions towards lessons and for their personal achievements. The specific criteria for the achievement of house points are displayed in every classroom. Students can accumulate house points which lead to the award of bronze, silver and gold certificates.
- Staff can further raise students' achievement profile by:
  - nominating students for a *Student of the Month* award;
  - sending a team postcard home;
  - telephoning parents;
  - sending a congratulatory e-mail;
  - nominating a student for a *KS3 or KS4 Rewards Evening* prize.
- Students are seated according to a teacher-decided seating plan aimed at maximising progress. A typical seating plan pairs up boys and girls for the purpose of developing flexible thinking. Progress data from the cycle reports is also taken into account in some instances to decide seating plans. Students who are making modest progress might, for example, be moved to the front of the classroom.
- Students are expected to comply with the school's *Learners' Code of Conduct* at all times. Non-compliant behaviour is managed with the use of a graduated warning system each level of which is matched to a published consequence. A W2 for instance will result in a detention. W3s and W4s carry significantly harsher consequences. Contact with parents is encouraged and expected in getting compliant behaviour. All warnings are logged on SIMS in order to support the school's system of levelling student behaviour. Classroom teachers use the appropriate school sanctions in the first instance. If there is no notable improvements the pastoral teams are then involved.

### **3.3 Inclusion**

- Gifted and talented students are identified by the Gifted and Talented co-ordinator. Classroom teachers are aware of these students by means of a published register and meet their needs through differentiated work some of which is included in subject teams' schemes of work.

- Students with Special Educational Needs are made known to the staff also by means of a confidential register where specific skill or learning deficits are made clear. In some instances students have TA support and the expectation is that there is liaison between the classroom teacher and the TA in order that the best use of time and energy can be made. Where TA support is not available, classroom teachers differentiate the work by a number of means, again with the intention of enabling students to access curriculum objectives

### **3.4 Assessment for Learning**

- Teachers provide oral feedback, aimed at enabling improvement, in a variety of classroom situations e.g. in response to students' speculations, on completion of group activities, on return of written work etc.
- Teachers provide detailed enabling written feedback to students on their Key Assessment tasks which are used to measure progress and attainment over the course of an academic year. The feedback is aimed at helping learners to access the next level or grade and typically focuses on a skill or an aspect of knowledge which is need of development.
- Feedback is always focused on the particular qualities of a student's work, with advice for improvement and is never about comparisons with other learners.
- Teachers ensure that all students in their classes are aware of what level or grade they are working at and what knowledge and skills are needed to achieve the next targeted level or grade.
- Teachers encourage students to reflect on their progress with the help of level or grade criteria in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Students are given guidance on and opportunities to self-assess so that they can understand the main purposes of their learning and mindful of what they need to do to achieve at a higher level or grade.
- Students are encouraged to work together for the purpose of coaching improvement through the model of the critical friend. Peer assessment is used in order to promote students' familiarity with and understanding of level and grade criteria and to develop opportunities for assessment dialogues.
- Learners and parents are provided with five reports per annum in which progress is profiled against effort, attainment, behaviour, homework and proximity to predicted and aspirational targets.
- Underachievement as noted from the cycle reports is challenged by classroom teachers, mentors and team leaders. Team leaders are expected to analyse report

cycle data with the intention of identifying specific and patterns of underachievement in order to formulate intervention strategies.

- The report cycle is supplemented by two Learning Review days (November and July) when mentors meet with learners and parents for the purpose of setting and agreeing targets (both academic and behavioural) on the first day and reviewing them on the second.

### **3.5 Independent Learning**

- Lesson activities, Assessment for Learning and homework are important elements in developing students' capacity for independent learning. Teachers set longer tasks, known as Key Assessment Homework Tasks, designed to encourage students to research and then to collate their findings into appropriate formats. In some instances assessment outcomes might call for students to produce something of a more creative nature such as a board game, a model or a Movie Maker piece. The idea behind more creative responses is to enable students to show their learning and understanding in ways other than more traditional written formats.
- Encouraging opportunities for independent thinking through more open ended tasks which draw upon classroom learnings is aimed at helping students to be speculative and to make connections and links which result in *light bulb moments*.
- Teachers and mentors aim to engage students in learning conversations whenever appropriate and possible. An instance of this might be when students are asked to compare and contrast and then to give some thought as to how they might do this. At this point students might identify a thinking map or a graphic organiser to help them. Independent learning is about being *strategy aware* and being a generative thinker.

### **3.6 Use of Resources**

- The achievement of learning objectives relies not only on the structure, design and management of lessons, but also upon the imaginative use of resources. Interactive whiteboard technologies are used to help students to grasp otherwise hard to envisage concepts and ideas. Teachers, for example, use downloaded video clips, images, music or animations to provide further and enabling learning opportunities. Adept use of resources provides another means of differentiation.
- Resources used in class are uploaded into FROG so that students can access them from home and to use them in the event of an absence or to consolidate their learning.
- Teaching Assistants are valuable resources too. Where TAs are deployed in classrooms the expectation is that classroom teachers will liaise with them prior to lessons so that the best outcomes for identified students are achieved.

### **3.7 The Learning Environment**

- Classroom and corridor displays are intended to celebrate and share students' achievements and to enable students to understand what skills and knowledge are needed to attain levels or grades. With this in mind teachers create classroom displays which feature, for example, inspired student work and Level Ladders aimed at describing the skills and knowledge for each level of attainment in their subject. Important, too, are the codes of behaviour which students can be reminded of simply by pointing to them.

### **3.8 Teacher Communication**

- Teacher communication is a critical element in the learning experience. Students learn only where positive, enabling relationships exist. Teachers recognise that students of all ages and abilities are able to receive and decode both explicit and more subtle non-verbal communication. Teachers therefore aim to make their communication (language, body language, facial expression, tonality) as positive as possible so as to create and sustain stress-free learning climates.
- Teachers communicate positive learning messages at every opportunity e.g. *There is no failure, only feedback* and accentuate the virtues of the key learning dispositions of resilience, responsibility, reasoning, resourcefulness and reflection – the Five Rs.
- Teachers aim to achieve basic rapport with their students through tried and tested methods such as basic meeting and greeting and conversations which relate specifically to a student's learning needs. At more sophisticated levels teachers will aim to mirror and match body language and even speak in ways which appeal to individual student's representative (VAK) systems.

### **3.9 Use of Data**

- Each teacher has all of the necessary data to monitor the progress of students in her/his classes. Using the report cycle data in SIMS, teachers can provide progress information on their students and specific progress on students who fall into Ofsted categories such as free school meals, gifted and talented and so on. The cycle data is used to identify and counsel underperforming students; use of the same data opens up opportunities to celebrate the progress of students who, for instance, may have made two sub-levels of progress over the course of one report cycle.
- Teachers use Fisher Family Trust D generated data to benchmark and to assess progress towards targets for each of the students in their classes.
- Teachers use the Fisher Family Trust and report cycle data for their classes to calibrate teaching and to self-evaluate in the light of summative assessments.

- Teachers share Fisher Family Trust and report cycle data with students and parents for the purpose of establishing learning dialogues which focus on goal setting and evaluating progress.

### **3.10 Virtual Learning Environment**

- The school has a Virtual Teaching and Learning Environment – FROG – which enables teachers and students to access a range of ICT- based curriculum materials. The VLE represents an important part of the school’s strategy to align the teaching and learning agenda with the needs of every child, to provide resources to support independent learning and to involve parents in their child’s learning journey.
- *I am Learning*, a web-based teaching and learning resource, is accessible through FROG and can be used by students to consolidate their learning and to practise revising for tests and exams. Teachers are also able to set homework using this platform.
- Parents are able to access attendance and behaviour information regarding their child by logging on to FROG.

## **4.0 Monitoring and Evaluation of Lessons**

### **4.1 Senior Leadership Inspections**

- The Senior Leadership Team regularly undertakes week long Ofsted-style inspections of teams which incorporate a number of paired observations. Lessons are evaluated using the Ofsted criteria and feedback is provided to teams at the end of the week.
- Teachers whose lessons are deemed to be unsatisfactory are subsequently monitored, observed and either coached or mentored in order to raise the standard of their teaching to an acceptable standard.
- Line management meetings provide further opportunities to focus on the quality of lesson provision. SLT observations, together with Team Leader evaluations and a range of statistical data, provide a context for meetings.
- Line managers and team leaders are expected to undertake joint learning walks whenever possible with a view to moderating one another’s judgements and so achieve a consistency in the observation process.

### **4.2 Team Leader Evaluations**

- Team leaders are required to establish an on-going profile of their team’s work by using a self-evaluation schedule. The team profile, and notably lesson quality, is principally established through learning walks, formal lesson observations, work samples and pupil voice meetings or questionnaires. These evaluations are intended to loop back into the Department Improvement Plan.