



Sunderland High School

The best in everyone

Teaching and Learning

This is a key policy of Sunderland High School. It applies to all members of the school community including those in our EYFS setting. The policy is available to all parents, prospective parents, school governors, members of the UCST Board and ISI Inspectors. This policy is available in printed form upon request or it can be accessed and downloaded via the school's website, www.sunderlandhigh.co.uk. By contacting either Mrs E. Martin (school registrar, 0191 5677674) or Miss McArdle (Junior School Secretary, 0191 5143278) additional copies of the policy can be made available. In addition, larger print copies can also be produced upon request.

Sunderland High School seeks to implement this document through adherence to the procedures set out in the rest of this document.

Sunderland High School is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010). Further details are available in the school's Equal Opportunities Policy document.

This document is reviewed annually by AJS / CWB or as events or legislation change requires. The next scheduled review date is September 2011.

School Policy Statement

This document outlines the aims, principles and strategies for the effective delivery of the curriculum at Sunderland High School. In particular, this document specifies the principles that are necessary for developing and maintaining an effective classroom.

The document is split into four main areas:

- The general aims, objectives and principles underlying our curriculum.
- The general principles of effective teaching.
- The general principles of effective learning.
- The specific principles that support the development and maintenance of a thinking classroom.

1. The general aims, objectives and principles underlying our curriculum:

Our aim at Sunderland High School is to prepare children for their future role as responsible citizens, capable of playing a full part in society.

Our objectives are to ensure that our pupils:

- Develop the skills necessary to progress satisfactorily from the School into the world of work or further & higher education.
- Develop the literacy skills necessary to be able to communicate effectively in spoken and written English, as well as being able to use those skills in a broader context.
- Develop the numeracy skills necessary to tackle a range of practical tasks and real life problems.
- Develop investigative skills and a knowledge of strategies designed to overcome practical problems.
- Develop an awareness and knowledge of a broad range of subjects.
- Develop an interest in their work.
- Develop an ability to think and learn for themselves.
- Adopt a lifelong love of learning.
- Develop the confidence to express themselves in an articulate, creative and confident manner.
- Show a sense of caring for one another in their actions and deeds.
- Create and maintain high self-esteem and a feeling of self worth.

Principles underlying our curriculum:

We aim to deliver a curriculum which allows pupils at Sunderland High School to:

- Experience a range of teaching styles.
- Utilise a range of learning styles and intelligences.
- Learn to work systematically, independently and co-operatively.
- Learn through practical and investigation work, with a focus on discovery learning rather than via a purely teacher-led didactic delivery.
- Be provided with challenging, differentiated work, appropriate to their abilities.
- Have access to a wide range of academic and non-academic activities. In particular, all pupils are encouraged to participate in the rich and diverse Activities Programme.
- Be rewarded for their effort in addition to their achievement.

We further aim to deliver a curriculum that allows teachers at Sunderland High School to:

- Make effective use of lesson planning so that it is informed by an understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of the pupils.
- Takes full advantage of teaching methods and activities, with an eye to utilising adequate quality, quantity and a range of resources, in particular, interactive technologies.
- Make effective use of time management in class.

In the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1, delivery is mainly through the class teacher. There is some specialist delivery in music, French, German, ICT and P.E. At Lower Key Stage 2 class teacher delivery remains the preferred method of delivery, with specialist teaching taking around 50% of the curriculum time from Year 4. All foundation and core subjects are taught from Year 1, with the addition of a Modern Foreign Language.

Subjects at Senior School level are taught, almost exclusively, by subject specialists. In Modern Foreign Languages and Mathematics, students are taught in sets. In Science, students are taught the three separate Sciences, Biology, Chemistry and Physics, at key stage 3. At key stage 4, students are given the opportunity to study one or more Science subjects to GCSE level.

At Key Stage 4, all students are expected to adopt a GCSE programme which includes the following elements. Where it is not essential for the subject to be examined externally at GCSE, an asterisk has been included:

English (language and literature/language and media studies)

Mathematics

A Science subject

A Modern Foreign Language

PSHE*

Religious Studies*

Physical Education / Games*.

In addition to these subjects, some students may wish to participate in a series of 'curriculum support' lessons. At key stage 4, Additional Studies and study Skills are offered; neither is examined externally.

For a more detailed insight into the specific content of each subject, please refer to the relevant subject handbooks (there are separate documents for the Junior School and Senior School).

The Senior Management Team ensures that reporting and assessment are applied consistently throughout the school.

2. The general principles of effective teaching.

Through our teaching we aim to:

- Enable children to become confident, resourceful, enquiring and independent learners.
- Help children to grow into reliable, independent and positive citizens.
- Show respect for all cultures and promote positive attitudes towards other people.
- Foster children's self-esteem and help them to build positive relationships with others.
- Develop children's self-respect and encourage children to respect the ideas, attitudes, feelings and values of others.
- Enable students to understand their community and help them feel valued as part of the community.

When teaching, we focus on motivating students and building on their skills, knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. Individual subjects' schemes of work are used to guide teaching. We expect all teachers at Sunderland High School to be committed to demonstrating appropriate knowledge and understanding of their subject at all times and this should also be clearly reflected in schemes of work.

A good scheme of work should contain some, if not all, of the following items:

- *Aim(s)* - what is the lesson / teaching period intending to do?
- *Objectives* - based on NC guidelines
- *Strategies* - including a starter activity, main body of work and a plenary.
- *ICT* - deployment of appropriate ICT resources.
- *Homework* - possible homework activities which could be undertaken by students. These should be open to differentiation and, where possible, more than one homework should be specified.
- *Points to note* - this area focuses on important areas of the teaching episode that need to be addressed. This might include a regular misconception that needs to be modified or explained, an instruction on how to use a particular piece of equipment, a safety issue that needs to be addressed or an appropriate thinking skill that could be employed to improve teaching and learning.

Planning the curriculum delivery is, essentially, addressed in terms of:

Long term planning - the purpose of which is to indicate the topics that will be covered in each subject area every term as well as planned trips and other events including exam revision.

Medium term planning - the purpose of which is to decide what is going to be covered in each subject area over the course of each half term.

Short term planning - the purpose of which is to decide what is going to happen over the course of the coming week. This information is documented in each teacher's planner.

When planning, teachers need to make certain the following areas have been addressed:

- Specific learning objectives;
- Stimulating learning tasks;
- Challenge for all students, differentiated based on individual ability;
- Assessment.

3. Assessment

Pupil's work should be assessed regularly and thoroughly. All staff have been trained in the use of assessment for learning strategies and these should be deployed in the classroom at every opportunity. Assessment is usually formative (on-going) or summative (at the end of a teaching episode). However, ipsative assessment should also be employed for students who display particular difficulties in one or more area. Ipsative assessment is employed to give students more confidence and self-worth because the student is assessed on his/her previous performance rather than on set criteria that other students are assessed against.

Assessment should not only consider the results of internal and external performance but also the performance of pupils relative to the school's overall aims as described earlier in this policy.

The Head and management teams consider the performance of pupils relative to national norms and other schools in the UCST GROUP during the Autumn Term.

This information is conveyed to all teaching staff so that meaningful and informed targets can be set for the forthcoming academic year.

4. Characteristics of effective teachers:

Effective teachers tend to adopt particular behaviour types. Research findings show that they:

- 1. Value creative ideas.**
- 2. Use open-ended questions.**
- 3. Are fair.**
- 4. Are optimistic.**
- 5. Actively listen.**
- 6. Build confidence.**
- 7. Are humorous.**
- 8. See learning in mistakes.**
- 9. Encourage play.**
- 10. Are punctual.**
- 11. Allow time.**
- 12. Are available.**
- 13. Assume it *can* be done.**
- 14. Deal with others as an equal.**
- 15. Share the risk.**
- 16. Stress independence.**
- 17. Like children.**

Essentially, effective teachers make a special effort to establish a good working relationship with all children in their care. Students should be treated with kindness and respect. Students should be treated fairly and all be given an opportunity to take part in class activities. Classroom behaviour, code of conduct, expectations and school values should be discussed with each class at an appropriate level. Students are expected to comply with these rules and to help promote the best learning opportunities for all. Good teachers praise students for their effort and so help to build positive attitudes towards school and learning in general. When students misbehave, effective teachers follow the correct guidelines for sanctions as outlined in the behaviour policy.

Effective teaching is safe. All tasks and activities performed are done so in a safe environment. When students are to be taken out of school, or placed in some other unusual learning environment, parents are informed and their written permission is asked for.

Where appropriate, classroom assistants are deployed as effectively as possible. They work with individual students or small groups of students. Classroom environments are attractive learning environments. The classroom itself should reflect the teaching and learning that occurs within it. Display work should be shown and replaced on a regular basis. The classroom should serve to stimulate the student and set a calm climate for learning. An exciting classroom promotes independent use of resources and high-quality work for students.

Effective teachers conduct their teaching in an atmosphere of trust and respect for all.

5. The general principles of effective learning.

We acknowledge that people learn in different ways. At Sunderland High School, we aim to provide a rich and varied learning environment that allows children to develop their skills and abilities to their full potential through a variety of different teaching techniques. In particular, teaching takes into account that students learn predominantly via visual, auditory and kinaesthetic methods. Similarly, an appreciation of Gardner's multiple intelligences is used to inform planning of teaching in certain areas of the school.

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

- Investigation and problem solving;
- Research and finding out;
- Group work;
- Pair work;
- Independent work;
- Whole-class work;
- Questioning techniques;
- ICT deployment;
- Fieldwork and visits to places of educational interest;
- Creative exercises;
- Discovery through play;
- Presentations, oral work, role play and debating;
- Designing;
- Participation in athletic and physical activity;
- Metacognitive reflection.

Where appropriate, students should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Students need to be involved in reviewing the way in which they learn and they should be encouraged to reflect on how they learn most effectively. This method of monitoring and evaluating learning on a regular, but informal, basis is the main thrust behind a metacognitive curriculum. More information concerning metacognition will be included in the next section of this policy document.

When trying to make students effective learners, we look for (and try to develop) certain characteristics that are commonly found in the most able students and displayed in the most effective learners. These characteristics include:

- Excellent memory and knowledge;
- A highly metacognitive approach to learning - students think about their thinking processes, access information expertly, monitor their development and evaluate their learning;
- The ability to deal with problems efficiently - they can easily see superfluous information when problem solving;
- A degree of flexibility / ability to perceive 'multiple solutions' - students appreciate that there are more ways to solve a problem than their immediately chosen approach;
- A preference for complexity - effective students enjoy challenge;

- Excellent concentration span.
- The display of early symbolic activity - effective learners often read, write and speak very early.

6. The specific principles that support the development and maintenance of a thinking classroom.

Thinking skills lessons are encouraged at Sunderland High School. A thinking skills lesson is different from a standard or traditional lesson in that teaching thinking emphasises the learning *process* as opposed to the learning *product*. Teaching thinking aims to raise students' achievement through the development of their cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

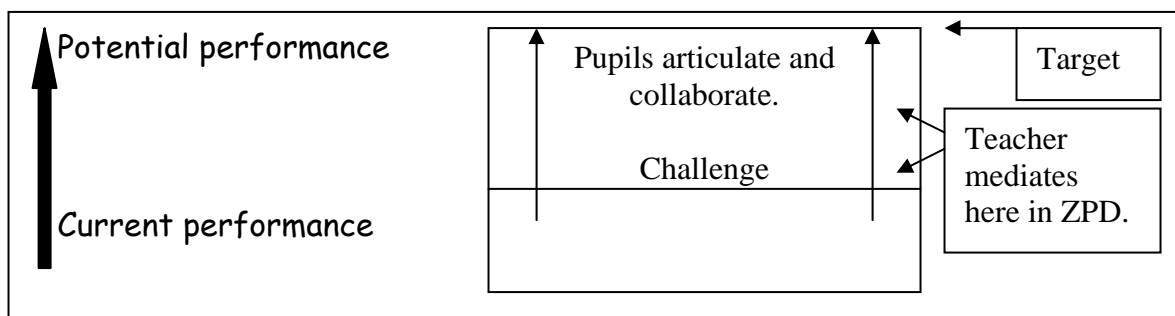
These are the following principles which underpin thinking skills lessons:

1. Clear purpose: The teacher shares broad goals and the meaning of the task with pupils, i.e. why they are doing the tasks and what strategies are needed. Making the learning aims and targets explicit encourages active participation and intrinsic motivation of pupils, and at the same time sets up concrete targets for them to achieve.

2. Challenging tasks: The goal of a learning activity is to bring about changes in all pupils - to make them competent learners and to develop their full learning potential. In order to reach that goal, pupils need to be supported and challenged to close the gap between their current performance and their potential performance. This is probably best explained via Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development*. Vygotsky defined ZPD as:

"the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers."

In practical terms, this means that the teacher needs to present tasks at a level above pupils' current competence, and push pupils out of their *comfort zone* - but, at the same time, reassure pupils that they can do it! The diagram below demonstrates how a thinking skills technique can be used to develop learning potential:



and articulating their thinking and reasoning. Such articulation provides teachers with an opportunity to see how pupils are thinking. Teachers observe pupils talking and explaining their reasoning, pick up any misconceptions or gaps in their learning, subsequently using these to inform their teaching. For pupils, listening to others articulate their thinking gives them a chance to become aware of alternative ways of looking at things and doing things.

4. Metacognition: Pupils are encouraged to reflect upon their learning and to verbalise the strategies they have used. Reflection and articulation help pupils identify and label the strategies they have used in problem solving and to develop their repertoire of strategies. The explicit identification of and evaluation of strategies helps pupils to regulate their learning behaviour and is an important pre-requisite for the transfer of learning. Transfer of learning occurs when they apply these strategies to solving problems in different contexts. Metacognition, therefore, aids the development of autonomous learners.

5. Connect the learning: The teacher encourage pupils to interpret new learning in the light of what they already know or have experienced, to link it to what they have already learnt in one context to other areas of the curriculum and to link what they have learnt at school to their life outside of school. All these can help pupils to see how their learning relates to a bigger picture.

6. Mediation: Mediation occurs at every stage of the thinking skills lesson. The teacher intervenes to challenge pupils' thinking, to help to articulate their thinking, to encourage them to reflect on their learning and to enable them to make links with their existing knowledge. Mediation lies at the heart of thinking skills approaches. It begins with the teacher listening to and observing pupils at work, which helps the teacher to diagnose and to assess how best to intervene. Informed by diagnosis, the teacher is able to select appropriate strategies to close the learning gap. Intervention strategies might take the form of guidance or support, including prompts, cues, task strategies analysis or breaking down the learning into smaller chunks.

Key stages in thinking skills lessons:

1. *Launching the activity:* the stage where the teacher shares with pupils the purpose of the lesson and starts to engage them in learning. This relates to the principles of clear purpose and challenging tasks.

2. *Managing the activity:* the stage where pupils are engaged in a thinking skills strategy, typically working collaboratively to solve a problem. This relates to the principles of challenging tasks, articulation and mediation.

3. *De-briefing the activity:* the stage where pupils reflect upon and talk about what they have learnt and how they have learnt. This relates to the principles of metacognition, connecting the learning and mediation.

Characteristics of thinking skills lessons:

These are the characteristics found in thinking skills lessons.

- They contain challenging tasks that encourage pupils to use what they already know.
- There is seldom one single correct answer and the teacher does not necessarily offer a best solution.
- Work is highly cooperative, and tasks are initially done in groups where pupil talk is encouraged.
- The teacher only gives help where it is absolutely necessary so that pupils have the chance to struggle.

- In the debrief, there is discussion both about solutions and how the task has been done.
- The teacher seeks to help students to make connections between the thinking and learning from the task and other contexts, i.e. to transfer, in order to see the bigger picture.
- Teachers sometimes cannot predict the learning outcomes of a lesson or respond to all pupils' questions or comments.
- assessment is largely diagnostic and formative rather than summative - and listening to and watching groups is as important as marking work.
- Talk about pupils' thinking and learning is just as valuable as subject-related learning outcomes.
- Teachers gradually develop a language for pupils to use to be able talk about their thinking and learning.

The following table explains the main principles of thinking skills lesson. In addition, the table explains what action might be taken in order to meet it:

| The Principle | The Action |
|---|---|
| <i>Focus the teaching</i> | Plan according to objectives and ensure students know what they are |
| <i>Provide challenge</i> | set expectations and teach to them so that pupils surpass previous levels of achievement |
| <i>Make concepts and conventions explicit</i> | Use questioning, explaining and modelling |
| <i>Structure the learning</i> | Use starters and plenaries and a clear lesson structure |
| <i>Make learning active</i> | Provide tasks in which pupils make meaning, construct knowledge and develop understanding and skills through problem solving, investigation and enquiry |
| <i>Make learning engaging and motivating</i> | Use stimulating activities and materials |
| <i>Develop well-paced lessons with high levels of interaction</i> | Use collaborative tasks and talk for learning |
| <i>Support pupils' application and independent learning</i> | Use prompts, frames or other forms of support and targeted intervention |
| <i>Build reflection</i> | Teach pupils to think about what and how they learn, and involve them in setting targets for future lessons. |

Related School Documents and Policies

Curriculum Policy

SEN Policy
Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy and Procedures
Behaviour and Discipline Policy
Staff List and Qualifications
EYFS Staffing Ratios

Updated January 2011