Sydenham School Learning & Teaching Policy

Updated May 2016
To be reviewed May 2017

Sydenham School

Curriculum, Learning & Teaching Policy

Background

The aim of this document is to improve the effectiveness of our teaching by focusing on how our students learn. The refocus on curriculum after a period of uncertainly of government policy is critical to maximise students' learning. If we are to be evidence based practitioners and leaders of learning, then we must understand that thinking is at the root of learning in order to exploit students' knowledge and skills to function as intelligent learners.

Vision

- Inspirational teaching, exciting learning, achievement for all.
- Thinking at the core of learning and the curriculum

Aim

Teaching is consistently good or outstanding, promoting exciting and independent learning across the curriculum through the further improvement of differentiation and implementation of the curriculum review.

Curriculum Statement

To promote an inspirational curriculum that engages and motivates all our students to achieve and beat their personal best.

1. The curriculum is about the development of the whole person and their independence as learners.

2. All learners are given equality of opportunity to learn and develop to their commitment to their own learning

3. Sydenham's curriculum builds on learners' strengths, interests and experiences, both inside and outside the classroom and outside of school

4. Important skills such as thinking and literacy are embedded in the curriculum for all subjects, using a wide range of practical, theoretical and creative learning opportunities

5. The curriculum presents students with new challenges and opportunities beyond the classroom and with topic based approaches, including the STEM curriculum in Year 7

6. The curriculum provides opportunities for complex projects, extended writing and academic research with cross subject boundaries

Objectives

Objectives help us to measure our progress towards these aims and ensure that:
- o Attitudes to learning at Sydenham empower student learning
- o Our environment and curriculum encourages and ensures that young people are motivated and challenged
- o Leaders and Teachers at Sydenham School are committed to closing the gaps
- o Teachers' practice is informed and flexible.
- o Prompting student self-evaluation as critical to independent learning
- o Feedback focuses on the student's next steps in learning.

The success of this policy will be measured through
(1) the regular data captures on student achievement and progress
(2) the Student Voice activities conducted by faculties
(3) the observation cycle, work scrutiny / book sampling,

Research

Research has found that high self-esteem is key to effective learning and Sydenham School has a focus on demonstrating how the following factors improve learning and accelerate progress:

- Confidence that every student can improve and belief of the teacher that they can and will.
- Every student can achieve higher, through effective feedback, seeing their own progress and doing the next steps.
- Active involvement of students in their own learning, making the most of independent learning.
- Adjustment of teaching which takes into account the results of assessments and clear identification of gaps in learning, differentiating learning to meet student need.
- Encouraging students to identify and bridge their own learning gaps.
- The need for pupils to assess themselves and each other and understand how to improve through learning conversations with teachers and with peers.
- Sustain a supportive working environment in which outstanding learning and teaching flourish.

Research impacts on teaching and learning in classrooms at Sydenham and shows us that students won't be effective in their learning if they are:
- Unsure about what they should be doing.
- Occupied by purposeless teaching activities.
- Finding work unduly hard or too easy.
- Working too slowly or too fast to embed learning.
- Afraid to make mistakes or to take risks.

Attitudes

Attitudes to learning at Sydenham empower student learning and are:

- Positive Active Powerful
- Resilient Resourceful Responsible Reflective Ready
- Supported by good behaviour and feeling of safety and security

These attitudes are promoted in a range of ways both in and beyond the classroom.

Environment - in and out of school

The whole school is a learning environment, through the multiple interactions students experience on a daily basis. Our environment encourages and ensures that young people are:

- Motivated to achieve higher than nationally expected levels in all aspects of their learning
- Challenged by high expectations through a variety of teaching strategies.
- Building on their prior learning and experiences at primary school
- Learning outside the classroom, expanding their horizons and view of the world
- Active, caring and self-disciplined members of the Sydenham School community in and out of school.
- Able to develop personal, spiritual, moral, social, economic and environmental awareness through a range of opportunities sufficient to meet all students' needs and interests.
- Share a common language through which to discuss, define and improve their learning.

People and Relationships

Leaders and Teachers at Sydenham School are committed to closing the gaps and believe that a student is more likely to be learning effectively when:

- Students enjoy the excitement, imagination and curiosity that the curriculum provides.
- Students feel safe and secure. All the relationships they experience are rooted in trust and a common purpose of learning and achievement for all.
- Students demonstrate respect and kindness in her behaviour, enabling her own and others' learning to flourish.
- Students are working in a positive, encouraging and stimulating environment where every day students expect high quality marking, feedback and challenging teaching that has been planned and shaped to meet her individual learning needs.
- Students are clear about what they are trying to achieve, know how to seek help and respond to it when needed and are motivated to take responsibility for being creative and improving their own work because they want to.
- Students take opportunities to work in a range of situations eg independently, with a partner or group, in the whole class, outside the classroom and outside the school.
- Students are interested in their own progress and maintain a high work rate, which includes developing their own skills of self-evaluation, participation, independence and self-confidence.

Practice and Pedagogy

<u>Teachers' practice is informed and flexible:</u>

- The curriculum should be constantly reviewed to keep up to date with students' changing needs and external demands.
- Scaffolds are also valuable prompts to support and extend the student's thinking.
- Teachers' questioning is differentiated to challenge every student leading to higher level questioning eg Describe the differences between, write in a certain style, refine your skills.
- Higher Level Questioning should be a key part of every lesson, using Blooms Taxonomy to differentiate and to elicit the best thinking from students.
- Checking of student understanding must be planned during the lesson.

- Students should have the opportunity to contribute towards their curriculum and lesson planning.
- Teachers take control of the classroom making decisions about student seating to reflect the planned learning and differentiation which is informed by careful data and question level analysis
- Planning must reflect student assessment outcomes and build on prior learning. Special consideration should be made for students from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as for students with SEN and the most able.
- Flexible, creative and innovative approaches to learning should be a normal part of teachers' practice
- Tasks should be matched to the LO and differentiation must be explicit in the planning.
- Adjustments to planning should be shown through informal notes for future planning.
- Learning objectives must to be clear and shared with students so that:
  - ✓ They know what the purpose of the lesson is.
  - ✓ They can concentrate on their learning through the lesson.
  - ✓ LOs can be adjusted during the lesson to respond to gaps in learning.
- LOs can be created by the students as part of their involvement in their learning.
- The outcomes at the end of the lesson are defined eg by the end - everyone must, should, could.
- Statements or criteria for success are explicit eg we are learning to... , we are looking for...., I will be successful in my learning when I ...

- Sessions for student self-evaluation should be built into planning as should time for responding to feedback and marking.
- These sessions inform planning and show the students that their responsibility and role in learning is as important as the teacher's.
- The main purpose of marking and feedback is to give information to students about how well they have done against the LO or the homework objective.
- Where there are gaps in an individual student's learning, identified by effective assessment and marking these must be specifically planned for in order to close that gap.

- Display to support teaching is important and should be planned and provided for at the start of each term to embed learning.
- Teachers should consider learning beyond the classroom as part of their planning and schemes of work in order to give students real and powerful experiences, giving them exposure to events or people that, over time, leads to an increase in knowledge or skill.

Student Self-Evaluation for Learning

Prompting Student self-evaluation as critical to independent learning

- To develop personal responsibility for learning.
- Students need to think about what happens when they learn best and teaching other students can significantly increase learning and confidence.
- Student self-evaluation helps us to find out what the student needs to overcome any barriers to their learning:
    - What did you learn that was new for you in today's lesson, what can you do now at the end of the lesson that you couldn't do at the start, what surprised you and made you want to find out more, can you see how what you learned in today's lesson builds on what you already knew.
    - What really made you think in this lesson, what did you find difficult when you were learning to, what helped you when something was tricky or hard to learn.
    - What is the first thing you do when you find something difficult - think, think harder, look in a book, the library or on the web, ask a friend, ask a group of friends, ask older students, ask an adult.
    - If you were the teacher how would you change this lesson so that students learned more, how might another group or class learn better about this area, how did the trip/visit / visitor make your learning better, if you were teaching this to a friend how might you do it..
    - What are your most pleasing things about learning today?
- Self-evaluation must be linked to the LO can be done is a variety of ways including online questionnaires, paper questionnaires, discussions, written in books displayed for individuals, pairs, groups, classes, etc.