



# Teaching & Learning Policy

## Secondary

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Our vision is for all of our students, regardless of background and circumstance, to make outstanding progress and achieve grades which will open the door to the future of their choice. We want our students to be curious and develop a thirst for knowledge; we want them to be resilient and to value effort; we want them to understand that sometimes failure is an essential part of the learning process and to recognise that developing a positive, ‘can do’ attitude will help them to set and achieve aspirational goals.

The classroom is at the heart of everything we do in Laurus schools. If we are to achieve our vision, we need to ensure that we are developing a thirst for knowledge in all of our students. Excellence should be expected.

Teachers are expected to:

- Show outstanding knowledge and passion for their subject area.
- Know their impact - evaluate the effect they are having on students learning and adjust teaching accordingly.
- Be skilled in formative assessment practices, assessing students' progress thoroughly throughout the lesson, changing the course of the lesson as appropriate.
- Know what students know, and what they need to do to improve in the different aspects of the subject
- Use assessment data, assessment of current performance & assessment objectives to plan effective lessons
- Set clear intentions that students understand
- Provide students with appropriate and timely written or verbal feedback that will develop incremental beliefs.
- Differentiate the work appropriately to effectively challenge all learners.
- Challenge and inspire students, expecting the most of them, so as to deepen their knowledge and understanding
- Use methods which enable all students to learn effectively
- Manage students well and insist on high standards of behaviour
- Use time, support staff, technology and other resources effectively
- Use P&P to reinforce and/or extend what is learned in school
- Recognise and act upon any differences in the standards of achievement or progress made by different groups of students, for example to include: Pupil premium, Race, disability, gender, age, religion & belief and sexual orientation. (protected characteristics - Equality Act 2010)
- Take responsibility for their own professional learning.

### **Professional Learning in Laurus schools - Never Stop Learning**

‘Every teacher needs to improve, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better’ Dylan Wiliam

In Laurus Schools we take staff professional learning extremely seriously. We believe that the best educators are the best learners and we therefore expect staff to be avidly engaged with their own professional learning within a dynamic learning community. Staff should actively connect with research in order to best inform their own classroom practice. We recognise and embrace the complexity involved in professional learning. Changing practice is an intricate process, sometimes we have to stop doing something good to do something better, but the impact that can be had on student success make it a priority.

The purpose of this Teaching & Learning policy is an attempt to promote consistent practice, ensure clarity of purpose and engage staff in an ongoing debate. It is an opportunity to reflect upon aspects of our practice that, as a school, we hold to be effective.

*“...one of the main tasks of the teacher - to introduce children to the best of what has already been discovered or thought.”* Tom Bennett

It is important that we recognise the role of the teacher as an expert and build upon this.

*“Turning mere facts into personal meaning is the central element in learning”* C Rose

In Laurus schools we aim to create a learning environment which provides students with opportunities to make sense of the information they receive and create “personal meaning” from it.

There is not a recipe for expert teaching. The following information should be viewed as a guideline for staff to work within and beyond.

#### **Expert teaching requires....**

##### **....knowing the students**

Knowing your students enables you to assess their needs and effectively raise their expectations. When is their engagement drifting? Why might this be happening? Do they need some help or should you leave them to figure this out? These questions can only really be answered if we know our students well.

Learners need a trusting, fair and safe environment that acknowledges that they ‘may not know’ and will make errors in learning. Learning takes time but one of the teacher’s roles is to maximise the efficiency of the time available, to provide many opportunities to learn the same idea over time, and to ensure time is spent on learning and not merely doing ‘something’.

##### **.....high levels of Challenge**

*“A successful teacher establishes a student’s expectations of their abilities but then dispels those expectations by telling them they can do better”.*

Prof J. Hattie

Appropriate challenge ensures that students have high expectations of what they can achieve.

Robert Coe contends “Learning happens when people have to think hard.” This seems like a great starting point and is directly connected to Daniel Willingham’s proposition that “Memory is the residue of thought.” What we think about is what we will remember and thinking ‘hard’ is more likely to produce long-term retention.

##### **....engagement**

We need our students to engage in what is happening within the classroom. Engagement means that ‘they will be thinking about that we want them to think about’ and therefore learning is more likely to take place. Lessons must get off to a flying start, with students purposeful from the beginning.

### **....explanation & modelling**

It is critical that new material is effectively explained in order for students to be able to move to other aspects of the learning process. If not, often you will find yourself returning to further explanations or students will need to look elsewhere for additional support. Once information has been explained to students, they need to know what to do with it. The best way for students to see what to do is for an expert to model the process. The emphasis of the modelling stage is on building procedural knowledge.

### **....opportunities for autonomy**

*“Don’t practice until you get it right. Practice until you can’t get it wrong.”* Unknown

This is the phase in learning where students will be working most independently of the teacher. Within this stage, students should be completing activities that have been carefully designed to allow application and intelligent practice of key principles. Intelligent practice is designed to develop the thinking process rather than a repeated mechanical activity. There may be further conceptual and procedural development taking place.

### **....effective questioning**

Questioning is a key part of what takes place in the classroom. Effective questioning can spark discussion, assess current performance and provide deeper levels of challenge. Through expert questioning, we can force our students to think. This is a key part of the learning process. We are far more likely to transfer something to long-term memory if we think about it. Effective questioning can also ensure that students are accurately using subject specific language within their answers. Skilled questioning can be used to assess current performance. These ‘hinge’ questions, on which the next stage in the lesson depends, should be carefully planned in order to assess if students are ready to move on as well as diagnosing potential misunderstanding.

### **....feedback**

*Marking is planning, marking is differentiation.*

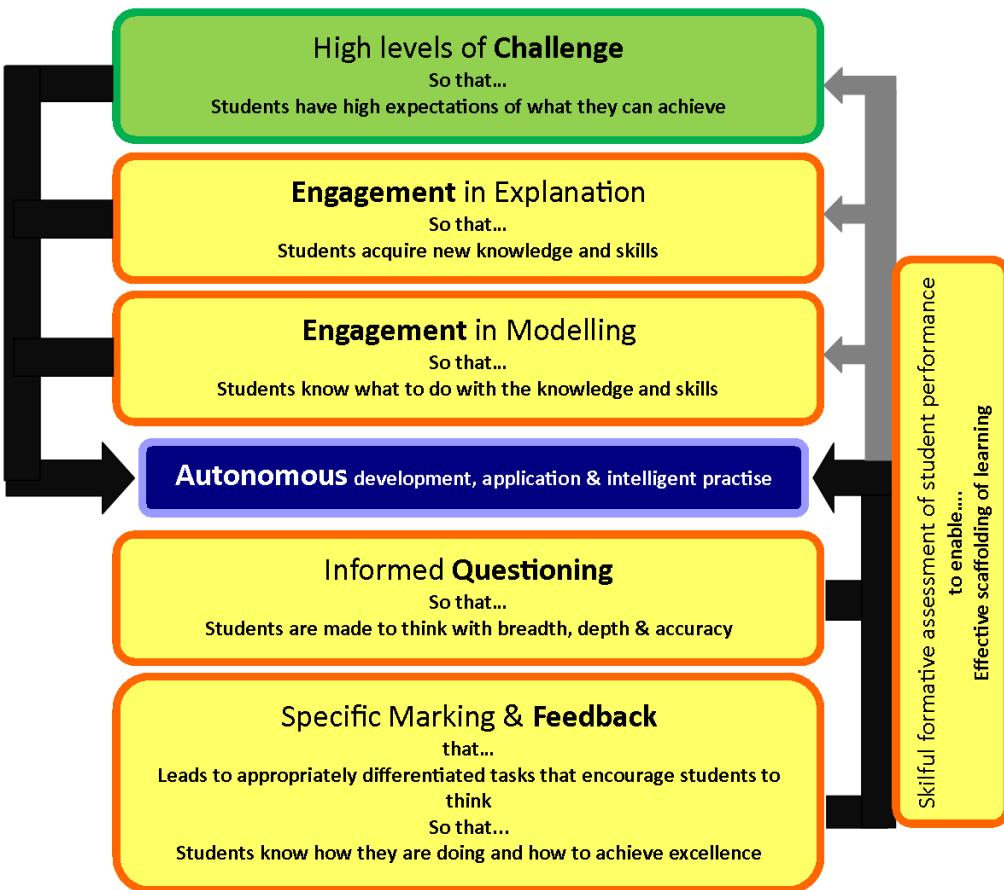
Effective marking and feedback is crucial in order to determine the next steps a student needs to take and in communicating these appropriately. Sound marking and feedback practices lead to high levels of differentiation as students work on the particular content or skill that will move them forward.

### **....skilful formative assessment of student performance**

This will enable the effective scaffolding of next steps within the lesson and beyond. Formative assessment is a means to consider the improvement in performance that a student is making. Expertly used it will enable a teacher to judge where next to take the lesson.

It is important to acknowledge that learning takes place over time. We need to reflect on this carefully as teachers and consider how we will change this improved performance into learning.

## Expert teaching requires...



Students will be set realistic but **challenging** goals and should be involved in setting their targets. We intervene to support students who underachieve and we seek opportunities to stretch the most able. This is based on a clear assessment of learners' needs. Intervention programmes are tightly focused on improving the progress of learners.

In Laurus schools staff regularly engage students in conversations about their learning. Time is set aside for students to reflect upon where they are and where they would like to be. The emotional and learning needs of every child are at the heart of everything we do. The school promotes **high aspirations** in order that all learners succeed.

## **Management of Teaching & Learning**

It is important that teaching and learning is monitored in order to ensure that all students receive the best education that can be provided.

*"Interventions at the structural, home, policy, or school level is like searching for your wallet which you lost in the bushes, under the lamppost because that is where there is light. The answer lies elsewhere - it lies in the person who gently closes the classroom door and performs the teaching act -the person who puts into place the end effects of so many policies, who interprets these policies, and who is alone with students during their 15,000 hours of schooling." Prof J. Hattie*

### **The monitoring of teaching and learning**

#### **Formal Observations**

Formal lesson observations take place as part of the appraisal cycle. Staff will receive constructive feedback on their performance. Feedback will highlight particular areas of strength as well as any areas that may need attention.

#### **Informal Arrangements**

Other observations may take place during the year. These may be more informal observations, peer observations to aid professional learning, or subject leaders monitoring the teaching and learning taking place within their department.

#### **Faculty Review**

As part of a full faculty review staff may be observed to gain a clear picture of teaching and learning standards across the whole department. Feedback will be received for all observations.

#### **Walkabout**

Walkabout is a means for the head of school, and others who have delegated responsibility for teaching and learning, to assess the standard of learning that is taking place in the school. These classroom visits are 'drop-ins' to inform monitoring of the quality of learning. They are not a lesson observation of teaching and focus on students learning.

#### **Timeline**

The timeline for lesson observations is outlined below. If a member of staff does not teach a particular key stage then a different year group will be observed.

**Autumn Term:** Key stage four/five observation - this observation will take place as part of the appraisal cycle.

**Spring term:** Key stage three/five observation or faculty review - this observation will take place as part of the appraisal cycle. The spring term cycle should be completed prior to half term wherever possible.

**Summer term:** Key stage three/five observation or faculty review.

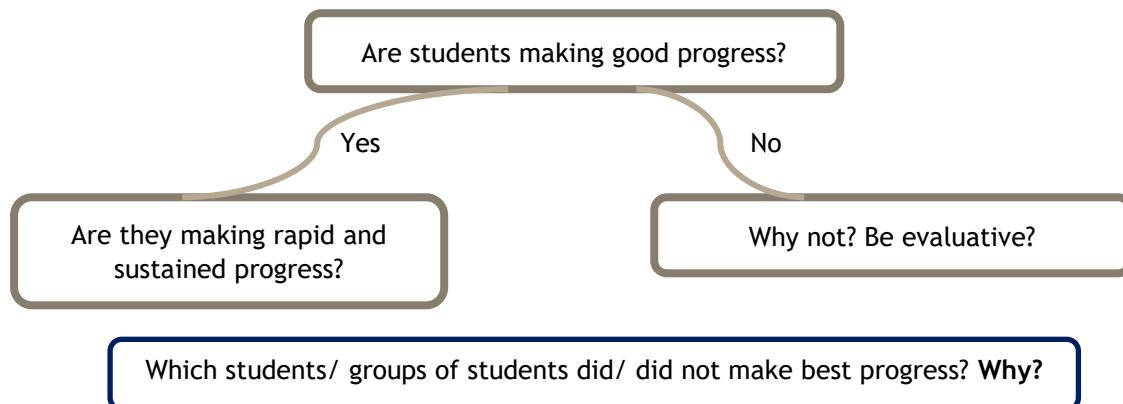
**Additional observations may take place to provide support for new staff and for staff earlier in their career. Each member of staff will be observed across at least two key stages during the academic year.**

Lesson observations will be analytical and evaluative. The type of questions an observer is looking to answer are outlined below.

Question
Does the teacher have high expectations and high aspirations?
Does teaching engage and include all students, with work that is challenging enough?
Does the teacher listen to, carefully observe and skilfully question students?
Does the teacher use questioning and discussion to assess the effectiveness of their teaching?
Does the teacher reshape tasks and explanations during lessons in response to student understanding?
Does the teacher assess students' progress regularly and accurately?
Is appropriate P&P set, and is high quality marking and constructive feedback evident?
Are appropriately targeted support and interventions matched well to most students' individual needs?
Does the teacher (and other adults) create a positive climate for learning?
Is behaviour managed consistently well?
Are opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exploited?
Possible evidence
Students' progress is consistently strong and evidence in students' work indicates that they achieve well over time.
Learning of different groups is consistently good.
Students display a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning,
Students learn well. Their knowledge and understanding of the subject deepens quickly and securely.
Students gain a wide range of skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics
Students understand well how to improve their work
Students are properly prepared for each lesson, bring the right equipment, and are ready and eager to learn.
Students conduct themselves well, have good attitudes and are punctual to lessons.
Students take pride in their work.
Students respond very quickly to staff's instructions and requests allowing lessons to flow smoothly and without interruption.
Students are reflective about beliefs, values and more profound aspects of human experience, enabling them to develop curiosity in their learning.

Does all the evidence suggest that, over time,

- **the teaching is helping students to gain knowledge and skills?**
- **the teaching is helping students to learn, understand and make progress (indicated by an increase in performance)?**



## **Expert Practice.**

If an observation (formal or informal) is considered to demonstrate expert practice this colleague should be encouraged to do one or more of the following:

- Lead a workshop - dept. or whole school
- Conduct peer observation; be encouraged to buddy up with a colleague
- lead or participate in coaching / mentoring
- Summarise a book or a piece of research pertinent to the subject
- Undertake Action Research and feedback to staff

## **Concerns**

If the lesson is a cause for concern the member of staff **must be made aware**. This applies to **all** types of lesson observation both formal and informal.

The observer will meet the teacher to:

- give clear feedback about the nature and seriousness of the concerns;
- give the teacher the opportunity to comment and discuss the concerns;
- Discuss any support that may be required

The observer must meet with their appraiser to inform them of the concerns that have been raised. Through discussion with their appraiser it will be

- agreed any support\* that will be provided to help address the specific concerns;
- make clear how, and by when, progress will be reviewed. This will include further lesson observations.

**A repeat formal lesson observation should take place (this will then form part of the appraisal process) within two weeks in order to gather further evidence and inform any support that will follow.**

If any lesson is observed that raises ‘serious concerns about the progress/ safety of students’ then a support programme **must** be put into place.

\*Support package might include:

- HOD involvement and support mechanisms triggered at a departmental level.
- The teacher being able to undertake peer observations; pairing with a colleague whose teaching is judged to be excellent.
- Team teaching.
- Teacher being assigned a peer mentor.
- Lesson by lesson scrutiny of lesson plans and work by HOD and/or senior leader.
- Time limited period of support after which further procedures may be necessary.
- Further professional learning opportunities
- For an NQT any support package will usually be provided by their subject mentor.

## Lesson Observation Outcomes

\* If any lesson is observed that raises 'serious concerns about the progress/ safety of students' then a support programme **must** be put into place.

