Ballyclare Secondary School

Teaching and Learning Policy

LEARNING AND TEACHING POLICY

Introduction

Every child regardless of intellectual ability or social background, should have a rewarding educational experience. Ballyclare Secondary School believes that each pupil should be regarded as an individual having the right to a high quality education. Our school must be in a position to meet the educational needs of the children who attend it.

Our aim is to ensure that every child has the fullest range of courses available to him/her in his/her school and to ensure the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils. Our role is to develop the child holistically, to provide opportunities for every pupil to attain his/her fullest intellectual, social, cultural, physical, emotional, creative and moral growth. The experience of all our pupils should be meaningful and worthwhile; it is our responsibility to ensure that pupils are given the opportunity to gain a realistic knowledge of the world and to attain the understanding, skills, attitudes and values which will enable them to live effectively in a highly technological society.

Through the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Policy the school aims to develop in pupils a sense of self respect, the capacity to live as independent, self motivated adults and the ability to function as contributing and caring members of the community in which they live.

To make this possible we must ensure that effective learning and teaching will take place in a calm and caring environment within which teachers, pupils and support staff can work to the best of their ability.

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to establish a shared understanding of what constitutes quality Learning and Teaching and to state clearly the schools expectations with regard to Learning and Teaching. To provide a framework for monitoring the effectiveness of Learning and Teaching across the school.

Definition of Learning

Learning is acquiring new, or modifying existing, knowledge, behaviours, skills, values, or preferences and may involve synthesizing different types of information. Learning does not happen all at once, but builds upon and is shaped by what we already know. To that end, learning may be viewed as a process, rather than a collection of factual and procedural knowledge.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Learning can be said to be effective when:

- The learning intentions have been shared and the success criteria met
- Pupils succeed in public examinations in line with predictions based on baseline testing and tracking of progress
- Pupils are able to apply learning to different contexts
- Pupils are able to take increasing responsibility for their own learning and work towards becoming independent lifelong learners
- Pupils complete tasks appropriate to their potential
- Pupils display confidence and pride in their work and achievements
- Pupils set and meet or exceed their own learning targets
- Pupils are equipped to use ICT and emerging technologies to progress their own learning beyond the classroom

Definition of Teaching

Teaching is the sharing of knowledge through the use of appropriate methodology. It generates and encourages enthusiasm about the subject matter. It develops specific skills and enhances talents, develops habits of mind and encourages inquiry.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching

Teaching can be said to be effective when:

- There are good, positive working relationships between teachers and pupils
- Lessons are well planned and prepared
- A wide variety of teaching styles and methodologies are employed in a productive learning environment
- Teachers have high and challenging expectations of their pupils
- Teachers differentiate in terms of pupil ability, progress and preferred learning styles
- Appropriate resources, including ICT, are used to stimulate and enhance the learning
- Pupils are responsive, enthusiastic and motivated and are given opportunities to work individually, in pairs and in groups
- Pupils are given opportunities to engage in open ended problem solving activities
- Pupils are encouraged to improve on previous best performance
- Pupils are exposed to a variety of learning environments
- Teachers provide regular feedback about pupils' learning developing a sense of partnership in learning between parents/carers, teachers and pupils

The Learning Environment

Through the school's Pastoral Policies and in tandem with this policy, it is our aspiration to create a warm and caring school environment, in which our pupils' personal, social, emotional,

intellectual, physical and moral development can be enhanced and in which effective learning can take place.

We regard the building of strong, supportive relationships as being vital to the creation of that caring ethos, in which learning can take place. The contributors to these relationships include the pupils, teaching and other staff, parents/carers, governors and all those who make a regular contribution to school life.

Ballyclare Secondary School seeks to be a stable, supportive and positive influence on the lives of its pupils in a society where there are many challenges and pressures. In this policy there is a strong emphasis on developing the positive – positive ethos, positive behaviour and positive relationships.

We hope that in doing so we will maximise the opportunities for learning, for experiencing challenge and for tasting success in a physical environment which is stimulating, comfortable and well resourced.

Assessment

In line with current curriculum development the school is moving from assessment of learning to assessment for learning and this is reflected in the school Assessment Policy.

- Assessment should be an integral part of planning, learning and teaching
- Marking/assessment should highlight strengths and areas for improvement and these should be clearly understood by pupils and parents/carers
- A variety of forms of assessment will be employed and will include teacher, peer and self assessment
- Assessment tasks will have a clearly identified purpose which is understood by all pupils
- Feedback to pupils should encourage and motivate with constructive, formative and positive comments

The Role of Parents/Carers

Maintaining close relationships with parents/carers is a vital part of effective learning and teaching and emphasis is given to this in the School Development Plan. The school will ensure that parents/carers are kept informed and up to date with curriculum changes that affect their children and will seek support in the learning process by informing them of their children's progress. It is anticipated that parents will:

- Look at their child's assignments, homework and class work and regularly discuss progress with their children
- Encourage their children to see the value and purpose of their learning
- Understand and support their child's expectations and those placed upon their child
- Read their child's Progress Record (December) and Academic Report (June) and respond in a way that will assist the learning and teaching process
- Have a knowledge of when and where their child receives additional support

- Discuss their child's targets and explore ways of supporting their achievement
- Check pupil planners and provide a suitable environment for their child to complete homework and revision
- Read and discuss feedback from teachers on children's work
- Encourage and praise their children's achievements and make every effort to attend consultation and other evenings of relevance to their children's progress
- Have a clear understanding of the school's policies and be involved at an early stage in the event of difficulties being identified; acting in partnership with staff and their children in reaching solutions

The Learners Role

The learner is expected to:

- Set personal goals
- Seek information independently using a range of resources including ICT
- Acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills
- Learn to work with others and appreciate the views of others
- Engage in evaluation, reflection and self assessment
- Develop creative and critical thinking skills
- Develop a sense of, and demonstrate, self awareness and self discipline
- Take pride in their work

Staff Development

The school believes that the development of the professional competence of all its staff will be enhanced by attendance at selected in-service courses and that the educational experience, for all its pupils, provided by the school will be improved as a result. It further believes that an integral part of staff development is the encouraging of members of staff to accept and adopt particular areas of responsibility within the management, curriculum and pastoral dimensions of the life of the school

Monitoring and Evaluation

The school will constantly assess and review the delivered curriculum, staff allocation, time allocation and resource provision to ensure that all pupils receive the breadth and balance to which they are entitled. Throughout the year teacher self-evaluation, Head of Department Meetings, Departmental Development work, Annual Review, Senior Leadership Team and Principal will discuss, determine, monitor and evaluate the extent of the implementation of the school Learning and Teaching Policy in terms of the characteristics of a stimulating learning environment and effective learning and teaching. This will be carried out through formal and informal observation and use of other auditing tools such as book scoops and a range of data. Particular responsibility for this work will lie with the Vice Principal – Education Provision

The Learning and Teaching Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

November 2012
Review: November 2013