

# St Dominic's Sixth Form College



## Teaching and Learning Policy

*St Dominic's is a Roman Catholic Sixth Form College committed to the personal and spiritual growth of all its members based on Christian values, academic excellence and high quality pastoral care.*

### Principles of the Policy

- Staff at St Dominic's Sixth Form College recognise that the quality of learning in our classrooms forms the basis of success for our students. Teachers at St Dominic's embrace the belief that the pursuit of excellence in teaching is integral to attainment and achievement and the future academic success of each individual student.
- The Teaching and Learning Policy is a core component of our commitment to continually seek ways to drive up educational standards and to ensure consistency of the quality of teaching and learning for all students.
- We recognise that every student is entitled to experience a variety of teaching and learning styles and techniques in lessons and that it is vital in ensuring students are engaged and motivated in their learning.
- We recognise that students are entitled to the appropriate level of individual support which will enable them to achieve their full potential.
- We are firm in our belief that all teachers have a responsibility, collectively and individually, to contribute to the delivery of an engaging, varied, challenging and appropriate curriculum.
- In addition, we individually have a responsibility to strive to deliver lessons where the teaching and learning is of the highest quality and where the learning needs of all students are met.
- Teachers should strive to give our students the competitive edge over other students from other institutions. This should mean they are committed to being an outstanding practitioner.
- We recognise that continued professional support, coaching and mentoring at whole College, departmental and individual level is essential to empower staff to deliver effective learning experiences and we hope that this policy will help provide teachers with a framework of guidance to help them deliver lessons and support of the highest quality.
- We are committed to personalising learning. Teachers are committed to making subject matter relevant, are flexible in their approach to teaching, and are committed to setting activities that stretch and challenge all students.
- Teachers employ motivational triggers to engage the students.

**Purpose of the policy is:**

- To provide a framework for teaching and learning within which there is flexibility and scope for creativity thereby ensuring a high quality experience for students of all abilities and aptitudes
- To provide coherence of approach and consistency of expectation and to make explicit the entitlement of all students.
- To make transparent our beliefs about the characteristics of effective teaching and learning.
- To raise attainment by increasing levels of student motivation, participation and independence.
- To promote reflection on, and sharing of, good practice.
- To promote an understanding of how learning takes place.
- To make explicit a baseline for monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning that takes place.
- To provide practical guidance and a focus for continued professional development.
- To inform teachers, students, parents, governors and the wider community about the aims and processes of teaching and learning.

**Outcomes of the policy:**

Students who attend St Dominic's Sixth Form College will:

1. Be effective independent learners.
2. Be aware of a variety of learning and revision techniques so that they can work independently.
3. Develop a "Fluid Mindset." They will appreciate that success depends on effort. Students will believe that hurdles can be overcome by the application of more effort. They will understand that the world is a place containing challenges which are not insurmountable.
4. Be able to appreciate that adversity can be beneficial and can help us to grow as people and as learners.
5. Be able to enquire and solve problems.
6. Be able to set themselves targets and work towards them.
7. Be given opportunities to develop leadership skills in and outside the classroom.
8. Be in receipt of a well-balanced, consistent curriculum that meets their needs.
9. Be taught in a way that will allow them access to A\* grades.

**As teachers we know the characteristics of effective learning are when:**

- Students understand the purpose of the learning and see relevance to their own experience.
- Students understand the ways in which learning takes place.
- The learning builds on prior knowledge and understanding.
- Success criteria are explicit and models are provided.
- The learning is active and collaborative.
- Student questioning, reflection, and discussion are encouraged.
- Independent learning and thinking is facilitated and encouraged.
- There are opportunities for creativity and utilising different learning styles.
- Students can self and peer assess, know what they need to do to improve and are able to set appropriate targets.
- Students have opportunities to transfer skills, knowledge and understanding to other contexts.
- The environment is secure, stable and stimulating.

**Collective responsibility is the key to success:**

We see teaching and learning as a process of co-operative teamwork. We welcome and encourage the involvement of parents and others in the community. All members of the school community (teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and students) work towards the success of this policy by providing a supportive, nurturing environment for the students to work and socialise.

**Teachers work towards the Teaching and Learning Policy aims by:**

- Providing a challenging and stimulating programme of study designed to enable all students to reach the highest standards of personal achievement.
- Having a positive approach to developing their own expertise. This includes embracing new teaching methods and new technology and employing a variety of teaching methods.
- Continuing to be learners themselves – this means always looking for new examples, explanations, books, journals, theories and ideas to enrich their teaching.
- Maintaining an up-to-date knowledge of the Examination Specifications.
- Attending in-house meetings designed to improve teaching and learning in the College.
- Being good role models - punctual, well prepared and organised.
- Ensuring early contact with parents to discuss matters which affect a student's happiness, progress and behaviour.

- Recognising and being constantly aware of the needs of each individual student according to ability and aptitude.
- Collaborating with members of their own department and across departments to share best practice.

#### **Students support the Teaching and Learning Policy aims by:**

- Arriving on time, preparing for learning, ready to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Being a proactive learner, who listens, questions, participates and collaborates.
- Meeting all deadlines.
- Keeping focused on long term goals and ambitions.
- Working hard at all times and with consistency.

#### **Core Principles underpinning teaching and learning**

##### **1. There is no known ceiling to achievement. Intelligence can be developed by good teaching.**

Intelligence is not static, and is not innate. It can be developed by students engaging in appropriate and challenging learning activities. Concepts such as ‘ability’ and ‘intelligence’ should be handled professionally with great caution. In professional dialogue, including in all communication with parents, it should be clear that the College’s view is that intelligence and ability are not fixed, and are susceptible to development through good teaching and learning and hard work and effort from the students.

MTGs for students are a projection of minimum performance based on earlier/prior attainment. They are used to measure the value added by the teaching received, and to ensure that uniformly high expectations exist across all subject areas and amongst all students and parents. They make no claim about the ‘intelligence’ or ‘ability’ of a student. Targets exist to be achieved or, indeed exceeded.

##### **2. A significant contributor to excellence in any given field is hard work.**

While there may have been physical predispositions or genetic factors this pales in comparison to hard work and consistent application by the student throughout the course.

##### **3. Clarity is essential to allow students to fully access their chosen programmes of study.**

It is imperative that students are provided with all relevant information at the start of the course, ensuring they fully understand the nature of the course and its requirements. All resources are made available to students throughout the course and in particular on iLearn. If students are absent, every effort should be made to ensure they have access to work missed.

- 4. High expectations are important, but to fulfil these high expectations students must be shown how to improve by their teachers. This requires students to be taught to learn and to reflect on their learning, and to assess and review their progress.**

It must be made explicit to students what they can do to be effective learners. Strategies for achieving this include discussions with them about their learning, scaffolding, modelling, guided writing, joint developing and inculcating effective study skills. When explaining new concepts, teachers need to check for understanding by students. There is a variety of ways in which this may be done, including appropriate questioning, which should be targeted at students least likely to have understood, or asking students to explain back to the rest of the group. Students will be able to assess their own learning through progress towards clear learning objectives, and by formative feedback on their work. Other strategies may include peer assessment or self-assessment, as well as summative grades at prescribed intervals.

- 5. Learning objectives that challenge each student and take their own learning forward must be shared explicitly with students and reviewed at the end of the lesson.**

The learning objectives must be focused on what (new) learning will take place in the lesson, not simply activities to be completed in the lesson. Students need to know what they are learning in lessons, not just what they are doing. Learning objectives generally need to be shared with students at the start of the lesson. To consolidate learning, and enable students to assess their progress, learning objectives must be reviewed, checked or tested preferably at the end of the lesson, normally as part of a plenary.

- 6. Effective formative and summative assessment in the light of learning objectives must be regularly undertaken.**

Assessment has a range of purposes, all of which are important. It needs to help students to improve (formative assessment); it needs to inform teachers, parents and students about progress made (summative assessment). It also needs to inform teachers about their teaching; the results of assessment to feed into teachers' planning for future learning. This may impact on pace, content, teaching methods and the revision needs of learners.

- Work assessed by teachers must receive written formative feedback which makes it clear how students could improve their work further.
- It is also essential to routinely grade practice examination questions, as in the approach to public examinations it is important that students are aware of the grade or level their work is currently meeting.
- Target grades must be recorded in the electronic mark book for all students, so that progress towards and beyond these targets can be clearly seen.
- Target grades or levels must be discussed openly with students so that they have a clear awareness of what the minimum expectation for their achievement is.
- Work collected in for marking must be returned to students within two weeks of collection. Long delays between work being completed and being returned to students mean that the impact of assessment is lost. Opportunities should be created for students to respond to the teacher feedback given either verbally or in writing.

- 7. Lessons must be carefully planned and clearly structured to include an engaging and stimulating variety of learning activities and tasks which contribute to meeting the learning objectives. Teachers must evaluate their lessons so that their own practice can improve.**

Every course should be planned in a detailed scheme of work, which will set out a clear timescale for different elements of the course to be covered, resources, suggestions for learning activities, planned differentiation, assessment activities, literacy and SMSC.

**Start of the Lesson:**

- The start of the lesson has a clear focus, using activities which immediately engage the learner.
- The expected learning outcomes are shared with students, in the context of prior learning, to ensure they understand what they are doing and why. The success criteria by which the learning will be evaluated are made explicit

**Lesson Development:**

- Present lessons with clarity, enthusiasm and pace, ensuring timings are clear and adhered to
- Make learning active by providing tasks which enable students to make meaning, construct knowledge, solve problems and develop understanding and skills
- Model activities and processes, making their thinking and decision-making explicit to students
- Provide exemplar work so that students are aware of the sophistication of response expected
- Use a variety of questioning techniques to probe and develop students' understanding
- Promote active listening, inviting a range of different responses and building in time for reflection
- Give constructive, positive feedback on work in progress
- Provide opportunities for progression which increase the level of conceptual challenge, the depth of understanding and the breadth of application of skills
- Demonstrate flexibility in their approach and be prepared to deviate from the lesson plan where appropriate
- Set a variety of homework tasks to deepen, extend, or initiate learning, to promote knowledge gathering and to encourage focused, independent thinking.

- 8. Teachers must create and maintain a purposeful learning environment, both physically and in terms of classroom ethos.**

It is absolutely imperative that teachers have the same high expectations of students in their lessons.

- 9. Achievement must be recognised and celebrated, and underachievement must be challenged and addressed by teachers, not simply processed.**

Praise and acknowledgement is a key way to encourage student progress and it is essential that teachers develop a range of strategies to celebrate individual and group achievement in their lessons. When underperformance is evident, the teacher's job is to change the underperformance, not simply to note it or record it. An underperforming student needs to be spoken to by their teacher with a view not just to identify reasons, but to clearly establishing strategies for improvement. Short term targets and further review discussions should normally take place.

## **10. Teachers should be supported in their strive for excellence in the classroom through an effective professional development programme that is linked to their performance management**

All teachers are entitled to tailored programme of CPD that is agreed with their line manager at the start of the year and on an on-going basis. Keeping up to date with current practice and examination specifications is important and the College has a duty to facilitate this for each member of staff. The College will offer professional support, coaching and mentorship at whole College, subject, departmental and individual level. This will ensure that staff will be equipped with the necessary skills to put the policy into practice.

### **What to expect? How will this policy be monitored?**

#### **Lesson Observation** (three graded observations per teacher per year)

- SLT and Heads of Department will observe staff throughout the year and each department will be reviewed every two years as part of a rolling programme of self/internal review. The departmental review will follow the protocols as published by Ofsted. This review will include members of SLT and external colleagues.
- During a Departmental Review it will be expected that the various components of the Teaching and Learning Policy will be evident, through observation, learning walks and professional dialogues with Head of Department/Subject.
- We will analyse the observation data for both the lesson observations and Departmental Reviews to measure the impact of the Teaching and Learning Policy

#### **Work Scrutiny**

- During observations and department reviews, student work will be reviewed by the inspection team to ensure the policy is being followed. Electronic mark books will be checked to ensure that students know their target grade, where they are currently at and what specifically they must do to improve. Assessments, assignments and essays will be reviewed to ensure that students are being given clear, specific targets about how to further their progress.

#### **Student Voice** (one a year per department)

- Students will be explicitly aware of their entitlement at St Dominic's. Therefore, during the student voice aspect to the lesson observation and Departmental review it will be easy to monitor whether the Teaching and Learning Policy is being successful.

### **Who will monitor the Teaching and Learning Policy?**

#### **Role of Subject Teachers**

- The role of the teacher is pivotal in the success of the Teaching and Learning Policy. It is the individual duty of subject teachers to ensure that they are following the requirements and guidance that is stipulated in the Teaching and Learning Policy. If students fail to meet expectation in lessons, it is worth repeating that the subject teacher's job is to change the underperformance and to intervene as appropriate.

### **Role of the Heads of Subject and Heads of Department**

- HODs and HOSs are responsible for the day-to-day management of their department/subject and, as such, are responsible for ensuring the subject or department adhere to the policy. Heads of Department and Heads of Subject should ensure that subject teachers understand and follow the Teaching and Learning Policy consistently.

### **Role of the Tutors**

- The form tutor has regular contact with each student in their form and, as such, is, very often, the first line of contact with home. The form tutor therefore plays a vital role in supporting the Teaching and Learning Policy. It is the duty of tutors to forward any student concerns to the Senior Tutors and/or the Assistant Principal for Pastoral Care regarding non-fulfilment of their entitlement. For example, if work is not being handed back to students within 10 working days. It is also the role of form tutor to deal with student underperformance, referrals, attendance and punctuality problems. They should also make sure that they inform the relevant HoD/SLT member of any issues regarding underperformance.

### **Role of the Principal and the Senior Leadership Team.**

- The SLT are responsible for the monitoring and oversight of the Teaching Learning Policy as they have an oversight of all departmental and pastoral structures. It is the duty of the SLT to monitor this policy through line management and to hold middle managers to account accordingly. SLT must ensure that teachers are being offered professional support, coaching and mentorship. SLT line managers will support all departments when any issues arise about a student's poor performance and failure to adhere to our expectations.

### **Role of the Governors**

- The Governors have a role in monitoring the performance and effectiveness of the College. This is undertaken at full Governors' meetings and a number of committees. The Governors will receive presentations and briefings of departmental performance and practice. This will allow them to monitor the effectiveness of the Teaching and Learning Policy and to discuss this when on their departmental visits.

### **How often will the Teaching and Learning Policy be reviewed?**

The Teaching and Learning Policy is a flexible document. We appreciate that as new directives come from the Government that the policy will need to reflect these changes. Therefore the Teaching and Learning Policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team, Teaching and Learning Group and the Governing Body with amendments circulated for consultation with all teaching staff members.

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