



Notre Dame High School

Learning and Teaching Policy

December 2015



“Our aspiration is that every young person will attain the knowledge, skills, qualifications and dispositions required for a personally rewarding life, productive employment and effective contribution to the wider community”

Adapted from Notre Dame High School, Vision, Values and Aims

Context

At the heart of our school Vision, Values and Aims is the commitment to providing the highest quality teaching and learning which will enable our young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Curriculum for Excellence aims to achieve a more coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum which is firmly focused on meeting the needs of our young people through more imaginative teaching. Achieving this requires a team of dynamic staff who are committed to their craft, open to new ideas and who recognise that there is always room to improve current practice.

Climate and Relationships

Trusting, friendly relationships and a positive climate where everyone feels respected, included and valued is at the core of successful learning.

Staff create an engaging and empowering climate for learning, promote a sense of order and security and build positive, open relationships with each other, pupils, parents and wider partners. We have high expectations and provide a high level of support and challenge for all, ensuring that our pupils flourish in a safe environment.

“A Catholic community of faith which embraces and celebrates the rich diversity of cultures and faiths in the school”

HMIE, December 2009

Our “outstanding” Catholic ethos seeks to base its words and actions on the gospel values of Love of God and service to our neighbour. Staff and pupils work collectively to create a climate where mutual trust, confidence, compassion and love are evident throughout the school.

Pupils’ Learning Experience

Our school continues to focus on improving the learning experience with staff who are committed to developing Learning & Teaching approaches which are:

- Well planned, challenging and build on prior knowledge

- Enjoyable, relevant and inclusive – enhancing the experience, achievement and attainment of all
- Active and fun, allowing young people to become problem solvers in a supportive and stimulating atmosphere
- Flexible and creative, allowing for personalisation and choice
- Place emphasis in appropriate and innovative use of technology
- Demonstrate high expectations for all
- Collaborative and cooperative, promoting quality social interaction between our young people and,
- Encourage learners to take responsibility wherever appropriate

These learning experiences take place across the totality of our curriculum which can be described across the four contexts, namely all learning that is planned for pupils through;

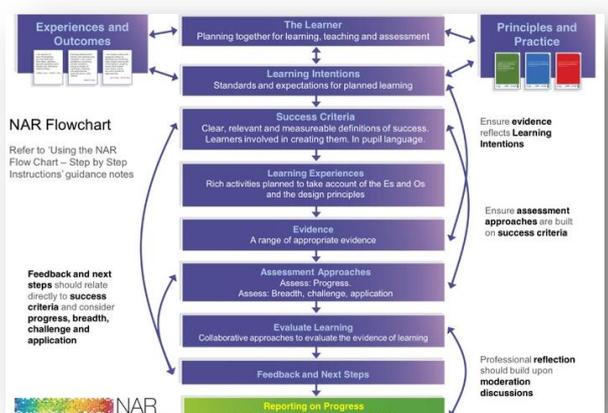
- **Programmes and courses** – the subjects and courses which are experienced by **all** young people through their Broad General Education and subjects selected by pupils through personalisation and choice in the Senior Phase
- **Interdisciplinary learning** – planned opportunities which provide space for young people to experience learning of a cross-curricular nature, allowing them to make connections between subject areas
- **Wider Achievement** – opportunities for our young people to experience success out with the traditional subject areas, helping them develop confidence and resilience
- **Ethos** – activities which encourage our young people to contribute to the life and work of the school through activities such as Pupil Council

Staff in Notre Dame High School recognise the need for these learning experiences to be well planned with a clear focus on what the learning is to be and what success looks like.

Planned Learning within Broad General Education

The design of all lessons from S1 – S3 should reflect the “NAR Flowchart” which makes clear all planned learning activities are based firmly on a group of experiences and outcomes, most of which are in relation to third level, however, as young people progress through their Broad General Education, they will be increasingly exposed to fourth level work. These are then used to create the “Learning Intentions” for the lesson.

At this stage, staff give due consideration to how learning will be assessed and by creating and sharing clear and measurable “Success Criteria” at the beginning of each lesson, both staff and pupils know



how work will be judged. Often young people can be involved in designing these, making the language used more accessible and relevant.

Education Scotland's "Assessing Progress and Achievement in Significant Aspects of Learning" and the associated Progression Framework Statements provide departmental staff with further structure when planning learning which allows young people to progress within and through levels. Further information on this can be found in Notre Dame's Assessment policy.

Within Notre Dame High, 'Planned learning' has been defined as learning blocks or experiences that take account of:

- success criteria
- experiences and outcomes
- significant aspects of learning
- relevant progression framework statements
- dominant skills for learning
- dominant skills for work
- context for learning
- form of assessment
- responsibilities of all (literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing)

Lessons are generally designed around three stages – **beginning, middle** and **end**.

Beginning- The start of the lesson is generally used to recap on previous learning and to make links with today's lesson. Staff often have a starter activity to help achieve this and to ensure the lesson begins in a prompt manner. The learning Intentions, Success Criteria and thinking skills are usually shared at this point so that pupils are clear about what is expected of them.

Middle - Throughout each lesson, staff design well-paced and engaging activities which match learners' needs and ensure that they are on-task. This is coupled with effective questioning which is described in more detail below. Young people have the opportunity to work individually and collaboratively in pairs and small groups in a supportive and encouraging environment using well-planned and appropriate resources which include the use of ICT and audio-visual equipment.

End – It would be usual for staff to recap and review the lesson by returning to the learning intention and success criteria, allowing young people and staff to measure understanding. A plenary activity is often used for this purpose or to highlight the skills for learning, life and work which have been employed.

Learning in Senior Phase

As young people progress from Broad General Education to Senior Phase they continue to experience learning across the four contexts, as described above. It is appropriate at this stage of their education that their learning is shaped around strengths, personal preference and career ambitions and to support this, the programmes and courses available in the Senior Phase are driven by pupil needs.

The learning in Senior Phase courses is designed around SQA's detailed arrangements documents for National Qualifications but the design of each lesson is structured in a similar manner to those in BGE. Pupils appreciate the good habits which have been established in S1 – S3. The use of success criteria to help measure progress, effective questioning, well-planned activities and accurate feedback help staff to ensure young people are successful.

Questioning



Asking effective questions is at the heart of an effective learning climate. Asking well thought-out questions can provide teachers with immediate feedback on pupils' thinking: on what they know and, most importantly, where the gaps lie. Suitable questioning is strategic as it offers opportunities for learners to hear others' answers, which can help them reflect on their own understanding.

When questioning pupils staff use appropriate language and techniques to ensure that all learners are involved including:

- Appropriate waiting time
- No hands up
- White boards
- Open and closed questions

Every classroom in Notre Dame has the **Thinking Skills** poster on display and over the last few years staff and pupils have become much more adept at identifying and sharing the prominent Thinking Skills which pupils will employ during the lesson. Through the use of effective questioning techniques, staff promote these Higher Order skills, allowing pupils to develop a deeper understanding and analysis of texts, concepts and ideas.

Use of Pupil Diary/Planner

Every young person in Notre Dame has a copy of the appropriate diary/planner for their stage – BGE and Senior Phase. Pupils should have this available on their desk at the beginning of each period to support their learning. As described above, staff are encouraged to share the prominent Thinking Skill involved in each lesson of the day and pupils record this in their diary/planners. This brief entry helps support learner understanding and recall. Staff encourage all young people to record their homework in the diary as it helps them to organise and plan their studies both in school and at home. Diaries are monitored during Personal Support time and during lesson visits by senior members of staff.

The diary is also used as a first means of communication between the classroom teacher and parent/carer and therefore it is essential that staff encourage and monitor its use in their classroom.

Feedback

Assessment for Learning strategies have been employed by Notre Dame staff as part of their normal everyday learning and teaching approaches since before the year 2000. Like “Questioning” above, providing learners with timely, focused feedback is crucial to supporting the learning process. By providing clear guidance on how work can be improved, the next steps in learning and how pupils can take them, staff support pupils to understand strengths and areas for development.

In our school this begins in the classroom. Classroom teachers are best placed to provide effective feedback through verbal and written direction on classwork, homework and assessments. This feedback can be of a formal and informal nature. Informally, it can take the form of;

- Teacher comments during the lesson on written work
- Verbal comments on homework tasks
- Comment/praise for pupils’ verbal response

Formally, staff engage in a variety of activities which are designed to support young people’s progress;

- Written comments in jotter or diary
- Written Comments provided on return of homework exercises
- Interim and annual Reports
- Feedback to Pupil Support staff on individual progress when requested
- Learner Conversations with pupils on progress, strengths and areas for development

During Session 2015/’16, staff have been looking more closely at effective feedback as a key component of our Improvement Plan and during Learning and Teaching Focus Periods.

Literacy, Numeracy, Health and Wellbeing - Responsibility of all

Literacy, numeracy, health and well-being are highlighted as key skills which will allow our young people to gain access to learning and to succeed in life. Every member of staff has a responsibility to develop pupil skills in these areas and to provide direction which will allow them to make connections across subject areas.

Our Personal Support curriculum has been instrumental in bringing these to life and providing a whole school focus for pupils from S1 – S6. For example, under health and wellbeing, each of the wellbeing indicators contained within GIRFEC were teased out, allowing young people to understand their significance. In the promotion of literacy across learning, departments have identified thirty key words from their BGE curriculum to display on classroom walls, reinforcing the need to engage with literacy.

During session 2015/’16, each of the three key areas have School Improvement Groups established, allowing staff to take forward our school’s approach. The groups’ remits include enhancing our school policy in each area and confirming our approach to assessing and moderating pupil progress in literacy, numeracy, health & wellbeing, key national indicators

Skills for Learning, life and work

Notre Dame High School's curriculum provides opportunities for staff to provide planned experiences for our young people which helps them to develop and demonstrate their skills.

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Thinking Skills
- Health & Wellbeing including
 - personal learning planning
 - career management skills
 - working with others
 - leadership
 - physical coordination and movement
- Enterprise and Employability

However, our curriculum is not solely based on the experiences and outcomes which are planned by departmental staff in the delivery of everyday lessons or on the inter-disciplinary learning which is planned for between departments. As the other contexts for learning, wider achievement opportunities and activities which take place through the ethos and life of the school, provide scope for pupils to extend the development of these skills, all of which are essential for Scotland's young people to meet the challenges of life and work in the 21st century.

During session 2015/'16, we are undertaking a process to more formally record and chart pupils' progress in these additional activities, providing an enhanced picture of skills development.



As a school we are committed to embedding the recommendations of the Wood Commission report – Developing Scotland's Young Workforce and all classrooms display the Skills for Learning, Life and Work poster. Staff are increasingly making reference to these during lessons, allowing young people to make connections and become further aware of their progress. As a priority for our Improvement Plan during Session 2015/'16, departments used dedicated Inset time to review S4 course, making the skills more explicit.

Meeting Learning Needs

In keeping with National and local guidelines, Meeting Learning Needs is the responsibility of all staff in Notre Dame High School. Within the classroom, staff adopt a wide range of strategies to ensure all young people progress at the rate they are capable of, including, collaborative working, differentiation of materials and activities as well as the planned personalisation of the curriculum for individuals or groups.

In order to ensure the inclusion of all young people, the classroom teacher utilises the support of specialised staff within the school in line with the national GIRFEC policy (Getting it Right For Every Child). Our Pupil Support Team is headed by Mrs Elizabeth Henderson, Depute Head Teacher, and consists of three Principal Teachers of Pastoral Care, one Principal Teacher of Support for Learning, Pupil Support Workers and two highly qualified staff who support pupils with English as an Additional Language. This team are able to provide a wide range of support to classroom teachers and pupils, including;

- General advice and guidance on additional support needs
- Accurate and detailed information contained within the confidential Pupil Care File
- In class cooperative teaching support
- Individual and group tuition
- Resources to support learning

Our Pupil Support Team use a staged intervention support framework to engage with local authority and other partner agencies in supporting our pupils. Psychological Services, Glasgow's Dyslexia service and health services are just some of the agencies who provide additional specialised support to our young people through a series of support meetings which begin with our own Supporting Inclusion Group.

Further information can be found in the Notre Dame Additional Support for Learning Policy document.

Technology to Support Learning & Teaching

Staff believe that learning is enriched through the planned use of ICT. From an early stage, the young people are encouraged to understand and work with a range of technology which enhances their understanding and provides essential skills for the future. Every pupil in BGE is exposed to a range of technology subjects including Information Technology, Computing, Graphic Communication and Home Economics. Within the Senior Phase, pupils can choose to continue to specialise in this area, however, given the information on current job market trends which indicates that technologies are a real growth area for future employment in our City, pupils are encouraged to continue their studies in this curricular area.

All classrooms are fitted with Smartboard and LCD Projectors to support the planning of engaging lessons. Whilst the school has a policy on the use of personal mobile devices, staff recognise that these can and are used during lessons where appropriate.

Assessment

As stated under “Planned Learning”, staff give due consideration to how learning will be assessed at the outset of lesson planning. This information is shared with pupils through the use of success criteria.

Increasingly staff are becoming more confident in the use of the Progression Framework Statements which describe progression through each level of the significant aspects of learning for each curricular area

As outlined in ***Building the Curriculum 5***, the key purposes of assessment are:

- To support learning
- To provide a summary of achievements
- To inform the learner and their parents that progress is made in line with expectations
- To help plan the next stages of learning
- To inform future improvements in learning and teaching

Staff value assessment as an integral part of learning and teaching and is used to support learning and build capacity in our young people to improve and progress. As well as summative assessment, formative assessment techniques are used to provide a clear picture of where each young person is in their learning. We achieve this through processes such as:

- Sharing learning intentions and success criteria
- Providing timely and constructive feedback
- Encouraging peer and self-evaluation
- Deciding next steps in learning
- Effective questioning

Notre Dame High School has been developing a database system “The Learning Path” for monitoring the progress of our pupils within Broad General Education. This progress is based on assessments which have been designed around Experiences and Outcomes and the Significant Aspects of Learning in each curricular area. For each course in the BGE staff will assess pupil progress around six times per academic year. The process of determining whether or not a pupil has achieved a level involves engaging with Education Scotland’s Progression Framework Statements and most significantly, on the dialogue which takes place between colleagues on agreeing standards. Relevant interventions can then take place.

For our young people in the Senior Phase, assessment in National course is set out by SQA. All National Qualification courses and new Highers include internal assessments and, for the vast majority, an external assessment by means of an examination in the annual May/June diet. Some courses also include coursework tasks, investigations or assignments. Assessment Calendars are available for all pupils in S4 – S6 and these detail the form of assessment and a calendar view of when these are likely to occur.

Quality Assurance and Self Evaluation

Staff at all levels are committed to ensuring the highest quality of pupil experience at Notre Dame High School and our Quality Assurance Calendar provides a framework for us to engage in a systematic review of our work, both at departmental and whole school level. Effective, ongoing self-evaluation provides a unique and valuable picture of what is having the greatest and least impact on our learners.

Our young people deserve the very best and as classroom practitioners, our aspiration is to deliver the highest quality of learning and teaching during every period of every day. Self-evaluation is an on-going process and we analyse our work to evaluate performance, to determine what is working well and to plan for future improvement.

This analysis includes three distinct features:

- Individual reflection by classroom practitioners against the standards in HGIOS3
- Direct observation of teaching and learning
- Use of data at departmental and whole school level

This “triangulation” provides a robust evidence base for decisions on areas of strength and future development.

Notre Dame staff are well-versed in this process of “looking inwards” and during session 2014/’15 agreed to move from a line management approach of classroom observation to a peer-learning model where both the teacher and observer are focused on their individual professional practice.

Using Learning and Teaching Focus Periods for both Broad General Education and Senior Phase, staff at all levels participate in a 3-week process of self-evaluation. As well as examining their own practice using the quality indicators found in How Good Is Our School and Journey to Excellence, they observe a colleague either within their own department or beyond. Meanwhile Senior Leadership Team members hold pupil focus group discussions and shadow the pupil experience.

Evidence from these activities is discussed at departmental meetings where staff agree what is working well and set targets for future improvement.

Following each Focus Period, the Learning and Teaching School Improvement Group meet to review all information gathered:

- Departmental and SLT data is used to judge school performance against the national benchmarks
- Departmental action points contribute to future School Improvement Planning and Continuing Professional Development priorities

Commitment to Continuing Professional Development

Each year, promoting the highest quality approaches to teaching and learning is a focus of our School Improvement Plan where resources are identified to support our annual priority. Time is

utilised during Inset and collegiate hours for whole staff training and sharing good practice sessions. In addition, the Professional Review process allows staff to identify individual priorities for enhancing their pedagogy and to identify the manner in which these can be addressed.

As outlined in the school's policy on Continuing Professional Development one of the key objectives of continuous professional development is to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning at all levels, in order to provide effective learning experiences for pupils and to raise attainment.

All staff share the responsibility for ensuring a successful and effective programme of staff development for Notre Dame High. Each member of staff has a professional responsibility for his/her own development. This is demonstrated by:

- The identification of strengths and needs,
- Seeking opportunities for staff development,
- Maintaining a record of continuing professional development
- Supporting the professional development of colleagues.
- Providing appropriate feedback to colleagues in support of their professional development
- Monitoring the impact of staff development opportunities on their own professional effectiveness
- Annual participation in the PRD process as line-manager reviewer/reviewee as appropriate.

In addition to in service courses, staff are encouraged to participate in a range of professional development opportunities which include:

- Shadowing colleagues
- Collegiate working
- Team teaching
- Modeling good practice
- Distributed leadership
- Contribution to school Improvement Groups

Senior staff have offered a number of optional collegiate activities for staff to support their professional development. These have been well-received and included sessions on Insight and Peer Learning.

Transitions

Staff at all levels recognise the move from primary to secondary is just one of a number of key transitions which affect our young people. At present, subject choice at S2 requires pupils to focus on strengths and future career aspirations whilst for our older students in S4, 5 and 6, this is much more immediate.

Our transition programme with our associated primaries helps to ensure this particular transition is smooth and offers continuity of learning and teaching approaches, particularly in Mathematics and English. The school is building on this effective practice to ensure that this key information is

available to all curricular areas. Support staff work closely with all primaries to ensure the transfer of sensitive, personal information is effective and utilised to support the transition of our more vulnerable groups. Also, our annual Open Evening in September is an opportunity for young people and parents/carers to meet initially with school staff.

Our three-day Induction programme in June is an excellent opportunity for young people to meet a number of staff and experience a taste of secondary education. The introduction of CAT testing has provided useful information to pupils, parents and staff and forms part of our profiling, ensuring we are aware of the needs of each individual and enabling us to provide enhanced support as required.

Partnership with Parents

Our welcoming, inclusive ethos means that parents and carers feel encouraged to participate in their child's learning. Through a range of creative measures including our Parent Council, Parent Forums, website, consultations and evaluations, parents feel their views and opinions are valued.

Our S1 Mass of Welcome also provides an opportunity for parents to be involved in the life of the school whilst our focus on developing skills for learning, life and work provides the opportunity for parents/carers to share expertise and experiences of the world of work as volunteers at careers events or visits to the school.