

PORTLAND HIGH SCHOOL

'Care, Support and Respect'



Learning & Teaching Policy

Introduction and Rationale

Early in 2015, an Education Scotland Continuing Engagement Report highlighted the positives in the Learning and Teaching experiences of pupils across the school. They noted that:

- the majority of young people are making good progress with aspects of their learning and social and emotional development.
- young people are engaging in classes more often and are making progress with their learning as a result of the improved support from staff.
- most young people are supported well in classes, often with one-to-one support from teachers and support staff.
- staff are flexible and adaptable to learners' needs and respond well to any behaviour issues that arise.
- the school is continuing to develop the curriculum to ensure young people access a broad and balanced curriculum at all stages.

The report also noted areas for improvement and asked that the school address the fact that:

- young people are not yet improving their achievements sufficiently particularly in relation to National Qualifications.
- school needs to continue to raise expectations of young people's achievement.
- the school needs to increase the pace of curriculum change and improvement in line with Curriculum for Excellence.

In recognition of these aims, this policy updates the previous policy and seeks to ensure that the young people in the school are provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to a consistently high level of pupil achievement.

Young people learn through their whole experience. This policy guides what pupils do, what teachers do, how time is managed, the organisation of the classroom and what the school as an organisation does to create an effective and well managed learning environment in which the individual needs of each young person can be met.

By adopting a whole school approach to learning and teaching across our school, we aim

- To help teachers and support staff shape ways in which they can promote both effective teaching and learning.
- To encourage all pupils to develop their abilities to the full.
- To develop knowledge, skills and a positive attitude to learning.
- To promote commitment and confidence among staff when evaluation and self-evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

The Learning Environment

Young people feel at ease within a positive and encouraging learning climate. All teachers will ensure that:

- The curriculum is experienced by pupils through the 4 different contexts for learning:
 - the ethos and life of the school as a community
 - curriculum areas and subjects
 - interdisciplinary learning
 - opportunities for personal achievement.
- Learning is connected to what pupils already know
- The contexts for learning are relevant and enjoyable
- Young people are clear about what and how they are expected to learn.
- Young people are clear about how they are expected to behave and there is a consistent approach to behaviour management.
- There is an emphasis on active learning, providing a platform for pupils to develop a wide range of skills as well as deeper knowledge and understanding.
- Young people are encouraged to be actively involved in, and feel responsible for their own learning.
- They are given time to think about what they have learned and they get the chance to demonstrate their thinking and understanding.
- They are aware of what steps to take to improve and they can review and reflect on what they have learned.
- The classroom environment is stimulating, with relevant and meaningful displays of pupil work on the walls and in the corridors, updated regularly.
- They include opportunities for a series of planned, quality outdoor learning experiences.
- They have high expectations of all our young people and adhere to the consistent use of praise, e.g. positive referrals, phone calls and text messages home, newsletters etc. to reinforce a good standard of work and/or progress.

Teaching Methodologies

Staff in Portland High School use a wide range of Teaching and Learning strategies to maximise pupil attainment and achievement in lessons. In addition, planning and working with ASNs will support each learner's individual needs. Learning and teaching approaches are:

- Focused on the learner.
- Well planned, considering outcomes and experiences, learner's interests and prior knowledge.
- Motivational, relevant and inclusive.
- Active and meaningful, allowing young people to become problem solvers in a supportive and stimulating atmosphere.

Strategies used include:

- Active Learning
- Use of ICT to support learning
- Creativity in Learning
- Cooperative & Collaborative Learning:
 - Positive Interdependence
 - Individual Accountability
 - Group Processing
 - Face to Face Interaction
 - Social Skills
- Encouraging varied Thinking Styles
- AiFL:
 - Sharing the Learning Outcomes
 - Developing and using Success Criteria
 - Peer & Self Assessment
 - Questioning Techniques
 - Formative Feedback

For additional information, see the AiFL Policy and the staff training PowerPoints and video information on 'Questioning Styles', 'Cooperative Learning' and 'AiFL' on the school website.

Meeting Learners' Needs

This policy aims to put young people at the centre of the Learning and Teaching experience. Many of our pupils come with complex and many needs, and many have had negative experiences in mainstream education. This is addressed by our ethos of care, support and respect.

We respect our young people, remembering that for many of them the journey has not been an easy one. It is because we care for them that we will do all we can to support their learning in order to impact positively on each pupil's life chances and to enable all young people to become:

- Successful learners
- Confident individuals
- Responsible citizens
- Effective contributors

All teachers and support staff will do what they can to ensure young people are:

- Motivated
- Happy
- Given tasks which match their abilities
- Confident and secure
- Challenged and stimulated with work at an appropriate pace
- Supported in their learning
- Included in the learning

Teachers and support staff will work to these ends by making sure they are:

- Aware of pupils in our classes with learning support needs or any social, emotional and behavioural issues, and take the appropriate action to support them in class.
- Aware of and using first line intervention strategies when required.

Assessment, Recording & Reporting

Regular feedback to pupils on their progress is integral to effective learning and teaching. The purposes of assessment include:

- supporting learning
- helping to plan next steps and identify areas for improvement
- informing learners and their parents/carers of progress
- summarising achievements (sometimes through qualifications)
- monitoring the education system and influencing future developments.

Assessment should emphasise literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, ICT and higher-order skills, including creativity.

In Portland High School, staff have a responsibility to ensure that:

- Prior to learning and teaching, they have assessed pupils' needs.
- They use many approaches to assessment, formative and summative.
- Assessment focuses on breadth, challenge and application.
- Evidence of learners' progress is gathered.
- Professional dialogue is central to agreeing standards.
- *Curriculum for Excellence* principles underpin reporting.
- Assessment is quality assured and moderated.
- Good practice (e.g. in moderation) is shared.

Reporting should give information on:

- literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing
- progress within and between levels and in relation to qualifications
- strengths and areas for development
- the need for additional support, where relevant.

Reporting should adhere to the principles and purposes of *Curriculum for Excellence*, and should encourage active parental involvement by providing opportunities for parents to give their views on their child's progress, including written and face to face responses. Reporting should be regular and is particularly important at points of transition, especially at the end of the phase of Broad General Education.

Recording

It is every teacher's responsibility to:

Adhere to the school's monitoring and tracking programme.

Record assessment and praise information.

Take account of wider achievement



Monitoring & Self Evaluation

Effective self-evaluation enables staff to identify the strengths in Learning and Teaching and the changes needed to achieve better outcomes for learners. This includes monitoring, self evaluation and planning for improvement.

In Portland High School, it is essential that our teaching and learning is monitored and self-evaluated. The delivery of the curriculum has to be carefully balanced against meeting young people's social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. In order to do this, the delivery of the curriculum becomes the focus of:

- Minuted business meetings between teaching staff and the Head Teacher.
- Weekly 'Learning and Teaching' agenda item for teachers' meetings.
- Regular reference to the School Improvement Plan.
- Peer teacher observation visits to lessons, at least twice a year.
- Management observation visits to lessons, at least twice a year.
- Records of observation visits.
- Reference to the pupil voice through formal evaluations and informal chat.
- Monitoring of assessment information by PTs and SMT.

Continuous Professional Development

It can be argued that it is the commitment and skill of individual teachers which makes the biggest difference to children's progress and achievement. All teachers, therefore, have a responsibility to continue with professional learning throughout their career and further develop their knowledge and practice in order to meet the expectations placed upon them by Scottish society and to work towards closing the attainment gap.

The CPD needs of teachers are:

- identified through quality assurance and improvement planning processes, including professional review and development.
- are generally identified through self-evaluation by individual teachers, and sometimes in response to feedback from learners, peer observers, line managers and quality improvement officers.

In addition, staff:

- take time to discuss and share ideas, experiences and resources with each other.

- are aware that their CPD needs are informed by the sector in which we work and that wider professional knowledge into social, emotional and behavioural factors goes beyond the curricular.
- are encouraged to use the professional library that is frequently updated on First Class.

Summary

In conclusion, this policy has considered relevant aspects of classroom practice in order to provide a guide for staff in Portland High School. The consistent use of this policy by all staff across the school will yield significant benefits to ethos, behaviour, attainment and achievement. To ensure that pupils comply to the standards, the policy must be uniformly applied in every classroom.

A main priority in Portland High School is to reverse the negative attitudes towards education held by many. This will, in part, be achieved by effective teaching and learning that helps our young people become successful learners and more confident individuals.

This policy should be discussed at the Whole Staff and/or Teachers' meetings each time there is a new member of staff joining Portland High School.