



**St. Mary's Grammar School, Belfast**

**LEARNING & TEACHING**  
**POLICY**

**April 2017**



## **Rationale**

Learning and Teaching is the core purpose of our school. This policy provides recognition of current good practice and clarifies the means of consolidating and developing our work towards further improvement.

Implementation of the Learning and Teaching Policy is the responsibility of all who are involved in the life of the school including pupils, Teachers, Parents, Governors and the Leadership of the school at all levels.

## **The Vision for Learning and Teaching in St. Mary's CBGS**

Our pupils are taught by caring professionals within a faith based ethos and a framework which promotes effective pedagogy. Classrooms are welcoming, positive, supportive, stimulating learning environments where pupils' current work is openly displayed and celebrated.

The central focus of effective Learning and Teaching is directed by and arises from a clear understanding of what makes an effective learning experience and the necessity for learning to be achievable for all pupils and relevant to the real world.

Lessons should always be well planned, structured and paced appropriately to meet the needs of individuals, groups and classes. Assessment for Learning must be incorporated into the pedagogy particularly in relation to effective planned questioning and effective MFI, assessment and reporting should monitor and reflect the ongoing improvement of pupil's work.

Expectations must always be appropriately high, each child must experience methodologies which stretch and challenge them to achieve their full potential. Pupils are helped to become resourceful, independent learners, well prepared to successfully meet the challenges of adult life and life- long learning.

Everyone in the school acknowledges that the pre-eminent Pastoral Right a child has is to ***have their learning needs met and be well taught.*** Consequently, Subject Teacher, Head of Department, Head of Year, Head of Key Stage and SLT must work diligently and cooperatively to ensure this happens.

## **Expectations of Pupils / Teachers / Parents**

### **Pupils**

- Attend school every day and be punctual.
- Come to school prepared and equipped for each lesson.
- Respect self/others right to learn.
- Be well behaved/follow the code of conduct.
- Be an active learner/take responsibility for own learning.
- Complete classwork, homework, assignments to the highest possible standard on time.
- Have high expectations of self.
- Identify with guidance where there are areas for improvement and make appropriate adjustments.

### **Teachers**

As the leader in the classroom, the teacher assumes responsibility for ensuring, through sound classroom management and lesson planning, that a supportive and secure learning environment is in place where pupils, through agreed habits and routines, routinely lead and facilitate aspects of their own learning thereby growing in independence and autonomy.

Planning for quality lesson delivery, for pupil engagement, for positive outcomes is underpinned by ongoing teacher/pupil dialogue characterised by purpose, expectations and challenge and evident in pupils' articulation of their experiences and in pupils' workbooks, assignments and projects.

- Be child centred/be a positive role model.
- Be well prepared for each lesson.
- Plan effectively to meet the needs of each child (differentiate).
- Be consistent in approach/follow procedures.
- Effectively manage the classroom to meet Pastoral and Learning needs of pupils.
- Promote high expectations.
- Attend/be punctual (set the standard).
- Promote and provide a positive learning environment.
- Engage and work in partnership with parents.
- Assess effectively (summative/formative) provide feedback to improve learning.
- Report effectively to parents/meeting the required standard to deadline.
- Plan and deliver stimulating/interesting lessons and review the quality to ensure the needs of all pupils are met.
- Engage in CPD, support and develop colleagues, adapt to changing demands of the curriculum.

### **Parents**

- Ensure standards of attendance/punctuality.
- Ensure child is well prepared/equipped.
- Work in partnership with the school/communicate concerns/meet where appropriate with staff to resolve issues of concern.
- Understand and support school policies/procedures.
- Encourage high standards of behaviour, self/mutual respect.
- Check/support child in completing homework/assignments.
- Ensure provision of a study area at home/manage effective study patterns.

## **Relationships – Pastoral Links**

As with all of our work, the Learning and Teaching experiences in St. Mary's are based on positive relationships, mutual and self-respect, honesty, integrity and working with and for others.

The teacher's classroom management must be of a high standard and create the conditions for effective learning and teaching to take place. This includes setting standards for punctuality, how pupils enter and leave the classroom, the common practices for asking /answering questions and other issues related to everyday practice.

Teachers are expected to make full and effective use of Classroom Assistants in the learning experiences of pupils.

The classroom experience should promote a warm, purposeful, respectful relationship between teachers and pupils whereby pupils are encouraged to productively interact and become involved in their learning, particularly in relation to answering and asking questions.

Appropriate praise should be incorporated into the learning experiences in classrooms and should not be based on ability alone but relate also to effort and recognising hard work.

A culture of promoting the need for hard work coupled to a pupil's ability should be evident. Pupils should know how well they are doing and what they need to accomplish in furthering their learning.

## **Learning and Teaching Strategies**

“Teachers use adaptable, flexible teaching strategies that respond to the diversity of the classroom” (ESAGS 2009):

- A wide range of methodologies are utilised which meet the needs of all of the children in their care. These will ensure that pupils are actively involved in their own learning and that there is recognition of the range of learning styles.
- Schemes of Work, Programmes of Study, Lessons, are planned effectively to meet the needs of all pupils and ensure that they are stretched and challenged to improve. These plans should include time to evaluate assessed work and make improvements.
- Lessons are effectively planned and structured with clear learning outcomes, success criteria, planned questioning and plenary elements.
- Lessons should be planned to match learners' abilities and needs.
- Strategies for differentiation will be evident and effectively used and the needs of SEN pupils will be met including the effective use of IEPs. Stretch and challenge for all including the gifted and most able will be evident.
- Pupils benefit regularly from the use of new technologies, using ICT to learn as well as for task completion.

## **The Learning Environment**

Learning environments (the areas within and outside of classrooms) will be enhanced by displays of pupils' current work. This will be used to acknowledge, reward, motivate and inspire all of those involved in the learning experiences.

Seating arrangements and seating plans will be appropriate to the context of learning and must be safe and secure for all involved.

Classroom management of positive learning environments must convey an appropriate work ethic and produce a productive culture of learning.

## **Reflective Practice – Reference to GTCNI Competences**

*Teachers in St. Mary's are self-evaluating, reflective practitioners who engage in informal and ongoing formal reflective practice.*

*Consequently they question:*

- The extent and effectiveness with which they share and agree learning, intentions, success criteria and evaluate the extent to which success has been achieved.
- The extent to which the learning needs of all learners have been met. (Throughout the spectrum of abilities.)
- The quality of relationships in each classroom and the degree to which it is based on mutual respect.
- The extent to which pupils are encouraged to ask questions and are challenged to extend their learning.
- The degree to which each classroom provides a positive learning environment
- The quality of feedback provided to consolidate and promote learning
- The degree to which pupils are encouraged to move beyond the middle ground and take risks in their learning
- The extent to which pupils are actively involved in their lessons and to which there is a focus on ensuring effective differentiation and recognition of learning styles.
- The extent to which own teaching has or can be improved through professional dialogue with others and through observing best practice.