

## **Dalkeith High School Learning and Teaching Policy 2017-18**

In Dalkeith High School, we are committed to offering high **quality learning experiences** that are relevant, challenging and enjoyable. Working to implement the **Curriculum for Excellence** means that what happens in the classroom is only one part of learners' experiences in our school, but is crucial in developing their achievement and attainment. Our school motto, '**Labor Vincit**' (*hard work prevails*) is as relevant as ever in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In Dalkeith High School, learners are encouraged to feel responsible for their own learning across a variety of subjects and activities.

Learning and Teaching takes place in the following curricular areas:

- Expressive Arts (Art, Drama, Music)
- Health and Wellbeing (Home Economics and Physical Education)
- Languages (English and Modern Languages)
- Mathematics
- Religious and Moral Education
- Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)
- Social Subjects (Business Education, Geography, History, Modern Studies)
- Technologies (Computing Science, Design and Manufacture, Engineering Science, Graphic Communication)

Learners should also experience a degree of **personalisation and choice** within their studies, building **skills** in contexts specific to their interests and aptitudes. This may lead to a number of courses and qualifications in subjects beyond those listed above.

In addition to discrete subjects, there are three areas of learning for which **all teachers are responsible**, and which feature in all subject areas:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Health and wellbeing

The following **themes across learning** are also found across a number of subjects:

- Learning for Sustainability (e.g. Horticulture project at Vogrie County Park, Support for Learning work in the garden, Forest Schools programme)
- Global citizenship (e.g. History *Lessons from Auschwitz* project, Geography Fair Trade work, South African exchange)
- Enterprise (e.g. Business Education Christmas decorations, Support for Learning plant sales)

As well as taking part in subject specific work, our learners also engage in **interdisciplinary learning**- learning experiences based on groupings of experiences

and outcomes from within and across curriculum areas. For example, the S2 Creative Dalkeith project saw a number of subject specialists work with a local architecture firm to explore ideas based on potential improvements to Jarnac Court.

Effective interdisciplinary learning:

- Can take the form of individual **one-off projects or longer courses** of study
- Is planned around **clear purposes**
- Is based upon **experiences and outcomes** drawn from different curriculum areas or subjects within them
- Ensures **progression in skills** and in **knowledge and understanding**
- Can provide opportunities for **mixed-stage learning** which is interest-based
- Is **embedded** in the day to day work of the school

### **What do we mean by high quality learning experiences?**

The following types of learning can apply to all subjects and all stages of secondary education, though the focus on each will vary between different curricular areas. Below are just a few examples of day to day learning and teaching approaches:

- *Active learning*: activities which engage learners and challenge thinking using real-life and imaginary situations (e.g. in Drama, using role-play to investigate a variety of social issues; in Physics, building working circuits)
- *Co-operative and collaborative learning*: giving learners the opportunities to think and talk together (e.g. in History, learners working together to gather information from a range of sources; in Music, learners working as a team to create their own radio stations)
- *Creativity*: Developing higher order thinking skills in learners to enable them to apply learning and experiences to a range of different contexts (e.g. in Maths, learners solving real world problems using previously taught theory; in Modern Languages, applying existing knowledge of language structures to new topics)
- *ICT in education*: promoting digital literacy, not as an add-on, but as a new way of thinking about learning (e.g. in PE, using iPads to self-evaluate performance; in RME, learners making videos to support Youth Philanthropy Initiative)
- *Outdoor learning*: using both outdoor environments and those further afield to inspire learners (e.g. in Horticulture, engaging learners in working in the local environment; the S1 and S2 Outdoor Education days)

At Dalkeith High School, we evaluate learning on an ongoing basis. This happens through **learning visits** involving both teachers and the Parent Council, **learning walks** undertaken by the Senior Leadership Team, and through engagement with **Pupil Voice** groups and the **Pupil Leadership Team**. The following ideas were

generated by pupil focus groups of learners from both Broad General Education (S1-S3) and the Senior Phase (S4-S6).

### **What do we mean by excellent learners?**

Excellent learners are those who:

- Are **enthusiastic, motivated** and **engaged** with a strong work ethic
- Have a **mature and responsible attitude** towards learning and **can work independently**
- Know **what** they are learning, **why** they are learning it, and **how** to meet the standards expected of them
- Have regular **discussions with their teachers** about the learning, with conversations that focus both on **current strengths and next steps**
- Are able to talk about the **skills applied in their learning across the curriculum**
- Engage in **self and peer assessment** and are able to give and take on board constructive criticism
- Embody the key learner qualities: **responsible, resourceful, resilient and reflective**

### **What do we mean by excellent teaching?**

Excellent teaching happens when:

- Teachers and learners work together on a **shared goal**, established through **learner conversations**
- The **skills, interests and prior knowledge of learners** are taken into account
- Lessons don't rely too much on 'teacher talk' and let **learners lead the way** whenever possible
- Plans **adapt and respond to** the skills and development needs of all of the learners in each class
- The **pace of learning is appropriate** and tasks are **differentiated** as required
- There are **high aspirations** in place and a belief in the importance of **'growth mindsets'** - every learner has the potential to keep getting better at learning

### **Assessment Practices**

Regular assessment is undertaken in order to:

- Identify current **strengths** and **development needs**
- Identify **next steps** to support **progress**
- Keep **parents/ carers and other involved adults** informed about learners' progress

- Provide a **summary** of what learners have achieved (including through qualifications and awards)

Assessment can take place in many different ways. Teachers assess progress on an ongoing basis as part of daily learning and teaching as well as at the end of topics or units. They might do this by:

- Watching and listening to learners carrying out tasks e.g. debates, group discussions, problem solving activities
- Looking at what learners write and make e.g. posters, booklets
- Considering how the learners ask and answers questions e.g. 'speed dating' tasks, exploring 'What would happen if?'

Assessment is not simply about summative tests. Across all curriculum areas, learners are assessed in what they **make** (e.g. *models in Geography, leaflets in RME*), **say** (e.g. *debates in Modern Studies, group discussions in Maths*) **do** (e.g. *presentations in Drama, problem solving activities in Physics*), and **write** (e.g. *newspaper articles in History, imaginative in-role responses in English*), as is appropriate to the particular context for learning.

Learners should have the chance to demonstrate a degree of **personalisation and choice** as to how they might achieve the intended outcomes.

In order to support learners in achieving their best, teachers share **learning intentions** (e.g. 'We will **understand** how to label the x axis and y axis in a graph to show results'; 'We will **evaluate** the use of persuasive language in a piece of personal writing) and **success criteria** (e.g. 'Your graph must show the factor that will change and the factor that will remain the same on each axis'; 'You will identify at least three examples of persuasive language and be able to comment on their effectiveness') and make sure that learner know what success 'looks like'.

When introducing new learning, our teachers will:

- Discuss with learners what is expected of them
- Clarify the learning intentions and success criteria in 'pupil friendly' language where required and identify the appropriate experiences for achieving these
- Share challenging and realistic expectations

As they make progress in a subject, learners should be able to identify learning intentions and generate success criteria themselves. They will also engage in **self** assessment (e.g. learning logs; traffic lighting) and **peer assessment** (e.g. feedback following a PowerPoint presentation; giving peers two stars and a wish) activities to embed their understanding of standards and expectations.

Learners take part in regular **learner conversations** with their teachers as part of planned activities in the classroom. This means they can identify the progress they

have made and consider their next steps. This supports them in setting targets in their Tracking Reports, which are shared with parents/carers.

Learners need **timely, accurate feedback** about their learning. Assessments will not always have a grade or a mark attached. Research shows that learners are likely to make better progress if they are given comments based feedback to help them improve their work.

Teachers ensure assessment decisions are **consistent** by:

- Working together with the relevant curriculum guidance to plan learning, teaching and assessment
- Establishing the standards and expectations associated with each course at each level
- Using exemplification to provide 'real life' evidence at different levels
- Engaging with colleagues in school, across the local authority and nationally, to share and confirm expectations

Learners should be confident about where they are in their learning journey and are encouraged to discuss their progress with their classroom teacher.

Dalkeith High School's learning, teaching and assessment approaches reflect the principles of Visible Learning, a Midlothian priority across the early years, primary and secondary sectors. Further information on this can be found at [www.visible-learning.org](http://www.visible-learning.org)

We have high aspirations for our learners and aim to work in partnership with parents/carers to both inspire and support our young people.

Further information about learning in Curriculum for Excellence can be found at [www.educationscotland.gov.uk](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk)

The link below provides a useful starting point for parents/carers who wish to find out more about current assessment practices.

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/assessment>