



Teaching and Learning Policy

Introduction

The Shires aims, through successful teaching and learning, to develop all students, enabling them to become lifelong learners and achieve their highest level of independence. We recognise that all students have special skills, abilities and aptitudes and all have an entitlement to access a broad, challenging and appropriate curriculum. Additionally, every student is entitled to experience a variety of teaching and learning styles, thus enabling them to achieve their full potential.

All staff share a responsibility to contribute to the delivery of a broad, challenging and appropriate curriculum. In addition they 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.

As there are many teaching and learning opportunities outside the formal curriculum we strive to provide young people with optimum conditions for achievement and development in all situations. The strength of The Shires' provision lies in the 24 hour curriculum which promotes learning across the care and education settings throughout the students' waking hours.

Aims of Teaching and Learning

At The Shires we aim to:-

- ❖ raise levels of attainment for all students, enabling them to achieve their personal best
- ❖ develop confident and enquiring learners who are able to make informed choices.
- ❖ make learning an enjoyable experience
- ❖ build on the students' natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning
- ❖ promote self-esteem and self confidence
- ❖ involve and stimulate students through active learning
- ❖ set achievable and high expectations for all students and provide appropriate support
- ❖ create a climate of praise and positive reinforcement

Structure of Learning Opportunities in The Shires

All teaching and learning opportunities are underpinned with specific objectives, based on the students' individual needs. In order to increase motivation we carefully personalise activities to match interests and needs. The main core curriculum is the ALL curriculum (Accreditation for Life and Living) which is geared to 14 – 19 year olds, but which maps very easily onto the National Curriculum programmes of study making it also suitable for the Key Stage 3 students. It has a strong focus on life-skills and the development of independent learning skills. It allows all students irrespective of their cognitive ability to achieve their best.

Planning for Learning

Termly planning is written by the teaching team leader and is the result of shared discussion with all teaching staff. Following the initial mind-mapping exercise which precedes all termly planning, the teaching team manager produces a list of activities under the 10 ALL curriculum headings of:

- ❖ communication
- ❖ numeracy
- ❖ ICT/computing
- ❖ world of work
- ❖ leisure
- ❖ creative arts
- ❖ personal skills
- ❖ home management
- ❖ community
- ❖ environment

This stage of the planning is very important as care staff access it when planning their evening and weekend activities to promote the notion of the 24 hour curriculum and to ensure that there is continuity in students' learning.

The activity lists are then mapped onto a weekly planning grid. At this stage activities are not differentiated. In addition to planning weekly activities, the teaching manager also needs to ensure that at this stage 'books of the week' and 'events of the week' are identified. The planning for events of the week ensures that key national and international 'happenings' are not missed.

The final stage of planning is carried out by teaching staff. This stage is individual lesson/activity planning. At this point activities must be differentiated for individual students. In some cases this will mean that there are four levels of learning for each activity. Differentiation is informed by the differentiation sheets, IEPs, ongoing assessment and therapeutic input. All activities are assessed at the end of each day and teaching staff should note the areas students achieve and those where more input is required.

In summary, teachers will:-

- ❖ be prepared for each session
- ❖ be flexible in terms of the organisation of the classroom and groupings
- ❖ plan to provide students with inclusive, meaningful, purposeful tasks that promote independence and self-esteem
- ❖ focus on the development of key skills of communication, social awareness and life skills
- ❖ use ICT wherever possible to support and promote effective learning
- ❖ take account of students' individual interests
- ❖ enable students to learn in a variety of ways
- ❖ produce teaching materials which meet all students' needs and which are of high quality
- ❖ use assessment information to ensure that learning builds on previous knowledge, understanding and skills
- ❖ use resources in such a way to encourage students to become more independent learners
- ❖ evaluate the impact of teaching at regular intervals
- ❖ share all aspects of the teaching and learning process with everyone involved, acknowledging the importance of a team approach in breaking down barriers to learning and promoting all strands of the curriculum
- ❖ maintain purposeful and informative planning, record-keeping and assessment documents, in line with the school's record-keeping and assessment policy statement

Quality of teaching

The Shires has the following expectations that all teaching will:-

- ❖ enable students to make good progress and show good attitudes to their work
- ❖ prepare and plan activities that enable students to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding
- ❖ reflect good levels of teacher subject knowledge
- ❖ engage students and encourage them to work independently
- ❖ manage students' behaviour positively using the agreed approaches
- ❖ challenge all students to achieve their best
- ❖ be based on a good knowledge of the students' needs using ongoing assessment information
- ❖ be tailored to the range of students' needs and to enable success
- ❖ be delivered in a professional manner by the teaching staff
- ❖ reflect good classroom practice

Differentiation

Teachers will differentiate the curriculum by:-

- ❖ task
- ❖ outcome
- ❖ level of adult support required

Record-keeping and assessment

Regular assessments are made of students' work in order to establish the level of attainment, and to inform future planning. Record-keeping and assessment procedures are defined in the Assessment Recording and Reporting Policy.

All students have an individual record of achievement which is an A3 portfolio which showcases a range of work across a one year time period. This provides an excellent record of students' progress and achievement and builds their self-esteem. It also provides an excellent point of reference for parents and external agencies and demonstrates the wide range of learning experiences. Teaching staff must ensure that there is at least one entry per month in these records so that over the year a comprehensive picture of learning emerges.

Monitoring and evaluation

Students' work is monitored and moderated termly in each of the core curriculum areas by the teaching staff. Teaching staff attend moderation meetings as required for the ALL curriculum and for B Squared which is The Shires' main system of tracking of progress.

Lesson observations, both formal and informal, are carried out at appropriate intervals by the Principal, the Head of School, Principals of other Acorn schools, Acorn Advisors, and by teaching peers. Lesson observations are shared with staff and the outcomes discussed so that ongoing progress and development can be achieved.

Teachers are responsible for ensuring that work by students for AQA awards is well kept and organised so that awards can be issued in a timely manner. Where new awards need writing teachers must liaise with the school's AQA co-ordinator.

Classroom Management and Organisation

The Shires organises class groups to meet the individual and collective needs of students and also the demands of different activities. Because activities are differentiated for students at an individual level, groupings of students tend to be informed largely by the students' personalities and preferences. For example, class groups would not usually contain a mix of students who like working in a quiet environment with those who make a lot of noise. For the purpose of formal teaching and learning students may be organised in the following ways:-

- ❖ whole class groups
- ❖ small groups
- ❖ one to one teaching
- ❖ pairs

The classrooms are organised to facilitate learning and the development of independence. This may require flexibility in the organisation of furniture and learning environment to suit individuals.

Resources

Each teaching space is equipped with a good range of resources to enable effective teaching and learning. All classrooms have an interactive whiteboard and teaching staff should make the best possible use of this key resource to support teaching and learning. Students will be taught how to use appropriate resources correctly and safely, with care and respect, and with regard for Health and Safety and eco-issues. Care will be taken to ensure that resources reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of society, and that all students have equality of access.

Support for Learning

Teachers will:-

- ❖ ensure that daily schedules are in use at all times and that individual schedules reflect the needs of individual students
- ❖ vary their teaching styles for different topics and at different times
- ❖ always give clear and simple instructions
- ❖ use augmented communication, including BSL and GoTalk boards and apps and Proloquo2Go to support teaching and learning
- ❖ build opportunities for reinforcement and consolidation into units of work
- ❖ build in opportunities for one-to-one interaction
- ❖ set achievable short-term targets and make clear the criteria for success
- ❖ make clear to students how they can improve
- ❖ acknowledge, reward and celebrate achievement
- ❖ teach the technical vocabulary linked to each subject

- ❖ promote the use of new and constantly changing technologies that increase and enhance the learning opportunities of students with learning difficulties
- ❖ encourage students to take an increasing responsibility for their rate of progress in order to promote active learning and increase engagement
- ❖ ensure effective deployment of support staff within the curriculum to support the flexible learning needs of individual students
- ❖ undertake professional development through training and accept support from colleagues in order to ensure a high level of teaching, learning and support expertise
- ❖ maintain records of achievement for each student

Use of Support Staff

Teachers are responsible for the effective deployment of other staff within their lessons to support learning.

Support staff should:-

- ❖ read and use the teachers' long and short term planning to understand and implement the structure of learning for the whole class and each student and their role in supporting this
- ❖ be focussed on the learning outcomes for young people
- ❖ consult with the teacher to prepare materials and resources to support learning as directed; ensure resources are well looked after and kept tidy
- ❖ conduct themselves as good learning role models for the young people
- ❖ support good behaviour conducive to learning and intervene as required to ensure good order and discipline
- ❖ support young people with their learning in a way that promotes and supports their independence

Teachers should:-

- ❖ ensure their planning is made available and used by support staff
- ❖ ensure support staff are clear in their roles within lessons
- ❖ use support staff as a resources for teaching and learning for the whole class, engaging with them to promote a variety of teaching and learning styles, not just individual support for young people
- ❖ ensure support staff are engaged in assessment for learning where appropriate

Learning Styles

In developing their learning, students need to: -

- ❖ have explicit learning expectations delivered in a way that reflects their preferred learning style – for example, the use of symbols, using visual and tactile objects etc.
- ❖ have comprehensive explanations of key ideas
- ❖ understand the relevance and context of their learning
- ❖ be set demanding but realistic short-term targets

Performance Management (Appraisal)

The quality of teaching and learning is a criteria within teachers' annual performance management (appraisal). Teachers should expect to agree with their line manager objectives which will impact positively on the quality of their teaching and the students' learning. Where there are targets that have resource implications, these will be shared with senior managers and included within the School Improvement Plan – for example, improved use of laptops for students to complete work tasks. Teachers are encouraged to participate in activities designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning – these might include:-

- ❖ lesson observations by line manager/peers
- ❖ learning walks
- ❖ sharing of students' work for the purpose of moderation
- ❖ sharing of long term, medium term and short term planning

Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it meet the needs of all learners.