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. Our school motto, *'Labor Vincit' (hard work prevails)* is as relevant now as when the school opened in 1914.

In Dalkeith High School, we aim to develop key learner qualities through our curriculum. We want our young people to be responsible, resourceful, resilient and reflective learners.

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 engagement with 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

What do lessons at Dalkeith High School look like?

The following features form part of **all** lessons at DHS:

- **Positive relationships:** These are crucial to learner success and supported by a calm, orderly and restorative learning environment.
- **Starter activities:** In order to maximise time spent learning, learners are expected to be on task promptly at the beginning of each lesson.
- **Learning intentions:** These outline what learning is expected to take place and link clearly to tasks and activities in the class.
- **Success criteria:** Learners can measure their progress against these and use them to evaluate their learning.

- **Effective questioning:** Questions can be used to check understanding, inspire discussion and promote high order thinking skills.
- **Feedback:** Ongoing dialogue between the teacher and the learner is crucial for continuous progress. In some lessons, learners will also provide feedback to each other.
- **Pace, challenge and support:** Differentiation is in place as required to ensure that all learners are able to make progress.
- **Plenary activities:** These help to consolidate the learning that has taken place in the lesson.

In addition to this, the following aspects of learning and teaching also feature:

- **Cooperative and collaborative learning:** Learners are given 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).
- **Active learning:** These experiences 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).
- **Higher order thinking skills:** Learners use critical, logical, reflective, creative and metacognitive (thinking about thinking) skills, activated when they encounter unfamiliar problems, uncertainties and questions (e.g. moral dilemmas in RME, identifying artists' intentions in Art and Design).
- **Employability skills:** Transferable skills are developed that will be useful beyond school, such as teamwork, problem solving, communication, and leadership (e.g. working in a team to develop choreography in Dance; developing a design brief in CDT).
- **Digital literacy:** ICT is used to encourage new ways to approach learning (e.g. in PE, using iPads to self-evaluate performance; in Music Technology developing use of foley sounds).
- **Outdoor learning:** Outdoor environments around school and those further afield are explored to inspire learners (e.g. in Horticulture, in working in the school garden; the S1 and S2 Outdoor Education days).
- **Co-created learning intention and success criteria:** Along with the class teacher, pupils are able to agree on the learning they would like to engage in, and on the methods they will use to check their progress
- **Peer and self assessment:** Based on a shared understanding of the learning intentions and success criteria, learners are able to assess their own work and that of their classmates to identify strengths and next steps

Interdisciplinary learning

As well as taking part in subject specific work, our learners also engage in **interdisciplinary learning**; learning experiences which focus on skills development and the links between different subjects. Recent examples include:

- The annual Creative Dalkeith project involves a number of subject specialists working with a local architecture firm to explore ideas based on potential improvements to the local built environment.
- Classes in Maths and Home Economics focus on accurate use of weights and measures in recipes
- New for this session, the S1 State of Emergency project links all departments to exploring a simulated international disaster

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

- **Learning for Sustainability** (e.g. Horticulture project at Vogrie County Park; Forest Schools programme.)
- **Global citizenship** (e.g. History *Lessons from Auschwitz* project; South African exchange; engagement with Fair Trade.)
- **Enterprise** (e.g. Business Education sale of Christmas products; Support for Learning plant sales.)

How do we know learning and teaching is successful?

At DHS, we evaluate learning and teaching on an ongoing basis. This happens through:

- **Learning visits** involving every member of teaching staff, and representatives from the Parent Council.
- **Learning walks** undertaken by the Senior Leadership Team, who visit every subject department.
- Engagement with **Pupil Voice** groups and the **Pupil Leadership Team** to discuss learners' experiences.
- **Reflection and self-evaluation** within subjects and faculties.
- Effective use of **assessment** data.

How does assessment support learning?

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).

What does assessment at Dalkeith High School look like?

Assessment at DHS takes 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, and problem solving activities.
- Looking at what learners **write and make** e.g. posters, booklets, and mind maps.
- Considering how the learners ask and answers **questions** e.g. 'speed dating' tasks; exploring 'What would happen if?'; encouraging learners to questions each other

Assessment is not simply about summative tests. Across all curriculum areas, learners are assessed as is appropriate 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, experiments in Chemistry)
- **Write** (e.g. newspaper articles in History, imaginative in-role responses in English

Where appropriate, learners have the chance to demonstrate a degree of **personalisation and choice** as to how they might achieve the intended outcomes and evidence their progress in learning.

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'.

How do we help ensure success in assessments?

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

At key points, learners 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.

We aim to ensure that all learners are confident about where they are in their learning journey and able discuss their progress with their classroom teacher.

How do teachers ensure assessment data is accurate?

- **Understanding** with the relevant curriculum guidance to plan learning, teaching and assessment in a way that suits different types of learner
- **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

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

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

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