

St. Mary's R.C. High School: Teaching and Learning Policy

AIMS

In the classroom:

- Make teaching & learning an enjoyable experience
- Build on natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning
- Promote high self-esteem and a sense of responsibility
- Involve and stimulate pupils through active learning
- Set achievable and high expectations for all pupils and provide appropriate support
- Develop partnerships between pupils/teachers, pupils/pupils
- Provide pupils with an appropriate curriculum which meets their needs and develops their abilities
- Create a climate of praise and positive reinforcement

In the whole school:

- Evaluate the reasons for pupil success and analyse and share the teaching process, the support processes or management structures enabling this to happen
- Evaluate the reasons for pupil failure and take action where the teaching process, the support processes or management structures cause pupils to experience failure
- Develop partnerships between teachers/teachers, teachers/parents, pupils/parents, and schools and their local communities
- Develop professional skills of teachers through mutual support and staff development working with colleagues within and beyond the school
- Promote opportunities for reflective thinking by teachers
- Develop teachers' understanding of each subjects' place in the curriculum and the demands placed upon pupils by them
- Encourage and support continuous and collaborative evaluation of the teaching process
- Develop school and classroom environments which are attractive, friendly and stimulate learning
- Make available information and communication technologies to all teachers and pupils for regular and appropriate use

Promote the role of support services such as teaching assistants, departmental and school leadership to enhance the teaching and learning environment of the school in all the above ways.

Rationale

The principal function of the school is to promote a positive attitude to learning. It is the view of staff and pupils in this school that this can best be effected by developing an ethos of achievement. For the development of such an ethos, certain prerequisites are essential and both staff and pupils have a responsibility to:-

- listen
- respect different individuals' opinions/needs/abilities
- challenge prejudiced attitudes to achievement
- have high expectation of themselves and others
- and persevere with work and face difficulties positively
- A number of particular classroom practices will have a positive effect on pupils' learning and in their behaviour.

These classroom practices can be grouped under the following headings:-

- Support for Learning
- Planning for Learning
- Managing Behaviour

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

NEEDS OF PUPILS, TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Needs of Pupils

- To work with a friendly, approachable, knowledgeable adult
- Knowledge of what they are supposed to be learning
- Discussions and explanations focused on the activity, problem or task in which they are engaged
- Identification of why they have problems in understanding or achieving something
- Reassurance that their knowledge and skills are developing steadily – to be shown they are being successful
- To receive respect and to be part of a caring community
- To receive appropriate support and guidance in course choice and in learning itself
- To work in an atmosphere where to be wrong is not seen as failure

Teachers' experience and educational research shows that quality in learning occurs when pupils experience well-structured courses.

In preparation for learning, pupils need:-

- to know what is to be learned and to be motivated by it
- to have connections made with what they already know, have done and are about to do
- to know the stages, orders and processes of the learning
- to have support in the acquisition of prerequisite knowledge and skills

In developing their learning, pupils need:-

- to have comprehensive explanations of key ideas
- to have misunderstandings and misconceptions identified and rectified
- to have a variety of work set at appropriate levels and to see its relevance
- to be given regular homework and to have it marked and returned promptly
- to be set demanding but realistic short-term targets
- to be given support in self-pacing and be taught how to persevere
- to be given models or examples to help them understand and develop their own learning

In consolidating their learning, pupils need:-

- to be given strategies for taking notes, highlighting key points, revising and tackling examination questions (internal and external) – developing independent learning
- to have access to appropriate learning resources at school and at home
- time to practice, reiterate and revise learning
- time for individual, class and group feedback.

Needs of Teachers

The need to:-

- to be shown respect
- have their workload concerns taken seriously and controlled
- be able to co-operate and work collaboratively
- work with appropriate class sizes
- have a clear understanding of the factors which influence teaching and learning
- examine current practice and develop teaching
- have support and time for reflection in a non-threatening atmosphere
- be consulted and involved in developments
- pay attention to and support whole school needs and policies
- be well informed of developments in their subjects
- be supported by effective service from guidance, learning support, senior leadership and administrative staff
- have effective management of discipline, curriculum, subject choices, timetable, whole school administrative procedures, accommodation, resources and reporting.

Teachers need to meet pupils' needs by:-

- being informed and take account of external factors which can affect their pupils' learning
- creating a good working atmosphere for all in the classroom
- setting high and achievable expectations for all pupils
- taking account of individual needs and previous learning
- planning work so that each pupil has the best opportunity to progress
- giving pupils responsibility and help them to develop their sense of responsibility
- seeking and valuing pupils opinions
- being fair and consistent
- having enthusiasm, patience, tolerance, understanding, empathy, sympathy
- having skills of planning, organising, communication.

Needs of Parents

Parents need to be actively involved in the process of supporting their children's learning through being:-

- made to feel welcome in the school
- respected and having their concerns listened to and acted upon
- given advice about how and when to support their child
- well-informed about their children's progress, their needs and how they are being met
- informed about homework which is clear and has a specific purpose
- given a timetable of important dates (for folios and investigations, etc.)
- informed of dates for tests and exams
- given clear outlines of course demands
- informed and consulted about educational developments and asked for their opinions.

APPENDIX 2
CLASSROOM PRACTICES
MANAGING LEARNING & TEACHING

Support for Learning

- Use Learning Support productively and in a variety of ways
- Vary your teaching styles – for different topics and at different times
- Always give clear instructions
- Build opportunities for reinforcement and consolidation into units of work
- Set achievable short-term target and make clear the criteria for success
- Make clear to pupils how they can improve
- Acknowledge and reward achievement
- Teach the technical vocabulary of the subject
- Give prompt positive feedback to homework.

Planning for Learning:

- Be prepared for each class
- Make clear to pupils the outline of the course, the unit content and the homework to be undertaken.
- Produce teaching materials which meet pupils' needs
- Take account of prior knowledge
- Match homework and assessment to learning outcomes of syllabus
- Give plenty of warning of assessments
- Evaluate teaching and course content regularly.

Considering Individual Learning Needs

- Take account of pupils' interests
- Allow pupils to learn in a variety of ways
- Involve pupils in their own learning
- Offer opportunities where pupils can be open about problems

Managing Behaviour:

- Set clear ground rules for behaviour in class
- Establish a clear system of rewards and sanctions
- Give praise for improvements and for achievement
- Be consistent
- Always deal with disruptive pupils

Wider Implications

- Recognise all types of achievement
- Involve parents in ensuring improvement and achievement is acknowledged
- Ensure equality of provision for all
- Give equal status to all subjects
- Take learning and teaching principles into account when timetabling
- Take account of staff development needs regarding learning and teaching.

The following pages contain extensions to the 'Teaching and Learning' policy by outline future strategies currently under trial at school.

Addenda for near future consideration

Implications of Self Determination Theories

Possible extension to the Teaching and Learning Policy

- When teachers provide pupils with a rationale for what they are learning that will help the pupils to understand for themselves the value of the learning.
- If teachers help pupils to see the long-term relevance to them in terms of intrinsic goals such as personal growth, meaningful relationships with others, becoming more healthy and fit, or contributing to their community, they are likely to become more engaged with the learning activities and as a consequence to understand the material more fully.
- Teachers do not need to shape the type of goals they provide to the pupils' personal goal orientations. It appears that all pupils, regardless of whether they attach higher importance to extrinsic goals or to intrinsic goals, benefit from having teachers explain the intrinsic value of the goal of the learning activities.
- Teachers would do well to support the autonomy of the pupils rather than having a controlling style in relating to the pupils.

- It is important to understand the pupils' perspective, encouraging them to solve the problems they encounter, supporting them when they initiate something for themselves, helping them experiment, and providing as much choice as possible about what to do and how to do it.
- When teachers support the autonomy of pupils in the ways just specified, their promotion of long-term intrinsic learning goals will have more positive effects on the pupils' motivation, learning, and achievement.
- Even a very brief mention of the relation of learning tasks to intrinsic goal tends to be beneficial to the pupils' learning. In addition, relatively small changes in being more supportive of autonomy (e.g., 'You may try to do your best') rather than in controlling (e.g., 'You should try to do you best) also appear to have a relatively profound effect on pupils' learning, performance, and persistence.

A pattern emerges that in order to motivate more pupils to achieve better than it is vital that their goals emerge from within themselves and that they feel some sort of control over them. Of course there are targets set by teachers (extrinsic goals) but if they are explained and pupils perceive them as worthwhile intrinsic goals which will contribute to their 'personal growth, meaningful relationships with others, healthy... etc...' there is a much increased probability of success and well being for the child.

After extensive research concerning materialism and well being Dr Tim Kasser identified four identified needs:

- To feel safe and secure
- To feel competent
- To feel connected to others
- To feel autonomously and authentically engaged in their work and play

Peoples' sense of well-being increases when these are met and hence their performance will as well.

We can see that if the proposed extension to the 'Teaching and Learning' policy is made then in various ways the needs of pupils can be met and hence their well-being will increase..

For more information about "Self Determination Theory" (Tim Kasser) please refer to the papers:

"However did we get to where we are": Clive Lambert, 13,14, (2012)

"Intrinsic versus Extrinsic Goal Contents in Self Determination Theory: Another Look at the Quality of Self Determination", Marteen Vansteenkiste,

Willy Lens, Edward L. Deci; Educational Psychologist 41(1), 19- 31, (2006)

Self-theories – Motivation and Development

Praise

What should praise sound like?

Praising pupils for their intelligence does not provide them with motivation or resilience but a fixed mindset with all the vulnerabilities described previously. Eventually they come across something that they cannot do and because they are in the 'fixed' mindset of believing that they are intelligent (because that is what they have been told) they have not developed the strategies or resilience to 'work at' the problem. Often these pupils give up, make excuses or even cheat. Sometimes even pretend that they could have done it but couldn't be bothered!

Praise for effort or 'process' (praise for 'process' would mean for engagement, perseverance, strategies, improvement and the like) fosters hardy motivation. By praising in this way we are telling the pupils what they have done in order to be successful and what they need to be successful in the future.

This may sound familiar in the context of 'Assessment for Learning'. However the research provides an irresistible rationale for praising in a very specific and measured way in order to secure maximum benefit for the pupils. The crucial thing is to ensure that by praising their effort and strategies we are building their capacity in the future to cope with challenges that are not solely confined to the classroom.

Examples of process praise might be:

- *You really studied for your English test, and your improvement shows it. You read the material over several times, outlined it, and tested yourself on it. That really worked!*
- *I like the way you tried all kinds of strategies on that maths problem until you finally got it.*
- *It was a long, hard assignment, but you stuck to it and got it done. You stayed at your desk, kept up your concentration, and kept working. That's great!*
- *I like the fact that you want to take on that challenging project for your technology class. It will take a lot of work—doing the research, designing the machine, buying the parts and building it. You're going to learn a lot of really interesting and useful things.*

- *You have put a lot of thought into that piece of work and it shows by how you presented your arguments.*
- *That experiment kept going wrong, but you sought help and persisted with it until you got the results. Well done.*
- *I can see that you have trained hard for this competition, you may not win but you will get a lot of experience by playing against others.*
- *Learning a new language can be hard but you have the persistence to learn the 'rules' and the vocabulary.*
- *You are speaking those French sentences so well, I can see that you have been practicing.*

The important principle is to ensure that you praise them for their effort or 'process' (praise for 'process' would mean for engagement, perseverance, strategies, improvement and the like). By praising in this way we are telling the pupils what they have done in order to be successful and what they need to be successful in the future. Then you can, if appropriate, tell them what standard they are working at and what they can do to work towards improving on that standard.

Students that seem to get high marks without effort

"What about a student who gets an A without trying? I would say, 'All right, that was too easy for you. Let's do something more challenging that you can learn from.' We don't want to make something done quickly and easily the basis for our admiration."

What about 'failure'?

“What about a student who works hard and doesn't do well? I would say, ‘I liked the effort you put in. Let's work together some more and find out what you don't understand.’ Process praise keeps students focused, not on something called ability that they may or may not have and that magically creates success or failure, but on processes they can all engage in to learn.” Dweck (2008)

It is actually all right for a child to feel bad about a result or a problem, or a misunderstanding. How is a child going to learn resilience if we protect them from every uncomfortable or challenging situation they may encounter?

We can teach the child to learn ways to overcome difficulties and build their future capability to deal with what life throws at them.

I would add that it is important the teachers themselves do not adopt a fixed mindset. This can have the effect of maintaining the status quo, if a teacher believes a child is bright they might expect them to be at the top regardless of effort and equally for those that struggle they might believe that is always where they will be Teachers must guard against a self-fulfilling prophecy. It has been shown that when teachers hold a growth mindset many pupils who start out lower in the class can blossom during the year and become high achievers.

Guidelines for teachers and all those involved with children

- Every word and action from us to a child sends a message. Listen to what we say and tune into the message we give. Are we saying, ***'You have permanent traits and I am judging them.'*** or ***'you are a developing person and I am interested in you?'***
- Remember that praising children's intelligence or talent, tempting as it is sends out a fixed-mindset message. It makes their confidence and motivation more fragile. **Focus on the processes they used – their strategies, effort or choices.** Practice working the process praise into your conversations with children.
- Watch and listen to yourself very carefully when a child messes up. **Remember that constructive criticism is feedback that helps the child understand how to fix something.** It is not feedback that labels or excuses the child.
- Lowering standards does not raise pupils' self esteem. But neither does raising standards without giving pupils ways of reaching them. **Try giving pupils topics in a growth framework and giving them process feedback.**
- Do you think of our slower pupils as children who will never be able to learn well? Do they consider themselves dumb? Try to work out what they don't understand and what learning strategies they don't have. **Great teachers believe in the growth of talent and intellect, and are fascinated by the process of learning.**
- When setting targets and goals **give something they can work towards.** Having innate talent is not a goal. Expanding skills and knowledge is.

The complete paper is 'Self theories, praise and development', Clive Lambert, (2012) and is based on the work of Professor Carol Dweck and is outlined in her popular text, 'Mindset', on which much of the above is based.