



ST MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL, NEWRY

Learning and Teaching Policy

Revised: November 2024

“Our vision is of schools as vibrant, self-improving, well governed and effectively led communities of good practice, focusing not on institutions but on meeting the needs and aspirations of all pupils through high quality learning, recognizing the centrality of the teacher”.

Every School A Good School – April 2009

Rationale

In St. Mary's the quality of teaching enables all pupils to become actively engaged in their own learning and motivates them to reach their full academic and creative potential. The curriculum and pastoral structures together with the variety of quality learning opportunities and teaching methods allows students to engage fully with their own learning, helping them to reach the high standards of attainment.

The school fully embraces collaborative, high quality personalised learning as outlined in its mission statement:

“We will work in collaboration with other educational institutions and in partnership with parents and students to maximize academic and creative potential of students, enabling them to achieve the highest educational standards, thereby enriching their lives, the community and the economy”.

Teaching is the art of guiding students towards the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding. Learning is the acquisition and retention of new knowledge, skills or understanding.

Aims

- As a Rights Respecting School we will foster a child centred, supportive learning environment where all pupils are treated with equality and fairness;
- Provide a relevant curriculum, based on the key principles of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, the Entitlement Framework and reflects latest Labour Market Trends;
- Provide students with learning opportunities suited to their needs and abilities;
- Develop the Cross Curricular Skills of Literacy, Numeracy and ICT skills across curriculum areas;
- Develop Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities through a variety of learning experiences within individual subjects;
- Maximize the academic and creative potential of students by challenging them to become independent learners, embracing lifelong learning;

- Provide additional support to pupils with Special Educational Needs, Newcomer Pupils and ensure appropriate Access Arrangements are provided when necessary;
- Provide students with opportunities to develop competence and confidence in e-learning;
- Give students opportunities to learn about factors which impact on learning e.g. learning styles, study skills, healthy lifestyles and to make connections in their learning, transferring their knowledge and skills;
- Prepare students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, equipping them with the necessary skills to manage their career development including the provision of work based learning;
- Foster the personal and social development of students as responsible members of society including the fostering of positive attitudes and dispositions;
- Support students to take risks with their learning and develop self-resilience;
- Collaborate with other schools and learning providers to improve learning and extend curriculum provisions;
- Use assessments and other data to inform learning and teaching, raising pupil engagement and attainment;
- Empower pupils to become fully engaged in their own learning and progression through the use of a variety of assessment for learning strategies;
- Create a reflective, self evaluative climate for learning committed to raising attainment for all pupils;
- Have continuously high expectations of students to achieve their full potential;
- Enrich learning opportunities through links with industry and community groups;
- Allow students to develop their social, enterprise and leadership skills through involvement in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and student voice groups.

Objectives

- Students will have access to a wide range of learning activities which meets their needs, interests, abilities and aptitudes;
- Learners will work in an attractive, well-resourced, supportive and safe learning environment where they are encouraged to reach their full potential in all aspects of their personal and academic development;
- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, both in the classroom and at home, including setting personal goals and targets within a self-evaluating culture;
- Pupils are able to voice their opinions, take risks in their learning, take responsibility for their own work, to feel valued and are encouraged to do their best;
- Pupils know that their teachers are committed and enthusiastic to improving learning and have realistic expectations of what they can achieve;
- The pastoral system encourage self-discipline and responsible behavior;
- Pupils receive clear guidance, written and verbal on the quality of their work and effort and have the opportunity to discuss and improve their achievements;

- Assessment is an integral part of planning, learning and teaching. Teachers use varied forms of assessment which have a clearly identified purpose and which are shared with and understood by pupils;
- Assessments used by teachers' rewards student's effort/achievements but also encourages them to reflect and improve upon current performance.

Key Roles -

Senior Leadership Team

- Learning and teaching is integral elements in the School Development Plan;
- There is a broad and balanced curriculum, consistent and progressive in line with the Northern Ireland Curriculum, Entitlement Framework and LMI;
- To ensure the provision of varied vocational and academic experiences at each key stage.
- Teachers are encouraged to develop leadership and management skills and acquire necessary knowledge through ongoing Continued Professional Development together with the sharing of good practice within and between schools;
- The Senior Leadership Team employ a range of methods in a systematic process of monitoring, evaluating and reviewing all practices of learning and teaching;
- The Senior Leadership Team use assessment and other data, both internal and external to set targets to raise attainment;

Heads of Department

- Create and manage an effective, safe and well resourced learning environment;
- Monitor and evaluate the learning and teaching within their department and celebrate achievements;
- Monitor the progress of students and set appropriate targets for improvement;
- Actively encourage and promote extra-curricular activities;
- Review and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching by monitoring performance in terms of lesson preparation, methodology, classroom management, assessment procedures, classroom observation and analysis of examination results;
- Lead their department in implementing new programmes of study, approaches and initiatives in line with curriculum developments and to meet the changing needs of students and to encourage their department members to share examples of good practice;
- Lead the process of evaluation and target setting for improvement in learning and teaching within their department;
- Implement all statutory and school requirements on assessment, marking, recording, reporting and homework;
- Coordinate appropriate quality assurance procedures, in line with school requirements;
- Ensure Schemes of Learning are revised regularly and learning resources are relevant and high quality;
- Ensure extra provisions for pupils with SEN and Newcomer are in place and effective utilization of classroom assistants;
- To support and offer encouragement to newly qualified teachers;

- To look for opportunities to promote and embed careers opportunities within their subject

Class Teachers

- Keep up-to-date with current educational developments and initiatives availing of all opportunities for professional development;
- Create a purposeful, supportive and safe learning environment where expectations are realistically high and appropriate teaching approaches are used to promote success;
- Create a child-centered, high-quality learning environment that supports and encourages all pupils to achieve their full potential, ensuring that all students are treated with equality and fairness.
- Motivate students and encourage them to become involved in their own learning, valuing their contribution, using praise appropriately;
- Share learning intentions and success criteria with students encouraging them to take ownership for their own learning;
- Teachers give students clear guidance both written and verbal on the quality of their work and effort highlighting areas and strategies for improvement;
- Teachers make use of a wide range of teaching strategies which match the identified educational needs of pupils including those with Special Educational Needs and Newcomer;
- Students are given opportunities to develop their competence and confidence in e-learning together with developing independent study skills;
- Students are encouraged to develop the Cross Curricular Skills together with the range of Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities;
- Assessment is an integral part of planning, learning and teaching. Teachers use varied forms of assessment which have a clearly identified purpose and which are shared with and understood by pupils;
- Assessment is used by teachers to reward student's effort/achievements but also encourages them to reflect and improve upon current performance.
- Use a variety of data, knowledge of pupil attainment levels to engage in informed planning and delivery of the curriculum with due regard to pupils with special educational needs.

Role of Parent/Guardian

- Parents ensure their daughters good attendance at school and engage in strong communication regarding any absences from school;
- Parents value the strong partnership between home and school as we work together to provide quality Catholic Education for pupils;
- Parents support school policies and procedures and recognise their pivotal role in guiding their children through their school career;
- Parents maintain strong pastoral and academic links with teachers encouraging their daughters to avail of all the academic and extra curricular opportunities available to them in school;
- Parents promote a positive attitude to school in their daughter and encourage her to participate actively and do their best;

- Develop strong and supportive links between home and school by checking and signing their daughter's diary each week and though attendance at:
 - Induction Seminars
 - Parent Teacher Meetings
 - Prayer Services
 - Presentation Evenings
 - Pupil Progress Meetings
 - Careers Meetings/Seminars
- Create a supportive environment that is conducive to home study;
- Ensuring all homework is completed to a high standard, coursework deadlines are met and adequate time is spent revising for examinations both internal and external. Parents should also inform the school if there are any problems that may prevent these from happening.

Role of Pupil

- Value their education through good attendance and punctuality at school, providing notes to explain any absence to their form teachers on return to school;
- Come to all classes prepared for learning with the necessary books and equipment;
- Complete all homework to a high standard;
- Complete all coursework and portfolio assignments to a high standard by the set date;
- Listen attentively in class, actively participating in all activities;
- Respect the rights of other pupils by valuing their opinions and views;
- Record all homework and study tasks into their homework diary;
- Ensure their books are kept to a high standard;
- List all examinations into their homework diary and spend sufficient time revising;
- Respect the school environment, its property and the property of all individuals within the school;
- Pupils must take pride in their appearance and wear the correct school uniform at all times;
- Show respect to their teachers, visitors to the school and all school employees;

Implementation:

A wide range of strategies are used by teachers, these are in line with the nature of their own subject and the ability level of the pupils. The range of strategies used engages students to become actively involved in their own learning and motivates them to reach their full potential within a differentiated, inclusive learning environment.

At Keys Stage 3 all pupils follow the Northern Ireland Curriculum, studying in total 17 subjects. Pupils are taught in mixed ability classes except for the following subjects:

Year 8 – Mathematics (one SEN English class)

Year 9 – English and Mathematics

Year 10 – English, Mathematics and Science

In Key Stage 4 and Post 16, pupils select from a range of subjects, allowing them to choose a programme of study that best matches their interests, ability levels and career aspirations.

The range of teaching strategies include:

- Whole class teaching/demonstrations
- Group work
- Reading
- Discussions
- Presentations
- Independent and group research
- Homework
- Problem solving tasks
- Written tasks eg essays, comprehensions
- Completion of past paper questions
- Preparation for and completion of controlled assessments
- Practical tasks eg performances
- Learning/study skills tasks
- Peer and self-assessment tasks
- Work based learning/ industry visits/guest speakers
- Project tasks
- ICT tasks
- Project work
- ICT tasks
- Controlled Assessments

Assessment:

Assessment is an integral aspect of learning and teaching in St Mary's. It supports each pupil in their own learning, empowering them to achieve their full academic and creative potential. Effective assessment engages pupils in the learning process, develops their self-esteem and sense of personal responsibility. Assessment data is essential to whole school planning and review, creating a child centred learning environment based on individual learning and high expectations of all.

Homework:

Homework is an integral part of effective learning and teaching, it consolidates work which has been undertaken in class and helps to reinforce and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Homework encourages pupils to think and learn independently, developing important self-management skills.

Associated Whole School Policies:

This policy is set within the broader school context of Curriculum and as such should be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Assessment and Marking Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Homework Policy
- SEN Policy
- Literacy Policy
- Numeracy Policy
- ICT Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Examinations Policy
- Controlled Assessment Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Parental Engagement Policy
- Inclusion Policy

All policies are available from the school website www.stmarysnewry.com.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review:

The Vice Principal, Mr. Fitzpatrick is responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the Learning and Teaching Policy. The quality of learning and teaching within the school will be monitored and evaluated through:

- Completion of schemes of learning by Heads of Department
- Classroom observations including PRSD, Trusted Colleague
- Collegial Book monitoring
- Departmental and Senior Management Meetings
- Exam analysis and Target Setting
- Attendance at relevant in-service meetings
- Attendance at relevant subject specific and curriculum courses

Signed by Chair of Governors: _____

Date: _____

Signed by Principal: _____

Date: _____

Date of Review: __November 2027_____