



Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Policy

The Cherwell School

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Curriculum and Assessment – features and rationale

At The Cherwell School, the curriculum is:

- rich in powerful knowledge and language, which is specified, taught, assessed and securely learnt
- exceptionally well-planned and sequenced
- exceptional in its use of assessment to support learning
- manageable and efficient; supportive of teacher workload and wellbeing

Rich in powerful knowledge, which is specified, taught, assessed and securely learnt

- 1) Knowledge here can be defined as both factual and procedural knowledge (ie how to perform subject specific procedures or tasks). Therefore, knowledge includes those concepts, facts, ideas, stories, techniques and procedures which are important to know in order to have a deep understanding of a subject.
- 2) Powerful knowledge gives students the cultural capital they need to be able to take their place as informed, active citizens, be increasingly aspirational for their future choices, and excel in further academic study.
- 3) Desirable skills such as analysis, explanation, creativity, evaluation and independence of thought are only possible when a wide knowledge base is secure; all thinking involves connecting new ideas to existing knowledge.
- 4) Powerful knowledge includes knowing the language required to apply knowledge. Therefore, the best language for students to learn in order to apply their knowledge at each point in the curriculum should be specified, taught and practised.
- 5) Therefore, greater emphasis should be given to knowledge, with a view to covering ‘fewer things in greater depth’, and a commitment to the idea that overall, students will be taught, understand and retain much rich knowledge.
- 6) Curriculum planning should define and minutely specify the core knowledge and core skills that is regarded as most important for students to learn.
- 7) Where curriculum content is minutely specified, clarity is provided which supports teacher workload, helps students understand the progress they are making, and enables high quality intervention for those who are not being successful. On the other hand, vague or unspecific curriculum content is burdensome for teachers, and a contributor to excessive or inefficient workload.

Exceptional planning and sequencing

- 8) Careful and skilful curriculum sequencing and planning is essential if students are likely to secure and retain knowledge.



- 9) This requires that the order in which students are exposed to core knowledge is carefully specified and planned so that concepts lead on from one another.
- 10) Effective sequencing also involves specifying exactly when and how core concepts will be returned to so that they are retained over time.
- 11) Where it is sensible to do so, planning should take into account the content that is being taught, or has been taught, in other curriculum areas at any point. Links between subject areas – for example where the same period is being considered in English, Art and History – should be planned, understood and capitalized on by teachers in each subject.
- 12) An effective curriculum therefore will have a very clear and convincing rationale for what is taught, and the order that it is taught in. It will clearly identify core concepts, knowledge, ideas, words and skills, and will specify when they are to be introduced, and when / how they are returned to.

Exceptional in its use of assessment to support learning

- 13) Effective teaching uses assessment and feedback constantly and fluidly in the classroom, through discussion, questioning and activities which require students to demonstrate learning. In some subjects, particularly practical subjects at KS3, this is very much the dominant form through which assessment takes place.
- 14) In many subjects, it is also essential that a standardized approach to formative (interim) assessments is devised, so that it is consistently high quality and 'manageable, meaningful and motivating'. Formative assessments of this type should be centrally agreed and shared through the subject, and not left to each individual teacher to devise.
- 15) For formative and summative assessments, clear procedures must be in place which specify how the information gathered should be shared and used to adapt future teaching. Faculty Assessment Policies should make this clear, and ensure that practice is 'manageable, meaningful and motivating'.
- 16) Faculty Assessment Policies should make these procedures clear, and ensure that practice is 'manageable, meaningful and motivating'. 'Manageable' here means efficient and achievable for teachers, with a sensible expectation of workload. 'Meaningful' means that assessments allow valid and reliable inferences to be drawn about what students know or can do, and what their next steps should be. 'Motivating' means that assessments should provide opportunities for accomplishment and challenge, to ensure that students benefit from the positive impact on motivation which comes from genuine learning and achievement.
- 17) Teacher praise and positive affirmation for achievement is valuable and encouraged, students should be dissuaded from seeing work as being produced 'for the teacher' or

for other extrinsic reward, and guided towards the intrinsic motivation. This comes from genuine learning and accomplishment.

- 18) Formative assessments can take a variety of forms, including short answer questions and multiple choice questions. They should not solely be a watered-down version of the summative assessment, but should aim to isolate and target the knowledge and skills which combine when students complete summative assessments.
- 19) Summative assessments should be standardized across a subject, and be expertly designed. This means that they have high levels of validity (they test understanding of the core knowledge and skills as specified in the curriculum), and reliability (they allow the teacher to make reliable inferences about what a student has learnt and where gaps remain).
- 20) Well designed formative and summative assessments include cumulative elements – that is to say, they include items which refer back to previous learning and content. This is designed to aid retention and ensure that knowledge is secure over time.
- 21) In best practice, standardised and carefully designed formative assessments allow leaders to collect in raw data for vulnerable students, and therefore gain a clearer picture of the specific content which these students are not grasping.
- 22) It is the responsibility of school leadership (at subject and senior level) to ensure that high quality standardized formative and summative assessments are in place for each course that is delivered.

Manageable and efficient; an approach which supports teacher workload and wellbeing

- 23) An effective curriculum will mean that a teacher is always clear as to what needs to be taught, in what order, to what time scale and how / when this is to be formatively and summatively assessed.
- 24) This information should be provided through Schemes of Work, Faculty Assessment Policies and Faculty Assessment Calendars – in place for each subject taught.
- 25) Teachers of an excellent curriculum are free to concentrate more of their attention on how to deliver content with skill, precision and energy.
- 26) Core resources - including formative and summative assessments, multiple differentiated model activities, SoW sequences and core activities – should be coherently planned, excellent quality, and easily accessible to all teachers of that course.
- 27) Teachers should be supported in the best ways to deliver the content of the curriculum through regular opportunities for training, sharing and discussion with other teachers of their subject wherever possible. Opportunities for teachers to access training and have these discussions within faculties and subject areas are essential and should be planned into whole school and faculty meeting time.



Note: please refer to the appendix document 'Implementing the CAT Policy at Faculty Level' for an overview of policy expectations for curriculum planning and resourcing.

What is the vision for Teaching?

Our aim is to provide the best possible opportunities for student achievement, progress and learning. We do this by focusing all of our teaching and learning professional development work on the elements of our practice which research shows make the most difference (R. Coe et al, What makes great teaching? Review of the underpinning research, 2014). These elements are in our planning and delivery and every teacher at Cherwell has a responsibility to:

Know the curriculum deeply

- 1) Maintain deep and fluent knowledge of the curriculum content they teach.
- 2) Use agreed mid and long-term plans to guide the learning and ensure that it is well-organised over time.
- 3) Maintain deep and fluent knowledge of the relevant language and terminology related to the subject.
- 4) This includes knowing and teaching a full range of rich academic language to allow students to talk, think and write about the subject.
- 5) Understand typical ways students think about subjects, concepts, processes and ideas, anticipating common misconceptions and planning teaching to account for these

Plan well-constructed lessons, with clear explanations, and deliver lessons with conviction

- 6) Plan lessons with a clear focus – a single, clear objective is almost always best. Lessons which try to address or introduced multiple concepts, or are cluttered with multiple activities, are to be avoided, as working memory is likely to become swamped.
- 7) Use well-planned direct instruction and explanation so that content is clear and every student can access the lesson and tasks. Avoid assuming knowledge that the students may not have – explain words and ideas clearly and carefully.
- 8) Ensure student activities are appropriately challenging, high-value and purposeful in helping students to learn, practice and retain curriculum content.
- 9) Provide opportunities in lessons for extended practice, to ensure that knowledge and

skills are secured, before moving on to new learning.

- 10) Avoid low-value, or inefficient filler tasks, such as posters or gimmicky 'creative' tasks, the completion of which distracts students from the subject content required to be learnt.
- 11) Wherever appropriate, model how to access and complete tasks, and how to achieve excellence in the quality of work produced.
- 12) In most cases, tasks should be accompanied with a basic model to provide access, and an excellent example to provide challenge. This may not apply for some content, such as mathematical processes, where challenge can be provided in other ways, such as through the increasing complexity of the activities.
- 13) Ensure that high attaining students are effectively provided for, according to the High Attainers policy.
- 14) Ensure that SEND students are effectively provided for, through high quality teaching, and following strategies from the SEND profiles.
- 15) Include regular periods of silent, independent work during lessons. This is essential to help students concentrate and manage distraction.

Ensure effective assessment and feedback

- 16) Fully understand and implement Faculty Assessment Policies, to ensure that practice is manageable, meaningful and motivating (see Curriculum and Assessment section 16 for further detail of these principles).
- 17) In particular, use formative assessments to make decisions about post-assessment teaching, by identifying gaps and planning teaching to address these.
- 18) Make regular use of short, low-stakes quizzes to ensure that knowledge is retained over time. Quizzes should include reference to recently learnt material, eg from the last lesson, as well as material from further in the past – last week, last month, last year

Create an effective working environment

- 19) Understand and insist upon school rules and routines in relation to student behavior (see the BFL policy and agreed school routines).
- 20) Insist upon high standards of effort and presentation, according to school policy.
- 21) Hold students to account for completing work. It is expected that this includes regular use of silent, independent work during lesson time.
- 22) Contribute to the upkeep of well-ordered and well-organised classrooms, by storing books and resources in an organized manner.



Homework

- 23) The purpose of homework is for students to learn, memorise, revise or practise the knowledge and skills that they are taught in school. Therefore, homework activities should be those which require students to think deeply about the knowledge and skills they've been taught.
- 24) Suitable activities include revising through creating revision cards or notes, practice of a taught skill or employing strategies to commit learning to memory.
- 25) Pre-reading or learning of content prior to a lesson is also appropriate, although caution should be exercised in ensuring that students are able to access enough of the content and concepts without needing teacher explanation.
- 26) Pre-reading / learning in advance of a lesson is also appropriate in some contexts. However care needs to be taken in selection of materials, with confidence that all students will be able to access and understand enough of the content and concepts in before needing teacher explanation.
- 27) Learning homeworks should be followed up by quizzes or assessments in class to establish that students have learnt the material successfully.
- 28) Open-ended research homework, such as 'find out about' or 'find five facts' should not be set, particularly at KS3. It is our responsibility to identify core knowledge and provide this through the curriculum and resourcing, with students taught to learn and retain it at home. Open-ended research, whilst providing a surface sense of independence, frequently results in low quality work and little genuine understanding or retention, and is inefficient in promoting learning. It is also likely to disadvantage vulnerable students still further.
- 29) Tasks such as posters or model-making should only be set as compulsory homework if they directly represent the skill or knowledge being learnt. This means that a model could be set as homework if, for example, relevant to a DT Scheme of Work on model making, or a poster set if students are learning about the use of posters for propaganda in History. This is because they tend to result in students spending lots of time thinking about the act of creating the homework, such as their presentation, colours or pictures, and are often inefficient as a tool to promote deep thought about and retention of the core material. Posters, models etc may be set as optional competitions or activities, rather than a compulsory homework.

Responsibilities

The Senior Leadership team are responsible for overseeing the successful implementation, continual refinement, monitoring and evaluation of the school's approaches to curriculum, assessment and teaching, according to the principles and practices outlined above.

Faculty Leadership are responsible for ensuring that approaches to curriculum, assessment are clearly defined, resourced and adhered to within the faculty. This incorporates the generation and upkeep of clear Schemes of Work which and a clear faculty assessment policy. Furthermore, Faculty Leadership are responsible to ensure that teachers are made clear as to the expectations and procedures required, and supported to develop the deep knowledge required for successful curriculum delivery.

Teachers are responsible for reading, understanding and implementing the taught curriculum, and approaches to assessment specified in the Faculty Assessment Policy. Teachers are also responsible for learning the content of the curriculum in depth and detail, so that they are able to deliver content with authority, fluency and flexibility.



Appendix

Implementing the CAT Policy at Faculty Level

Planning, documentation and organisation of curriculum and assessment

In order to implement the terms of the CAT policy, the following documentation should be centrally provided to teachers centrally in faculties, and updated regularly to ensure that information is current:

1. A course outline / overview of the year for each year group
2. An Assessment Calendar which shows (for each year group) when standardised formative and summative assessments should take place
3. An updated Assessment policy, which details the approaches to assessment expected for each Key Stage. This policy should be specific in terms of what and how to assess and provide feedback.
4. Mid-Term plans / Schemes of Work for individual topics and units, which give a clear sense of what content is to be covered and when it is to be covered by.
5. Standardised high quality resources for students, including:
 - Specified banks of relevant and powerful knowledge (likely to be through a textbook, internally produced student booklets, knowledge organisers)
 - Specified banks of rich and high quality academic language (likely to be through standardised banks of words / phrases / connectives) which students are taught in order to apply knowledge, eg through writing evaluation, description, explanation etc
 - Standardised model answers at various different levels, along with guidance as to how to use them in class
 - Standardised formative assessments (likely to be low stakes knowledge quizzes, mid-term tests / quizzes / interim assessments)
 - Standardised summative assessments (likely to be longer assessments, such as essays, end of unit tests, mock exam papers)

The form / style of documentation can be decided internally, although whole-school models are available if required.

Further standardisation of high quality resourcing is encouraged, such as:

- Standardised whole-cohort homework tasks, particularly for key periods and content
- Electronic resources as appropriate (elearning videos, access to websites), along with clear instructions for how they should be used

It is also good practice to provide a summary of the Teaching section of the policy, which provides any further guidance about best practice implementation of this policy in subject-specific contexts.