



Learning and Teaching at The Cherwell School

Introduction

Our aim is to provide the best possible opportunities for student achievement, progress and learning. We also believe that the promotion of excellence in learning gives students the best opportunities to grow as individuals, to make positive contributions to communities, and to find success in their lives. Furthermore, we recognise that the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom is the most influential factor in student success and achievement. As a result, we constantly aim to improve our practice in the classroom and are open to feedback, and to learning new approaches and adopting new techniques.

Key Principles for Professional Learning at The Cherwell School

- 1) As teachers, we are also learners. We are reflective on our practice and actively look for ways to improve.
- 2) As learners, we focus our attention on those aspects of practice which make the most difference to student achievement and progress
- 3) As a community of professionals, we respect autonomy and the individual, recognising that different styles and approaches to teaching are valuable. There is no prescribed style or format of lessons which must be adhered to.

Core elements of Classroom Practice

We value the fact that teachers are unique individuals, all of whom bring their own strengths, creativity and preferred approaches to the classroom. At the same time, there are some features of practice which research and experience suggest make the most difference to student learning. Therefore, it is important that, as individuals and as a team, we give prominence to these features in our thinking, planning and practice. Rooted in the formative assessment process, they represent the framework within which teachers at The Cherwell School are encouraged to work. These principles are detailed here:

1) **Setting clear and appropriate learning objectives**

All lessons and units of learning should be planned with clear, focused learning objectives. These objectives should be used by the teacher as a starting point for planning, and should articulate clear, challenging, important and achievable goals for the students.

Possible Strategies / points to note:

- Ensure that the **students understand the learning objective** at some point in the lesson – often this will be at the start, but doesn't have to be
- Ensure that **Learning Objectives express the skills / knowledge** that students will learn in the lesson, not a description of tasks to be completed
- Ensure that **Learning Objectives are sufficiently challenging** for the range of students in the group
- **Avoid over-complicating Learning Objectives** or including too many in one lesson – simply-expressed objectives which are then explored in depth tend to generate most effective learning



2) Designing tasks, discussions and activities which help students make progress towards the learning intentions

Tasks, discussions and activities which allow students to make progress towards the learning objective are essential. Therefore, these tasks, discussions and activities need to be carefully planned, in order to ensure that they are purposeful in helping students acquire the knowledge or develop the skills that they need to achieve the learning goals. Tasks, discussions and activities should therefore be explicitly developmental, with outcomes which give students the opportunity to work towards the learning objective.

Possible Strategies / points to note:

- **Questioning** students is a key area to reflect on. Teachers are advised to use a range of strategies, and avoid relying on IRE (Initiation, Response, Evaluation) for long periods. Instead, structured group and paired discussion is likely to generate higher levels of participation and engagement from students – training is available on this.
- **Effective direct instruction** from the teacher is a valuable, high-impact strategy, but it is difficult to sustain its effectiveness for long periods. It is therefore advisable that direct instruction is well-judged in terms of timing and focus.
- Tasks should be **low access / high challenge**. This means that all students need to be able to attempt the task meaningfully, whilst there needs to be sufficient challenge for higher-attaining students. Thoughtful use of Success Criteria is an efficient way to achieve this – how do students complete this task in order to show that they have learned really well?
- **Creativity** is to be valued in task setting, but be aware that, in order to learn, students need to think about the learning objective and the underlying purpose in the task. Therefore, clear structure and purpose is needed in creative tasks in order to help students make progress.
- The **quantity** of tasks in a lesson is important to get right; if too many tasks are provided, student engagement can be superficial. Setting up substantial, well-constructed tasks is key to helping students learn.
- **EWAP** is a useful reminder – Everything With A Purpose. This means making sure that any tasks which are provided make a real contribution to helping the students to learn.

3) Setting Success Criteria and using Models

Whenever students are given any substantial tasks, discussions or activities to undertake, it is important that they are made aware of the indicators of success or quality that will represent progress. In some activities, these criteria might describe a process or method which the students are asked to follow (process success criteria). In others, success criteria may focus more on the qualities which student work should aim to display (qualitative success criteria). Modelling of successful work is also an essential tool, through which students can be shown the process or qualities for which they should aim. Furthermore, success criteria and modelling provide a useful framework for peer and self-assessment, teacher feedback, and for enabling the students to feel that they are independent and in control of their learning.

Possible Strategies / points to note:

- Use Models and Success Criteria to **make quality / success explicit** to all students, being mindful of the fact that students arrive to use with widely differing extents of prior knowledge / understanding of how to produce successful work.



- Using **models of work at different levels** can be effective in helping students to see the way that a skill can develop.
- Asking students to **annotate and assess** models helps them to understand and engage with the success criteria.
- Skilful teaching in this area will **move beyond simply providing** models / success criteria, by encouraging students to work closely with them and **making them central** to the lesson.
- Models can be **provided for any task**, not just written work. It's often sensible to provide / generate models of part of a task, rather than a completed task, to help students get started.
- Asking **students to generate their own** success criteria for a task can help them to engage closely with the purpose of and learning in a task.

4) Providing effective feedback which shows learners how well they've done, and structures their next steps

The quality of feedback students receive on their work is a highly-influential factor on their learning. Teachers should aim to provide clear, focused commentary on student progress, showing the student where and how they have met success criteria and made progress towards the learning objective. Feedback should also indicate to students the next steps they might take to improve further. Crucially, it is the teacher's role, when giving feedback, to then design activities which ask the student to engage with the feedback and put the guidance into action. Other forms of feedback include self and peer assessment, both of which are powerful only when clear learning objectives and success criteria are in place.

Possible Strategies / points to note:

- Aim to **include follow-up tasks with feedback**, which ask students to immediately engage with the advice they've been given. It's important also that time is given in lessons for students to complete follow-up tasks.
- Providing feedback which is **closely tied to the success criteria** helps keep marking manageable and effective – resist the temptation to mark everything in every piece of work.
- Use the **school marking code** and guidance for Literacy when assessing longer pieces of writing, and ask KS3 students to 'green-pen' their own work for sentence accuracy / word choice before handing it in.
- **Avoid 'hanging targets'**, where students are set targets or given advice, but with no opportunity or requirement to do anything with the target.
- Use feedback to **inform the planning** for your next lesson / series of lessons with that class. Therefore, it's important to plan formative marking at times other than at the end of the course.
- See further guidance on Feedback in the school **Assessment and Marking protocol**.

5) Teaching inclusively and focusing on all groups

As a comprehensive school, it is essential that we are actively addressing the range of needs within our classroom; the progress of all pupils is the responsibility of the subject teacher. TAs are valuable additions to your classroom but should not be directed to work exclusively with students with SEN/D. It's important that the teachers work with all groups of pupils so that we can be clear about the next steps in their learning.



Possible Strategies / points to note

- Rotate focus for support so that all students get specific teacher-time
- Actively plan for your TA – be clear about the key questions they should ask, the success criteria for the pupils they are working with and any additional resources they may need to use.
- Use feedback from TAs to match the Learning and Teaching to the needs of the pupils
- Develop independence by giving all pupils ‘hard work they can do’ without the intervention of a TA

Implementation of these principles

There is an infinite variety of practical ways in which the above principles can be implemented in our teaching, and choice, creativity and individuality in teaching is important. There is also great value in sharing practice and working together, departmentally or as a whole school. Therefore, we will work to share practice and practical approaches frequently, through whole school and Faculty development and meeting time. Lesson observation, whether judged or coaching, is another key area where feedback can help us to learn and refine our practice. Furthermore, the Training School office and the NS library store a range of appropriate texts for further reading, and examples of effective practice are stored on the school Learning and Teaching blog at www.cherwelllearning.blogspot.com



Literacy at The Cherwell School

Key Principles

- At The Cherwell School, all staff are committed to developing literacy skills of students, because to do so is crucial in helping students to achieve, during and beyond their time in formal education.
- All subjects require students to develop and apply literacy skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. It therefore follows that **all teachers are teachers of literacy**, with a responsibility to teach literacy skills explicitly.
- At The Cherwell School, we serve students with widely differing backgrounds and levels of literacy on entry. The effective and **explicit** teaching of literacy is among the best strategies we have for ensuring that we promote achievement for all.

General Expectations:

- All departments will identify and explicitly teach those aspects of literacy which are relevant to their subject area
- The teaching methods for delivering literacy objectives are the responsibility of the department and teacher. However, methods should pay attention to these core aspects of good practice: devising and sharing literacy-focused learning intentions, providing success criteria and models, the provision of activities which help students to improve their literacy, and the provision of quality, focused feedback on the quality of literacy in student work.
- All departments will have a literacy element to assessment and feedback, using the Literacy Annotation code to help students to see and correct weaknesses in their work
- All departments will make reference to literacy in classroom / corridor displays, including display of subject-specific key words

Literacy Focus Areas and Approaches

When teaching Speaking and Listening...

Key focus areas include:

- a) Using language with precision and coherence
- b) Listening to the speech of others and extracting meaning
- c) Responding thoughtfully and constructively to the ideas of others, by challenging or building on their speech

Effective Strategies include:

- Using questioning strategies and structures which encourage high levels of participation and accountability for students. Reliance on Initiation-Response-Evaluation, without application of further strategies, is unlikely to achieve this
- Using modelling and success criteria for spoken work so that students are clear about how to produce quality work
- Expecting students to be precise and detailed in their responses to questions, using appropriate vocabulary
- Expecting students to use think-time / paired / group discussion before contributing spoken answers
- Encouraging students to listen for specific purposes, e.g. to identify the main points to arise from a discussion



When teaching Writing...

Key focus areas include:

- a) Teaching students to write for specific purposes (explain, describe, inform, argue, persuade, advise, analyse, evaluate, comment, discuss)
- b) Teaching the importance of making good choices in Form, Language, Audience and Purpose
- c) Helping students improve the accuracy and quality of their written communication, including Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

Effective Strategies include:

- Providing and using models and success criteria for written work so that the features of the expected style are made explicit to all students
- Providing opportunities for students to write in a range of styles and for a variety of purposes
- Using good judgement when scaffolding writing, by avoiding overly-restrictive writing frames or gap-fills which diminish student independence
- Identification and focus on key vocabulary and commonly misspelled words, expecting students to take action when spelling errors have been identified. Keeping a spellings page in their book is a straightforward way to achieve this
- Expecting students to 'Green-pen' their written work, through which they check the accuracy of their word choice and punctuation, using targets agreed in English lessons

When teaching Reading...

Key focus areas include:

- a) Teaching students to use basic reading strategies (predicting, scanning, skimming, close reading, summarizing, questioning, inferring)
- b) Teaching subject-specific vocabulary and key words

Effective Strategies include:

- Providing and using success criteria and models for tasks which involve reading, so that students are clear as to how to apply the skill
- Identifying and working with key words, by including on display and on Literacy mats
- Explicitly teaching different reading strategies and exploring contexts where they are most useful, ensuring to move beyond information retrieval as the dominant approach
- Teaching approaches to explore texts even if they contain challenging vocabulary, e.g. deduction, inference
- Exploring structural features of texts, such as topic sentences / connectives
- Ensuring that students are exposed to reading material which is appropriately challenging for their current level of capability



Marking and Assessment Protocol

When?

Marking and Assessment should:

- Be regular. Bearing in mind the different proportions of time given to each subject area, the most appropriate way to define regularity is to work to the principle of a marking intervention happening **once every 6 lessons**. Acknowledgement marking (see below) is valuable but does not constitute a marking intervention for the purposes of this document.
- Within this, it should be recognised that there may be certain times of the school year when particular groups are given priority. Across the year the sense of a marking intervention for every 6 lessons taught should stand.

How?

Marking and Assessment should:

- Be positive, reflective and constructive
- Be focused and relevant to the specific learning intention / success criteria of the task
- Over time, include examples of:
 - i) Formative marking, which aims to set targets for improvement
 - ii) Summative marking, which aims to summarise achievement and progress
 - iii) Acknowledgement marking, which aims to acknowledge that work has been completed well
- Be accompanied with tasks that students complete in order to put the marking into action

What impact?

Marking and Assessment should:

- Lead to identifiable progress in student understanding or attainment