

Teaching and Learning

Purpose:

We want all students at Greatfields School to love learning and be inspired. Learning is not about passing exams but rather being curious about the world and our surroundings. We want our students to have a deep and rich learning experience in order to develop their cultural capital preparing them not only for the next stage of their careers but also enabling them to become well rounded citizens who can make a meaningful contribution to society.

We expect students to take responsibility for their learning and to develop learning skills and habits during their time at Greatfields which they can apply to whichever career they choose to pursue. Students should feel challenged every day and develop the resilience to be able to overcome these daily challenges.

Core principles:

In order to achieve this there needs to be a consistent approach to learning in all lessons. These are our core principles:

1. Depth not breadth

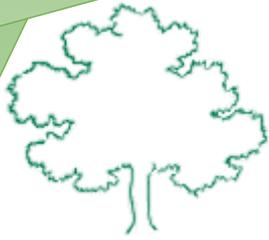
Learning must be deep and not superficial. Students must be able to retain and apply the knowledge and skills being learnt long after the lesson has finished. Deep learning means that students must go beyond merely knowing the 'facts' or a particular topic but be able to relate and apply these facts in more complex situations.

2. Challenge

It is essential that the level of challenge is appropriate in every class. If the lesson is too easy then the learning will be limited; if is too hard then students will become disengaged. Students should always be working just outside their comfort zone.

3. Explanation

Teachers are the 'expert' in their subject and therefore teacher explanation plays an important role in the learning process. However, this does not mean that a teacher should spend half an hour talking at the class – students will quickly become disengaged. Explanation must be planned in advance and it must move the students' learning forward. Talking for the sake of talking will not lead to deep learning. Well planned and effective explanation, on the other hand, can address any misconceptions there may be and inspire the students.



4. *Questioning*

There is a 'no hands up to answer' policy in every classroom. This ensures that students remain alert at all times in case they are chosen to answer the question and it allows the teacher to gauge the level of understanding of a particular topic. In order for this questioning to be effective students must be given sufficient 'thinking time' after the question is asked in order to allow them to think more deeply about the answer they will give. Key questions must be planned – spontaneous, quick fire questioning may not lead to a deeper understanding of a topic – it might merely confuse the students.

5. *Collaboration*

Effective collaboration in lessons allows students to develop their learning and reinforce previous learning. In some cases students can learn as much from their peers as from their teacher. In order for collaboration to be effective it needs to have a clear purpose and there needs to be a high level of accountability for every member of the group. Collaboration for the sake of collaboration is not effective and can often lead to ingrained misconceptions and students working off task. As with all learning, collaborative activities must be planned carefully in advance.

6. *Application*

Students must be given as many opportunities as possible to apply what they have learnt. By putting into practice what they have just learnt it will help to deepen their understanding and allow the teacher and the students themselves to check for any misunderstandings that may have arisen. Students need to be given regular opportunities to put an idea or concept into practice in order to deeply learn it.

7. *Feedback*

Students must not be afraid to make mistakes – the deepest learning takes place through correcting mistakes. Effective feedback should identify misconceptions and allow students the time and space to correct them. Feedback can be written or verbal. The most important part is that students act on this feedback and that their learning moves forward as a consequence.

8. *Good relationships*

Strong relationships between students and teachers are fundamental to students being successful in lessons and progressing their learning. Students need to be able to trust teachers and believe that they have their best interests at heart at all times. By sharing their passion and love for the subject teachers will engage the students and create a vibrant learning environment in which both students and staff can flourish.