



ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

The following document outlines our Learning Centre ethos with regards to teaching and learning. It incorporates guidance on planning for student feedback, assessment, recording and reporting at ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant whole school policy documentation.

RATIONALE & AIMS

ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre aims to encourage all our students to achieve their potential through a culture of high expectations for everyone. Learning is at the centre of all that we do and we aim to encourage a commitment to learning that is not based solely on the acquisition of knowledge but on the development of the skills, attributes and values needed to encourage life-long learning and employment. At the heart of our teaching and learning ethos is the creation of an environment which builds young people's self- belief and confidence through systems of praise for effort. Offering praise for students' work and efforts can build a mind set that allows students to begin to view their own intelligence as something that can be developed. This mind set of developing intelligence will increase students' ability to "bounce back" in the face of academic setbacks and other difficulties.

The aims of this document are to set out a clear set of high expectations and a common approach to teaching and learning at ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre so that teachers, parents/carers and students are all aware of and can work towards the highest possible standards of education. It is designed in such a way that whilst teaching staff are encouraged to adopt a style of their own and are not expected to teach in any specific way, regular monitoring of teaching and learning takes place at ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre to ensure that high standards are always met and therefore, the best outcomes for the students.

At The Learning Centre we believe assessment for learning is central to effective teaching and learning. Feedback and marking will provide constructive feedback to every student by focusing on success and improvement needs against clear learning intentions. This will enable students to become reflective learners and help them to 'close the gap' between current and targeted performance. Assessment is also a valuable tool in helping us to 'personalise' learning to ensure that instruction is matched more appropriately to individual student

needs. In essence high quality assessment for learning is lesson planning.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Head Teacher

- Ensure all relevant staff are aware of this policy, receive appropriate professional development and local procedures are followed
- The Head Teacher and Deputy are responsible for implementing this policy and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum
- Purchase appropriate resources
- Provide guidance to teachers
- Facilitate appropriate INSET training
- Develop appropriate schemes of work
- Identify appropriate qualifications

Teachers

- Plan and deliver engaging lessons tailored to individual student need.
- Ensure continuity and progression across key stages
- Effective monitoring and evaluating of students progress
- Are responsible for ensuring pedagogy is in line with this policy

ETHOS

- We have high ambitions for all students to fulfil their potential and have a clear ethos of respecting each young person, recognising their strengths as well as providing effective strategies to help minimise any barriers to learning
- We seek to excite students about learning through delivery of a flexible and challenging curriculum that provides a sense of discovery
- We believe learning should be fun and all lessons should involve a sense of discovery
- Our aim is to increase the opportunities available to young people and nurture their talents so they experience success, develop confidence and thrive.
- Across the Learning Centre the expectations is that students are provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to consistently high levels of achievement.
- We place significant emphasis on developing young people's talents and preparing for adulthood

KEY PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING AT THE ASPIRE: LIFESKILLS LEARNING CENTRE

- All lessons have clear learning objectives
- All lessons have clear success criteria (eg within weekly plan)
- All lessons are clearly differentiated (by process and/or content) to enable all students to access learning
- All lessons should include opportunities to learn through different learning styles
- All students are actively engaged in learning activities
- All students are stimulated and challenged
- All students receive regular feedback on their learning
- Learning is enhanced through positive feedback that recognises student achievements

- Learning is enhanced by effective use of technology
- Learning is enhanced by rich and varied learning activities
- Learning is enhanced through effective use of displays and learning walls
- Learning is enhanced through a welcoming, safe and well organised and purposeful learning environment
- Learning is enhanced by identifying appropriate opportunities for extended writing
- Learning is enhanced through effective use of baseline assessment to inform lesson planning
- Learning is enhanced by effective collaborative working with other agencies
- Learning is enhanced through effective use of computer assisted learning
- Students make the most progress when they feel respected and valued
- All lessons include opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills and social communication skills to address areas of deficit associated with autism
- Effective learning involves understanding rather than encountering information
- All schemes of work have clear objectives and progression activities

MONITORING PRACTICE AND RAISING STANDARDS

- SLT will regularly drop into lessons so teachers receive regular feedback from SLT identifying strengths and areas for development
- Appraisal targets link to the Learning Centre Development Plan, AET Competencies and Autism Standards assessment tools.
- SLT are responsible for ensuring good quality INSET days that improve the quality of teaching and learning
- SLT are responsible for monitoring the progress of different groups of students (eg LAC, SEN, FSM, EAL)

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre Curriculum Policy outlines the broad and balanced curriculum on offer to students at the Learning Centre. While many students will enjoy access to the full range of academic subjects, some will cope better with a curriculum focused on skills for living and supporting access to the community.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

All students in KS3 and KS4 are entitled to access to Religious Education but it is acknowledged that this subject area can often present difficulties to young people with Autism whose thinking style inhibits their ability to appreciate the thoughts, feelings and beliefs of others. At ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre, rather than deliver RE as a 'stand alone' curriculum area, we have incorporated it into various other curriculum areas e.g. PHSE, British Values, Citizenship; and several of the ASDAN short courses, including Beliefs and Values. In addition to this, students will spend the last 30 minutes of each day taking part in a 'reflection' activity which will incorporate a 'thought for the day'. Through studying different possibilities and faiths, students can consider their own identity, morals and views; and are encouraged to develop a mutual respect and tolerance of the different life views and belief systems in today's diverse global society.

RATIONALE

It is important that teachers plan schemes of work and deliver lessons that enable students to work towards the learning objectives and make progress towards the success criteria. It is acknowledged that different teachers have their own preferred styles of teaching but it is imperative that the agreed criteria are followed to ensure the best outcomes for all students in all lessons. The ultimate aim is to ensure that thorough planning and focussed lesson implementation aids students in their quest to make progress over time. Schemes of Work Medium and long term planning can be presented in a way that best suits the faculty to which they belong.

However, it is expected that schemes of work will at least:

- Clarify objectives and outcomes (including success criteria) for progress over time;
- Identify clearly the subject knowledge to be taught;
- Include different learning style opportunities so that all students are able to learn in their preferred style;
- Include references to differentiated work to ensure all students are challenged in line with their ability;
- Provide opportunities for developing independent and collaborative learning;
- Detail literacy, numeracy and communication opportunities and how they will be taught;
- Include opportunities for a variety of assessment for learning strategies;
- When initially devising a new lesson, teachers are reminded to keep the lesson focussed on the learning objectives and intended outcomes so that students move forward and make progress in their learning every lesson relative to their starting points.

Teachers at ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre should strive to ensure that their planning allows for the following criteria to be met each lesson:

- Use of assessment in planning - Information from assessments should be used to set tasks that are perfectly matched to students' prior attainment
- Level of challenge - Work should be pitched at a level that is appropriate to the individual. It is challenging – success is only achievable if individual students work hard and try their very best. All individuals should find the tasks demanding at their own level.
- Use of support staff- Support staff should be highly effective in promoting rapid learning for groups of students regardless of their aptitudes and needs.
- Opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy, and communication skills – Teaching should include opportunities to develop reading, writing, communication and numeracy skills that are highly effectively taught and cohesively planned as part of the lesson.
- Use of strategies and tasks to engage students - Strategies and tasks should enthuse students so that they persevere when faced with difficult problems and are keen to succeed and to learn more.
- Pace and depth of learning - The pace of learning should be optimised throughout the lesson as to the best effect to support students at the time they need such support. As a result, almost all pupils make rapid and sustained progress.
- Use of questioning - Questions should be designed to tease out students' understanding so that the teacher is exceptionally aware of the degree to which pupils are secure in their knowledge and understanding.
- Assessment of learning during lessons - The work for each individual student should be adapted in the light of any misconceptions that are brought to light through questioning or checks on students' work.
- Marking and feedback - Marking should be frequent and regular, providing students with very clear guidance on how work can be improved. Students need to be engaged in the process.
- Progress – Ultimately, all students should make at least good progress in their

learning relative to their ability and starting points, and demonstrate full understanding of this. For many, this is better than might be expected.

- Praise effort.

PLANNING

- All subjects require a clear policy, and detailed scheme of work that include differentiated objectives and learning activities.
- A teacher's planning is their most important tool. Consistently high standards of teaching can only be achieved if teachers are properly planned and prepared. Teachers plan on a weekly basis using agreed curriculums and planning proformas. As lessons are completed, teachers evaluate whether the learning objectives have been achieved, this can be annotated on the planning. To ensure consistency and quality, teachers' planning is carefully monitored. It is the class teacher's responsibility to ensure plans are made available to teachers and teacher assistants covering release.
- It is acceptable for teachers at ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre to use a variety of methods to plan their teaching on a day-to-day basis. The reason for this freedom of choice is to allow teachers to develop their own styles and to give them the freedom to be creative in their planning so that they may feel empowered to offer deep learning experiences and un-restricted by a set lesson plan. However, whilst teaching staff are encouraged to adopt a style of their own and are not expected to teach in any specific way, regular monitoring of teaching and learning takes place at ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre to ensure the highest standards and therefore, outcomes for the students.

FEEDBACK AND EFFECTIVE MARKING

- Embedded in everyday practice and is used to inform teaching and learning. Students benefit from opportunities for formal feedback through group and plenary sessions. Feedback enables students to understand their strengths and weaknesses demonstrated in their work. Marking or oral feedback explains what the next steps should be and if effective, students will make excellent achievements by building on previous learning.
- Giving feedback involves:
 - Oral- making time to talk to students and teaching them to be reflective about the learning objective and about their work and responses.
 - Self/Peer-marking- students will be encouraged to see for themselves what they need to do to improve and discuss it with an adult/partner or work it out independently.
 - All students are clear about how they need to improve. Marking is linked to the learning objective, reflects learning expectations and identifies, next step prompts and/or challenges to develop student's thinking further. Students are given regular time to address developmental areas raised in marking.
- Session objectives and outcomes document offers students the opportunity to feedback and evaluate their own learning, reflect on their attitude and also on the overall effectiveness of the session.

USING EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

- Challenging students to deepen their thinking.
- Teachers take time to plan effective questions which go beyond straight recall with strategies such as:
 - Giving a range of answers for discussion.
 - Turning the question into a statement.
 - Finding opposites, why does one work/one doesn't?
 - Giving the answer and asking how it was arrived at.
 - Asking the question from an opposing standing.
 - Using questions to find out what students know, understand and can do in order to target teaching more effectively.
 - Analysing student's responses in order to find out what they know, understand and can do.
 - Using student's questions to assess understanding.

SUPPORT STAFF:

- AT ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre, our support staff are clearly directed to support learning so our students can be effectively targeted and progress maximised. All learning support staff are fully engaged with students at all times, quietly engaging them, explaining the task or using other resources to maximise progress, eg: a number line to facilitate learning.
- Our teachers and teaching assistants work as a team and the onus is on the teacher to prepare activities for the teaching assistant to do with the students.
- A teaching assistant's involvement should be communicated before the start of the lesson and/or planning shared. Teachers make it clear in their plans how they would like their Assistants to support during every stage of the lesson and the plan at all times should be shared.
- Assistants should be clear about who they are supporting and why and are involved in assessing pupil's understanding, recording observations (annotate on their planning) and feeding back assessments to the teacher, when appropriate.

WHEN TEACHING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM TEACHERS SHOULD BE MINDFUL OF:

- Visual timetables
- Visual instructions
- Well organised classrooms
- Clear simple language
- Concrete language not metaphors
- Allow processing time
- Comic strips to explain social situations
- Social skills included in PSD curriculum
- Low arousal approach
- Use of sunglasses or headphones for sensory sensitivities
- Provision for time out
- Alternatives to group work
- Provide structured activities at break times
- Use buddy systems
- Use traffic lights or thermometers to support emotional regulation
- Minimise stress and anxiety
- Clear and consistent rules
- Provide warning of any change

- Address students individually
- Use special interests as motivator
- Behaviour may be a coping strategy so be cautious about trying to change it

ASSESSMENT

(Refer to Assessment, Recording and Monitoring Policy for further information and procedures)

THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT IS:

- To support learning and continuous progress, through high aspirations.
- To provide certification for pupils, where appropriate.
- To provide evidence for monitoring and evaluation.
- To enable teachers to plan their work and set appropriate individual targets and tasks for students.
- To provide information for parents and other professionals involved with the student.
- To assist in diagnosing specific difficulties

AIMS:

Through the application of assessment for learning principles in the planning and delivery of learning and the assessment of students' work our aims are:

- To set the bar of expectation high and expect all students to get there.....and beyond!
- To ensure that students are able to explain what they are trying to learn, and why.
- To ensure that students know what they need to do to demonstrate progress thus encouraging independent and reflective learning.
- To ensure that students take increasing responsibility for assessing their own progress and help make all students believe that they can do better.
- To provide regular, fair and helpful feedback to support the progress of all students; and to expect students to respond to your feedback.
- To ensure that all students are supported in reaching their full potential and are motivated through recognition and credit for their achievements.
- To expect hard work and effort from all students, and to make this ethos the highest priority, every lesson.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

Formative Assessment focuses on enabling achievement, examples of which include:

- Sharing learning objectives and success criteria with students
- Appropriate and effective questioning which develops the learning
- Focusing oral/written feedback around the development of learning objectives
- Organising targets so that students' achievement is based on previous achievement as well as the next step.
- Involving students in self and peer evaluation

Summative Assessment focuses on measuring attainment, examples of which include:

- Teacher assessment levels
- External exams
- Internal exams
- Levelling/grading a piece of work
- Recall questions which establish current knowledge or understanding

- Any assessment method which aims to establish whether learning has taken place, or a target has been met.

In lessons all teachers will:

- Share clear learning objectives with students, which where appropriate will be individually personalised to the students' progress.
- Include questioning, explanation and feedback to students which are focused on the learning objectives of the lesson.
- Utilise Learning Support Assistants for maximum impact in 'closing the gap' and to help students get the most out of directed improvement and reflection time.¹
- Share clear and unambiguous learning outcomes with students and engage in a dialogue about how students can be successful in achieving these learning outcomes by making the success criteria explicit.
- Differentiate learning outcomes to ensure that all students can make progress towards the personalised and group learning objectives.
- Use Oral and written feedback to encourage students to think about what they have learned and how they might improve their work. Feedback relates directly to the shared learning objectives/outcomes/success criteria as appropriate.

ASSESSMENT ON MONITORING PROGRESS

- Teachers are expected to monitor student understanding during lessons
- Teachers are expected to update the Learning Centre data tracking system which incorporates the ASPIRE Assessment Model progress and tracking information for each student across each curriculum area; and is completed at the end of each term.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

- We believe community based learning is a useful means of developing functional skills in natural settings
- All educational visits must have a clear educational objective.

MONITORING

The annual model for monitoring of teaching and learning involves the triangulation of 3 key areas:

1. Lesson Observation (3 times a year)
2. Student Progress and Achievement evidence (3 central inputs a year)
3. Quality of feedback on students work, via work scrutiny (on individual teachers 3 times a year)

Information in these 3 areas is collated across the Learning Centre using individual staff monitoring to give a rigorous evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning at The Learning Centre. Teaching staff also complete an individual version of this as part of the self-reflection of their practice.

The monitoring cycle also includes:

- Regular formal and informal learning walks – this may include a variety of formats such as 'drop-ins' or tours of the school.
- Department review and Subject Progress Reports– triggered by examination results and to be used to guide support and direct challenge;
- Whole school work scrutiny as per calendar

There may be instances where additional monitoring is required such as where a teacher is identified as requiring additional support or where a teacher is newly qualified.


Monitoring of teaching and learning is quality assured through a model of paired observation and scrutiny wherever possible. The monitoring of quality of teaching also includes a comparison to outcomes so as to give a broader picture of the success of teaching over time.

REFERENCES AND LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

- Curriculum Policy
- SEN policy
- Assessment Policy
- Monitoring and Evaluation Policy
- Observation of Teaching Policy

POLICY REVIEW STATEMENT

This policy will be reviewed every year or earlier should legislative change or other event require it.

SIGNED:... 

POSITION:.....DIRECTOR

DATE:.....2nd June 2025

REVIEW DATE:...2nd June 2026

FOR & ON BEHALF OF

ASPIRE: Lifeskills