



Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy



Dalkeith High School

Purpose and Principles of our Teaching and Learning Policy and Practice

Purpose

To provide an overview of learning, teaching and assessment within our school community and is intended to:

- promote effective and consistent teaching, learning and assessment, in the best interests of learners
- maximise participation by highlighting the complex nature of learning and providing non-discriminatory strategies to meet the needs of all learners
- provide guidance on assessment approaches at different ages and stages
- provide direction to all partners in supporting young people at Dalkeith High School
- encourage transparency and accountability by outlining the procedures, roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the process

Principles

An effective learning, teaching and assessment policy:

- aims to achieve excellence and equity
- has a child rights-based approach with shared values that underpin practice
- acknowledges that high quality teaching leads to quality learning
- creates a culture of continued professional development and collaboration, where good practice is celebrated and shared
- acknowledges that non-discriminatory positive relationships lead to successful learning
- provides an inclusive learning environment which addresses the needs of all learners through effective and non-discriminatory strategies
- offers learners activities and opportunities to promote participation through personalisation and choice
- ensures that all learners are appropriately challenged
- ensures that a range of assessment approaches are used to check for understanding, make informed judgments about a young person's learning and identify appropriate intervention strategies
- promotes timely and well communicated feedback to support student improvement
- accounts for the skills and qualities we want our young people to develop in order for them to achieve positive destinations

School Vision, Values and Aims

In Dalkeith High School, we are committed to offering high **quality learning experiences** that are relevant, challenging and enjoyable.

Our motto, '**Labor Vincit**' (*hard work prevails*) is as relevant now as when the school opened in 1914.

In Dalkeith High School, we aim to develop key learner qualities through our curriculum. We want our young people to be responsible, resourceful, resilient and reflective learners.

Our Vision Statement:

'Enabling young people to succeed in an inclusive, respectful and stimulating environment'.

Determined – Happy – Successful.

Our vision is underpinned by values which have been identified following a collegiate process, bringing together the views of staff, young people and parents. Our values are reflected in the policies and practices we continue to develop. Learners are evaluated against our values, using our tracking, monitoring and reporting system.

Our school is currently focused on improving two outcomes for young people: raising attainment for all and closing the poverty related attainment gap

We aim to do this by working continuously within three contexts:

- Improving our practice in Learning, Teaching and Assessment
- Developing our Curriculum
- Improving our Quality Improvement processes

The most important resource in our improvement journey is our staff. Three things are particularly significant in nurturing our staff:

- Recruiting and retaining good people
- Working with our staff to develop their skills through effective in-house professional learning
- Enabling our staff to value the importance of improving their pedagogical practice through research and evidence based practice

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of Learners:

- Living our school values by being respectful and non-discriminatory when engaging with others in the learning community
- Giving consistent effort when participating in lessons, tasks and assessments
- Planning work thoroughly and meeting deadlines
- Engaging in effective self-evaluation about their learning
- Being receptive to feedback from staff and appreciating that this as a learning opportunity
- Being ready to learn by bringing the correct equipment, including Chromebook
- Ensuring that learning missed is caught up on as a priority

Responsibilities of Staff:

- Role model **high expectations** for all young people and staff
- Foster a rights-based ethos and ensure all **relationships** are supportive of learning and participation.
- Build and use highly developed **subject knowledge and understanding of course content**
- Engage in quality **lesson planning and curriculum review - collegiately and individually**
- Influence planning for high attainment
- Ensure awareness of all **learners' needs** and the strategies and resources to meet these
- Use relevant **assessment** approaches to check for understanding, track progress and inform interventions
- Use effective **Learner Conversations** to support learners in making next steps
- Successfully incorporate **digital technology** into teaching and learning to enhance experience
- Work collaboratively with colleagues to enquire and develop effective practice

Responsibilities of CLs and Pupil Support:

- **Model behaviours and provide support** for teachers to achieve excellence as classroom practitioners using evidence-informed strategies.
- Actively build a **culture** where teams demonstrate **creative thinking**, are able to make **informed judgements** and **take ownership** towards improvement.
- **Lead high quality professional conversations** that enhance professional knowledge, expectations and practice.
- Actively **lead and evaluate processes** for curriculum planning, assessment, moderation and data analysis.
- Facilitate **team and individual Career Long Professional Learning** that aligns with team and school improvement priorities.

Responsibilities of SLT:

- Actively **set and regularly communicate** an explicit improvement direction and priority improvement strategies to align our school around a shared direction.
- Make **strategic evidence-informed investments** in the allocation of time, expertise and resources to enable progress in stated improvement priorities.
- Promote and participate in **professional learning and development** aligned with our school's identified improvement priorities and evidence-informed strategies.
- Build **Principal Teacher capacity** to effectively lead their teams, support practice improvement and build a culture of high expectations.
- Develop and oversee school-wide approaches to **evaluating impact** and monitoring progress in learning, practice and organisational outcomes.
- Actively build **relational trust and a positive climate for learning** for both young people and adults.

Learning, Engagement and Quality of Teaching

We facilitate effective and consistent learning and teaching across the school by employing a range of methods to encourage dialogue and collaboration amongst staff. We aim for learners to be challenged and engaged. We aim to promote opportunities for learners to be autonomous and we believe that effective feedback is central to developing our learner’s knowledge, attitudes, skills and habits. In addition, we make use of Google Classroom to develop our learners’ independence beyond the classroom, ensuring that learning materials are available through this resource for all young people.

The Leader of Learning and the teaching and learning working group work collaboratively with staff in an ongoing process to improve the quality of teaching and learning experiences across the school. The working group lead whole school staff through the creation of our DHS Lesson Evaluation Toolkit. This is designed to support our teaching and ensure everyone can select strategies that lead to the best outcomes for learners. It is not a checklist. Instead of simply listing good features of teaching practice, it details pedagogical approaches which should improve the quality of learning and teaching. We use it to support lesson planning, self-evaluation, coaching and CPD.



Dalkeith High School Lesson Evaluation Toolkit

Our Lesson Evaluation Toolkit is designed to support our teaching and ensure everyone can select classroom strategies that demonstrably work best. It is not a checklist. We use it to support lesson planning, self-evaluation and coaching. Instead of simply listing good features of teaching practice we use in lessons, it should make us think about **how well** we do these things.

Element	Illustrations	Notes
Structural Features		
Daily Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low stakes assessment, promoting recall (retrieval practice) from everyone. Make learning visible Includes material required for the lesson, recent and less recent material. 	
Learning Intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make clear what, specifically, students are learning about or to do ('Know...' 'Understand...' or 'Be able to...'). Clearly communicated (verbally and visually) in student friendly language. Revisited during lesson and in plenary. 	
Success Criteria <i>Don't differentiate success criteria</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear communication of what you are looking for / what success looks like, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'I can...' statements Key features Exemplars ('good' and 'bad') Used to support feedback, self assessment and/or peer assessment. More experienced/expert learners may be able to co create success criteria. 	
Presentation of Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap of prior learning, contextualising lesson and activating relevant schema. Clear presentation, including explanations, demonstrations, modelling and/or visuals which stimulate interest. Checking what students know or can do already. Interactive – Includes frequent checks for understanding. Repeating and summarising key points. 	
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided, supported, then independent. Co-operative learning opportunities. Over learning – lots of opportunities to master content. 	

	Teacher circulating class.	
Plenary Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisits the learning intention and success criteria. Reinforces the main learning points. Uses assessment to gather further evidence about what has been learned or not learned. (e.g. via Exit Tickets). Summarises next steps. 	

Element	Illustrations	Notes
Key Principles		
Differentiated challenge and support <i>Not different content or topic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiated support e.g. via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher support Peer support Checklists and scaffolds Differentiated challenge, e.g. via choices within activities. Balance of familiar and less familiar content. 	
Making students think (not 'busy') & making their thinking visible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies to make everyone think and their thinking visible, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show me boards Questioning, jigs, jigsaw, jounce, bounce Discussion ('chat to a partner', think pair share) Active assessment activities (such as true/false, multiple choice, deliberate mistakes) Self and peer assessment, using success criteria 	
Feedback to students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific: clear and positive. Supportive: what, how, and next steps. Links to success criteria ('I can' statements), key features, exemplars. Individual and whole class messages. Time available for students to act on feedback. 	
Learning Environment		
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowing students well. Positive teacher-student and student-student interactions. Use of encouragement rather than praise. 	
High expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High expectations of effort, behaviour and quality of work (including presentation of written work). Target/goal setting (e.g. personal bests). - Encouragement. 	

Click on the link below to access the DHS Lesson evaluation toolkit:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aDgOb84JiQ-tF8B_bEcdudNM2CEwyEOlahNp5d8gc00/edit?usp=share_link

Structural Features of Effective Lessons at Dalkeith HS:

Daily Review

An activity, usually at the beginning of a lesson, designed to assess learners long-term memory – specifically, what they know already about a topic or to check if they can remember content they should have learned. This should also be weekly or monthly, and can be used to help exploit the lag effect.

Learning intentions

Learning intentions are statements which summarise the purpose of a lesson in terms of **learning**. If a lesson is to be effective, it must have a clear purpose, shared with learners and the learning activities must be designed to achieve that purpose.

Success Criteria

Success criteria relate to the **evidence** which determines if learners have learned what you intended and should support assessment and feedback. Success criteria are statements that include verbs which allow young people to demonstrate their learning, by making clear what you are looking for.

‘I can name...’, ‘I can identify...’, ‘I can describe...’, ‘I can explain...’, ‘I can discuss...’, ‘I can calculate...’

Presentation of content

Presenting content at an appropriate pace, with appropriate challenge and to gather evidence of learning is a key principle underpinning high quality teaching. Specific teaching or direct interactive instruction is teacher led but is most certainly not passive. It involves clear explanations, modelling and demonstration, visuals, questioning and high quality, specific feedback.

Practice

Practice is putting into action content or skills that have been explained or demonstrated. It is essential to learning as it allows young people the time to embed knowledge and skills. Watching learners practice in class provides evidence of their learning and allows teachers to adapt instruction and scaffold support - learners leading learning.

Plenary Review

A plenary review is of the learning intentions and success criteria of an **individual lesson**. Time should be built into the end of a lesson to check what students know or can do after something has been taught.

Key Principles of Teaching and Learning at DHS:

- Differentiated Challenge and Support
- Making Students Think and Making Thinking Visible
- Feedback

Differentiated Challenge and Support

Differentiation is a problematic practice. It means different things to different people and unfortunately it can mean that we deny opportunities to our students by having different individuals in a class learning different things, in different ways according to their perceived abilities. This is completely unmanageable from a workload perspective never mind being undesirable. What differentiation should mean is using interactive instruction and formative assessment to increase participation, remove discrimination and diagnose and respond to the learning needs of individuals using appropriate challenge and support.

Making Students Think and Making Thinking Visible

Direct, interactive instruction isn't lecturing, it relies on the teacher listening and watching in order to assess learning progress and plan what to do next. In order to progress and gather evidence of learning, teachers must make students think hard and plan for activities that make that thinking visible in the classroom. The Dalkeith HS Professional Learning site provides teachers with current pedagogical approaches to support effective classroom strategies.

Feedback

Providing specific, individual feedback on students' work is an essential tool for learning however, there are more effective ways of giving feedback than we may have traditionally relied upon. How often have teachers spent a long time writing detailed suggestions on extended pieces of work for it to have almost no impact the next time a student attempts a similar learning activity? It should be about choosing the right feedback, whether that's verbal, through a learning activity or enhancing the experience by injecting some creativity through the use of digital technology.

How do we know learning and teaching is successful?

At DHS, we evaluate learning and teaching in an ongoing process for the best interests of learners. This happens through:

- **Learning Walks** undertaken by the Senior Leadership Team and members of the Teaching and Learning working group. Learning walks take place within faculties and on a whole school basis.

- Engagement with **Pupil Voice** groups and the **Pupil Leadership Team** to discuss learners' experiences.
- **Reflection and self-evaluation** within subjects and faculties.
- Effective use of **learner feedback and assessment** data.

Effective Use of Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching. It helps to provide a picture of a student's progress and achievements in order to identify their next steps in learning. We aim to promote a growth mindset in our learners, enabling them to face the challenges of learning positively in order to maximise their potential and achieve their aspirational goals.

At Dalkeith High School we aim to create assessment capable learners, where students are:

- **Aware** of where they are in their learning
- Able to **articulate** their next steps
- Able to put their next steps into **action**

What does assessment at Dalkeith High School look like?

Assessment at DHS takes place in many different ways. Teachers assess progress in a dignified way, as part of daily teaching and learning and at the end of topics. Effective use of both formative and summative approaches to assessment enables teachers to check for understanding and identify where each young person is in their learning.

Where appropriate, learners have the chance to demonstrate a degree of **personalisation and choice** as to how they might achieve the intended outcomes and evidence their progress in learning. Across all curriculum areas, learners are assessed as is appropriate in what they:

- **Make** (e.g. models in Geography, leaflets in RME)
- **Say** (e.g. debates in Modern Studies, group discussions in Maths)
- **Do** (e.g. presentations in Drama, experiments in Chemistry)
- **Write** (e.g. newspaper articles in History, imaginative in-role responses in English)

How does assessment support learning?

Regular assessment is undertaken in order to:

- Identify current **strengths** and **development needs**
- Identify **next steps** to support **progress**

- Keep **parents/carers and other involved adults** informed about progress
- Provide a **summary** of achievement (including through qualifications and awards)

How do we help ensure success in assessments?

When introducing new learning, our teachers will:

- **Discuss** with learners what is expected of them
- **Clarify** the learning intentions and success criteria in accessible language where required and identify the appropriate experiences for achieving these
- **Share** challenging and realistic expectations

At key points, learners engage in **self-assessment** (e.g. learning logs; traffic lighting) and **peer assessment** (e.g. feedback following presentations; giving peers two stars and a wish) activities to enhance their understanding of standards and expectations.

Learners take part in regular **learner conversations** with their teachers as part of planned activities in the classroom. This means they can identify the progress they have made and consider their next steps. This supports them in setting targets in their Tracking Reports, which are shared with parents/carers.

Learners need **timely, accurate feedback** about their learning. Assessments will not always have a grade or a mark attached. Research shows that learners are likely to make better progress if they are given comments based feedback to help them improve their work.

We aim to ensure that all learners are confident about where they are in their learning journey and able to discuss their progress with their classroom teacher.

How do teachers ensure assessment data is accurate?

Understanding of the relevant **curriculum** guidance to plan learning, teaching and assessment in a way that suits different types of learner.

Establishing the **standards and expectations** associated with each course at each level.

Using candidate evidence to provide **exemplification** at different levels.

Engaging with colleagues in school, across the local authority and nationally, to share and confirm expectations through effective **moderation**.

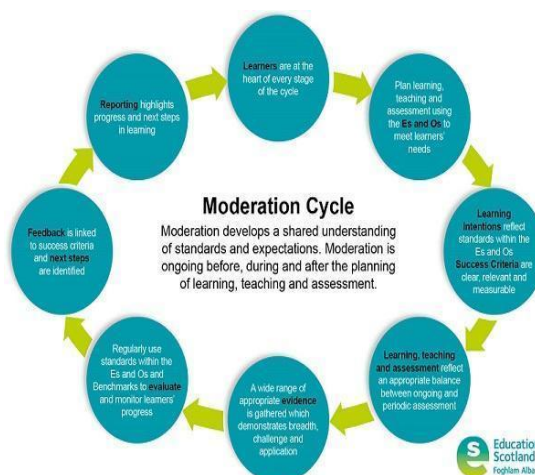
How do we moderate our assessment judgments?

The first stage of moderation in the Broad General Education is planning collegiately in order to ensure that the learning and teaching opportunities for students allow them to experience appropriate breadth, depth, challenge and application. Teachers will make informed judgments on student performance based on a shared agreement of assessment opportunities, using the national benchmarks. Faculties will ensure a wide range of high quality assessment with a shared understanding of what constitutes the achievement of a level and the nature of evidence required. Departments will ensure that assessment standards are applied consistently, using local and national support and resources, such as Network Subject Leaders, QAMSOs and SQA, as appropriate.

Within both the Broad General Education and Senior Phase, departments will participate in regular moderation opportunities throughout the academic session, as appropriate to the subject, in order to judge that standards are being consistently applied. These opportunities may include observation, video moderation or checking written work.

Staff will also be expected to participate in whole school opportunities to explore assessment standards and expectations across the curriculum for Experiences and Outcomes which are the responsibility of all - Literacy, Numeracy and Health & Well-Being.

‘...the process of moderation is not an activity that happens only at the end of a planning block or year – it is ongoing throughout the learning and teaching process.’



In the Broad General Education, staff judgments will focus on assessing skills, attributes and capabilities against the National Benchmarks, leading to achievement of a level. In the Senior Phase students will experience assessment practices, which lead to National Qualifications. Where possible, students will be involved in the process of co-constructing success criteria, to ensure they are fully engaged in how to achieve success.

Assessment across the curriculum should adhere to consistent principles of validity, reliability and manageability, but have the flexibility to be suitable for all subjects. It is essential that the assessment process is effective, efficient and not overly bureaucratic. We want students to produce their best work so that assessment is both meaningful and purposeful. Whilst singular assessments may be used, in line with national guidance, we promote high quality holistic assessment.

Assessment is used to track and monitor progress, which is reported to both students and parents at regular intervals. As part of the reporting process, students should engage in self-reflection, enabled by learner conversations, to identify their strengths and next steps.

Related Policies and Links

Select the link below to access related DHS policies in the School Policy folder on Google Drive:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/176N0xYSuDe3yj97F5fkVbumQHP31aj2R?usp=drive_link

Links

Professional Google Site

<https://sites.google.com/midlothian.education/teaching-and-learning/home>

DHS Lesson Evaluation Toolkit

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aDgOb84JiQ-tF8B_bEcdudNM2CEwyEOlahNp5d8gcO0/edit?usp=share_link

How Good Is Our School? 4th Edition

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/HGIQS4>

The Moderation Cycle

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/the-moderation-cycle>

The UNCRC

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

The Seven Principles: Child Rights-based Approach

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/child-friendly-cities/crba/>