

Courthouse Green Primary School
'Doing our best to be our best'

TEACHING, LEARNING and ASSESSMENT POLICY

"Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world"
Nelson Mandela

1. Rationale

This policy is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for teaching and learning at Courthouse Green Primary School. It is the method through which we offer a rigorous knowledge-led curriculum and its implementation is the responsibility of all the members of the school community. The aim of this document is to help the teachers in the school become the most effective practitioners they can be by using principles established from research, cognitive science and experience. The impact of quality teaching and learning is the progress pupils make and the outcomes they achieve.

2. Through our teaching we aim to:

- achieve deep understanding, by helping children connect new knowledge with existing knowledge so they are fluent and unconsciously competent at applying their knowledge as skills deliver academic excellence
- secure knowledge into long-term memory
- develop secure schemas with connected networks of ideas
- equip children with knowledge and cultural capital that they need to succeed in life
- give all pupils access to the best that has been thought and said and engender an appreciation of human achievement
- enable children to become confident and interested learners, actively engaged in their own learning
- develop children's awareness and appreciation of their own cultures and values and those of others
- develop our core values: pride, responsibility, collaboration, resilience, kindness and striving to improve

3. Strategies for Teaching and Learning

Our principles for teaching and learning are based upon Barak Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction¹

1. Begin a lesson with a short review of previous learning (Reactivation)

This might be a review of vocabulary, events or a previously learned concept or additional practice to learn facts and skills where overlearning is required to develop automatic recall. Effective teachers review knowledge that is essential for the lesson that could include multiple-choice quizzes, timed tests, counting activities or review knowledge organisers.

2. Present new material in small steps with pupil practice after each step: Only present small amounts of new material at any one time, and then assist pupils as they practice this material.

Our working memory can only hold a few bits of information at once - too much information over loads the working memory. The most effective teachers present only small amounts of new material at one time, and they teach in such a way that each point is mastered before the next point is introduced. They check pupil's understanding on each point and reteach when necessary.

3. Ask a LARGE number of questions and check the responses of ALL pupils: Questions help pupils practice new information and connect new material to their prior learning.

Questions provide necessary practice and allow a teacher to determine how well material has been learned and whether there is a need for additional instruction. This can also help to uncover misconceptions.

Teachers ask pupils to explain the process they used to find the answer. Teachers might ask pupils to:

- Tell the answer to a learning partner;
- Summarise the main idea in one or two sentences or repeat the procedures to a learning partner;
- Write the answer on a mini-whiteboard /ipad and hold it up;
- Explain how you worked out the answer;
- Raise hands or raise hands if they agree with an answer someone else has given.

4. Provide models: Providing pupils with models and worked examples can help them learn to solve problems faster.

Teacher modelling and thinking aloud while demonstrating how to solve a problem are examples of cognitive support. A worked example is a step-by-step demonstration of how to solve a problem or how to

perform a task. The presentation of worked examples begins with the teacher modelling and explaining the steps that can be taken to solve a specific problem. The teacher also identifies and explains the underlying principles for these steps.

5. **Guide pupil practice: After presentation of new material, the most successful teachers guide pupil practice.**

This might consist of the teacher working the first problems on the whiteboard, serving as a model for pupils. It could include a visualizer being used to demonstrate or a pupil working out a problem on the board. This provides additional models, more time for checking for understanding, asking questions and correcting errors and more time having pupils work out problems with teacher guidance. Pupils are then better prepared for independent work. Some pupils might receive further guided practice as part of a masterclass or guided group.

6. **Check for pupil understanding: Checking for pupil understanding at each point can help pupils learn the material with fewer errors.**

We frequently check to see if all pupils are learning the new material. They check for understanding by asking questions, by asking pupils to summarise the presentation up to that point, or to repeat directions or procedures. This helps pupils to make connections with other learning in their long-term memory and to alert the teacher to when parts of the material need to be retaught. Other ways to check for understanding are to ask pupils to think aloud while completing tasks or to explain or defend their position to others. This can help to limit misconceptions.

7. **Obtain a high success rate: It is important for pupils to achieve a high success rate during classroom instruction.**

Research suggests that the optimal success rate to be about 80% - as judged by oral responses during guided practice and individual work. It shows that pupils are learning the material and that they are being challenged.

8. **Provide scaffolds: The teacher provides pupils with temporary supports and scaffolds to assist them.**

Scaffolds are a form of guided practice. They include modelling the steps by the teacher or tools, such as cue cards, word banks, checklists to guide or evaluate their work, or a model of the completed task against which the pupil can compare their work. Others may be in the form of prompts – such as question stems to help pupils ask questions while they read or the opportunity to ask the teacher to think aloud when solving a problem. Teachers should carefully consider who needs what type of scaffold, rather than regularly provide the same scaffold to all.

9. **Require and monitor independent practice: Pupils need extensive, successful practice in order for skills and knowledge to become automatic and embedded in long-term memory.**

Independent practice is necessary because overlearning is needed in order to become fluent and automatic in the recall of knowledge or a skill. Independent practice should involve the same material as the guided practice and pupils should be fully prepared. Cooperative learning can increase achievement if it provides extra instruction through someone else (the other pupil) explaining the material to the pupil.

10. **Engage pupils in weekly and monthly review: Pupils need to be involved in extensive practice in order to develop well-connected automatic knowledge**

Pupils need extensive and broad reading and extensive practice in order to develop schema in their long-term memory. When one's knowledge on a particular topic is large and well-connected, it is easier to learn new information and prior knowledge is more readily available for use. Memory is more enduring when practice is spaced out as pupils need to forget a little to benefit from spaced practice.

4. Classroom Talk and Questioning

The central mechanism in effective classroom talk is good use of questioning.

Cold Calling:

Principle: All pupils should be involved in engaging with the teacher-pupil dialogue with time to think, and not be allowed to hide, dominate or be overlooked.

Practice: No hands up. Teachers ask questions and then select pupils to respond based on their knowledge of the class, avoiding the pitfalls of hands-up or calling out. This is an inclusive process that involves all pupils. It's not a one-off strategy; it should be routine and the default mode for most questions.

No Opt-Out:

Principle: Pupils should feel safe in answering when unsure but, if they don't know or get things wrong, they should

be given the opportunity to gain confidence by consolidating correct or secure answers. Also, pupils should not be allowed to opt out by saying 'I don't know'.

Practice: If a pupil or several pupils get an answer completely or partially wrong or they say they don't know, move to other pupils or provide the correct answer. But then go back to all those pupils who made errors or couldn't answer giving them a chance to now say the right answer. This gives them an opportunity for practice but if done routinely, it also means that pupils soon learn there is no value in offering 'I don't know' as a defence, in the hope of being left alone.

Checking for Understanding:

Principle: Teachers should not assume that knowledge has been secured. It is necessary to check for understanding of how much has been learned.

Practice: After any exposition or question exchange with a particular pupil, ask a number of others to relay back what they have understood. Even if they are answering a question that someone else has already answered, it's valuable for others to be given a chance to offer their version, showing what they have understood and, in so doing, giving the teacher feedback about how successful the teaching has been. It's especially powerful to ask multiple pupils, often yielding various different responses which throw up subtle points for further teaching.

Probing:

Principle: In order to explore a pupils' schema in any depth, you need to ask them several questions; asking several pupils one question each provides shallow responses compared to when each pupil has to provide multiple responses.

Practice: Aim to try 3-5 questions before moving on, probing for understanding, checking for misconceptions, adding extra challenge, providing scaffolding to engineer success.

Say it again, better:

Principle: It's normal for first responses to be half-formed as pupils think aloud and formulate ideas. A second opportunity to respond allows them to finesse their answers, adding depth, accuracy and sophistication. It's important not to inhibit pupils when they are unsure; it's also important not to allow them to assume mediocre answers are good enough.

Practice: When pupils offer a short, half-formed or partially incorrect answer, say, 'thanks, that's interesting....now say it again better. Try again but make sure you add in X and link it to idea Y' giving them an immediate opportunity to give an improved response. Modelling this for pupils is vital.

Think, Pair, Share: Them

Principle: In pairs, all pupils have space to think, to air their initial thoughts, to confess their lack of knowledge and to prepare to give good answers, to rehearse. They are all involved and subsequent discussions then have lots of material to explore.

Practice: Give the class a specific time-cued task – e.g. to decide on four main points in order of importance, in three minutes – get them all talking in pairs, with a reminder at after half the time has elapsed to allow their partner to talk, and then, on time, bring them back together with a signal. Then engage in probing, cold call questioning asking them to report back what their three points were.

Whole-Class Response:

Principle: Sometimes it is useful or even essential to get a response from every single pupil at the same time. This provides quick feedback to you as the teacher about the success of the relevant teaching and learning exchanges, identifies individuals who need further input and can help direct subsequent questions or exercises as you respond to the feedback you gain.

Practice: Mini-whiteboards /ipads are quick and allow for responses to multiple-choice questions as well as practice sentences, calculations and diagrams.

5. Metacognition

Awareness of ourselves as learners helps us to learn more effectively. Children are taught metacognitive practices so that they can tackle higher levels of challenge independently. Questioning and modelling are used to enable children to apply previous learning, make links about what they already know and understand how they will approach the task in front of them, monitoring their own progress as a learner.

6. Differentiation

Differentiation applies to the level of support and scaffolding learners need to reach common, aspirational goals. Not all learners learn things at the same-rate – some will need more help, more time or more guidance. In practical terms, differentiation involves setting the same learning objectives and planning different ways to support pupils to get there. Differentiation can involve:

1. Differentiation involves teachers sharing learning objectives and success criteria with children so that they can:
 - assume greater responsibility for their own learning
 - measure their own success and achievement
2. Scaffolding planned with guided practice leading to independent practice. Scaffolding could be in the form of distinct tasks or writing scaffolds for some pupils.
3. Providing appropriate help, possibly with different but carefully selected resources.
4. Providing distinct tasks.
5. Embedded tiering of tasks
6. Different modes of questioning and feedback, tailored to push pupils forward from wherever they are.

7. Planning

Teachers carefully plan learning opportunities that build on and deepen understanding, regularly requiring children to apply what they have learnt to a range of different contexts. Teachers plan regular learning checks throughout lessons to assess understanding and adapt the pitch and pace of learning where necessary. Planning includes a clear learning focus, range of questions, specific vocabulary, planned assessment opportunities, role of all adults within the lesson and the specific learning tasks for children

8. Evaluation and Assessment

Good assessment and evaluation improves the quality of teaching and learning and as such is integral to the whole process. In conjunction with this policy please also read the Feedback and Marking Policy and the Assessment Policy. The school particularly values assessment as an on-going process and uses Assessment for Learning strategies. Staff encourage pupils to self-assess and peer assess their work against the success criteria. Use of the plenary which should refer clearly to the learning objective. It should be an opportunity to reflect upon what has been learned and to revisit teaching points.

9. Effective Working with Learning Support Assistants

Learning Support Assistants should be informed of the specific needs of pupils and of medium term and weekly planning in order to understand the role they are to carry out. They must be given clear and explicit instructions as to the concepts, facts and information being taught and the intended learning outcomes.

10. The Learning Environment

In classrooms, there should always be a Working Wall which is updated each week with current work in maths and English. A flipchart should be used for modelled writing and examples of calculations for the pupils to refer back to. Other displays should reflect subjects currently taught. Use display and resources to positively impact on learning; through consolidation/reminder of previous learning and introducing new information and knowledge. Pupils should know how to easily access resources in the classroom to support learning. They should present practical resources related to their current curriculum, including artefacts from the school science and historical artefacts collection. This is to create both a sense of curiosity and wonder and concrete 3D examples for pupils to draw on. Pupils should know that they can access maths apparatus when they need it and should know where to find this. All displays should reflect the school's high expectations and ambition for all. All displays should reflect the school's emphasis on ambitious vocabulary.

Review

This policy is reviewed by staff and governors every three years.

Barak Rosenshine's

PRINCIPLES OF INSTRUCTION



A thematic interpretation for teachers by Tom Sherrington @teacherhead

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REVIEWING MATERIAL

1 Daily review



Daily review is important in helping to resurface prior learning from the last lesson. Let's not be surprised that students don't immediately remember everything. They won't! It's a powerful technique for building fluency and confidence and it's especially important if we're about to introduce new learning – to activate relevant prior learning in working memory.

10 Weekly and monthly review



QUESTIONING

3 Ask questions



The main message I always stress is summarised in the mantra: ask more questions to more students in more depth. Rosenshine gives lots of great examples of the types of questions teachers can ask. He also reinforces the importance of process questions. We need ask how students worked things out, not just get answers. He is also really good on stressing that asking questions is about getting feedback to us as teachers about how well we've taught the material and about the need to check understanding to ensure misconceptions are flushed out and tackled.

6 Check for student understanding



SEQUENCING CONCEPTS & MODELLING

2 Present new material using small steps



Small steps – with practice at each stage. We need to break down our concepts and procedures (like multi-stage maths problems or writing) into small steps so that each can be practised.

Models – including the importance of the worked-example effect to reduce cognitive load. We need to give many worked examples; too often teachers give too few.

4 Provide models



Scaffolding is needed to develop expertise – a form of mastery coaching, where cognitive supports are given – such as how to structure extended writing – but they are gradually withdrawn. The sequencing is key. Stabilisers on a bike are really powerful aids to the learning and confidence building – but eventually they need to come off.

8 Provide scaffolds for difficult tasks



STAGES OF PRACTICE

5 Guide student practice



Teachers need to be up close to students' initial attempts, making sure that they are building confidence and not making too many errors. This is a common weakness with 'less effective teachers'. Guided practice requires close supervision and feedback. High success rate – in questioning and practice – is important. Rosenshine suggests the optimum is 80%. i.e. high! Not 95-100% (too easy). He even suggests 70% is too low.

7 Obtain a high success rate



9 Independent practice



Independent, monitored practice. Successful teachers make time for students to do the things they've been taught, by themselves... when they're ready. "Students need extensive, successful, independent practice in order for skills and knowledge to become automatic"

