

Ullapool High School

Learning & Teaching Policy

2016 Update

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Ullapool High School
Learning & Teaching Policy

Rationale

Ullapool High School Learning & Teaching is firmly rooted in the principles laid out in the Curriculum for Excellence, complimented by a Highland Learning & Teaching toolkit. This can be downloaded from

www.hIGHLAND.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/6523/learning_policy

Curriculum Rationale

Curriculum for Excellence Describes Four Contexts for Learning: Totality of Experience			
Ethos and life of the School	Curriculum Areas and subjects	Interdisciplinary learning	Opportunities for personal achievement

CfE Describes Six Entitlements					
Coherent curriculum 3-18	Broad General Education including well planned 'E's & 'O's across all curriculum areas	Senior Phase providing opportunities for qualifications	Opportunity to develop Skills for Learning, Skills for Life, Skills for Work	Personal support & challenge	Opportunities to move into positive & sustained destinations beyond school

At Ullapool High School we have actively tried to engage with and implement the entitlements listed above, within those four contexts of learning. Our improvement planning process will consider how well we can address and build on each of these as we move into the future.

We will work in partnership with all our stakeholders and the wider community to continue to develop our totality of experience.

We will always aspire to the highest level of achievement for each youngster, delivered through high quality teaching and learning experiences.

When young people leave Ullapool High School they will be successful learners, effective contributors, responsible citizens and confident individuals. It is our intention that all of our young people will move on to the next stage of their lives in a sustained, positive destination.

All pupils will follow a broad general education in their first three years, with opportunities for specialisation and choice in all their courses but more formally in their third year, where in addition to their core areas they will have the ability to choose three areas of personal interest for further study, as well as two electives.

After third year pupils will enter the Senior Phase of their education at school. This will be the stage where National Qualifications are gained. This allows pupils to study subjects in depth and look to progress in the areas they enjoy and are successful with. Youngsters pick six subjects for study, the level of the award, not the age of young person, becomes the criteria for progression. The school will continue to develop opportunities for qualifications and experiences outside subject disciplines, as we take forward the Developing the Young Workforce agenda.

Wider Achievement

The school has a long tradition of offering outstanding opportunities for youngsters to excel outwith the formal curriculum. Athletics, Music, Art, Film Production, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, John Muir Award, Football, Netball, Futurechef and Engineering are just some of the areas for pupils that develop other strengths and interests. The Guidance team will encourage and monitor each youngster in this important aspect of their lives.

Key Principles

- Our school aims to transmit positive values for living and to provide education of the highest quality. These aims will be reflected in all our interactions with pupils. Thus what we expect from pupils will be consistent with the way we behave towards them on a regular basis.
- Every interaction in school contributes to a child's education. We will work collaboratively and consistently to ensure that our shared practice is coherent.
- Human beings have great potential and we cannot be sure of the learning limits of any child. We will work to ensure that not only do individuals want to succeed, but also each believes s/he can.
- We will value all kinds of abilities and cultivate pupils' strengths, whilst helping them work on their resilience to overcome challenge.
- Teachers have both the right and the responsibility to develop a climate in the classroom that supports effective learning.
- We are a restorative school. We seek to explain the benefits of good, collaborative, purposeful learning within the school and whilst we will seek to challenge behaviour that detracts from this, we will do so in a way that is not about punishment but rather is about making people understand the effect negative behaviour has, and making them accept the need to change
- Our expertise and experience matter. We will apply all aspects of this policy consistently throughout the school and reflect on whether improvements can be made.

Inclusion

No learner can be fully effective if he or she feels unhappy, troubled or insecure. It is the responsibility of the school community to ensure that each learner feels safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included.

Teachers have a central role in creating the right conditions for effective learning. Learners should not be subject to discrimination, intentional or otherwise, on the grounds of their social circumstances, gender, race, religion, cultural beliefs, ability or sexual orientation.

Engagement

Learners need motivation. They should have a significant reason for engaging in the learning process and positive feelings about involvement – be that their own personal satisfaction or external awards of some kind.

Teaching approaches and expectations should be suitably varied to include all types of learners. Learners should strive to use a variety of styles and adapt as necessary.

Appropriate tasks and activities are chosen to allow for different learning experiences, and to meet the widest range of pupil needs with the involvement of Support for Learning as appropriate.

Homework should be well planned and varied to include all learners. Account to be taken of identified needs of learners. (See UHS Homework Policy document)

Teachers' explanations should be clear and purposeful.

Teachers should consider ways of setting out learning intentions more explicitly to enable young people to understand clearly not only what they will do within the lesson but what they are expected to learn.

The purpose of activities should be shared with pupils, identifying prior learning and to allow learners to see where the theme is developing.

Teaching tasks should be related to real life experiences, where possible.

Participation and Dialogue

Learners should be encouraged to be active and take responsibility for their own learning and learning styles. They need to participate in the learning process. They should actively reflect on their own experiences, and develop their knowledge of their strengths and areas for improvement.

Learners should have the opportunity to work in a variety of circumstances involving individual as well as group work of different compositions and sizes.

There should be positive encouragement of co-operative working in class e.g. between boys/girls, different abilities and different cultural/ethnic and racial backgrounds.

All learners should be encouraged to be actively involved in self and peer assessment.

Teachers should, through collegiality, create learning communities within our school and develop other skills by visiting other staff teaching to obtain different perspectives and ideas.

Real understanding takes place when learners talk through what is to be learned and how far they have been successful in their learning. Learners should question, answer, expound, challenge, support propositions, offer alternatives, suggest solutions, self assess and peer assess.

Classroom Ethos

Ongoing surveys within the school tell us our young people's ideas about what makes a successful teacher:

- Aspirational – Believes in young people
- Assertive – Decisive and confident, firm but fair.
- Encouraging – Gives everyone a chance, praises your work,
- Enthusiastic – Believe in what they are teaching and enjoy their job.
- Humorous – Has a good sense of humour, has good craic
- Open – Can get along well with students – has good relationships.
- Respectful – Takes students' opinions into account,
- Knowledge of their subject

The classroom ethos should reflect the above attributes.

There should be a climate of fairness within which boundaries for acceptable behaviour are clearly defined.

“Excellence is a habit” - Socrates

CREATING AN ETHOS OF ACHIEVEMENT

- Value and care for all pupils.
- Cultivate and foster a teamwork ethos – consult and respond.
- Retain/build a positive, optimistic self-image (self and pupils).
- Celebrate successes (academic, sporting, musical, arts, caring).
- Challenge blame culture & cynicism.
- Celebrate good attendance. Encourage pupils to value coming to school.
- Enrich the curriculum with lots of opportunities outside the classroom.
- Use extensive and valued rewards system for the 'quiet and the good'.
- Give pupils responsibility at home and in school.
- Enable pupils to contribute to school's development – council, prefects, buddies.
- Enter competitions – local and national.
- Lead well – encourage a positive sense of identity and purpose from parents, pupils and colleagues.
- Enable colleagues to take risks and help them to be successful.
- Put robust systems in place for recognising and challenging underachievement.
- Continually develop a comfortable and pleasant environment – with achievement celebrated.
- Trust people – build excellent relationships.

Thinking

Learners need to think. This thinking should be critical and creative, robust and flexible. This can involve the use of language. Learners can construct ideas through language e.g. highlighting, decoding etc.

Learners should be positively critical: questioning, investigating, testing and seeking after the truth about themselves, others and the world in which they live. They should be creative: imagining, expressing and exploring the boundaries so that there are no limits to ambition.

Learners need time to be reflective in class, after lessons and after assessments.

Learners need both encouragement and challenge to build resilience and take ownership of their learning.

Teachers should be thinkers- reflective professionals – self aware, systematically evaluative and focusing on both self and learners' improvements.

Teachers should monitor the learning which goes on in the classroom more regularly and more explicitly at the end of learning episodes, think about it and evaluate its success.

The Learning Environment

The most effective learning environment is collaborative. This requires that the atmosphere be harmonious, engaging, restorative and aspirational, that the teacher promotes positive self-image and esteem, engages with children's positive emotions and recognises that individual learners have legitimately different learning needs.

All staff should:

- *Know and act upon Child protection Guidelines*
- *Provide a safe and secure environment*
- *Plan lessons to develop the skills and knowledge of all members of the class*
- *Treat each pupil as an individual, seek their views and act on them*
- *Give feedback and set targets*
- *Encourage pupils and give praise and/or rewards for effort*

Some examples of good practice include:

Negotiate a brief written agreement with each class that specifies how the pupils in the group will work hard, safe and fair.

Exemplify your assessment standards by displaying pupil work. (What does a grade 1,2 3 etc mean in practice?)

Use visual displays of subject material. This improves long-term retention.

Be flexible in interactions with pupils – no single style approach is best.

Over time, try to notice and state something positive about each person.

Emphasise core generic skills (numeracy, reading, writing, spelling and presentation) across all subjects.

Ask pupils for verbal and written feedback on their experiences of the learning environment.

Professional Standards

All staff should actively engage with the professional standards through Professional Update

<http://www.gtcs.org.uk/standards/standards.aspx>

Some advice for new teachers

Lesson Structure

We recognise that lessons may have a different character throughout the school. However there are elements of widely established good practice that should be part of every teacher's routine. This helps build good habits within the pupil body and means that there is less need for expectations to be explained at the start of every lesson, if all staff are looking for the same.

A lesson begins when the teacher welcomes and settles in pupils. It ends when the teacher dismisses the class after the 'bell rings'. Each lesson should have a clear beginning, middle and an end (even if this is abbreviated to stress its continuity with previous work).

- Greet pupils. Be welcoming.
- Verify/record late coming. Record attendance.
- Set the big picture. Describe what the lesson will be about.
- Connect the learning. Find and make explicit the links between what's to come and with what went before.
- Describe the outcomes. Tell the pupils what they will have achieved by the end of the lesson or invite them to set out their own outcomes. Use positive language '*by the end of the lesson you will be able to...*'.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to learn in different ways (visually, listening, writing doing etc).
- During the main work of the lesson, break the routine for younger pupils by changing nature of the activity.
- Shortly before the end, review what the lesson was about, describe (or ask pupils to describe) its big ideas.
- Make links with skills displayed and learned.
- When the 'bell' goes, calmly guide the pupils out of the department.

Managing Classroom Behaviour

Schools have better behaviour if they are proactive, aiming to prevent and pre-empt difficulties, have a strong sense of community and have teachers who collaborate and promote pupil autonomy.

- Manage your classroom creatively, not only the physical layout but also the social structure and the psychological setting.
- Use restorative practice techniques to allow the focus on addressing misbehaviour to be that the pupil recognises what they have done wrong and that they know how to address this in future.
- Ask for help and advice.
- Apply the school's disciplinary procedures consistently.

Other Issues

- Each youngster's expectations are influenced by the school's overall ethos of achievement. Our positive ethos will be up-front and obvious throughout the school.
- The achievement of gifted individuals is sometimes constrained by structural factors such as timetabling, age & stage issues and the demands of class teaching. We will be flexible and pragmatic in our provision to provide opportunities for youngsters to excel.
- People learn in different ways and therefore our teaching methods will reflect this.
- Encourage review at home. Some 80% of knowledge is lost within 24 hours because the learner doesn't think about the learning.
- Encourage the use of memory maps for note taking. By using colour, bold images and space on the page, pupils build up their own way of making sense of the material.
- Homework tasks should emphasise quality, not quantity.

Assessment is for Learning

Effective assessment informs and supports the learning and teaching process, helping to raise attainment and achievement. All involved should understand and take appropriate account of the three main types of assessment

Assessment *for* learning is essentially formative. It is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence so that learners, parents/carers and teachers can decide, through high quality dialogue, where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go next and how best to get there.

In effective assessment *as* learning, learners through self and peer evaluation identify and reflect about their own evidence of learning. Personal learning planning provides a supportive framework for these purposes.

Assessment *of* learning is essentially summative. It is about measuring, analysing and reporting performance. Effective assessment of learning provides information about individual skills and knowledge leading to awards, which are passports to opportunities in life, work and education.

Further reading

See Appendix 1

Parental Engagement

Our school recognises that “parents, carers and families are by far the most important influences on children’s lives” and that “parents who take on a supportive role in their children’s learning make a difference in improving achievement and behaviour”¹. The benefits of parental involvement have been shown by many studies and include greater self-esteem and self-discipline for their children, improved interactions between parents and children, higher morale for teaching staff and better community support for the school.² As such we hope that parents will:

- take opportunities to participate in school life, from one-off assistance to regular activities.
- think about how their child learns and what they can do at home to support their child’s development and seek advice from the school where required.
- monitor their child’s homework performance and encourage engagement in this.
- facilitate their child’s revision and preparation for exams, seeking advice when appropriate.
- be active partners with the school in making sure the best educational opportunities are available for all pupils.

1 Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006: Guidance p5.

2 The Benefits of Parent Involvement: What Research Has To Say. G.Olson & M.L.Fuller. July 2010, education.com/reference/article/benefits-parent-involvement-research/

Appendix 1

Advice for New Teachers Section –

“Describe the Outcome” – link to Education Scotland website,.

Online version -

https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.educationscotland.gov.uk%2Fimages%2FWhatmakesagoodLearningIntention_tcm4-660845.doc

AifL Activities suggestions

- The Teacher’s Toolkit (Paul Ginnis)
- Pimp Your Lesson (Isabella Wallace and Leah Kirkman)
- 100 Ideas for Secondary Teachers (Ross Morrison McGill)

These texts not only talk about the importance of plenary tasks (and AifL as a whole) but also give ideas for different tasks which can be edited and applied in a variety of curriculum areas.

“Managing Classroom Behaviour – Getting them to Behave” (Sue Cowley)

Other Ideas –

- “People learn in different ways” – Visible Learning (John Hattie)*
- Visible Learning and the Science of How We Learn (John Hattie and Gregory Yates)*
- Assessment and Learning (John Gardner)*
- Inside the Black Box (Black and William): <http://weaeducation.typepad>
- Working Inside the Black Box: <http://datause.cse.ucla.edu/Docs/pb-wor-2004.pdf>

* (These titles are available as e-books on the GTCS website and can be downloaded as PDFs) <http://www.gtcs.org.uk> Research Tab beside “Profiles”