



Teaching and Learning Charter

2024 - 2025

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Chair of Governors: Mr S Fitz-Gerald

Blackfen School for Girls

The Context

The Teaching and Learning Charter is at the heart of everything we do at Blackfen. We provide all of our students and staff with an outstanding learning environment in which aspirations can be raised and potential released and a culture of Growth Mindsets encouraged. The expectations outlined in the Teaching and Learning Charter will link in and be referred to in all self-evaluation including learning walks and work scrutinies.

Rationale

The school aims to become an outstanding teaching and learning school within a Growth Mindsets culture. The Charter incorporates the philosophy of Blackfen as to what outstanding teaching and learning looks like. All teaching staff should produce elements of the Charter in their classrooms.

Statement of Intent

The Charter is certainly not a straitjacket but gives some ideas of what constitutes a Blackfen lesson. The aim of the Charter is to challenge all stakeholders to inculcate an ethos of excellence in the classroom, to enable our students to leave Blackfen as confident and independent young people who are happy to embrace change and appreciate that success in learning is down to a positive and active response to feedback, hard work and an understanding of the learning opportunities presented by 'failure'. Teachers should encourage students to show **PRIDE, Positivity, Resilience, Introspection, Determination** and an understanding of the need for Effort.

Planning for Learning and Progress

- Blackfen believes that lesson planning is the key to learning
- All planning carried out by teaching staff, whether for an entire key stage, a specific scheme of learning or an individual lesson should have clear learning objectives and success criteria which reflect students' prior learning and future potential.
- All planning should show awareness of students' prior learning and possible misconceptions
- All planning should allow opportunities for retrieval practice
- All planning should allow all students to make progress
- All planning should consider the individual needs of the students in the class and take into consideration the ways in which students learn best and show evidence of the use of the Bexley Toolkit
- All planning should demonstrate a teacher understanding of the key conceptual knowledge needed by students to make progress

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- All planning should address gaps in knowledge or additional practice, as required, so that students' learning is embedded and secure, as is their readiness for new learning.
- All planning should help students to develop a Growth Mindset and promote an ethos of excellence
- All planning should provide regular opportunities for formative assessment

Every Lesson Counts

Every lesson should strive towards expert teaching and be built around 6 key principles

1. **Challenge so that** students have high expectations of what they can achieve
2. **Explanation so that** students acquire new knowledge and skills
3. **Modelling so that** students know how to apply the knowledge and skills
4. **Practice so that** students have the opportunity to hone their new knowledge and skills
5. **Questioning so that** students are made to think hard with breadth, depth and accuracy
6. **Feedback so that** students think about and further develop their knowledge and skills¹

Most of all the Growth Mindset philosophy of Blackfen should be adhered to and students encouraged to take risks and learn from their mistakes.

Every lesson should include:

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO LEARN?

- Learning Objectives should be communicated to students with **passion**
- Teachers must explain how this lesson fits in with the bigger picture of the scheme of learning or exam specification and refers to prior learning that students have undertaken

HOW ARE WE GOING TO LEARN?

- Teachers should use a variety of activities and teaching and learning methods
- Teachers should think about using a challenging starter activity which sets the challenging tone for the remainder of the lesson.
- Teachers should adapt learning tasks which suit the needs of individual students and challenge them to make better progress
- Teachers should ensure that students have a clear understanding of any success criteria for work they are completing

¹ Shaun Allison and Andy Tharby, Making Every Lesson Count (2018)

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- Teachers should build in activities that place students in the ‘pit’ but provide scaffolding to help students out of the ‘pit’
- Teachers should endeavour to use low risk testing to help students memorise prior learning and knowledge

WHY ARE WE LEARNING THIS?

- Teachers should endeavour to make the learning relevant to everyday life
- Teachers must make it clear what’s in it for the students? “We are learning this because...”
- Teachers should link learning to prior lessons or learning in other subjects to enable students to improve their recall skills and make a change to their long-term memory

HOW will I know I have learned this?

- Teachers should use regular formative assessment throughout the lesson.
- There should be modelling of work by teachers and students
- Teachers and students should make regular reference to the original learning objectives and success criteria
- Blackfen School uses DIRT: Dedicated Improvement and Reflection Time
- There should be regular marking and feedback in line with Blackfen’s assessment policy, both written and oral. All feedback should generate a reaction and a response and re-drafting of work is positively encouraged. Students should be made to understand that feedback is a vital learning tool and is the basis for improvement. It is vital that students are given the opportunity to practice their new learning.

All of the above should be underpinned by a positive classroom learning environment

- Teachers should meet and greet their class promptly at the start of the lesson. This is especially important after morning break and lunchtime
- Teachers should develop good relationships with students, “warm strict”
- Staff should be approachable
- Teachers must set out clear classroom expectations and create clear classroom routines that students understand and follow
- All staff must adhere to the behaviour charter to promote consistency
- Teachers organise class layout and groupings in a way which is beneficial to ALL learners
- Teachers use the language of Growth Mindsets, “I know you can...”, and “You can do it.” “What help do you need? “, “Which BIT can’t you do

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YET?” “Show me what you’ve done and let’s figure out what you can try next”

- Staff reward resilience and responding to feedback by using the school reward system
- Praise should refer to the effort and learning process rather than intelligence

Teachers should have a structured start; clear active phase and frequent consolidation

It is essential for teachers to meet and greet students promptly at the start of a lesson. This helps settle students and encourages other students in the corridor to get to lessons on time.

During the active phase, staff, with the aid of relevant data, will plan lessons that could include a range of adapted activities that enables all students to access higher levels. **No ceiling should be set on what progress students can make in a lesson.** Teachers should use the latest research on planning such as Pips McCrea on ‘Lean Lesson Planning’² and Rosenshine’s Principles of Instruction³ to aid them in their planning. Teachers should also make use of the **Bexley Quality First Teaching and Special Educational Needs Support Toolkit** in meeting the needs of all their students

Students should be challenged to think for themselves. Students should be encouraged to not fear failure. Teachers should aim to put students in ‘the pit’ in their activities and then teach students strategies they can use to get out of ‘the pit’ in all lessons. Indeed, students successfully overcoming failure should be celebrated.

The consolidation phase (DIRT) will give students an opportunity to reflect on their learning, being given the opportunity to practice their new-found knowledge and skills⁴ and allowing the teacher to adapt and amend their future planning accordingly. Lesson Plans should not be set in stone, effective teachers use their judgement of progress to adapt the original plan and objectives.

² Pips McCrea, Lean Lesson Planning (2015)

³ Tom Sherrington, Rosenshine’s Principles in Action (2019)

⁴ Doug Lemov

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Teachers should use a variety of activities and teaching methods

Students should start learning straight away with a focussing task that taps into their emotions and arouses their curiosity and recaps on their previous learning. It is always a good idea to think about having students recall learning from previous lessons/weeks/terms

To fully engage and motivate students, a variety of tasks should be incorporated into schemes of learning which colleagues know have the most impact on learning. These ideas should be shared amongst colleagues as much as possible in subject/faculty meetings as time allows

Questioning

Teachers are encouraged at Blackfen to use the 'hands down' technique when questioning students. This allows the teacher to assess the understanding of all the students in their class rather than asking for hands up. This also allows the teacher to differentiate their questions so that suitable questions are asked of individual students. Some teachers use items such as rubber balls and lollipop sticks to facilitate this and ensure that ALL the class join in with oral work.

Questions are to be used to deepen and develop student learning. Questions are also used to test understanding or recall knowledge. Questions to be asked of students should be as well planned as the activities to be used. Effective lessons have students challenging and asking their peers questions. Teachers try to encourage this. Teachers should encourage students to listen to each other and to evaluate each other's' responses. Questions can be defined as being lower cognitive questions and higher cognitive questions.⁵ The former are for knowledge recall and the latter 'require students to manipulate their knowledge in order to support a logically reasoned response'.⁶

Share the Success Criteria

Teachers share with students the different ways they can demonstrate they have met the learning objectives. Teachers discuss exemplar work with their classes. Modelling thinking and learning strategies to students can be a very effective use of lesson time. It is vital that teachers explain their thought

⁵ Kathleen Cotton, Classroom Questioning, School Improvement Research series 3, (2001)

⁶ Chris Runeckles, Making Every History Lesson Count (2018)

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processes aloud to model the metacognition that is needed to complete a piece of work to a high standard.

Assessment and Marking

All work that is formally assessed should include **What Went Well** and **Even Better If**

More importantly Teachers should be looking for evidence that students have used the feedback to improve future work. This evidence should be highlighted to the whole class

Teachers aim to find time in their lessons to give students verbal feedback.

Teachers try to develop lots of peer and self-assessment opportunities.
Teachers use the 'Full Fat' feedback sheets to be found in student planners

Teachers must follow Blackfen's assessment policy of having at least one piece of levelled or graded work per half term for foundation subjects and two pieces for core subjects.

Teacher's praise should focus on the effort and learning process that has taken place. Teachers should avoid telling students they are clever or smart.

Students should be given the opportunity to practice the new knowledge or skills they have been taught and redraft original work. There should be regular opportunities for students to carry out this deliberate practice

Home Learning

Teachers design home learning tasks with a great deal of thought and planning. Do they help to inform students, staff and parents of the progress students are making? Do they allow students to be challenged? Motivated? The school's home learning policy needs to be adhered to. As a reminder;

Years 7/8

Core subjects 1 hour per week

Foundation subjects 30 minutes per fortnight

Year 9

Core subjects 1.5 hours per week

Foundation subjects 45 minutes per fortnight

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Years 10/11

Core subjects 2 hours per week

Foundation subjects 1 hour per week

Years 12/13

All subjects 3 hours per week

It is up to Faculty Leaders whether they wish to conflate the number of home learning hours for a half term or term and set a project. However, if extended or project home learning is set then it is important that students continue to record in their Learning Journals that this is occurring so that parents are aware that home learning in that subject is still being set on a regular basis. Home learning is an important part of the learning journey; it provides an opportunity for student reflection, consolidation and independent thinking. Home learning tasks are carefully planned to develop the key skills across the curriculum. Home learning can also be used to enable teachers to use the evidence of cognitive science on spaced or distributed practice ⁷, for example set home learning tasks that are about previous work. Look at this model below;⁸

Main Teaching Tasks	Weekly home Learning Schedule, repeat every 4 weeks
Topic 1	Topic 1, topic 1, topic 1, topic 1
Topic 2	Topic 2, topic 1, topic 1, topic 1
Topic 3	Topic 2, topic 1, topic 2, topic 1
Topic 4	Topic 3, topic 2, topic 1, topic 4

⁷ John Dunlosky, Strengthening the Student Toolbox: Study Strategies to Boost Learning, American Educator (2013)

⁸ Chris Runeckles, Making Every History Lesson Count (2018)