



# **Blackfen School for Girls**

Raising aspirations - releasing potential

# **TEACHING AND LEARNING CHARTER**

**INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS**

**SEPTEMBER 2020**

## 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 scrutiny's.

## 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**, **P**ositivity, **R**esilience, **I**ntrospection, **D**etermination and an understanding of the need for **E**ffort.

## 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 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.
- All planning should help students to develop a Growth Mindset and promote an ethos of excellence

## 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

# Blackfen School for Girls

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 skills <sup>1</sup>

## 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

### **HOW** ARE WE GOING TO LEARN?

- Teachers should use a variety of activities and teaching and learning methods
- Teachers should use a structured start and a clear active phase
- Teachers should plan differentiated 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
- 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 Assessment for Learning 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

---

<sup>1</sup> Shaun Allison and Andy Tharby, Making Every Lesson Count (2018)

## **Blackfen School for Girls**

- 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
- Teachers should develop good relationships with students, “warm strict”
- Staff should be approachable
- Teachers must set out clear classroom expectations
- 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 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 communicate Learning Objectives to students explicitly**

The teacher must explain the purpose of the lesson. Students are more likely to achieve if they know what they are expected to produce by the end of each task.

Learning Objectives must be referred to throughout the lesson and in marking and feedback.

### **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 differentiated activities that enables all students to access higher levels. **No ceiling should be set on what progress students can make in a lesson.**

# Blackfen School for Girls

Teachers should use the latest research on planning such as Pips McCrea on 'Lean Lesson Planning'<sup>2</sup> and Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction<sup>3</sup> to aid them in their planning

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 skills<sup>4</sup> 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.

## **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. This could be in the form of low stress tests or quizzes

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.

## **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. Outstanding lessons have students challenging and asking their peers questions. Teachers try to encourage this.

---

<sup>2</sup> Pips McCrea, Lean Lesson Planning (2015)

<sup>3</sup> Tom Sherrington, Rosenshine's Principles in Action (2019)

<sup>4</sup> Doug Lemov

# Blackfen School for Girls

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.<sup>5</sup> The former are for knowledge recall and the latter 'require students to manipulate their knowledge in order to support a logically reasoned response'.<sup>6</sup>

## 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 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

---

<sup>5</sup> Kathleen Cotton, Classroom Questioning, School Improvement Research series 3, (2001)

<sup>6</sup> Chris Runeckles, Making Every History Lesson Count (2018)

# Blackfen School for Girls

## 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

### 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 Student Planners 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 <sup>7</sup>, for example set home learning tasks that are about previous work. Look at this model below;<sup>8</sup>

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

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

<sup>8</sup> Chris Runeckles, Making Every History Lesson Count (2018)

### **Addendum: The Teaching and Learning Charter in a time of Remote Learning**

It is clear that the underlying principles of the Teaching and Learning Charter still apply even in a time of great change in the way that teachers deliver their curriculum. Over the last few months we have had to grapple with new ways of teaching and children and ensuring that their learning is meaningful and memorable. It is also evident that some of the practices described in this charter are not possible. However, outlined below are some of the principles that should still be possible using remote learning.

1. Learning assigned to students remotely needs to be **challenging** and ensure that we still have high expectations of what we expect our students to achieve. You could still point to students some websites they can reference to build up their subject knowledge
2. Our **Explanation** of the work needs to be clear and ensure that students are able to gain new knowledge and skills. Indeed, our explanation can be even more effective especially using technology such as Loom videos as we can edit our explanations. We don't have the students in front of us but if we use video technology then students can pause or rewind explanations from us, a luxury denied them in person to person teaching.
3. We can still **model** what we expect from them. One of the most effective things we can do is to show them again using Loom videos or live teaching on teams our own thought processes if we were completing the task they have been set. We can use Teams to share exemplar work from the students. We can attach work that previous years have completed to show them the standards we expect from them. (This also applies to challenge in **1**. Above.
4. If the curriculum is blended then why not use the time that students are not in to **practice** the new knowledge and skills that you have been teaching them in person to person teaching. Make their home learning meaningful by giving them the opportunity to redraft, to practice writing introductions, to practice how to solve quadratic equations.
5. Even **questioning** can be carried out effectively in remote teaching. Live stream your questions and give them time to answer immediately. Video yourself asking increasingly challenging questions and get them to pause after each question and answer. If teaching live ask questions and get students to show their work to the camera for you to assess how well they have done. Why do you think that? How did you come to that answer? What else could you add to that? These are questions that we can still set students even if teaching remotely.
6. There is no doubt that feedback on remote work can still be given and that feedback can be given much more immediately than in face to face teaching at times. It is highly effective to give feedback to the whole group using video technology paying particular attention to the more challenging work and showing them how to solve the problem that you have set and giving students specific feedback on how to improve their work.



## **Blackfen School for Girls**

Lesson should still be designed that have clear learning objectives and follow the procedure on learning objectives set out above.

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