

# **The Blackfen Teaching and Learning Charter**

## **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 Faculty Review weeks, lesson observations and learning walks.

## **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 of our teachers to aim for excellence every day and to allow 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'.

## **Planning for Learning and Progress**

- 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 take into account the individual needs of the students in the class and taking into consideration the ways in which students learn best.
- All planning should help students to develop a Growth Mindset and to embrace the challenges of learning.

### **Every Lesson Counts**

**Every lesson must allow students to make progress.** Students who arrive with  $x$  amount of skills or knowledge must leave with  $x+1$  or  $x+2$  or more. There should be no ceiling to learning based upon prior attainment and all lessons must have a **learning challenge**. The quality of the learning must be regularly checked and consolidated.

### **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?

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

- Teachers use a variety of activities and teaching and learning methods
- Teachers use a structured start and a clear active phase
- Teachers 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'

## **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..."

## **HOW** will I know I have learned this?

- Teachers use regular Assessment for learning throughout the lesson. Teachers and students should use the Formative Assessment boxes that are found in every classroom to help with this
- There should be modelling of work by teachers and students
- Teachers and students should make constant 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, both written and oral. Teachers may wish to have students respond to this feedback and 'Talkback' can be a vital part of lesson planning. All feedback should be recorded by using tools such as verbal feedback stamps. Teacher and student responses could also be sound recorded and used as evidence of the impact of feedback on student progress.

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

- Teachers 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 should demonstrate open body language
- Teachers must set out clear classroom expectations
- All staff should be prepared to be flexible
- Teachers organise class layout and groupings in a way which is beneficial to ALL learners

- Classrooms should have display material which is referred to in the lesson
- 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 must make use of the Behaviour Charter to enable ALL students to make progress in a positive learning environment
- Teachers must refer to the Rules for Learning

### **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 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.**

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, demonstrating the progress they have made during the lesson and allowing the teacher to adapt and amend their lesson 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.

To fully engage and motivate students a variety of tasks should be incorporated into the lesson.

### **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. 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 challenge students' learning. Teachers ask students to explain how and why rather than using closed questions that are just used for recall of 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. Teachers should encourage students to listen to each other and to evaluate each other's' responses.

## **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.

## **Assessment and Marking**

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

Teachers may encourage their students to comment on their **Even Better If**. More importantly Teachers should be looking for evidence that students have used the feedback to improve future work.

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 students' learning journals and in the Formative Assessment boxes to be found in every classroom.

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.

## **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 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.