

# Teaching & Learning Policy

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## Control Sheet

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Version 1	May 2022	Rob Carradice	New Policy
Version 2	March 2025	John Pacey	Revised Policy Incorporated Homework Policy

## 1 Aims

Teaching and Learning is at the heart of all we do. Our aim is to deliver outstanding teaching that enables outstanding learning for all students, so that knowledge is embedded, and disadvantage is not a barrier. We want all our students to reach their potential, so that they are well placed for life beyond school. We aim to ensure confident, happy and resilient students, who treat others with kindness and respect. We have high expectations of our learners and therefore the quality of teaching that they receive. We aim to see measurable impact of high-quality teaching in the outcomes and attainment of our students at incremental stages in their school year as well as in public examinations at the end of Key Stages 4 and 5. In the Northern Leaders Trust we firmly believe that:

- Every student is entitled to high quality teaching, irrespective of educational and social needs and no matter what their entry level.
- Every lesson should be engaging, full of new learning opportunities as well as building on and retrieving prior knowledge.
- Identification and re-teaching of common misconceptions is paramount to student success, particularly for students with pre-existing gaps in foundational knowledge.
- Every student should be stretched and challenged to the appropriate level to ensure that their potential is reached and to allow them to compete with their peers around the country.
- Student independence and resilience should be developed at every opportunity so that they develop a whole host of problem-solving strategies.
- Every classroom will reflect our core beliefs and values and lessons will reflect our belief in GREAT teaching (**G**uided and independent practice, **R**etrieval, **E**xtended learning, **A**ssessment and feedback, **T**argeted support)
- The professional development of all staff is central to our aims. A bespoke Professional Learning Programme has been developed to allow teachers to opt in to an aspect of the Academy Improvement Plan that best fits their needs as practitioners as well as affording staff opportunities to pursue their individual research.
- Teachers will model high quality meta-cognitive oracy and literacy and constantly elicit fully extended responses from students in order to close the vocabulary gap that exists on entry in Year 7.

## 2 Expectations

Teaching and Learning Model

Our philosophy on teaching and learning is two-fold: A four-part learning cycle and a firm belief in GREAT teaching.

- Teachers are expected to use the four-part learning cycle to plan and deliver lessons. A structured learning cycle is proven to help disadvantaged learners and teachers must share the ‘why’, ‘when’, ‘how’ of learning by verbalizing the cycle with their classes. This also provides a structured way for staff to reflect upon and learn from their experiences, promoting the investigation of new ideas and sharing of good practice with colleagues. The cycle is split into four distinct stages: **Connect, Learn, Apply, Review.**



The 'Connect' section focuses on connecting to prior learning through retrieval tasks, connecting to the lesson in question as an emotional hook or engagement activity and also suggests a connection between teacher and students as they meet and greet each other at the classroom door. This section of the learning cycle will include:

- Explicit teaching of vocabulary: Teachers will ensure that students are actively thinking hard about one key word per cycle, within the context of their subject. Students will encounter and use these words continually across the learning cycle, following a relatively short (approx. 1 minute) introduction during 'Connect'.
- Why this, why now: At the start of each unit of work, teachers will help students make explicit links to prior knowledge, future teaching, and other areas across and outside of the academic curriculum; helping students to see the relevance of what they are learning and/or how it is rooted in British Values and life beyond the classroom (careers, future education and training).

The "Learn" section is where new knowledge and skills are taught. The teacher will use a variety of strategies to model, explain and demonstrate (The "I do, we do, you do" or "WAGOLL" part of teaching and learning). Teachers will use techniques such as cold-call questioning, mini-whiteboards and visualisers, to ensure active listening, clear explanations and/or dynamic no-stakes assessment. Identification of misconceptions, scaffolding and extension of learning will take place continually, as needed.

The "Apply" section is where students practice what they have been taught independently. This is a crucial part of the lesson where teachers champion intense, timed tasks and work completion to the best of the student's ability. As such, students will work in silence in the vast majority of cases. Extended pieces are produced and progress and misconceptions are quickly spotted thanks to opportunities for 'live' marking.

The "Review" section is where the teacher has a final opportunity to check that the students have secured the desired learning. A final plenary allows for further assessment of learning and informs future planning and allows for misconceptions to be dealt with at the next possible opportunity.

A more detailed subject-specific approach to each section of the learning cycle may be agreed between middle and senior leaders - set out clearly in departmental policy documents. We believe that highly effective teaching is encapsulated by the acronym "GREAT":

Guided and independent learning  
Retrieve, review, re-teach, re-do  
Extend learning & vocabulary  
Assessment, questioning and feedback  
Targeted support

### 3 Planning

All teachers are expected to plan lessons for the classes they teach using our 4-part cycle. Teachers should adapt the scheme of learning that accompanies the topic to suit the needs and starting points of the learners in their class. Should lessons be pre-set in departmental areas, it is the teacher's responsibility to review in advance and alter as necessary to suit the class being taught. Particularly successful tweaks should be shared with colleagues who can add this to their repertoire at a future date. Sequences of learning should reflect the day to day planning that teachers do, reflecting on what has worked in the lesson or where misconceptions were noted and need reviewing in the next lesson. Staff must also be aware of the most up to date data; seating plans must be carefully considered and regularly changed; any information in SEND and EAL learning plans must be adhered to; and GREAT strategies are to be employed where appropriate, particularly regarding our Pupil Premium students, as these reflect the evidence base presented by a number of sources including the EEF.

### 4 Marking and feedback

We expect all feedback and marking to be manageable, meaningful and motivating and used to offer students opportunities to progress whilst informing teacher planning. EEF research places feedback to students as one of the most cost-effective ways to improve student outcomes.

We expect teachers to adopt the '7 pillars of effective feedback', including 'live' marking in lessons. The marking of longer pieces of student work is to be used where colleagues believe that it is motivating and meaningful and will result in further student progress.

At the end of each unit of work, students will complete a 'Key Apply Task' to assess what has been understood and can be applied in the short-term. Subject-specific processes are set out in departmental policy documents.

Marking of assessments continues as usual during formal assessment periods.

### 5 Presentation of student workbooks

Each lesson students will glue a '**Connect**' sheet into their book, accompanied by an underlined date and title. In most cases this will be a single sided A4 sheet including the 'Connect task' and key word. All student written work will be completed in blue/black pen, with diagrams drawn in pencil and self/peer assessment in green – to differentiate from 'live' marking, completed in red by school staff. To maximise productive time in lessons, teaching staff will ensure that necessary equipment is readily available to students as soon as they enter the room. Additional

subject-specific presentation standards may be agreed between middle and senior leaders - set out clearly in departmental policy documents.

## 6 Quality Assurance

We have a robust system in place to ensure that we retain high quality and consistency in our expectations across the curriculum. This is led by the Principal and is supported by the senior and middle leadership team. Departmental QA is carried out by SLT, HODs and TLR holders, including walkthroughs, book samples and student voice.

## 7 NLT Digital Platform & Home Learning

To support any students who wish to review the enacted curriculum outside of lesson time, and as a failsafe in the event of required home learning, all class teaching materials are stored within the NLT Digital Platform on a lesson-by-lesson basis. These materials will be accessible to all students remotely via internet connection and will contain a mixture of presentations/worksheets used in class, alongside signposting to online resources which support understanding and independent practice in lieu of in-person teacher delivery. All teaching staff will save adapted lesson content directly within the platform, removing the potential for duplication of resources.

Completed lesson resources, including adaptations from core planning, are saved in the staff folder of the relevant subject area for students, providing a library of lessons that both student and teacher can refer back to. Students can use these to revisit lessons from home or from other areas of the school (e.g. PLC, PDC, Bridge) if necessary.

## 8 Homework

Current research suggests that the most effective homework tends to be preparation for future learning and completion of specific tasks with clear criteria for success.

Students are encouraged to engage in extra-curricular activities alongside their studies. It is important therefore that any homework set has a clear purpose and that both parents and teachers encourage students to seek support if they are finding it difficult to manage expectations around additional study outside of the classroom.

It is important to note that there is no expectation that homework will be set every lesson; if there is nothing appropriate to set at that time, then the teacher is not required to set work.

**Under normal circumstances, it is not appropriate to set homework overnight.**

### Key Stage 3

In order to support students in the gradual building of independent study habits, and allow for further exploration beyond the intended curriculum, each subject area can provide half-termly 'Above and Beyond' tasks, alongside any weekly homework to consolidate curriculum learning in the classroom. Outside of subscriptions to self-marking online platforms, weekly homework

should follow a structure of self-quizzing - using existing knowledge organisers – with success measured by a fortnightly low-stakes quiz in ‘Connect’. Completion of tasks will be rewarded through the Praise System using Class Charts and the use of Homework Postcards. Teachers should also consider department awards and nominations for the Principal Award and WOW Awards to create a positive culture around additional study.

#### Key Stage 4

To reflect the needs and requirements of nationally standardised qualifications, homework tasks will be set in all appropriate courses for a minimum of 30 minutes every week, including school holidays. English, maths and science will set 1 hour of work weekly. Where online platforms and knowledge organiser quizzes are not suitable, it is recommended that staff set activities including past paper exam questions, use of revision guides, and/or any background reading.

#### Key Stage 5

As students concentrate their studies towards a more focused set of A Level and vocational courses, the recommended amount of homework for each subject is 90 minutes per week in Year 12 and 120 minutes per week in Year 13, with time split between teacher-directed tasks and independent study. Activities could include but are not restricted to: exam or essay questions, recommended further reading, supplementary research and revision of class notes.

## **9 Professional Development**

Dedicated time is allocated on a weekly basis for Continued Professional Development. Sessions are scheduled at the end of the school day to provide evidence-based guidance and support focused around Teaching and Learning, Pastoral, Departmental and Whole School priorities. We believe that every teacher in Northern Leaders Trust has a commitment to their own professional learning, and all teaching staff take part in a peer coaching program rooted in instructional coaching and deliberate practice, linked closely to our beliefs around what represents GREAT teaching. We work closely with Ambition Institute and 3 Rivers in terms of Early Career Programmes (See ECT Policy), and many school leaders have taken up the offer of working towards National Professional Qualifications at a middle and senior leader level. The need for ongoing CPD not only includes a focus on teaching and learning, but wider training disciplines including the emotional health and wellbeing of students, safeguarding, SEND and a greater awareness of legislative requirements from the Department for Education and Ofsted. Through the provision of our Trust-wide programme (CPD Extra), we have created a learning environment that supports effective development. In the majority of cases, these sessions are virtual and scheduled to support staff who may wish to take part away from school site.

## **10 Teacher Retention and Recruitment**

We were a successful pilot school for the DfE’s Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy and have built on this programme by placing our ECTs onto a two-year Ambition Early Career framework coaching programme. In addition to this we continue to work closely with Schools Direct, Teach First and Higher and Further Education institutions in order to champion new teachers into

the profession. We have a bespoke programme of support for all our Initial Teacher Trainers (ITTs) and Recently Qualified Teachers.