DMAT

Aspiration | Excellence | Transformation

Curriculum, Teaching & Assessment Policy

2023-2024

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# Introduction and Policy Principles

1. Introduction

Pupils across all DMAT schools are entitled to a curriculum and quality of teaching that matches or exceeds that provided by any other state sector or private sector school in the country.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that through curriculum, teaching and assessment all pupils, especially those in at-risk sub-groups, will:

a) Make significant academic progress over their 11 years at school.
b) Develop and retain the knowledge (declarative i.e. knowledge you can think about and say and procedural i.e. knowledge you can do) and cultural capital (including relevant tier two and tier three vocabulary) that will enrich their experience and empower them to access, the next stage of their education, find suitable employment and participate in a democratic society.
c) Value learning for its own sake and develop a range of skills, aptitudes and personal qualities to take into life. These will include non-cognitive skills (in particular kindness, aspiration, perseverance and pride), metacognitive skills (such as planning, monitoring and evaluation) and study skills (such as retrieval practice, spaced practice and dual coding).

It is a moral imperative that decisions about curriculum, teaching and assessment are informed by the best available evidence and the practical wisdom of the most effective teachers.

2. The links between curriculum, teaching and assessment
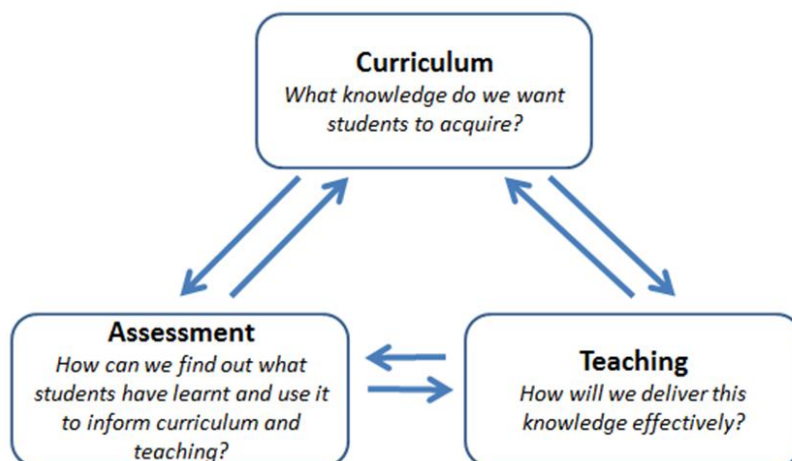
Curriculum, teaching and assessment are inextricably linked. When all three are aligned and of the highest quality, they should facilitate effective learning for all pupils, irrespective of their starting points. In turn, this should translate into all Pupils making good progress and achieving strong academic outcomes. This matters, because it gives them the best possible life chances.

The curriculum outlines the key knowledge that pupils need to learn over their time with us in order to be successful; this will then drive what and how we teach. A challenging curriculum will require pupils to think deeply about subject and lesson content. In other words, the level of challenge in the curriculum sets the level of challenge in our classrooms.

Next, we need to consider how to enable effective learning. When we talk about learning, we mean the retention and recall of knowledge so that it can be applied in different contexts. It should be **durable** and **flexible**. For this to happen, a deep understanding of the 'active ingredients' of teaching based on the best available research evidence is required. This is what our six pedagogical principles aim to do; however, these must be contextualised to different curriculum areas.

Assessment can be seen as the bridge between teaching and learning. Dylan Wiliam describes this well: *"It is only through assessment that we can find out whether what has happened in the classroom has produced the learning we intended."*

[Valid and reliable assessment](#) should inform our planning as teachers and leaders. For example, if assessment reveals Pupils have not fully learnt a particular topic, then it would seem sensible for a class teacher to re-teach that topic or relevant aspects of that topic. On a wider scale, it would also be worth reviewing the curriculum to see how that particular topic is being covered - e.g., is the level of challenge too high or too low? Is it in the right sequence relative to other topics that are needed to understand it?

3. Curriculum

Objectives

The curriculum should be challenging in its depth and breadth so that:

- All pupils acquire transformational knowledge that takes them beyond their experience.
- All pupils are encouraged to appreciate the value of each subject and content of lessons.
- All pupils are well-prepared for formal assessments during and at the end of key stages, including at the end of y11.
- All pupils build their academic background knowledge and cultural capital by acquiring [tier two and tier three vocabulary.](#)
- At each key stage, all pupils acquire and retain the foundational knowledge required for the next key stage at the very least.

Underlying Principles

- The curriculum must provide a map that directs what knowledge should be taught and when it should be taught. However, this should also allow some flexibility for teachers to respond to the differing needs of their classes.
- The curriculum must be taught in a coherent and step-by-step sequence that allows for the incremental development of knowledge within each subject/topic.
- When possible, each new unit of learning should build upon the previous unit.
- Broad and deep factual knowledge is usually the prerequisite for skills such as critical thinking, creative thinking, evaluation and analysis.
- Learning and performance should not be confused. Curriculum design should support real learning which requires durable changes to long-term memory.
- New tier two and tier three vocabulary should be incorporated into curriculum planning.

How do we achieve this?

- Each subject/team should develop a long-term map that clearly lays out the curriculum across the relevant key stages, so that the knowledge pupils are expected to acquire each academic year is made explicit. This knowledge should build cumulatively in terms of its breadth and depth.
- Subject/teaching teams should identify the concepts that are central to the mastery of each subject. They must then maintain an unrelenting focus on helping Pupils to learn this knowledge.
- Regular retrieval practice and spaced practice should be built into the curriculum to help Pupils form durable long-term memories.
- Professional development must maintain an unrelenting focus on improving and evolving the curriculum, and ensure that all teachers are developing their subject pedagogical knowledge.
- Each unit of work must be supported by a [knowledge organiser](#) that stipulates with precision the material-to-be-learnt. This must include relevant tier two and tier three vocabulary and should be used consistently across each department.
- Where appropriate, strategies must be in place (e.g., check lists) that support Pupils in self-regulating their learning of the curriculum.
- [Homework](#) should be planned into the curriculum and consistently applied across teams/school. It should provide Pupils with the opportunity to practise, embed, extend upon, or apply the knowledge that they have been taught in lessons, or provide the opportunity to improve a piece of work.
- Key curriculum documents must be centralised and made available for Pupils, parents, and carers via the website.

Monitoring & Evaluation

- Leaders must be responsible for the quality-assurance of curriculum plans and knowledge organisers. When possible, line managers should be subject specialists.
- Curriculum provision will be reviewed regularly by leaders.
- Curriculum content provision must be evaluated and reviewed each academic year.
- Homework will be monitored by the leader responsible for the curriculum area.

- Leaders must regularly review and remap the curriculum in response to the effectiveness of its delivery.
- At the end of each year, the curriculum must be formally evaluated and reviewed.

4. Teaching

Objectives

Effective teaching leads to pupils acquiring, retaining and applying curriculum knowledge in the classroom and beyond.

Underlying Principles

Learning happens when pupils connect new knowledge to what they already know. To achieve this, teaching must involve:

- **Challenge** so that pupils have high expectations of what they can achieve.
- **Explanation** so that they acquire new knowledge.
- **Modelling** so that pupils know how to apply their knowledge (including explicit modelling of metacognitive strategies and the thinking processes of adults).
- **Questioning** so that pupils are made to think hard with breadth, depth and accuracy. In doing so it should increase the thinking and participation ratio in lessons.
- **Feedback** so that pupils further develop their knowledge.
- Purposeful **practice** so that Pupils think deeply and eventually achieve fluency.
- Positive and effective classroom routines and relationships. A structured and safe classroom environment where relationships are valued and built on mutual respect.
- Pupils are taught how to **store and retrieve** knowledge using learning strategies such as retrieval practice and spaced practice.
- Pupils are taught how to develop **metacognitive** strategies.
- Pupils are explicitly taught **tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary.**

How do we achieve this?

- Through a 'tight but loose' approach so that the six principles above are contextualised to the subject/topic and the profile of the Pupils.
- Through an explicit instruction approach that includes specific practices such as reviewing previous learning, providing **models** for pupils, retrieval **practice**, planning in adequate time for pupils' deliberate **practice**, ensuring appropriate **challenge** for all pupils and the effective scaffolding of this challenge.
- By teachers asking both lower and higher cognitive **questions** to embed and develop knowledge. Questioning should focus on increasing pupil participation ratio and thinking ratio in lessons through mechanisms such as mini-whiteboards and paired talk.
- By teachers **modelling** and **explaining** metacognitive processes by making excellence explicit, demonstrating the thinking processes of experts, and breaking down and solving problems. This should support the development of Pupils' planning, self-monitoring and self-evaluation skills.
- Through written and verbal **feedback**, which should be an element of every lesson – as outlined in the feedback policy.

- By teaching [metacognitive strategies](#) explicitly.
- Teachers teach tier two and tier three vocabulary explicitly through sentence stems, test sentences, images and other explicit instruction strategies.
- Through collaborative professional development, that maintains a consistent focus on developing pedagogical subject knowledge. This activity should focus on how to effectively teach the curriculum over the next fortnight.
- By creating and maintaining a productive classroom climate through positive interactions and robust routines with pupils, active and early parental contact and adhering to the school behaviour policy. The most effective way of motivating Pupils is to enable meaningful achievement.
- Through the explicit instruction of cognitive science strategies including retrieval practice, spaced practice, dual coding, interleaving, concrete examples and elaboration.

Monitoring & Evaluation

- Teaching and learning reviews that involve a combination of lesson observations, data analysis and work sampling.
- Appraisal targets and actions that are aligned to teaching principles.
- Professional development that is consistent and has an unrelenting focus on subject and pedagogy development, using mechanisms such as instructional coaching.
- Lesson visits.
- Assessment data.

5. Assessment

Objectives

Formative and summative assessment is used to measure the acquisition of knowledge and serve teaching so that:

- Leaders and teachers at all levels know the gaps in Pupil knowledge and can adapt their leadership, intervention, planning and practice accordingly.
- Pupils know the gaps in their own knowledge and can adapt their study accordingly.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their current and future learning.
- Pupils do not forget the feedback provided by the assessment.
- Leaders and teachers at all levels have a clear picture of how pupils are performing and can intervene appropriately.

Underlying Principles

- Assessment operates on two layers:
  - **Formative** – ongoing assessment of small chunks of the curriculum to find out what Pupils know and understand to inform teaching and planning.
  - **Summative** – less frequent assessment of larger chunks of the curriculum to provide reliable information about pupil learning and performance.

- Assessment must be principally [formative](#) in nature as this will have the greater impact on learning. Where summative assessment is used, the outcomes must be used to inform teaching, feedback* and learning.
- Assessment must support teaching and curriculum rather than drive it.
- Assessment must support and inform the cumulative and sequential mastery of the curriculum.
- Assessment must be tailored to the subject and carried out with fidelity by all teaching staff.
- Assessment must focus on the composite parts of complex procedures and not just the final outcome – i.e., with extended writing.
- Assessment must find a balance between reliability (consistency of outcomes and judgements within and across classes) and validity (provide teachers with the information they are looking for). There is no perfect balance between the two.
- Testing causes learning; therefore, Pupils will learn more when they are exposed to regular low stakes quizzing.
- Assessment must provide useful and timely data in order for effective intervention at whole-school, subject and classroom level.

Feedback does not only mean written marking and is inclusive of: verbal feedback; whole-class feedback; adaptations to teaching; live-marking or any other method fit for purpose.

How do we achieve this?

- To ensure validity and clarity of purpose, subjects/teams retain control over the shaping of assessment.
- To ensure reliability and fidelity of summative assessment, subjects/teams standardise the conditions of delivery and moderate the accuracy of judgements. This way, consistent inferences can be made.
- There should be sufficient summative assessments to inform three tracking points per academic year per year group. However, these should not be at the expense of teaching a broad and deep curriculum.
- Regular assessment of tier two and tier three vocabulary through low stakes quizzing.
- Teachers give formative feedback on summative assessments. This could include individual and/or whole-class feedback.
- An appropriate range of strategies must be used to regularly assess and improve retention of knowledge. For example, low-stakes quizzes, multiple-choice questions, short answer questions and completing blank knowledge organisers.
- Formative assessment happens regularly in the classroom through teacher questioning, live marking, discussion, and peer feedback.
- Questioning in class is used to assess strengths and weaknesses in Pupil knowledge and understanding and support adaptive teaching.
- Summative assessments must be cumulative. This means that termly assessments include the testing of knowledge covered in previous units as well as the most recent.
- Assessment should be shaped by, but not necessarily identical to, the final assessment e.g., KS2 SAT tests or GCSE exams. Often, component parts require a narrower assessment focus e.g., how to write an effective story opening rather than a whole story; how to execute a relay handover, rather than the whole race.

Monitoring & Evaluation

- Assessments must be regularly evaluated by leaders and SLT to check reliability, validity, and fidelity.
- Subject/team tracking must provide leaders and teachers with actionable and portable data.
- Tracking points must be used to monitor academic outcomes.
- Assessment data should be used to inform the actions and targets of teachers.
- Assessment must be evaluated and reviewed each year.

Teaching and learning reviews will demonstrate that the principles are in use and embedded.

APPENDIX A

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