

DOMINICAN COLLEGE



Learning and Teaching Policy

Updated: October 2017

Introduction

“Only in the measure that we elicit the co-operation of our pupils, is our work a real success.”

In Search of Truth: The Dominican Way in Education

The principles underpinning this statement form the context of our Learning and Teaching Policy. This policy is intended to have a positive impact on the learning and teaching process in Dominican College. It is deliberately concise and focuses upon those elements of the learning and teaching process that will effect improvement in the quality of the learning and teaching experienced by the pupils in the college and lead to improved standards of learning and achievement for all pupils.

All teaching and learning is permeated with the school’s pastoral care system which exists primarily to enable the pupils to develop their full potential. Its kernel is that it is inextricably linked with the academic, social, cultural, moral and spiritual development of all pupils. Every pupil is within its ambit and every member of staff is involved in its delivery.

It is the task of each generation to re-examine its educational practice and see how it can apply to changing circumstances. As Dominican educators we bear in mind that a living, educational tradition follows the laws of all living organisms and must renew itself if it is to remain vibrant and dynamic.

Rationale

A successful learning and teaching policy:

- Puts pupils at the centre of the learning process.
- Defines clearly the entitlements and responsibilities of all learners; both staff and pupils.
- Provides all learners with the opportunity to achieve their full potential.
- Is measured by the extent to which it has a positive impact upon the learning and teaching that takes place within the college.
- Delivers on-going, sustainable school improvement

General Principals

The learning and teaching policy:

1. Reflects the aims and ethos of Dominican College.
2. Is consistent with and promotes a common interpretation of the NI Curriculum.
3. Requires that pupils are provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to consistently high levels of achievement.
4. Promotes a whole school approach to:
 - Self-evaluation which requires staff and pupils to engage in continual self-evaluation in all aspect of school life.
 - Target setting which requires staff and pupils to set personal targets of achievement.
 - Tracking pupil progress.
 - Effective use of data.
5. Advocates ‘capacity building’ as a means by which school improvement can be secured

6. Acknowledges fully that there is no single, 'preferred' method of teaching that can be applied to all circumstances and requires that teachers:
 - Are aware and take account of the preferred learning styles of the pupils they teach.
 - Employ a variety of teaching methods in their daily practice
 - Adopt teaching styles that are appropriate to the circumstances i.e. subject, lesson content, pupils' level of understanding and competence.
7. Recognises that pupils learn best when they are:
 - Interested, challenged, stimulated and motivated
 - Confident, curious and using their own initiative
 - Completing activities/tasks which matches and extends their ability
 - Achieving success

Expectations/Characteristics of Good Classroom Practice

All good practice is predicated on the conviction that pupils will be provided with the thinking skills and reasoning powers which will empower them to become people of honesty and integrity.

All learners are entitled to expect that:

1. Lessons are planned thoroughly and appropriate resources are prepared in advance of the lesson. (All teachers must maintain a daily lesson planner appropriate to their level of expertise in a subject and their teaching experience).
2. Prior learning is taken into consideration when planning a lesson
3. Learning intentions are shared with pupils at the beginning of each lesson so as to create a purposeful learning environment.
4. Effective questioning techniques are employed, where appropriate, to foster an enquiring mind
5. Their contribution to the learning process is both encouraged and valued
6. Their classroom experience is characterised by inclusiveness, positivity and an environment conducive to effective learning.
7. Learning intentions are revisited/reviewed before the end of the lesson to reinforce learning
8. Relevant, time-bound homework is set that reinforces the learning that takes place in the classroom.
9. Appropriate feedback is provided by the teacher which identifies foci for improvement.

Expectations/Characteristics of a Good Learning Environment

All learners are entitled to expect that their learning will take place in an environment:

1. Which enables the individual pupil to learn
2. Which recognises the right of every pupil to engage positively with the learning process
3. Where mutual trust and respect are encouraged among all learners
4. Which encourages learners to engage in their own learning
5. Where pupils feel safe and are treated with respect by their teacher and other pupils
6. Where all pupils are expected to be pleasant and courteous to their teacher and each other.

Expectations/Characteristics of Good Lesson Content

All learners are entitled to expect that they will be provided with:

1. Learning opportunities which:
 - enable them to experience success relative to their level of understanding and competence.
 - facilitate continuity and progression in their learning.
 - extend their understanding and competence.
2. Lesson content which:
 - is appropriate to their level of understanding and competence.
 - reflects the importance of individualised pupil learning in the classroom.
3. Resources which will engage and enrich the learning process.
4. A pace of learning which generates and maintains interest in, and appreciation for, learning.

Expectation/Characteristics of a Good Learning Experience

Learners should be provided with opportunities:

1. To work and learn in individual, paired and group contexts
2. That encourages them to:
 - assume an increasing sense of responsibility for their own learning.
 - aspire to become increasingly independent learners
 - be creative.
 - develop problem solving skills in both an individual and collaborative context
3. That helps them develop increasingly sophisticated research skills in such areas as the College library, other libraries and the internet.
4. To experience learning through the appropriate use of ICT and developing mobile technologies.

Cross Curricular Skills

Each Department will outline in detail its policy on the delivery and assessment of 'Cross Curricular Skills'. Consideration should be given to the following:

- **All** teachers are required to help pupils **acquire** and **develop** the cross curricular skills;
- Not all teachers will be required to assess and report on the cross curricular skills within the pupil profile;
- Nominated departments will be required to report on the cross curricular skills **using comments with reference to the levels of progression** as directed by DENI

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

Each Department will outline in detail its policy on the delivery and assessment of Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities. Consideration should be given to the following:

- **All** teachers are required to help pupils **acquire** and **develop** Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities;
- Not all teachers will be required to assess and report on the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities within the pupil profile;
- Nominated departments will be required to assess and report on specified Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities.

Marking of Pupils' Work

Each Department will outline in detail its policy on the Marking of Pupils' work. This will be contained in a separate Marking Policy.

Homework

Each Department will outline in detail its policy on the setting and marking of homework. This will be contained in a separate Homework Policy.

School Improvement

The school will seek to achieve school improvement through:

- Self-Evaluation (at **ALL** Levels)
- Tracking Pupil Progress
- Target Setting – Pupils and Teachers
- Effective Use of Data
- Effective Questioning
- Assessment for Learning (**ALL** aspects)
- Planning for Learning (at **ALL** levels)
- Literacy and Numeracy across the curriculum

Related Documents

The learning and teaching policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

1. Assessment Policy
2. Homework Policy
3. Pastoral Care Policy
4. Safe Guarding Policy
5. Role of the Head of Department
6. Role of the Year Head
7. Role of the Classroom Teacher
8. Role of Class Tutor