

Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Policy – features and rationale September 2018



At Uckfield College, our broad values underpinning the **College curriculum** are:

- **Inspiration and creativity:** we develop our schemes of learning so that they are as interesting and as motivational for students as possible
- **Stretch and challenge:** there are different pathways that offer additional challenge or support, as appropriate, to different groups of pupils
- **Choice:** we believe that students thrive when they have a combination of courses that they find challenging and interesting and our curriculum offer is broad and balanced in all three Key Stages
- **Progression:** the curriculum is designed so it “secures good progression” to sixth form and from the sixth form to employment or university.

The ‘College curriculum’ refers to all the learning that takes place throughout college life. This includes lessons, interventions, extra curricular activities, clubs, enrichment, PDT, trips, as well as both formal and informal coaching and mentoring of students.

At Uckfield College, the curriculum in the **different subjects** must be:

- rich in powerful knowledge and language, which is specified, taught, assessed and securely learnt
- exceptionally well-planned and sequenced
- exceptional in its use of assessment to support learning
- manageable and efficient; supportive of teacher workload and wellbeing

1) Knowledge here can be defined as both factual and procedural knowledge (ie skills and understanding). Therefore, knowledge includes those concepts, facts, ideas, stories, techniques and procedures which are important to know in order to have a deep understanding of a subject.

2) Powerful knowledge gives students the cultural capital they need to be able to take their place as informed, active citizens, be increasingly aspirational for their future choices, and excel in further academic study.

3) Desirable skills such as analysis, explanation, creativity, evaluation and independence of thought are only possible when a wide knowledge base is secure; all thinking involves connecting new ideas to existing knowledge.

4) Powerful knowledge includes knowing the language required to apply knowledge. Therefore, the best language for students to learn in order to apply their knowledge at each point in the curriculum should be specified, taught and practised.

5) Therefore, greater emphasis should be given to knowledge, with a view to covering ‘fewer things in greater depth’ where possible, and a commitment to the idea that overall, students will be taught, understand and retain much richer knowledge.

6) Curriculum planning should define and minutely specify the core knowledge and core skills that is regarded as most important for students to learn. These should be shared with students through [Personal Learning Checklists](#) and through subject specific vocabulary. This curriculum planning is documented in high quality [schemes of learning](#) that are regularly reviewed and updated with pedagogical advice and differentiation.

7) Where curriculum content is minutely specified, clarity is provided which supports teacher workload, helps students understand the progress they are making, and enables high quality intervention for those who are not being successful. On the other hand, vague or unspecific curriculum content is burdensome for teachers, and a contributor to excessive or inefficient workload.

Exceptional planning and sequencing

8) Careful and skilful curriculum sequencing and planning is essential if students are likely to secure and retain knowledge.

9) This requires that the order in which students are exposed to core knowledge is carefully specified and planned so that concepts lead on from one another.

10) Effective sequencing (including spaced learning and interleaving) also involves specifying exactly when and how core concepts will be returned to so that they are [retained over time](#).

11) Where it is sensible to do so, planning should take into account the content that is being taught, or has been taught, in other curriculum areas at any point. Links between subject areas – for example where the same period is being considered in English, Art and History – should be planned, understood and capitalised on by teachers in each subject. All teachers are teachers of literacy and numeracy, where applicable to their subject.

12) An effective curriculum therefore will have a very clear and convincing rationale for *what is taught, and the order that it is taught in*. It will clearly identify core concepts, knowledge, ideas, words and skills, and will specify when they are to be introduced, and when / how they are returned to.

Exceptional in its use of assessment to support learning

13) Effective teaching uses assessment and feedback constantly and fluidly in the classroom, through discussion, questioning and activities which require students to demonstrate learning, eg show me with mini-whiteboards. In some subjects, particularly practical subjects at KS3, this is very much the dominant form through which assessment takes place.

14) In many subjects, it is also essential that the standardised PIN formative (mid-point) assessment is devised, so that it is consistently high quality and ‘manageable, meaningful and motivating’. Formative assessments of this type should be centrally agreed and shared through the subject scheme of learning, and not left to each individual teacher to devise. [Marking Policy](#) and [Reporting Policy](#)

15) For formative and summative assessments, clear procedures must be in place which specify how the information gathered should be shared and used to adapt future teaching.

16) *Departmental Assessment Policies* for each year group should make these procedures clear, and ensure that practice is ‘manageable, meaningful and motivating’. ‘Manageable’ here means efficient and achievable for teachers, with a sensible expectation of workload. ‘Meaningful’ means that assessments allow valid and reliable inferences to be drawn about what students know or can do, and what their next steps should be. ‘Motivating’ means that assessments should provide opportunities for accomplishment and challenge, to ensure that students benefit from the positive impact on motivation which comes from genuine learning and achievement. Departmental Assessment Policies should cover for each separate course in each year group:

- a) Use of high quality standardised summative assessments, what these are and when they occur
- b) Use of formative assessment in lesson and homework activity
- c) How departments use and moderate assessment information to inform learning
- d) How departments prepare and check quality of what is submitted during [whole College assessment points](#)

- 17) Teacher praise and positive affirmation for achievement is valuable and encouraged but students should be dissuaded from seeing work as being produced 'for the teacher' or for other extrinsic reward, and guided towards the intrinsic motivation. This comes from genuine learning and accomplishment.
- 18) Formative assessments can take a variety of forms, including short answer questions and multiple choice questions. They should not solely be a watered-down version of the summative assessment, but should aim to isolate and target the knowledge and skills which combine when students complete summative assessments.
- 19) Summative assessments should be standardised across a subject, and be expertly designed. This means that they have high levels of validity (they test understanding of the core knowledge and skills as specified in the curriculum), and reliability (they allow the teacher to make reliable inferences about what a student has learnt and where gaps remain).
- 20) Well designed formative and summative assessments include cumulative elements – that is to say, they include items which refer back to previous learning and content. This is designed to aid retention and ensure that knowledge is secure over time.
- 21) In the best practice, standardised and carefully designed formative assessments allow leaders to collect in raw data for vulnerable students, and therefore gain a clearer picture of the specific content which these students are not grasping. These assessments should then be used to inform planning or intervention.
- 22) It is the responsibility of school leadership (at subject and senior level) to ensure that high quality standardised formative and summative assessments are in place for each course that is delivered and that information from summative assessments (including KS2 and CATs) is used effectively to inform teaching.
- Manageable and efficient; an approach which supports teacher workload and wellbeing**
- 23) An effective curriculum will mean that a teacher is always clear as to what needs to be taught, in what order, to what time scale and how / when this is to be formatively and summatively assessed.
- 24) This information should be provided through Schemes of Learning, Departmental Assessment Policies and Departmental Assessment Calendars – in place for each subject taught.
- 25) Teachers of an excellent curriculum are free to concentrate more of their attention on how to deliver content with skill, precision and energy.
- 26) Core resources - including formative and summative assessments, multiple differentiated model activities, scheme of learning sequences and core activities (including homework and Study Support materials for sixth form students)– should be coherently planned, excellent quality, and easily accessible to all teachers of that course.
- 27) Teachers should be supported in the best ways to deliver the content of the curriculum through regular opportunities for training, sharing and discussion with other teachers of their subject wherever possible. Opportunities for teachers to access training and have these discussions within subject areas are essential and should be planned into whole College INSET activities and Joint Professional Learning (JPL) time on Mondays.

What is the vision for Teaching?

Our aim is to provide the best possible opportunities for student achievement, progress and learning. We do this by focusing all of our teaching and learning professional development work on the elements of our practice which research shows make the most difference ([What Makes Great Teaching - Professor Coe Review of the underpinning research, 2014](#)). These elements are in our planning and delivery and every teacher at Uckfield College has a responsibility to:

Know the curriculum deeply

- 1) Maintain deep and fluent knowledge of the curriculum content they teach.
- 2) Use agreed mid and long-term plans and core resources to guide the learning and ensure that it is well-organised over time.
- 3) Maintain deep and fluent knowledge of the relevant language and terminology related to the subject.
- 4) This includes knowing and teaching a full range of rich academic language to allow students to talk, think and write about the subject. [Uckfield College Read Write Talk website](#).
- 5) Understand typical ways students think about subjects, concepts, processes and ideas, anticipating common misconceptions and planning teaching to account for these. Plan well-constructed lessons, with clear explanations, and deliver lessons with conviction
- 6) Plan lessons with a clear focus – a single, clear learning intention is almost always best, with an additional intention for extra challenge. Lessons which try to address or introduced multiple concepts, or are [cluttered with multiple activities](#), are to be avoided, [as working memory is likely to become swamped](#). [Learning intentions staff meeting 2017](#)
- 7) Use well-planned direct instruction and explanation so that content is clear and every student can access the lesson and tasks. Avoid assuming knowledge that the students may not have – explain words and ideas clearly and [carefully](#).
- 8) Ensure student activities are appropriately challenging, high-value and purposeful in helping students to learn, practice and retain curriculum content.
- 9) Provide opportunities in lessons for extended practice, to ensure that knowledge and skills are practised and consolidated. Regular 'pause' lessons should be planned into schemes of learning where appropriate, as they are very beneficial in improving memory. These lessons purely revisit and review and should be evidence based for maximum impact. [Geography example](#)
- 10) Avoid low-value, or inefficient filler tasks, such as posters or gimmicky 'creative' tasks, the completion of which distracts students from the subject content required to be learnt..
- 11) Wherever appropriate, model how to access and complete tasks, and how to achieve excellence in the quality of work produced. [8 Principles of Effective Modelling](#)
- 12) In most cases, tasks should be accompanied with a basic model to provide access, and an excellent example to provide challenge. This may not apply for some content, such as mathematical processes, where challenge can be provided in other ways, such as through the increasing complexity of the activities.

13) Ensure that high attaining students are effectively provided for, through high quality activities and questioning that provide stretch and challenge.

14) Ensure that SEND students are effectively provided for, through high quality teaching, and following strategies from the SEND profiles on the [Closing the Gap register](#).

15) Include regular periods of silent, independent work during lessons. This is essential to help students concentrate and manage distraction.

Ensure effective assessment and feedback

16) Fully understand and implement Departmental Assessment Policies, to ensure that practice is manageable, meaningful and motivating.

17) In particular, use formative assessments to make decisions about post-assessment teaching, by identifying gaps and planning teaching to address these.

18) Make regular use of short, low-stakes quizzes to ensure that knowledge is retained over time. Quizzes should include reference to recently learnt material, eg from the last lesson, as well as material from further in the past – last week, last month, last year.

Create an effective working environment

19) Understand and insist upon school rules and routines in relation to student behaviour (Behaviour for Learning Policy and [High Reliability Protocols](#)).

20) Insist upon high standards of effort and presentation, according to school policy.

21) Hold students to account for completing work by treating as an element of low-level disruption. It is expected that this includes regular use of silent, independent work during lesson time.

22) Contribute to the upkeep of well-ordered and well-organised classrooms, by storing books and resources in a neat and tidy manner. Displays in classrooms should be used to inspire and support learning. Key words for each department should be displayed in subject classrooms.

Use homework effectively

23) The purpose of homework is for students to learn, memorise, revise or practise the knowledge and skills that they are taught in school. The [EEF shows that effective homework can add 5 months of progress per academic year](#). Therefore, homework activities should be those which require students to think deeply about the knowledge and skills they've been taught.

24) Suitable activities include revising through creating flash cards, regular self-testing, practice of a taught skill or employing strategies to commit learning to memory.

25) Pre-reading or learning of content prior to a lesson is also appropriate, although caution should be exercised in ensuring that students are able to access enough of the content and concepts without needing teacher explanation.

26) Pre-reading / learning in advance of a lesson is also appropriate in some contexts. However care needs to be taken in selection of materials, with confidence that all students will be able to access and understand enough of the content and concepts in before needing teacher explanation.

27) Learning homeworks should be followed up by quizzes or assessments in class to establish that students have learnt the material successfully.

28) Open-ended research homework, such as 'find out about' or 'find five facts' should not be set, particularly at KS3. It is our responsibility to identify core knowledge and provide this through the curriculum and resourcing, with students taught to learn and retain it at home. Open-ended research, whilst providing a surface sense of independence, frequently results in low quality work and little genuine understanding or retention, and is inefficient in promoting learning. It is also likely to disadvantage vulnerable students still further.

29) Tasks such as posters or model-making should only be set as compulsory homework if they directly represent the skill or knowledge being learnt. This means that a model could be set as homework if, for example, relevant to a DT scheme of learning on model making, or a poster set if students are learning about the use of posters for propaganda in History. This is because they tend to result in students spending lots of time thinking about the act of creating the homework, such as their presentation, colours or pictures, and are often inefficient as a tool to promote deep thought about and retention of the core material. Posters, models etc may be set as optional competitions or activities, rather than a compulsory homework.

30) Teachers should follow the [homework timetable](#) and set all homework for all year groups on Google Classroom. It should be made clear to students how the homework is to be checked and reviewed after completion. It is good practice to set homework clearly at the beginning of the lesson to allow time to check students understand in full what it is they need to do. Where extended tasks are set, teachers should use the 'scheduling' feature of Google Classroom to keep students reminded.

31) The [Uckfield Outstanding Ten](#) provides staff with the key features of successful teaching and learning at the College.

Responsibilities

The Senior Leadership team is responsible for overseeing the successful implementation, continual refinement, monitoring and evaluation of the school's approaches to curriculum, assessment and teaching, according to the principles and practices outlined above. Curriculum Leaders are responsible for ensuring that approaches to curriculum, assessment are clearly defined, resourced and adhered to within the faculty. This incorporates the generation and upkeep of clear schemes of learning, a clear faculty assessment Policy.