



Amherst School (Academy) Trust

Policy Title	Teaching and Learning Policy
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Policy Reference	Non-statutory
Function	For Information and Guidance
Status	In-house policy (revised at Jan 22 inset)
Audience	Parents, Governors, Headteacher, Teachers, Support Staff
Ownership / Implementation	Headteacher
Staff member responsible	Headteacher
Review Frequency	3 yearly
Approved by Teaching & Learning Committee	May 2025
Date for Review	May 2027

Amherst School

Teaching and Learning Policy

Aims of the policy

At Amherst School, we are committed to high quality teaching and learning to raise standards of achievement for all children. This policy summarises expectations and common working practices. It reflects what has been agreed in terms of approach and consistency and makes explicit the best practice to which the school aspires. It also reflects the aims and objectives of the school and supports its vision which is to 'Inspire every Pupil'. We want children to be **knowing, doing and remembering more** as an outcome of their learning experiences and curriculum coverage at Amherst.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our subject policies and the Marking and Review policy.

Extra-Curricular Learning

A key part of a child's learning experience at Amherst School is their participation in the wide range (approx. thirty clubs a week) of extra-curricular activities on offer. We firmly believe that children need extra-curricular to develop excitement and enjoyment during their time at Amherst. They will also work with different children and adults to develop their social skills further. Development of wider interests, beyond the English and maths curriculum is a key part of their Amherst experience. Sport, music and the arts will always have a high priority at Amherst.

Principles of Teaching and Learning

Learning is the purpose of the whole school and is a shared commitment. At Amherst we recognise that education involves children, parents, staff, governors and the local community, and that we should all work closely together to support the process of learning. Working in partnership, we aim to:

- Provide a supportive, positive, healthy, caring and safe environment, which has high expectations and values all members of the school community
- Develop enduring values of Trust, Kindness, Cooperation, Fairness, Politeness and Determination
- Recognise the needs and aspirations of all individuals and provide opportunities for pupils to make the best possible progress and attain the highest personal achievements
- Ensure children can develop as literate, numerate and technologically competent individuals, within a broad, balanced, exciting and challenging curriculum
- Provide rich and varied contexts and experiences for pupils to acquire, develop and apply a broad range of knowledge, skills and understanding
- Provide a curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, physical, mental and emotional development of the pupils
- Encourage all children to be enthusiastic and committed learners, promoting their self-esteem, self-worth and emotional well-being
- Develop children's confidence and capacity to learn and work independently and collaboratively
- Encourage children to respond positively to the opportunities, challenges and responsibilities of a rapidly changing world

- Encourage children to value the diversity in our society and the environment in which they live
- Encourage children to become active and responsible citizens, contributing positively to the community and society

Ethos

The ethos and culture underpin and reflect the agreed aims and values of the school. In the course of their daily work the staff will contribute to the development of this ethos through:

- Providing a calm and effective working environment, in which each child can produce their best work
- Providing a welcoming environment, in which kindness, politeness, fairness, cooperation, determination and trust are fostered and have a high priority
- Strong awareness of learning anxiety levels
- Providing positive role models
- Providing a fair and disciplined environment, in line with the school's behaviour policy
- Effective management of their professional time
- Developing positive and effective relationships with all pupils and parents
- Develop a love of learning
- Valuing and celebrating pupils' success and achievements
- Reviewing personal and professional development to ensure a high level of professional expertise
- Model challenges as learning experiences

Roles and Responsibilities

Learning and teaching is a shared responsibility and members of the school community have an important part to play. Please see our Home School Agreement (Appendix 1) for the agreed shared roles and responsibilities of pupils, parents and the school.

Planning

The foundation for curricular development is the School Improvement Plan, developed through a process of collaboration between staff, and approved by governors.

At Amherst School we are committed to following the programmes of study as required by the National Curriculum 2014. As an academy, we utilise the freedom to develop a bespoke geography and history curriculum, which is led by the learning objectives from the National Curriculum.

A yearly long-term plan is created for each year group, which is reviewed annually. Medium term plans for each unit support the long term plan.

Subject leaders have a variety of roles. These include:

- Taking a lead in the policy development and the production of schemes of work designed to ensure progressions and continuity in their subject throughout the school
- Creating an annual calendar of tasks to be completed as subject leader
- Providing a short summary of developments and achievements within their subject to governors
- Supporting colleagues in their development and implementation of the scheme of work
- Monitoring progress within their subject and curriculum coverage

- Using release time effectively
- Keeping up-to-date through reading and attending relevant training

Organisation

The learning environment will be managed in such a way as to facilitate different styles of learning.

Opportunities will be made for:

- Whole class teaching
- Group work
- One to one teaching
- Pupil conferencing
- Paired teaching
- Collaborative learning in pairs
- Independent learning

The classroom will be organised to facilitate learning and the development of independence. For example:

- Books corners will be inspiring and inviting
- Resources provided to support children's learning in all subjects
- Labels and posters support children's learning
- Pupils will be involved in the maintenance and care of all equipment and resources
- Stimulating and thought provoking displays

Classroom support is available in the form of teaching assistants and sometimes volunteers. These are used at the discretion of the class teacher and Year Group Leader. Volunteer helpers assist with the many aspects of school life including supporting reading, providing assistance with school trips and running clubs. Students are welcomed in the school and certain standards of dress and conduct are expected.

Excellence and hard work is celebrated in display and performance. Sustained effort, including drafting and reworking, is encouraged to enhance standards. An example of this, is our twice a year whole school book projects. Friday's Achievement Assembly contains Star of Week. Each teacher identifies one child in their class who has demonstrated outstanding effort. The reason is read out to the whole school. This provides a powerful weekly message to the whole school of what is valued and recognised as high achievement. The reasons are then displayed on a certificate in the entrance hall for the following week to promote that child's achievement. Each child gets to wear a merit badge on their tie for the following week. Every child will receive the award once in the academic year.

A range of other reward systems are in place such as house points and headteacher awards.

Differentiation

Amherst School believes that mixed ability classes provide the best learning opportunities for all children to achieve their full potential. The wide range of ability is managed through Challenge by Choice. In each maths and English lesson (where appropriate) three levels of challenge are provided for the children. A core input is delivered to all children, leading their learning on the current concept. The three levels of challenge/tasks are explained and then the children self-select which challenge is right for them. This approach encourages greater responsibility and self-awareness of

the child's own understanding in each particular concept. It reinforces that learning is for the child not the teacher.

We encourage in the moment marking, especially in maths, to provide the children with immediate feedback and help identify what is a careless slip or a conceptual misunderstanding.

Pupils with identified special educational needs may receive support provided by a teaching assistant 1:1, or in a small group where appropriate. Advice is sought from relevant external support agencies when and where the need demands it. (See SEND Policy)

Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Regular assessments are made of pupils' work and attitudes to learning in order to establish the level of attainment and to inform future planning. Formative assessment (ongoing teacher assessment of a child's progress) is used to guide the progress of individual pupils and shape the next stage in their learning. Formative assessment is preferred to summative assessment to guide and encourage children's development. As Dylan William points out: *Aircraft fly by constantly monitoring their direction and making small adjustments; they don't wait till they have flown 3000 miles before checking whether they are on course.*

Summative assessment (using a test or exam to judge a child's ability and progress) is completed three times a year, December, March and June for Reading, Writing and Maths. Teachers place each child on a Step as part of our internal tracking system. The judgement of which Step to place a child on is informed by three sources: summative assessment, work in books and teacher's knowledge of the child applied against the Steps criteria.

National summative assessment (SATs) is completed in May of Year 6.

Feedback to pupils about their own progress is achieved through discussion and the marking of their work. Effective marking:

- Is for the child not senior leadership
- Helps the children understand how to improve
- Is often done while a task is being carried out through discussion between child and teacher
- Is meaningful, manageable and motivating

Reporting to parents is done twice a year through consultations and once through a written report. June summative assessments (NFER tests in reading and maths) are contained within the written report.

Assessment in Foundation Subjects

In History, Geography, Art and DT, there are four key questions for each unit which the majority of children are expected to be able to answer. Checking of the retention of children's knowledge and skills will be completed by the class teacher and subject leader in the following ways:

Class teacher

- Sharing the key questions with the children at the beginning of the unit

- Referring back to the key questions throughout the unit, particularly when lessons provide answers to specific questions
- Regular use of formative assessment throughout units including questioning the children using a range of strategies to address misconceptions and inform future lessons
- Providing opportunities for retrieval practice based on previous lessons and units, especially when useful links can be made with current learning
- Providing opportunities for recording knowledge and understanding in a range of ways including numerical and quantitative skills, written narratives and analyses as appropriate for different subject areas
- Reflective practice at the end of the unit to improve future teaching of the unit by passing on relevant information so that year group leaders can update suggested activities in the curriculum document and discuss any adjustments to learning objectives, skills or knowledge with the relevant subject leader

Subject Leader

- Using key questions as a focus for pupil interviews to monitor the retention and understanding of children over time
- Updating the learning objectives, skills and knowledge in the curriculum document in line with discussions based on reflective practice with class teachers

Assessment in PE (Get Set 4 PE), RE (Kent Agreed Syllabus), Music (Kapow), French (Language Angels) and Computing will be formative and class teachers/subject leaders should follow the normal monitoring processes for these subjects in line with the relevant curriculum scheme.

Assessment in PSHE will be formative, providing children with opportunities to demonstrate their learning through whole class discussions, pupil questionnaires, mind maps, role-play scenarios and written tasks where appropriate.

In Science we follow the *Developing Experts* scheme of work and accompanying assessment materials and strategies.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Pupils' work and progress is monitored by the class teacher and by subject leaders, Assistant headteacher and Headteacher. Three times a year whole school provision map review meetings provide the opportunity for every child's progress to be discussed. The headteacher observes every member of staff through the Performance Management cycle in the autumn term. Fortnightly learning walks are completed in the spring term. Each year a range of external visitors, such as the school's SIP, are also consulted to provide quality assurance.

Each year group has a Year Group Governor that visits three times a year. Time is spent in classrooms and with the Year Group Leader. The governor follows their cohort through the school to gain a detailed understanding of their four-year journey.

Teaching Strategies and Styles

In order to ensure equality of access and effective matching of tasks to needs, teachers will employ a variety of teaching strategies in any one session. This will include:

- Provision of an engaging and relevant curriculum
- Observing
- Discussion and questioning
- Leading the children's learning during whole class discussions in a collaborative style
- Use of talking partners to help lower pupil anxiety and increase participation
- Use of mini whiteboards to increase pupil participation and engagement
- Sometimes start with the answer to provoke what the question could be
- Direct teaching – explaining and demonstrating a concept with less interaction
- Conferencing
- Listening
- Brainstorming/generating ideas
- Providing opportunities for reflection by pupils
- Demonstrating high expectations
- Providing opportunities for repetition/reinforcement
- Making judgements and responding to individual needs
- Providing all children with opportunities for success
- Operating with high levels of emotional intelligence
- Using a range of communication strategies – verbal and non-verbal

Activities should show a balance in terms of individual, paired, group and whole class work.

Learning Processes and Learning Styles

Children enter Amherst School at different stages of development. Children learn in different ways and at different rates of progress. In the course of learning, children develop their skills through a variety of processes and learning styles. These include:

- Investigation
- Experimentation
- Listening
- Observation
- Talking and discussion
- Asking questions
- Child-initiated play
- Practical exploration and role play
- Retrieving information
- Imagining
- Repetition
- Problem solving
- Making choices and decision making

Staff at Amherst feel that pupils learn best when:

- They are happy, healthy and alert – receptive and positive
- They are interested and involved – learning is relevant and stimulating
- The purpose of a task is understood – they understand why they are doing it
- They feel secure – in terms of environment, relationships and learning

- They feel valued – teachers and other adults care about their development as learners
- They have opportunities to explore and take risks
- They are actively involved, making choices and taking responsibility in their learning
- They have an element of control and can work with independence
- They receive positive feedback and praise for achievements
- Praise is given for effort rather than outcomes
- Learning is built on existing knowledge and experience –clearly defined small steps
- They have opportunities to talk about their work, reflecting, discussing and sharing ideas
- The teacher is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and motivated

Successful teaching takes account of children’s prior learning and must ensure continuity and progression. Linked to the above, successful teaching is:

- Confident – teachers have a clear understanding of subject knowledge and setting objectives
- High expectation – there is optimism about, and high expectation of success
- Well planned – there is differentiation with methods and organisation strategies which match curricular objectives and needs of all pupils
- Interactive – pupil’s contributions are encouraged, expected, extended
- Well-paced – there is a sense of urgency, driven by the need to make progress and succeed
- Informed – by assessment (formative and summative) outcomes

Time is a resource that we value at Amherst School. To maximise its use:

- As children progress throughout the school they are encouraged to take greater control of their learning, including their use of time
- Opportunities for learning are maximised by ensuring that tasks are made specific by focused objectives
- Teachers will encourage pupils to work within given time scales
- All children engage in useful activities upon entering the classroom and know what to do between the end of an activity and the end of a session