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# HOE VALLEY SCHOOL

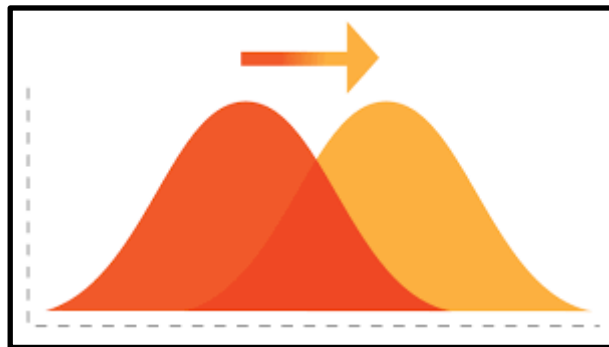
## TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Person Responsible: Assistant Head Teacher  
Date Adopted: September 2018  
Date of last review: Autumn 2024  
Date of next review: Summer 2025

*To be read in conjunction with the Feedback, CPD, Behaviour for Learning and Appraisals Policies*

### 1. OVERVIEW

Students come to Hoe Valley School (HVS) to learn biologically secondary knowledge<sup>1</sup> from expert teachers. We are excited by the potential in all students and are able accelerate students towards their potential through teaching rooted in evidence of what works and cognitive science (how the brain works). At HVS we talk about “shifting the bell curve” of intelligence with a view to “Making Kids Cleverer”, as inspired by the book of the same name (David Didau, 2019).



There is a known positive correlation between intelligence and quality of life, inclusive of mental health, physical health, longevity and financial security. An individual’s intelligence has 2 components

1. The processing speed of their working/short term memory, which is genetically determined and fixed
2. The quality and quantity of knowledge stored in their infinite, long-term memory; “if you don’t know it, you can’t think about it or with it” - you are ignorant.

The foundation of all of our teaching at Hoe Valley School lies in the quality development of students' long-term memories, to make them more intelligent and improve the quality of their whole life.

We value the differences between the diverse range of academic and practical subjects that we offer and that students will have a range of different potentials in each. We also understand

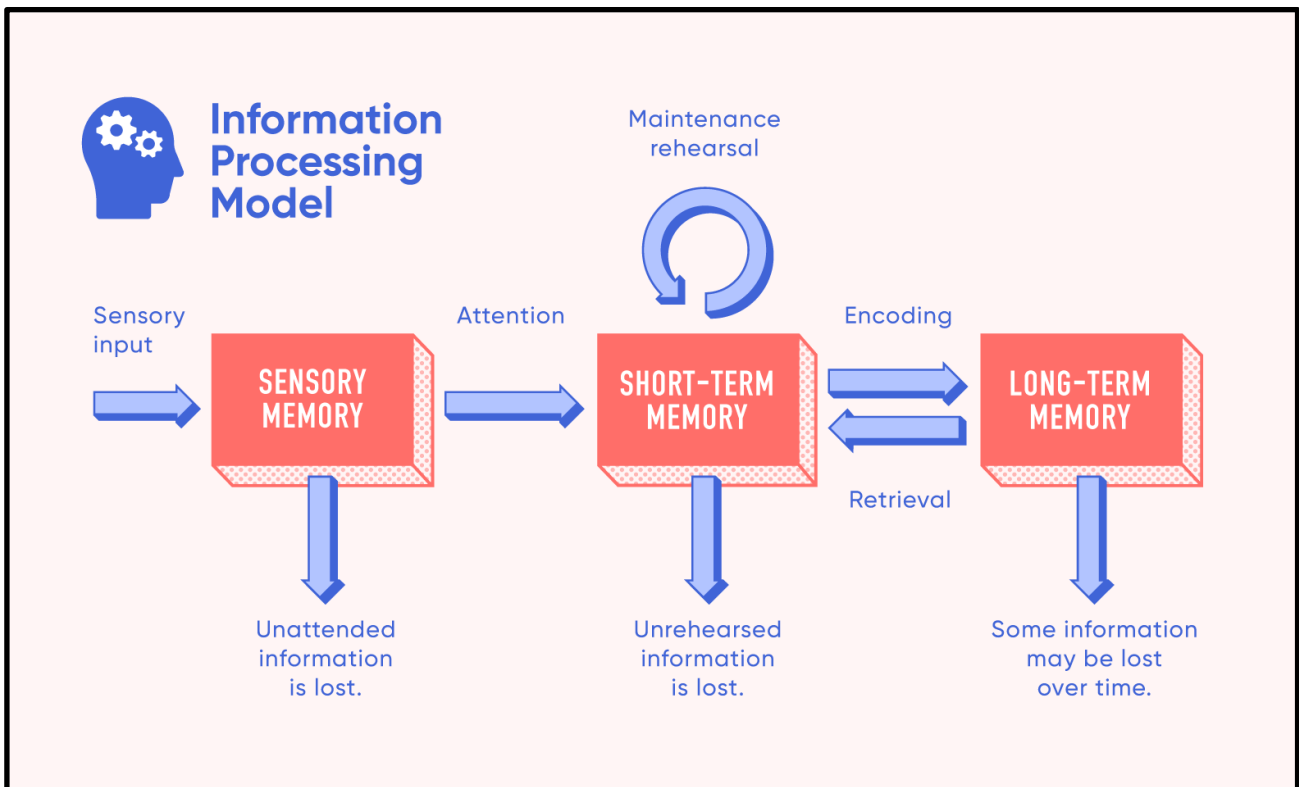
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<sup>1</sup> biologically secondary knowledge is that which an individual would not acquire naturally e.g. the ability to read, as opposed to biologically primary knowledge which is acquired naturally e.g. the ability to speak a first language

creativity, skills and how to apply knowledge can be further enhanced with new knowledge and experiences from an expert coach or teacher.

When students leave HVS they will know more, be able to do more, and therefore be able to secure excellent academic outcomes, be work ready and engage with the global community as good citizens.

All teachers at Hoe Valley School have a deep understanding of how long-term memories are acquired (see the graphic of the current information processing model below) and are able to apply this to teaching sequences and their day-to-day teaching practices



We understand that the single most important factor in successful schools is the quality of learning taking place.

Therefore:

- There is a relentless focus on young people, their learning and their awareness of behaviours for effective learning (metacognition).
- The adults in the school continue learning themselves through evidence-based CPD opportunities within and beyond the school (see CPD policy)
- Teaching and learning practices are transparent; staff and students are encouraged to collaborate by learning with and from each other, and are seen as empowered partners in the cognitive science-centred learning process.

## 2. VALUES UNDERPINNING LEARNING AT HVS

### 2.1 Challenging Learning

More effective learning takes place when students are placed into the “challenge zone” (see graphic below) - the brain pays more attention to tasks that challenge, but are ultimately overcome, which results in memories being more likely to be encoded to long term memory and memories that are more retrievable.



We firmly believe that students learn best when ‘desirable difficulties’ exist in lessons; lessons are differentiated so that learning is neither comfortable nor causing students to operate in the panic zone, where no learning can take place; challenge is always appropriate.

More Able students are quickly identified, in line with the More Able Policy, in order to develop their gifts or talents in specific curriculum areas.

Students are expected to take responsibility for their learning; they are encouraged to reflect on challenge in lessons and we encourage them to seek challenges independently outside of the school day.

In addition, all of our students access Google Classrooms for each of their subjects where they can use resources from lessons and work through independent extension activities to further challenge themselves.

By Year 9, all students are on the right GCSE pathway with a challenging academic range of subjects offered including and a choice of modern foreign languages. Our most able students take 10 GCSEs and follow the more challenging curriculum pathways (see curriculum policy).

Furthermore, the overall KS3, 4 and 5 curricula for every Faculty are continually under review to ensure that pathways through for all students afford appropriate challenge by, for example, interleaving units and cumulative assessment (assessments including questions from units in other years/terms).

## **2.2 Relevant Learning**

Students are more likely to encode new knowledge and skills when they connect or “hook” onto existing schema<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, students are more likely to be motivated to learn where new knowledge and skills connect with their own life experiences and where they see themselves in the future. Where appropriate, lessons will be linked to the “big picture” - students will never be told they need to learn something “because it’s in the exam”.

There is much in the media about the ‘UK skills gap’ and about the gap between the needs of employers and the skill set of school leavers and graduates. Hoe Valley School is committed to closing this gap and supporting our students to become ‘work ready’ and equipped with the key digital skills they may need for the future job market.

Teachers ensure lessons provide opportunities for students to learn and develop the following skills, with the support and guidance of our Head of Digital Skills and Communication.

1. Excellent communicator
2. Adaptable
3. Team Player
4. Persuasive
5. Creative
6. Digitally skilled

Our aim is for the ethos and culture of the School to be one where individuals flourish and grow in self-confidence so that they can dream big about their futures and excel in their individual talents. Our starting point is modelling these skills as a staff to our students. We believe that by demonstrating such behaviours is a strong motivator for children to follow suit and learn from their teachers.

Lessons are planned with these skills in mind and openly talked about to develop further understanding of the importance and impact of these skills. Each skill is also unpicked and taught through assemblies from both Heads of Year and the Senior Leadership Team and rewarded by achievement points, postcards and phone calls home.

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<sup>2</sup> A “schema” is what an individual knows about something and can be thought of as a collection of communicating nerve cells. The more we know about something, the larger and more complex our schema is. The more developed a schema is, the less it occupies our working memory when we use it to think. Experts have vast schemas in their field and use them to “think with”.

### 2.3 Engaging Learning

The most effective learning is when students are curious, excited to know more and demonstrate a thirst for knowledge. Classrooms require a positive energy and clear focus on what the new learning is and what success looks like. Clear and consistent learning routines underpin exciting and creative classrooms, where there are clear expectations about learning behaviours in lessons (see Behaviour for Learning Policy).

Teachers at HVS try to avoid gimmicks to engage students in their learning - the learning and development of knowledge and the skills derived from new knowledge is engaging in itself. Teachers at HVS understand that gimmicks often detract from and slow down the learning process. Additionally, we strive to develop student's intrinsic motivation towards overcoming challenges and self-improvement, as opposed to motivation tied to reward and sanction.

### 2.4 Personalised Learning

A personalised approach is crucial to ensure that students are able to access the curriculum and broaden their knowledge and skills. Our curriculum design and delivery is data driven and all lessons offer different pathways

At HVS we recognise that the "challenge zone", where learning is optimal, is different for every student for a variety of reasons. Every teacher has high expectations of all their students and can use, for example, differentiation by task or varied scaffolding towards a desired outcome to ensure all can access the highest levels of learning. All teachers must stretch or support all learners, where appropriate to keep them in that "challenge zone" and plan for this in the day-to-day or in sequences of learning as part of the subject curriculum.

### 2.5 Independent Learning Habits

A model for developing student's ability to be independent in their attitude and approach to their learning will be taught and reinforced with students in the Sixth Form. The model will also be applied within the curriculum, when relevant to other year groups, to help prepare them for Key Stage 5 study.

<b>H</b> elp others to learn	Promoting collaboration with other students so they can help and test each other. Encouraging study groups within a class to meet regularly.
<b>A</b> ct on feedback	Ensuring students follow up on feedback they are given by subject staff and fully embed what they are being asked to do.
<b>B</b> alance your study approach	Encouraging students to use different approaches for revision, making notes or presenting their prep, to enable greater retention of information.
<b>I</b> nteract with your teachers	Encourage mature and positive relationships with subject staff. They have a wealth of expertise and resources which students must be proactive in using.
<b>T</b> imetable your free time	Ensuring students have a clear structured timetable for their non-contact lessons and their home study, and this is regularly reviewed and adapted.
<b>S</b> tretch beyond the spec	Making sure students have a copy of the specifications for each subject, but that they are stretched to conduct wider reading and research to deepen their understanding.

## 2.6 Independent Study

Independent study for years 7 & 8 will be set in EBACC subjects only; roughly 40 minutes per fortnight. There should be a clear rationale behind any independent work that is set, which links to what is happening in the classroom. Independent study tasks are expected to consolidate or diagnose the state of learning in the classroom, or to prepare students for what is about to come next in their learning.

Independent study for years 9, 10 & 11 is two hour per week per fortnight. HoFs have the freedom to direct their Faculties to set forms of independent study that are most suited to success in their own GCSE area.

### Best practice when setting independent study tasks

- Teachers set independent study at the beginning of the lesson, which is also written into the Google Classroom that then feeds into the student's Google Calendar
- Independent study should be appropriate to all individuals in a class so that they can independently operate in their "challenge zone" in a guided independent study session.
- Teachers set work that does not require an independent study mentorteacher to deliver the learning. The majority of independent study set should be for quiet, independent work; however, there may be times where students will need to collaborate in the same space or time on a piece of work.
- If a student has no independent study left to do or does not understand an independent study task, they will have access to resources they can dip into at any time e.g. Dr Frost for Maths or SENECA learning
- Teachers assigned as independent study mentors are expected to set up their own routines for learning behaviour during a prep lesson, which could include, but are not limited to, periods of sustained silent working, having prep monitors who always write up known independent study or house points for excellent self-regulation.

## 2.7 Independent Study in the Sixth Form

Independent study outside of the classroom is integral to success at Key Stage 5. It will be reinforced with all students that for every hour of taught lesson they have in their timetable, they should be doing equal amount of time studying independently. This time will include prep tasks set by the teacher but also could include:

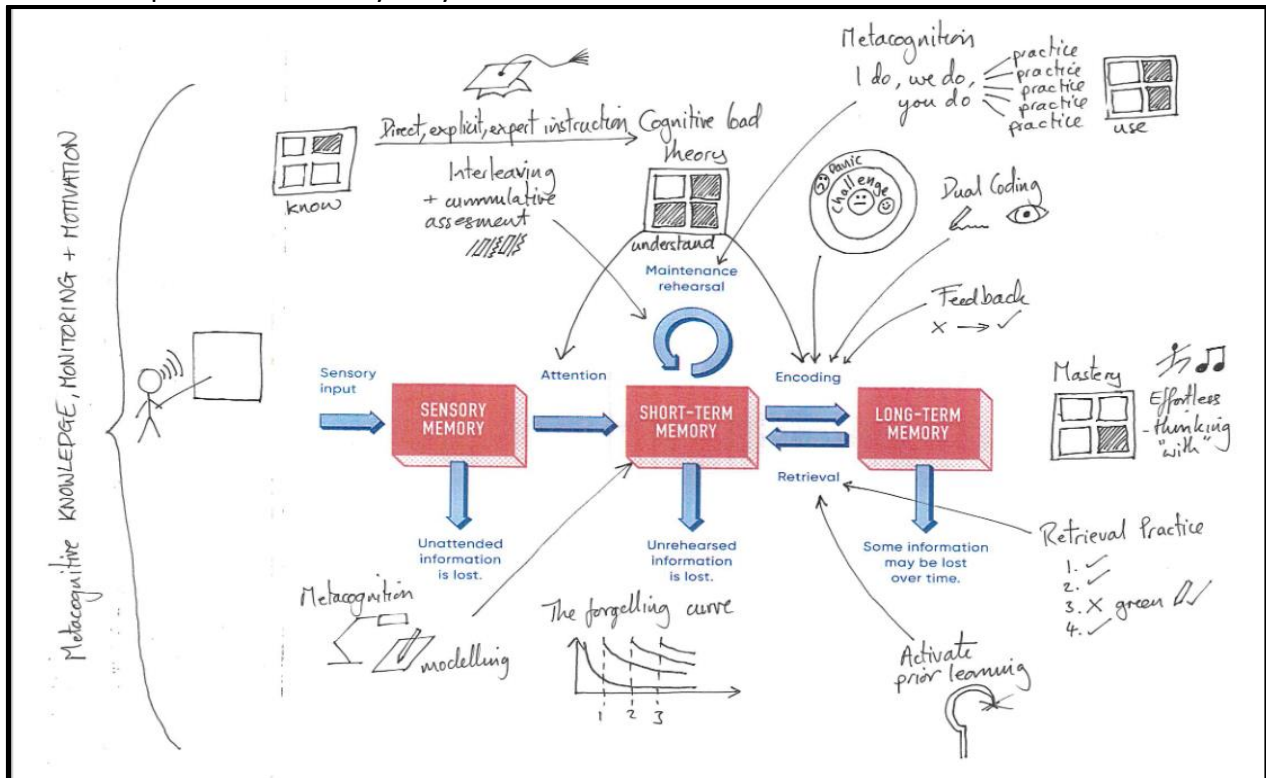
- Revision and consolidation activities
- Revisiting and redrafting class notes
- Reading signposted literature
- Extension work that take students beyond the exam board specifications
- Engagement in other sources of knowledge and skills (research / journals / podcasts / documentaries etc.)

*To be read in conjunction with the Prep Policy.*

### 3. THE AIMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Engaging and inspiring teaching is the absolute priority of the School. The Assistant Head Teacher responsible for Teaching and Learning leads on this area, and reports into the Head Teacher. Quality and consistency of teaching is the key to raising standards and we therefore aim to ensure that every student has access to a high-quality education which will allow them to achieve their full learning potential.

All teaching and learning practices are evidence-based and are proven to work in moving students on in their learning. Many of our teaching practices and behaviours can be linked to the information processing model (see the graphic below). A review of these practices, inclusive of detailed explanations on why they work can be found here.



We are committed to ensuring the following:

- Teachers encourage students to develop as independent, self-motivated, metacognitive learners<sup>3</sup> and make learning collaborative, rigorous and enjoyable
- Teachers at HVS are passionate and inquisitive learners themselves, constantly evaluating and sharing their professional practice and striving to achieve the aspirations that we have for our students. Teachers continuously refresh their subject knowledge and use current and appropriate teaching and learning initiatives. We have an open-door policy which supports teachers to develop and hone their practice through regular drop ins by other members of staff.
- Teachers are inspired to embed principles of cognitive science and the development of metacognitive behaviours in their lessons and/or across learning sequences. This could include, but is not limited to:
  - knowledge retrieval
  - spaced practice
  - prior knowledge activation

<sup>3</sup> Metacognitive learners understand how they learn best

- skill practice
- dual coding
- management of extraneous cognitive load
- metacognitive discussions
- modelling
- Teachers are open to feedback from a range of practitioners within and beyond HVS
- The HVS6 is evident in the vast majority of lessons and these ingredients will be explored via CPD and learning walks (see section 4)

Teachers will always strive to deliver outstanding lessons. There are many different ways to achieve this and we do not believe in a 'one size fits all' approach. As skilful practitioners, our teaching staff cater for different learners, and use their judgement to employ the most appropriate techniques in their lessons to optimise learning. Lessons are well-planned, well-structured and well-paced, with clear and challenging learning objectives, which are shared with students and reviewed throughout the lesson

- Students are fully involved in their own learning and progress, and are encouraged to develop the cognitive and metacognitive language to talk about their progress as well as the ability to understand how to be successful in a task.
- The power of feedback is known; all students receive some form of feedback on their learning, understanding or skills in every lesson, which informs what comes next in their learning.
- Monitoring, peer observations and learning walks help to ensure consistently excellent teaching. In addition, teachers and teaching assistants are held to account via the appraisals process

It is the responsibility of all adults at HVS to ensure students feel safe to take risks and learn effectively. The Behaviour for Learning policy outlines in detail the expectations of different groups of staff, students and parents

Staff at Hoe Valley School understand that they have a key role in developing metacognitive behaviours in our students, such they leave Hoe Valley with a clear understanding of how they learn best. Staff have received significant training on the development of metacognitive behaviours in students and are in the process of experimenting with what works for them and their teaching in the coming years.



#### 4. CONSISTENCY AT HVS

Although we agree with the OFSTED framework that there is not a ‘one size fits all’ approach to learning, we also know that good routines and habits support excellent learning experiences. Consistency is key in achieving this. All teachers are expected to follow the ‘Hoe Valley Six’ when delivering lessons:

HV6-1. <b>Cognitive Science</b> -derived strategies develop knowledge and skills, and metacognitive behaviours are facilitate
HV6-2. <b>Learning time</b> is maximised
HV6-3. Students are in the “ <b>challenge zone</b> ”. As many students as possible experience desired difficulties and find a pathway to success.
HV6-4. Quality <b>questioning</b> ; questions are of high quality and a variety of strategies are used to maximise participation and challenge levels
HV6-5. Authentic extension of <b>cultural capital</b> <sup>4</sup> . Opportunities to develop digital and work ready skills, Numeracy, Literacy, SMSC and an appreciation of the Big Picture are realised.
HV6-6. Students receive <b>feedback</b> in every lesson, which can take many forms

At KS5 we expect our students to understand themselves well as learners and we expect our teachers to continue to develop our students into adult, independent learners who will thrive in a rapidly changing post-18 landscape. As such HV6-2 and HV6-5 at KS5 will evolve to the following summarising statements:

- HV6-2. Learning time and opportunities for enrichment are maximised inside the classroom. Students are signposted to learn and develop independently beyond the classroom.
- HV6-6. Students receive different forms of feedback every lesson, which they act upon consistently to further their understanding

There should be consistency in terms of feedback (see whole school and faculty feedback policy and the staff handbook) and in terms of how students’ books or folders should be set out.

#### 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

At Hoe Valley School we have confidence in our teachers and believe that every teacher is at least ‘good’. As such, we do not feel that it is necessary to have a cumbersome quality assurance process. Additionally, teaching at Hoe Valley School is conducted in an open and reflective fashion. SLT aim to be visible in all classrooms during the school day, so that they can “take the pulse” of practice and also strategically follow any threads of best practice or inconsistency. Each week during the SLT meeting there is time set aside to share findings from these ‘walkabouts’ to enable success to be celebrated as well as ensure any teachers who may require additional support receive it. This is all done in a supportive fashion with the aim being to enable HVS’s teachers to deliver the best lessons they possibly can. Where excellent practice is seen the member of staff in question may be asked to contribute to whole staff CPD via the Thursday morning Professional Learning sessions.

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<sup>4</sup> Cultural capital is defined as the accumulation of knowledge, behaviours, and skills that a student can draw upon and which demonstrates their cultural awareness, knowledge and competence; it is one of the key ingredients a student will draw upon to be successful in society, their career and the world of work.

Heads of Faculty have initial responsibility for the formal quality assurance of the teaching in their faculty areas. Every member of staff is visited by their Head of Faculty on a regular basis. During these learning walk visits HoFs will identify areas of strength and areas for development in a teacher’s practice in order to support them to develop and improve their teaching. These learning walks are recorded once per term on the BlueSky platform, on a ‘best-fit’ basis, to enable HoFs to analyse the practice across their faculty in order to tailor faculty meetings to the needs of the team. Additionally, the Assistant Head Teacher responsible for Teaching and Learning will be able to analyse practice across the school and look for patterns to inform the planning of whole-school CPD.

Learning walks can have specific foci or seek to gage the state of teaching expertise across the whole of the Hoe Valley Six, dependent on the needs of the staff as a whole; regardless, a teacher is expected to provide the observer with a seating plan printed from Edulink, such that the profile of the class seen and the observer can be more precise in their feedback.

Teachers will be judged on their level of expertise within each of the HV6, so that the feedback received from learning walks is developmental in nature as opposed to pigeonholing staff into a particular lesson grading. We expect all staff to seek “adaptive expertise” in all areas of the HVS6, but also have a shared understanding that this will take significant personal investment in their own professional development. A summary of the 4 levels of expertise can be found below:

Adaptive	Deliberative	Procedural	Awareness
High level of expertise - <b>automaticity</b> and <b>flexibility</b>	<b>Some flexibility</b> in approach, with some supports and thinking through	Proficient practice that <b>follows set procedures</b> without adaptation	May have a background awareness, but this <b>does not crystallise</b> into practice

Consistency of approach for learning walks across HoFs is ensured through the linking of the HVS6 and the Blue Sky Learning walk proforma to the 8 National Teaching Standards and their levelled descriptors. Additionally, HoFs of different faculties will perform paired learning walks twice a year.

When a new teacher joins the School, the Head of Faculty must visit this teacher’s lesson within two weeks of them being at HVS, and as a priority thereafter. In their first learning walk at Hoe Valley School, a new member of staff should receive feedback on all areas of the Hoe Valley Six, regardless of whether there is a whole school focus. These findings should be discussed in line management meetings to inform decisions relative to the teacher’s probationary period.

Within Hoe Valley School, there are a number of trained coaches. HoFs can signpost members of a Faculty towards coaching where they feel a particular area of their practice may need reflecting on and personal development. A coaching cycle could take around 6 weeks. Any member of staff can also request a coaching cycle where they would like to address an area of their practice.

Where concerns are raised regarding teaching performance, Heads of Faculty, with guidance from the Assistant Head Teacher and the school’s coaching team, will act as mentors or coaches as appropriate in the first instance to provide subject-specific guidance to help teachers improve

their practice. In the case of this process not leading to significant improvement the Assistant Head Teacher will then place the teacher onto the Teaching and Learning Acceleration Programme (TLAP) in which they will be mentored by an outstanding practitioner who is not their line manager. This process is separate to the appraisals process and is overseen by the Assistant Head Teacher. If performance does not improve after this process, this will be addressed via the formal Appraisal process (see Pay Policy and Appraisal Policy).

The School's SIP partner also quality assures teaching and learning along with external visitors from outstanding local schools. This process allows the School to standardise the quality of feedback.

## **6. REPORTING ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

The Assistant Head Teacher responsible for Teaching and Learning ensures that all staff and the Board of Governors are briefed on the strengths and weaknesses of Teaching and Learning within the School each term. The quality of teaching and learning is also discussed at committee level with governors.

## **APPENDIX 1:**

### **TLAP (Teaching and Learning Acceleration Programme)**

#### **Aims**

To improve teaching by:

- identifying and building on the strengths of teachers
- identifying and meeting the developmental needs of teachers through tailored programmes
- sharing good and outstanding practice
- challenging and eradicating inadequate practice or practice that requires improvement

#### **Referral**

Staff will be placed on a TLAP if their performance is judged as requiring improvement or inadequate by drawing on a range of sources (lesson observations, learning walk letters, data trawls, student voice etc).

The TLAP will be run by an outstanding practitioner who will become their mentor through the process. They will not be the teacher's line manager. The teacher's line manager will be informed the TLAP is in place and what the outcome of the TLAP was.

#### **The Programme**

Each TLAP lasts approximately 6 weeks and will be tailored to meet individual needs by the mentor and teacher working together. TLAPs may include:

- Weekly non-graded developmental observations and feedback by the mentor, focusing on key areas of development e.g. personalization, home learning
- Observations of colleagues to model good and outstanding practice
- Shared planning meetings with an appropriate member of staff
- Direction to in-house or external CPD
- Support from external consultants or advisors
- Visits to relevant schools

#### **Monitoring**

At the end of the TLAP the teacher's performance will continue to be monitored through mechanisms selected to measure improvement. Such mechanisms may include:

- Pre-announced lesson observations
- No-notice typicality checks
- Work scrutiny
- Review of planning
- Looking at the achievement and progress of students

#### **Outcomes**

At the end of the TLAP a review meeting will be held between the teacher and the TLAP mentor. Three possible outcomes will be considered:

<b>If....</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
The teacher's performance has improved so that practice is now potentially good	No further action
The teacher's performance has improved but needs further support to become consistently good	Extended TLAP
The teacher's performance is unlikely to make the required improvement	Performance Review meeting with line manager

**Record Sheet: To be completed collaboratively between teacher / mentor (can be shared with line manager if agreed with the teacher)**

Week	Lesson observations	Discussion topics	Actions	Comments
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				