



High Quality Learning Policy

A Guide to Effective Teaching & Learning at St Andrew's International School

Rationale

This policy, in conjunction with the School's Guiding Statements, acknowledges that teaching and learning is one of the central elements of our school. We believe that every student has the right to be taught well and that the curriculum must be accessible, relevant, challenging and engaging if all students are to achieve and reach their potential. We believe that learning should be a worthwhile and enjoyable experience for everyone. Through our teaching we equip students with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to be able to make informed choices and lead happy and rewarding lives. The policy has been formulated to provide a basis for teachers to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching in their classroom and across the school.

Definition of High Quality Learning

St Andrew's International School is dedicated to achieving excellence in education. Teachers set the highest expectations in order to encourage a lifelong love of learning which will equip our students to succeed in any context. We define high-quality learning as that which:

- Enables students to inquire, question and think critically as they learn
- Is student-centred, planned and differentiated to provide necessary support and challenge
- Gives all students the opportunity to reflect on their individual progress, success and next steps

Purpose

By adopting a whole school approach to teaching and learning across our school, we aim: -

- To provide consistency of teaching and learning;
- To enable teachers to teach as effectively as possible;
- To enable students to learn as efficiently as possible;
- To give students the skills they require to become confident, resourceful, enquiring and independent, lifelong learners;
- To develop students' self-respect and encourage students to respect the ideas, attitudes, values and feelings of others, including an ethical respect for all cultures;
- To learn from each other, through the adoption of a collaborative, enquiry based approach to teaching and learning, where good practice is shared;
- To encourage students to take pride in their work and the work of others.

There is no simple recipe for improving teaching and learning in a school. However, this policy outlines some of the key principles we value at St Andrew's, which are essential in maintaining high standards in teaching and learning.

Effective Teaching and Learning

Student/Teacher relationship: the basis of learning:

At the heart of learning is the relationship between the student and the teacher. Learning is most likely if the student has confidence in the teacher's knowledge, organisation and compassion. The student is more likely to be engaged and this is a central tenet of progress.

We believe that students learn best when they:

- Are happy
- Are interested and motivated
- Achieve success and approval
- Are given tasks which match and extend their ability
- Clearly understand the learning goal
- Are confident in taking risks, feel secure in making mistakes and are aware of boundaries
- Are challenged and stimulated
- Are active participants in their own learning.

We agree that the best teaching and learning involves the following criteria:

- Teachers having high expectations of all students;
- Teachers having good knowledge of the subject content covered in the lesson, child development and how students learn;
- Students being involved in their own learning and assessment;
- Students knowing what it is they are being asked to learn and receiving feedback so they know what they need to do in order to succeed (see Marking Policy; Assessment Policy);
- Challenging work differentiated to match and nurture the range of needs in the class;
- A variety of teaching methods being used to make learning engaging where students are provided with a wide variety of planned and self-initiated learning opportunities;
- Recognising that different students learn in different ways and allowing students of all learning styles to thrive i.e. visual, auditory or kinaesthetic;
- An effective pace being maintained throughout lessons;
- A variety of activities and questioning techniques being used with opportunities to be involved in small group, individual and class based learning experiences;
- High standards of effort, accuracy and presentation being encouraged at all times;
- Planned and efficient use being made of any support e.g. teaching assistants, adult helpers;
- A good range of learning resources being used, including ICT;
- Homework being thoughtfully set to enhance and extend students learning experiences;
- All students being fully included;
- A safe and secure environment where students are able to freely explore/inquire;
- Teachers who continually assess and adapt a developmentally appropriate curriculum as required;
- Implementing a range of formative and summative assessments to monitor student learning;
- Using assessment data to adjust teaching to help all students achieve.

Teaching and learning styles and strategies

The following is a list (not exhaustive) that identifies a range of teaching and learning strategies that may be used:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explanation• Instruction• Questioning• Observation• Modelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reporting back• Investigation• Consolidation and practice• Problem solving• Individual work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paired work• Collaborative work• Using ICT• Extended writing• Peer assessment
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- Using open-ended questions
- Debate
- Directing and telling
- Discussion
- Demonstration
- Listening
- Making judgements
- Oral feedback
- Role play
- Research
- Brainstorming
- Sharing
- Games and puzzles
- Simulations
- Revision
- Self assessment
- Feedback through marking
- Think, pair, share

Key Principles

In order to meet the criteria for effective teaching and learning identified above, all lessons across our school should involve the following key elements:

1) The Learning Environment

The surroundings in which students learn can greatly influence their academic performance and wellbeing in school. The better the school looks, the more it could inspire the people inside it - a well-cared for classroom can make students feel that what they achieve, and how they themselves are perceived, is important.

Across our school we aim to ensure that an appropriate working environment is established and maintained where all classrooms, group learning areas and whole school areas are spaces that everyone can use to learn.

2) Planning

In order to ensure high quality teaching and learning, careful, thorough planning is expected. Teachers make ongoing assessments of each student's progress and use this information when planning their lessons. It enables them to take into account the abilities of all students. Teachers strive to ensure that all tasks set are appropriate to each student's level of ability. When planning work for students with special educational needs, due regard is given to information and targets contained in the Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Standards: These should represent enduring understandings that have relevance and significance beyond the classroom. Standards can be represented using varied, age appropriate content at levels across the school.

3) Learning Objectives

These should be specific and outline the learning expected to take place in that lesson. They should not be too broad or general, should use student age/appropriate language and should be written down. Learning objectives should also be measurable and shared effectively.

Learning objectives could begin with:

- To be able to.... evaluate/identify/describe/justify/explain/apply/demonstrate
- To use confidently ... To develop ...
- To classify ... To know how to ...
- To recognise ... To think about ...
- To predict ... To be aware of ...
- To illustrate ... To compare ...

4) Success Criteria

All students should be clear about how they will know if they achieved the learning objective. They can use these criteria to assess both their own and the work of others.

5) Differentiation

All learners should be challenged appropriately and planning should show clear differentiation, appropriate to the age of students and the subject.

6) Active Engagement

Students are actively engaged during the lesson. Teachers take into account students' concentration spans (developmentally) and ensure they are not sitting passively for long periods. Opportunities to Think/Pair/Share, discussions with a partner and opportunities for learning through genuine inquiry are regular features in all lessons. Students are trained to use appropriate body language when engaged in discussion with a partner. Visuals, artefacts and auditory input are all used creatively as ways to actively engage learners.

7) Enhancement of Learning

Consistent classroom management strategies are used to minimise the time spent on behaviour issues (see Behaviour Policy; Code of Conduct) and maximise the time spent on learning. ICT is used to enhance learning wherever possible. Additional adults are clear in how/why to support students' learning.

8) Feedback/Assessment

Regular feedback is to be given that is linked to the learning objective and success criteria. All students are clear about what they need to do to improve and their next steps in learning (see Assessment for Learning Policy).

Roles and Responsibilities

Educational Leaders:

- Support the use of appropriate teaching strategies by allocating resources effectively;
- Ensure that the school buildings and premises are best used to support successful teaching and learning;
- Monitor teaching strategies in the light of health and safety regulations;
- Monitor how effective teaching and learning strategies are in terms of raising student attainment;
- Ensure that staff development and performance management policies promote good quality teaching;
- Employ the appraisal system to ensure more good teaching, in more classrooms more of the time;
- Analyse school wide assessment data (see Assessment for Learning Policy).

Teachers:

Teachers are responsible for the progress of students in their classes by keeping records of their development in order to assess the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are expected to give regular feedback:

- During lessons
- Following homework assignments
- Following assessments

Teachers should analyse formative and summative data to ensure that students are learning what is being taught.

Records are kept in many ways, including:

- Teacher's weekly planning;
- Teacher's notes and observations;
- Teacher's records;
- Portfolios;
- Gradequick files.

Parents/Guardians:

We believe that parents have a fundamental role to play in helping our students to learn. We do all we can to inform parents about what and how their children are learning by:

- Holding parents evenings to explain our school strategies, policies and assessments;
- Sending information in the school agenda and posting on Edline, where we outline the topics the students will be studying during that trimester and how well they are doing;
- Reporting to parents on the progress made by each student and indicating how the student can improve further;

- Explaining to parents how they can support their children with homework. We suggest for example, regular shared reading with younger students and support for all students with their homework and investigative work;
- Holding Parent/Teacher, 3-Way and Student Led Conferences to assist parents in monitoring their child's progress and allowing opportunities to discuss and reflect on student targets (also known as next steps in learning).

Students:

All students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, ensuring they ask for help and clarification when they need it and always look to improve in order to achieve their next steps in learning.

The school is divided into three distinct sections. What follows is a description of how teaching and learning is approached specifically in those particular departments.

PRIMARY SCHOOL
Preschool to Grade 5

The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB-PYP) has been specifically designed for students aged 3-12 years. This internationally recognised programme provides students with the opportunity to learn and explore through the use of inquiry, promoting an academically challenging curriculum, which fosters international mindedness.

Primary Years Programme (PYP) Overview

The IB PYP focuses on the growth of the whole child, encompassing the academic, social, physical, emotional and cultural needs of all students. The PYP provides an international curriculum consisting of five essential elements developed to ensure students are engaged in a holistic programme that nurtures, challenges and supports all aspects of learning. The essential elements include:

- Knowledge
- Attitudes
- Concepts
- Skills
- Action

The PYP promotes learning through inquiry; by developing and asking questions structured around key concepts students research answers, pose and solve problems and engage in meaningful learning experiences that promote the acquisition of knowledge. The PYP also supports the development of a wide range of skills as an essential part of the curriculum enabling students to be effective life-long learners and to succeed in a challenging world. Positive attitudes towards learning, the environment and the people around us are encouraged and give students the opportunity to apply their knowledge to the real world.

The academically challenging curriculum has been developed around three key questions with each subject curriculum document being developed to respond to these questions:

- What do we want students to learn?
A written set of student expectations, learning objectives and concepts for each subject area
- How best will they learn?
Teaching and learning strategies that promote inquiry, encourage student ownership of their learning, support best educational practice and cater to the learning needs of all students
- How will we know what they have learned?
The use of effective assessment practices that monitor individual student progress and guide future planning and learning experiences.

Learning is further enhanced through clubs, activities, assemblies, the Junior School Student Council and field trips. These activities all contribute to promoting the IB Learner Profile and provide opportunities to share the student's learning and create avenues to explore the curriculum beyond the classroom. The wide variety of after school activities in sports, theatre, arts and crafts, music, IT games and others help students develop pastimes and hobbies outside of the academic field.

The PYP Exhibition

Within the Primary School, the PYP Exhibition is a required summative assessment, which is undertaken in Grade Five. The exhibition provides the culminating experience of the learner's engagement with the PYP. It unites the students, teachers and parents in activity that captures the essence of the PYP: transdisciplinary inquiry conducted in a spirit of personal and shared responsibility. It is a celebration, which synthesizes the programme and shares it with the whole school community. At St Andrews School, the exhibition marks the student's passage from the Primary School to the Middle School.

MIDDLE SCHOOL (Grades 6 to 10)

The Middle School years are a time of rapid growth in an adolescent's life – involving complex physiological, cognitive, social and emotional development. At St Andrew's we focus on providing a structured, caring environment for students, as they transition from the primarily "one classroom" learning environment of the Primary School to the varied demands and structures of externally examined courses in the Upper School.

The Middle School aims to encourage holistic learning, emphasises understanding concepts, mastering skills and developing attitudes as well as learning knowledge. These are all tools designed to help students to be successful in our global society, as well as providing a sound foundation for learning in the diploma programme (IBDP).

Students follow a prescribed curriculum emphasising critical thinking, working both independently and collaboratively and taking a disciplined approach to studying. They develop an ability to apply what they know and support their ideas through speaking and writing, in all subject areas.

Interdisciplinary Links

Students in the Middle Years are exposed to a range of learning approaches and asked to apply this knowledge across their studies. Central to the work of teachers is to draw holistic connections so that students are able to transfer their knowledge from one domain to another. It is a key feature of the successful learner that a student can move from the scaffolded situation to testing knowledge in a new environment.

In Grades 9 and 10, students sit The International Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), a standardised examination modelled on the British GCSE examination. In addition to IGCSE courses, there are a number of compulsory and elective 'regular' courses. The compulsory courses include: Physical Education and Level Up.

Option Choices

Students generally take eight IGCSE subjects over a two-year period. The eight subjects include three compulsory subjects: English Language, English Literature and Mathematics. Additionally, students choose at least one Modern Language, one Science, one Individuals and Society, and one Arts subject.

Students are encouraged to study the options of their choice, and Grade 8 students are asked to choose their first three choices in each group on the pre registration form issued in March/April of each year. We try to accommodate all combinations of subjects or all first choices, therefore, if difficulties arise, we consult further with individual students and parents. However, in order for any course to run it must have a minimum of five students opting to study it.

HIGH SCHOOL Grades 11 and 12

The Upper School offers a strong foundation of courses designed for successful further education in The Bahamas or at any university around the world. For college bound students, it offers a course of study that meets the entry-level requirement for colleges and universities. For those not aiming for college, the curriculum offers a well-balanced, general education in which there is some scope for individual choice as well as a sensible core of required subjects.

The IB Diploma Programme is an academically challenging and balanced programme of education with final examinations that prepares students, normally aged 16-18 for success in university and life beyond. The programme is taught over two years and has gained recognition and respect from the world's leading universities, often leading to preferential admissions and earned college credits for IB students.

The programme continues the IB philosophies of encouraging students to be open –minded, knowledgeable, compassionate and internationally minded. The course stands alone as a two-year programme, so students who have not come through St Andrew's are fully able to start in the IB Diploma programme.

The programme encompasses an in-depth study of six major subjects; three subjects are studied at higher level and three at Standard level, allowing students to pursue advanced work in subjects of particular interest.

The subject groups are:

- Group 1 Studies in languages and literature
- Group 2 Language acquisition
- Group 3 Individuals and Societies
- Group 4 Experimental Sciences
- Group 5 Mathematics and Computer Science
- Group 6 the Arts

Three additional components outside the classroom are also part of the programme:

Theory of Knowledge a critical thinking course, which trains students to think about knowledge and its origins at the deepest levels;

The Extended Essay engages students in independent research on a topic of their choosing, providing them with the opportunity to explore a subject further and to create a mature piece of extended writing;

Creativity, Action, Service is known by its acronym CAS. CAS balances academics with hands-on learning outside of class. Participation in our CAS programme encourages students to be involved in artistic pursuits, sports and community service work, thus fostering students' awareness and appreciation of life outside the academic arena.