



Teaching & Learning Policy

Approved by:	Staff, Learning and Leadership Committee	Date: 8th October 2025
---------------------	--	-------------------------------

Last reviewed by:	E Dickinson
on:	October 2025

Next review due by:	October 2026
----------------------------	--------------

Vision:

At Downlands Community School, we place learning at the heart of everything we do. The development of our pedagogy is essential to inspire our community to achieve their full potential. As a community, we recognise the importance of learning the core knowledge of the curriculum as well as the development of key skills.

We believe that teaching should be engaging, challenging and accessible for all. This is why we use the acronym PACE to underpin all our decisions about our curriculum (Pedagogy, Ambition, Coherence and Equity). We continually develop the practice (*pedagogy*) of our teachers in their implementation of a curriculum that is *ambitious* in order to enable students to achieve outstanding outcomes, that has *coherence* between Key Stage 2-5 and that provides *equity* by retaining the highest ambition for all of our students, regardless of their individual differences.

Running alongside all that we offer students within lessons and in the wider curriculum is the ROCKS structure that underpins Character Development at Downlands. Details on the acronym can be found on the graphic below.



In terms of lessons themselves, teachers consider the most appropriate strategies to engage, support and challenge students. They use cognitive science - knowledge about how students learn - to inform choices about methods, resources and activities to create effective lessons. Downlands is a professional community of learners, and all colleagues should be engaged in developing their own practice through departmental collaboration, CPD programmes and academic research.

Aims of this policy:

- Student progress to be in the top 10% nationally
- Develop students' key character elements of: Resilience, Optimism, Community-Focus, Kindness and Self-Awareness (the Downlands 'ROCKS')
- To enable students to embed the knowledge and skills needed for each stage of their learning
- To provide an evidence-based framework from which to develop our teachers at all stages of their career

Effective practice:

At Downlands we expect highly effective teaching, which enables all students to achieve without limits. Our practice is underpinned by the following 'Six Principles' which are fundamental to achieving successful learning.

The key principles are:



These principles are further broken down into the following elements to a successful lesson:

High Expectations for ALL	Classroom Culture
Adaptive teaching underpins all lessons <i>Before the lesson:</i> - Lessons are pitched to 'teach to the top' - The resources are SEND-friendly - Complexity of tasks is minimised to reduce distractions <i>During the lesson:</i> - The lesson is scaffolded appropriately to challenge students of all abilities to succeed - TA support is used effectively - There is a strategy to support students during independent tasks - Re-teaching occurs where gaps/misconceptions are identified	<i>Routines:</i> - Routines are explicit and embedded to maximise learning - Entry routines support the school's consistency ethos - The register is taken in silence, accurately and on time - Exit routines support the school's consistency ethos - The behaviour policy is consistently applied and expectations are maintained (e.g. for contributions, volume level etc) - Early and least-intrusive interventions are used as an initial response to low-level disruption - Homework set supports students to either review, practise or prepare <i>ROCKS & Relationships:</i> - Success is celebrated through the language of ROCKS and ROCKS points are used to motivate students - ROCKS language is used to apply behavioural sanctions - A culture of maximising learning is underpinned by respect and trust - Opportunities for celebrating diversity are sought
Literacy & Numeracy	Exposition
<i>Literacy:</i> - Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary is explicitly taught - Drafting and redrafting of work is routine - Feedback prioritises highlighting of errors rather than careless mistakes when marking - Appropriate opportunities for reading in lessons are sought and careful planning ensures impact is maximised <i>Numeracy:</i> - Mathematical vocabulary is accurate - Teachers have a consistent approach to teaching mathematical processes - Strategies are used which develop students' oracy	<i>Explanations:</i> - Prior knowledge is considered so that explanations begin at the point of current student understanding - Knowledge and skills are explicitly taught - New learning is delivered concisely and is carefully chunked to avoid cognitive overload <i>Modelling:</i> - Teachers construct and explicitly teach processes where they are needed - Guided practice is used deliberately and the thought process behind it is narrated (I Do, We Do, You Do) - Exemplars are used effectively
Promoting Deep Thinking	Assessment & Feedback
<i>Activities & sequencing:</i> - Students are given an appropriate sequence of learning tasks - Repetition, retrieval and spaced practice are all planned and carefully considered to maximise learning over time - Teachers use techniques to maximise the time that students are either participating or thinking <i>Fluency:</i> - There is adequate time allocated for students to practise until learning is fluent and secure - There are appropriate periods of silent work built into lessons to maximise hard thinking time (TAKE 5, 10 etc) <i>Questioning:</i> - Targeted questioning with wait time is used at hinge points of the lesson - Questions and dialogue are used to promote elaboration (e.g., 'Why?', 'Compare', etc.)	<i>Planning to assess understanding:</i> - Possible misconceptions are identified and planning aims to prevent these from forming - The success criteria are shared with students and is in student-friendly language - Teachers plan appropriate formative assessment tasks (eg questioning, low stakes quizzing, hinge questions) to assess understanding of lesson objectives <i>Live Assessment for Learning:</i> - Students are prompted to elaborate answers to ensure that a correct answer stems from a secure understanding - The teacher uses verbal feedback during lessons to aid student progress <i>Written feedback & REAct:</i> - REAct feedback adheres to policy

Learning Objectives:

Student-friendly learning objectives are communicated to students.

Success criteria should be shared at the start of each lesson and referred back to at pertinent points to review progress.

At Downlands, we ‘teach to the top’ and use adaptive teaching methods such as scaffolding to enable all our students to access the most challenging concepts/content. Once students demonstrate success, these scaffolds are removed.

Assessment and Quality Feedback

At Downlands we believe that effective use of assessment is a key factor in enabling students to make outstanding progress.

Formal Assessments:

Every department will have summative assessments that assess knowledge, understanding, competencies or skills at key points in their curriculum. The purpose of these assessments is to provide teachers with feedback on their students to enable them to plan for progress. The assessment should also form part of the learning process for students.

Feedback:

Rationale:

As a school we are committed to the learning of all students and we recognise the importance of consistent and quality feedback in facilitating their achievement. Feedback should build students’ self-awareness, by requiring them to engage with their successes and their next steps.

“The only important thing about feedback is what students do with it.” Dylan Wiliam

Aims of feedback:

For students:

- To recognise their strengths
- To facilitate their understanding of their next steps
- To develop a ‘ROCKS’ attitude towards learning
- To have an impact on their achievement

For teachers:

- To track and support the progress of all students
- To support planning by enabling them to gain knowledge of students’ understanding, addressing misconceptions and plugging gaps in skills & knowledge
- To ensure that students’ work is of the highest quality

For Parents and Carers:

- To provide clear information about the progress of their young people and their next steps.

Process:

“Just giving students feedback about current achievement produces only modest benefits, but where feedback engages students in mindful activity the effects on learning can be profound.” Bangert & Drowns et al.

At Downlands, we believe that the process of providing feedback is crucial to the development of students.

Quality Feedback (The REAct Process):

Quality feedback aims to engage students in ‘mindful activity’ about their own work and facilitate their understanding of successes and next steps. This is achieved through the **REAct** process, when students are given time to **REFLECT** on their work, **EVALUATE** their work and then **ACT** to improve their work.

Frequency:

Students’ work will receive REAct feedback every nine lessons.

The process of REAct Feedback:

- 1) Students’ work is marked by the teacher
- 2) REAct feedback will be on green paper
- 3) Feedback comments will use ROCKS language to praise the positive elements of the work as well as providing guidance to improve
- 4) Teachers will plan lessons which address misconceptions and re-teach key areas where necessary
- 5) Students are expected to provide a high-quality response which demonstrates evidence of improvement by either:
 - a) Correcting mistakes or misconceptions
 - b) Repairing or redrafting work
 - c) Extension work

Expectations Checking:

Students’ work should be well-presented and teachers will intervene where it is not.

Other types of feedback:

It is recognised that verbal feedback, peer and self-assessment are important elements of facilitating students’ progress.

Quality Assurance of Teaching & Learning

Learning Walks:

At Downlands we do not give advance warning of lesson visits and do not grade lessons. Instead, we want to develop an understanding of ‘typical’ practice. The Senior Leadership Team and members of our Extended Leadership Team/Heads of Faculty complete weekly learning walks as part of the monitoring process.

Learning walks are considered against the ‘6 Principles’ so as to develop a culture of continued improvement. These learning walks can be used strategically to focus on key areas of the school’s development and on improving very specific areas from the current Teaching & Learning Policy. Feedback from learning walks is shared, recorded and analysed on an online platform (Bluesky Education) and feedback is discussed with colleagues.