READING BLUE COAT

Teaching and Learning Policy

Introduction

Students' learning is the central function of Reading Blue Coat. We understand teaching to be distinct from learning. The role of the teachers at Reading Blue Coat is to facilitate the learning of the students in a responsive way.

Reading Blue Coat accepts students with a range of abilities and teaching methods are adjusted accordingly so that the students are stretched and challenged, as well as receiving the support and encouragement that they need. This policy sets out how teaching is to be undertaken so that it best promotes the learning of all students.

Teaching and Learning philosophy – 'Responsive Teaching'

As set out in the Reading Blue Coat 'Teaching and Learning Primer' (2019), the teaching staff at Reading Blue Coat are committed to a responsive model of instruction.

Responsive teaching explains why a particular method might work i.e. the underlying principles on which the method is based. Accordingly, there are no prescribed responsive teaching techniques: teaching is responsive when teachers use the evidence of their own eyes alongside theory to identify effective ways to address the challenges of learning. For example, using mini whiteboards is not responsive teaching *per se* but using mini whiteboards to identify student misconceptions about irregular verbs is responsive teaching.

In summary, responsive teaching is done by teachers, taking the three principles set out below, examining examples and adapting them to meet our students' needs.

Principle 1: Reducing Cognitive Load

Principle 2: Knowing what learning looks like

Principle 3: Understanding the role of the emotions in learning

For more information regarding the three principles listed above, please refer to the Reading Blue Coat 'Teaching and Learning Primer' (2019),

The responsive teaching model sits alongside the **'Ready to Learn'** and **'Seating Plan'** guidance that was first published in September 2022.

Being ready and organised to learn and being seated in the optimal place for learning are regarded as Reading Blue Coat's prerequisites for a building a positive learning culture at the School.

Ready to Learn

The expectation of all students at Reading Blue Coat is that they will:

- Arrive promptly for lessons.
- Line up quietly outside classrooms, ready to go in when invited by the teacher and then sit down ready to learn
- Start the 'Do Now' task as soon as they enter the classroom
- Have all the standard equipment with them for every lesson (see the Student Manual for details)
- Complete their homework to the best of their abilities and hand it in on time
- Actively listen when anyone else is addressing the class
- Try their best in every lesson
- Treat their work, resources, and the classroom, with respect.

Hands Down Questioning

To help our students maintain focus in lessons and be actively listening to the teacher we follow a 'hands down' policy in all lessons. This means that when a teacher asks a question they will:

- **Pose** the question
- **Pause** to allow thinking/discussion time
- **Pounce** a student/pair/group of students to try to answer
- **Bounce** a question to another student, pair or group for refinement.

Hands down is used in lessons to allow thinking time for students, to distribute questioning and to build a culture where contributing is valued more than being right or wrong. Hands Down sits comfortably within our responsive teaching model.

Sometimes it's not the right technique responsively and adjustments should be made for students who feel too much in the spotlight. However, sometimes it's exactly the right approach because it engages an entire class and can be used with students working as a pair or individually.

Feedback and Feedforward

The evidence-based methods that inform our approach are:

- Feedback that doesn't change the student's learning behaviour in some way is probably time wasted.
- To truly benefit students' learning and progress, the needs of teachers are crucial
- Teachers use the responsive teaching approach to devise the best type of feedback in the circumstances and how that feedback informs their teaching of future lessons
- To reduce the expectation that the teacher marks every homework every time

Teacher autonomy

At Reading Blue Coat, we believe that the teacher has autonomy over the type of feedback that is given. This is because we believe that the most effective feedback is likely to be different for different students depending on age, learning stage and subject.

We concentrate formative, task-focused feedback on three questions:

1. **Where is the student going?** Students need to know the criteria for success through multiple exemplars, live modelling by the teacher and being shown different approaches to be successful.
2. **What progress has been made?** Compares student performance with the criteria for success through highlighting strengths and ensuring they are replicated in the future and detailing specific areas for improvement.
3. **Where to next?** Focus on a small number of crucial areas. Narrowing the focus can help to direct students' attention to the most important elements to improve.

Alternatives to 'traditional' written feedback

Reading Blue Coat encourages teachers to use different feedback methods such as Learning Journals in Years 7&8 to help students find out where they are going, how much progress has been made and where they need to go next.

Students responding to feedback

There should be uses of both teacher feedback and feedforward techniques:

- **Feedback** = acknowledgement teacher comments (i.e. you've done this and I've seen it – great!) and tick/cross/corrections marking, verbal feedback, peer marking and whole class feedback can also work.
- **Feedforward =** 'deep dive' teacher assessment that requires both formative teacher comments (this is what you need to do to improve the task) and immediate student comments/reflection. The Feedforward technique is **not required** for all student work.

Seating Plan Guidance

The learning environments in which we interact with pupils need to have a distinctive set of shared expectations. The expectations must be high. The pupils need to be in classroom environments where they can engage, be aspirational and learn how to communicate their ideas with others and their teachers. We share the same space to teach what we are passionate about and expert in.

In conjunction with the 'Ready to Learn', all teachers in traditional classroom settings will:

- From the first lesson of the Autumn Term, place all classes in a seating plan.
- Change the seating plan every term, and let the pupils know that this will happen in advance.
- Decide the best positioning of pupils in their seating plan. Methods of distribution to consider include: learning behaviours, learning needs or peer-to-peer learning.
- Ensuring that pupils have opportunities to work with others. Boys and girls can be integrated in pairs rather than adhering to a strict boy-girl-boy-girl arrangement. A boy-boy-girl-girl arrangement is fine.

- Explain that a seating plan should be a normal part of school life. Implementing a seating plan from the first lesson of the Autumn Term should help to remove any sense of unfair judgement and subjectivity.
- Make positional changes in a classroom that are required for specific behavioural, relationship or learning requirements promptly. The teacher is the best judge.
- Communicate with Student Development to seek the expert guidance rearding best seating position.

Roles and responsibilities

a) Students

Students are responsible for following the Ready to Learn Policy for all of their lessons. They must arrive at lessons on time, correctly equipped and engaged in the learning that awaits them.

All students are also expected to apply the School's core values of Courage, Compassion, Integrity Aspiration and Service in an academic context.

Courage

- By embracing challenge, responding positively to feedback and taking intellectual risks so that they can learn from mistakes and persevere when learning is difficult

Compassion

- By respecting the contributions of others, listening attentively, collaborating positively and supporting classmates' learning

Integrity

- By arriving prepared, completing academic work that is their own, completing academic work to the best of their ability, meeting deadlines and treating their learning environments with respect

Aspiration

- By striving for excellence in every lesson and seeking continual improvement.

Service

- By helping to create a productive classroom environment, supporting the progress of others, and using their knowledge and character to benefit the wider school community.

b) Teachers

1. Planning

Careful planning is essential if the objectives of successful learning are to be achieved.

- Establish routines with all classes, especially at the start of lessons, to ensure that students are ready to learn
- The focus of the lesson should be made clear at the beginning – this can be verbal or part of the 'do now' task rather than a written lesson objective - and reviewed at the end lessons
- Each lesson should start with a 'do now' retrieval task.

- Lessons should have a clear structure, transition points and sequences in which learning is reviewed and reinforced
- Lessons must be linked clearly to previous learning
- Teachers should plan to support specific learning needs of students.
- Lessons should include a range of activities to ensure stretch and challenge
- Lessons should exhibit clear links with department schemes of work and examination board specifications. Department schemes of work should provide a long-term context for each lesson. They may also provide an outline scheme for a particular lesson, but the teacher will need to decide whether and how this should be adapted

2. The Classroom Environment

- Students must be ready to learn at the start of the lesson (see *Ready to Learn Policy*)
- Resources in the room should be well organised and thought given to the way the learning space is arranged to maximise learning opportunities
- There should be attractive displays of students' work and other stimulus material that is relevant to the subject being taught.
- The teacher should ensure that the classroom environment is safe and appropriate for learning.
- Expectations of behaviour should be made clear and the teacher should model behaviour and establish routines that facilitate learning.

3. Maintaining a Learning Culture

- The teacher builds and maintains good relationships respecting each student contribution so that there is a climate of mutual respect
- The teacher has high expectations of their students and is determined that every student will engage with equal enthusiasm. Praise and plus points should focus on the way students have completed a task rather than just the outcome and avoid praise for perceived 'natural' ability.

4. Differentiation

- The underlying principle for teachers to implement is that, in differentiating the curriculum, teachers are not dispensers of knowledge but expert designers of learning opportunities

5. Co-Education

With the introduction of full co-education to Reading Blue Coat in 2023, departments' schemes of work need to reflect the interests and aspirations of all students.

- Lessons will follow a 'hands down' policy to distribute questioning evenly and encourage all students to contribute to group discussions.
- Reading Blue Coat will not implement specific pedagogical tools for male and female students. The 'Responsive Teaching' model is designed well for a co-educational environment and it ensures that the learning needs of all students are responded to equally.

6. Maintaining Records

Teachers are expected to keep an up-to-date record of the progress made by their students. This may be in paper or electronic form, but it should be available for inspection by Heads of Department or the Senior Leadership Team at any time.

- Records kept should inform teachers, parents, line managers or pastoral teams of each student's performance. The information should be sufficient to track progress, inform report writing and lesson planning and to enable the teacher to set meaningful academic targets. Any relevant SEND and EAL information also should be included and retained sensitively

7. Reporting

See Reporting guidance published annually by Deputy Head (Academic).

8. Political Bias

Teachers should be aware that students are still forming their political opinions and that they can be vulnerable if faced with strongly expressed partisan or radical views.

- Teachers should take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of students they are offered in a balanced presentation of opposing views.

- Teachers should read the Visitors and Vetting Visiting Speakers Policy before inviting speakers expressing radical views into school as we wish to ensure a balanced portrayal of contentious issues.

c) Heads of Department

The Heads of Department should monitor the learning culture of students to ensure that standards are consistent and good practice is shared.

The Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring;

- Their subject's curriculum is well-balanced, stimulating, challenging and interesting and fulfils the requirements of public examinations. They may delegate the writing of departmental schemes of work to willing members of the department but the Head of Department maintains responsibility.

- Lessons follow the 'Responsive Teaching' approach and the associated principles in the 'Ready to Learn' and 'Seating Plan' guidance.

- Lesson observations of their departmental colleagues.

- Scrutiny of students' work and feedback. The Head of Department should use this information to identify the targets for departmental developments.

- Where there are instances of teaching standards not being met, they should take action to address the issue and then continue to monitor the situation to check it has been resolved. The Deputy Head (Academic) and Deputy Head (Education Development) should be kept informed if instances of underperformance are not rectified.

- If a teacher identifies a student who is having problems in terms of their performance or behaviour, the Head of Department should offer support and advice and ensure that parents and pastoral teams have been informed. The Head of Department should endeavour to find

out from their departmental colleagues whether there are students who are a cause for concern. The Head of Department should inform the Tutor, Head of Year and Director of Section of causes for concern.

- Support for their department by facilitating the sharing of good practice. Alongside the Deputy Head (Education Development) and Professional Tutor, they should also help departmental colleagues to plan and build on existing skills, enhance performance through identifying INSET opportunities and the effective use of the School's Professional Development process.

d) Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

The SLT, particularly the Deputy Heads Academic and Eduction Development, is responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring the standard of teaching to achieve the best possible learning outcomes.

- The SLT should facilitate and support the development of teaching skills.

- The SLT is responsible for whole-school curriculum decisions with the aim being to produce a well-balanced, stimulating, challenging and interesting curriculum that also fulfils the requirements of public examinations.

- The SLT should set the future direction of teaching and learning in terms of the focus of staff training, priorities for Heads of Department to monitor and evaluation of the learning experience of students through the Students Learning Council.

e) The Student Development Department

- The Learning Support Department supports - either directly through training or via appropriate resources on the Staff Intranet site - teachers in identifying those students that require learning support.

- The Learning Support Department will provide strategies for students and teachers that will enable SEND students to access the school curriculum fully and experience excellent academic outcomes

f) Pastoral Teams

- The Pastoral Teams monitor students' learning progress across the range of subjects by using school reports, exam results, baseline data and target setting.

- Tutors, Heads of Year or Directors of Section communicate with parents and teachers if there is a cause for concern in a student's learning progress with a view to determining the cause and finding a solution. They should also communicate with parents and teachers to help identify behavioural or emotional obstacles to a student's learning and help find strategies to assist students and teachers to manage these.

g) Governors

The Governors' responsibility is to hold the SLT to account in its efforts to best provide for student learning.

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