



Learning & Teaching Policy

Ardnashee School & College

Learning and Teaching Policy

Rationale

Ardnashee School and College has a vibrant and positive ethos which has its foundations in mutual respect, good relationships, collaborative decision making and effective teamwork. As such we have fostered a strong and effective partnership with parents/carers and third party providers and this ensures that Learning and Teaching goes beyond the school to the wider school community. Ardnashee School and College is an inquiry focused educational establishment working in partnership with the Education Authority (EA) through the Supporting Schools Initiative (2021) to investigate learning and teaching strategies that will engage all learners.

The **Learning Pathways Curriculum** within Ardnashee School and College was created in consultation with the staff and Senior Leadership Team in response to the ever - changing profile of learners. We cater for students aged 3-19 with moderate, severe and complex learning difficulties and disabilities some with co-existing conditions who require a bespoke and personal Learning Pathways curriculum.

Defining Characteristics of MLD learners

- Verbal in terms of intent
- Efficiently communicates for needs, wants, likes and dislikes
- Generally, physically independent of others
- May experience some difficulty with understanding abstract concepts
- Understands cause and effect

Defining Characteristics of SLD learners

- May be pre-verbal or verbal in terms of intent
- May communicate for needs and wants only
- May be physically reliant on others
- Significant difficulty with understanding abstract concepts
- Some understanding of cause and effect

Defining Characteristics of Complex learners (PMLD)

- Pre-verbal in terms of intent
- May communicate for needs and wants only
- Physically reliant on others
- Substantial difficulty with understanding abstract concepts
- Limited understanding of cause and effect

LEARNING PATHWAYS CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The Learning Pathways curriculum within Ardnashee School in College was devised to align with the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and provides opportunities for students to develop across the five areas outlined by the Department for Education for SEN (January 2019) which include: Cognition and learning; Social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing; Speech, language and communication needs; Sensory needs and Physical needs.

Central to the Northern Ireland Curriculum is an emphasis on the development of the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities Framework which supports our students in developing life skills.

Learning Pathways has three clear routes known as; **A**chieve, **S**ucceed and **C**onquer! Each pathway takes into account students' preferred learning styles, student learning plans and motivators to support all students to engage in learning.

With an emphasis on highly differentiated lessons students can access a meaningful curriculum, engage in purposeful learning and progress at the most appropriate pace for their cognitive ability.

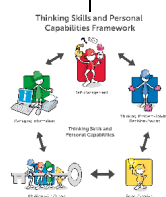
Achieve!	Succeed!	Conquer!
Curriculum Delivery Pupil Profile	Curriculum Delivery Pupil Profile	Curriculum Delivery Pupil Profile
Learners require decreasing support to engage in learning.	Learners require support to access learning.	Learners require high levels of adult support to access learning.
Lessons will be differentiated to support learners in this pathway to progress with functional life skills and work based learning opportunities in Post Primary.	Learners will experience the curriculum through carefully structured lessons focusing on topics and the cross curricular skills. Lessons will be differentiated to enable students to progress in self- help, independence and social skills.	Lessons will focus on support with communication including assistive technologies and enriching learning experiences purposeful for individual learners. A sensory curriculum in response to individual needs will be incorporated into lessons.

Structure of the Ardnashee School and College Curriculum

The Learning Programmes delivered within Ardnashee School and College adhere to the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum while embedding the important elements such as children's Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and Personal Development and Mutual Understanding.

The Areas of Learning of the curriculum for Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 have been successfully embedded into our new Learning Programmes which under the following specific Ardnashee School and College agreed Areas of Learning.

Communication and Interaction e.g. Language and Literacy e.g. English with Media Education e.g. Employability	Cognition and Learning e.g. Mathematics and Numeracy e.g. Mathematics with Financial Capability Home Economics e.g. The World Around Us e.g. Environment and Society e.g. Local and Global Citizenship
Social, Emotional, Health and Wellbeing e.g. Personal Development and Mutual Understanding e.g. Religious Education	Physical Development, Movement and Sensory e.g. The Arts e.g. Physical Education



Please see the Ardnashee School and College's "Big Picture" of the Primary and Post Primary Curriculum. (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2)

Our Post Primary curriculum builds on the learning opportunities experienced during each child's specific Primary Learning Pathway Journey. At Post 16 our students Learning Programmes reflect the Learning Pathways Journey that they are on in preparation for life beyond school.

Principles of Learning and Teaching

- To ensure every student **A**chieves, **S**ucceeds and **C**onquers barriers to learning *by providing an inclusive education within a culture of high expectations.*
- To make learning an enjoyable and challenging experience: *stimulate learning through matching teaching techniques and strategies to a range of learning styles.*
- To build on what learners already know: *structure and pace teaching so that pupil knows what is to be learnt, how and why.*
- To make learning individual, creative, vivid and real: *develop understanding through enquiry, creativity, e-learning and group and individual work and problem solving.*
- To promote assessment for learning: *make student partners in their learning and reflect on targets as they are achieved.*
- To enrich the learning experience: *build learning skills across the curriculum.*

The **Learning Pathways Curriculum** is creative, differentiated, personalised, nurturing, and provides opportunities for students to progress. The Learning Pathways curriculum is coherent across the school and students experience Cross Curricular lessons that are meaningful and connected to Topics/Units of Work.

Students are supported to **A**chieve, **S**ucceed and **C**onquer individual challenges during their educational journey working towards personalised goals. Students will learn about the world we live in and learn to become as independent as possible at a pace appropriate to their individual needs. Teaching teams will know how individual students learn so that their learning experiences are successful.

Different Learning Styles

We are committed to providing a multi-sensory environment and staff offer a highly differentiated Learning Pathways Curriculum which ensures students can **A**chieve, **S**ucceed and **C**onquer personal targets.

We are acutely aware of the importance of the need to develop effective strategies that encourage all students to learn in ways that best suit them and at a pace appropriate to them.

When a student feels a sense of belonging to an environment in which they feel safe, valued, respected and which gives them a sense of purpose and identity then effective learning takes place. Providing the right educational environment ensures that all learners are engaged in purposeful and worthwhile learning experiences.

Within the Learning Pathways Curriculum, we consider the pastoral and nurture needs of all learners to ensure that students feel alert, organised, relaxed and ready to learn.

Students are motivated to learn if we:

- Advocate, Support and Champion them before expecting them to learn
- Engage students in experiences that motivate and interest them.
- Praise effort rather than ability with positive language and a total and multi-modal communication approach.
- Emphasise achievement rather than failure.
- Recognise progress against previous personal targets (Personal Learning Plans - PLPs)
- Provide supporting visual prompts and encouraging comments with data rather than data without context.

Students can learn when we:

- Make it clear what students are being asked to learn and how they can recognise their own success.
- Help learners to become aware of how, as well as what, they are learning.
- When we understand the preferred learning styles and provide motivating and engaging learning experiences.
- Help students to reflect on their own strengths and areas for future development.
- Guide learners on what to do to improve and give them the opportunity to do it.

Learning and Teaching Styles

A wide range of teaching strategies are employed to support our students. All lessons consider a total communication approach as relevant to each learners needs. Learning and teaching styles may include:

- Whole class activities / Practical activities
- Group discussions / Group activities
- Team teaching
- Paired activities / Pupil led activities
- Individual activities
- Activity based sharing / Topic based activities
- Problem solving activities
- Educational visits / Class visitors
- Differentiated questioning techniques
- Target setting
- TAC PAC / Sensory Circuits / Intensive Interaction / Sensology
- Attention Autism / Circle Time / Mindfulness exercises
- Movement breaks

We provide opportunities to learn through:

- Independent, pair, group and whole class work
- The use of ICT
- Experience, explore, Inquiry, research and finding out
- 'Linking the learning'
- Investigation and problem solving / Effective questioning
- Visual, auditory and kinaesthetic means
- Visits and residential trips
- Drama and role play
- Participation in creative activities and physical activities

We ensure effective learning through:

- Establishing a positive atmosphere where students are prepared to take risks with their learning.
- A strong emphasis on the use of ICT to enhance the curriculum and extend learning
- Clear expectations of behaviour.
- High standards of work and a stimulating learning environment.
- Continued professional development for staff in response to student profile and need.
- Long, medium and short planning goals which are coherent, purposeful and self-evaluative.
- Opportunities to reflect and review learning.
- Creative and challenging lessons with carefully structured activities matched sensitively to students' individual needs.
- High levels of practical activities and interaction.

Learning and Teaching Across the Curriculum

The Learning Pathways Curriculum aims to meet the needs of learners in a bespoke and creative style with students accessing a range of learning experiences exploring learning intentions and assessment criteria from the Northern Ireland Curriculum. We know that a one fits all approach does not serve the needs of the learners in our school community and therefore we have established flexible learning programmes that incorporate personal learning targets for all students. Staff use the whole school topic cycle when planning lessons and students on the **A**chieve, **S**ucceed and **C**onquer pathways.

The Ardnashee Community

We believe in purposeful, engaging learning experiences for all members of our school community and continued professional development for all members of staff.

As a school, we have placed the voice of our students central to our school ethos to ensure that they learn in a positive, nurturing, creative and innovative way. The

school council meets regularly with a teacher who co-ordinates the meetings. All of our learners' successes are celebrated via assemblies, certificates, notes home and coverage in the local press etc.

Learning and Teaching Structure

We plan personalised, highly differentiated lessons which encourage students to engage in the learning and teaching process. The Learning Pathways "Bigger Picture" is explained, learning intentions are shared, success criteria are negotiated, questions are planned which further learning, strategies are used which maximise thinking and articulation, and ideas are modelled using appropriate communication tools in response to student individual needs.

Teaching

Staff have secure subject knowledge and understanding of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. When advice/support is needed teachers can seek advice from their Key Stage Leader or Vice Principal for curriculum.

Staff plan appropriately for all groups of students' and access high quality resources. The Learning Programme planning documents, introduced in August 2020 (with initial staff consultation) ensure that teachers outline clear Learning Intentions and staff are required to share objectives prior to learning with students. Where students are unable to interpret text or dialogue teachers might use object of reference or visual cues to share the learning intentions.

Learning and teaching activities are varied and differentiated to ensure that pupils explore, develop and practice new skills/ concepts and engage in learning. Staff cater for a range of differing learning styles and cultural diversity thus ensuring pupil participation and understanding. Staff provide appropriate resources, which support learning outcomes and provide challenge. Class teams have high expectations of presentation, quality and quantity of work

Sharing Learning Intentions

We want our students to be self-motivated, have a sense of purpose and take responsibility for their own learning. So, what they are learning, why they are learning it and how they know if they have succeeded or not is shared with them.

Our planning identifies learning objectives from the Northern Ireland Curriculum. We transform these into student friendly learning intentions so that students can understand the learning objective and expectation of the lesson. Planning success criteria ensures pupil focus, clarifies understanding, identifies success, determines difficulties, provides strategies for improvement and reflects on overall progress. It acts as an aide memoir and is a summary of what has been discussed.

Strategies for Sharing Learning Intentions

- Tell the student why they are learning this and how it fits into the bigger picture.
- Write learning intentions in pupil-friendly language or use appropriate visual prompts including objects of reference.
- Plan short focussed learning intentions which are not too broad. This can be individually or as part of small group activity.
- Display the learning intention for the current lesson and refer to the learning intention throughout the lesson.
- Build the learning intention into an appropriate part of the lesson.

Strategies for Generating Success Criteria

- Model the thinking processes involved in achieving the learning intention
- Use examples of work to identify what a good piece of work looks like
- Edit, combine and delete criteria together so learners can assimilate
- Match the success criteria closely to the learning intention
- Focus on the process of learning rather than the product
- Think about the most useful type of success criteria e.g. a think about list, ingredients, a chronological step-by-step list etc. This is usually dependent on whether the skills are open or closed.
- Use traffic lights, thumbs up, smiley faces etc as rewards
- Let the pupil try the task first and then ask them to tell you what they did first, next and so on
- Introduce learning logs or journal showing students success

Effective Questioning

We aim to engage in quality interaction which challenges and helps students to think, which in turn leads to better learning. When thinking is shared with the teacher and peers, a real understanding of what the pupil knows and does not know becomes apparent.

Asking effective questions clarifies understanding. A total communication approach to questioning will be delivered to encourage all students to question/ reflect and consider learning.

Effective Feedback

We aim to support, structure, mediate and scaffold pupil's learning by helping them to address the gap between what they already know, understand or can do at a given moment and what they will want or need to know, understand or can do in the future. We also encourage students, where appropriate, to bridge that gap themselves by giving effective verbal feedback and by making written comments count. Students who are able to self-evaluate should have opportunities to reflect on learning, take pride in success and review targets. Students should be encouraged to celebrate success at every milestone.

Expectations of Learning

In providing the most appropriate Learning Pathway students will be enabled to:

- Display levels of engagement, commitment and co-operation within lessons.

- Respond to teachers and classroom assistants as per class charter.
- Experience learning as appropriate to individual pace.
- Work towards personalised targets with decreasing support.

Differentiation

Students' progress at different rates and have different strengths. Such differences will be considered when delivering the Learning Pathways Curriculum. All students will have access to a broad and relevant curriculum with a different emphasis and pace being provided for the range of ability groups within Ardnashee School and College. As a school and a staff, we recognise the specific challenges that students encounter when trying to access the Northern Ireland Curriculum. To ensure that such students have the best learning opportunities as possible, we will always endeavour to implement strategies that will facilitate this access. The strategies that we will implement will include some of the following:

- WALT is displayed and discussed at the beginning of lessons and can be adapted for learners using object of reference of picture exchange versions of the learning intention.
- The classroom environment is suitable to support the student's individual needs
- There will be consistent links to previous lessons and active learning opportunities provided
- Teachers will know the learning pathway for all students and provide personalised learning where required to meet the needs of the learners
- Sufficient work space will be created for all students
- Multi-sensory approaches will be utilised during lessons
- Collaborative working will be encouraged (peer mentoring)
- Students will be given clear and singular instructions
- All lessons will be logical in nature and regularly linked to previous learning points
- Visual aids, colour and preferential seating arrangements will be utilised
- Feedback will be positive and constructive
- Plenary sessions will be held after lessons

PROMOTING AND EVALUATING THIS POLICY

As a school, we have a firm commitment to improving Learning and Teaching for all our students and we have established a culture of self reflection for improvement. We will ensure that all our staff have opportunities for continuing professional development and promote research through inquiry. This will include attendance at courses, coaching by members of the senior leadership team, school inset training and mentoring as well as good practice forums fortnightly in professional dialogue meetings as part of the continued curriculum development programme.

APPENDIX 3

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING TEACHING& LEARNING IN ASC

Strategies for Asking Better Questions

- Plan some higher order/ fat questions
- Give a range of possible answers
- Use true or false statements
- Model thought processes
- Start with the answer
- Turn some closed questions into open questions
- Ask pupil's to identify fat and thin questions
- Focus on how to work the answer out, not just the answer.
- Take the question round the room and back again
- Use wait or thinking time & PECS signs of the same
- Introduce no hands-up
- Use minimal encouragers
- Use entrance and exit tickets
- Use a bag of names or tick sheet
- Use think, pair, share
- Listen
- Use 'show me' whiteboards
- Plan brain breaks and timeouts
- Devise signals for pupil to give you feedback on their understanding
e.g. Traffic lights, thumbs up etc.

Strategies for Enabling Effective Feedback During Lessons

- Use reminder, scaffolding and example prompts verbally to help close the gap between the pupil's current performance and the desired goal.
- Use 2 stars and a wish verbally
- Use traffic lights, thumbs, smiley emoji as a way of getting pupil's to rate their achievement or understanding against the success criteria at different points of the lesson. Consider visual, aural and kinaesthetic learners and how best to feedback on their successful learning and areas for improvement.
- Use talking partners, pairs air think, articulate and extend their learning
- Use response partners; Individuals identify what they like about their partner's work and then work together on improving one of the success criteria
- Use real examples of completed work to generate success criteria or analyse against criteria
- Compare finished pieces of work to engage pupil's in thinking about which piece represents the most effective achievement.
- Use questions to focus feedback- How, why, what?
- Allow pupil's time to follow up and act upon feedback.
- Be positive when acknowledging pupil's responses

Strategies for Enabling Effective Feedback Away from the Pupil

- Write good comments where it really matters. Use insightful, diagnostic comments or visuals if a student is a pre-reader.
- When the learning intention requires higher order thinking. Say specifically what has been done well, identify what has been less successful and suggest how improvement can be made.
- Use highlight and prompt marking e.g. two stars and a wish, highlighters, post-it notes etc. Discuss feedback with learners so they understand what went well and even better if language. Use visuals such as thumbs up, happy emoji to celebrate good work from learners who may not understand verbal feedback for tasks or activities they completed in their personal learning workstation.
- Model areas for improvement for students.

Commencing Date	
Approval Signature	
Review Date	

Learning and Teaching Policy