



HOE VALLEY SCHOOL

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Person Responsible: Assistant Head Teacher
Link Governor: Mrs L Perkins
Date Adopted: September 2018
Date of last review: Autumn 2025
Date of next review: Autumn 2026

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 knowledge¹ from expert teachers. We see the potential in all students and are able to 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 considered 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.

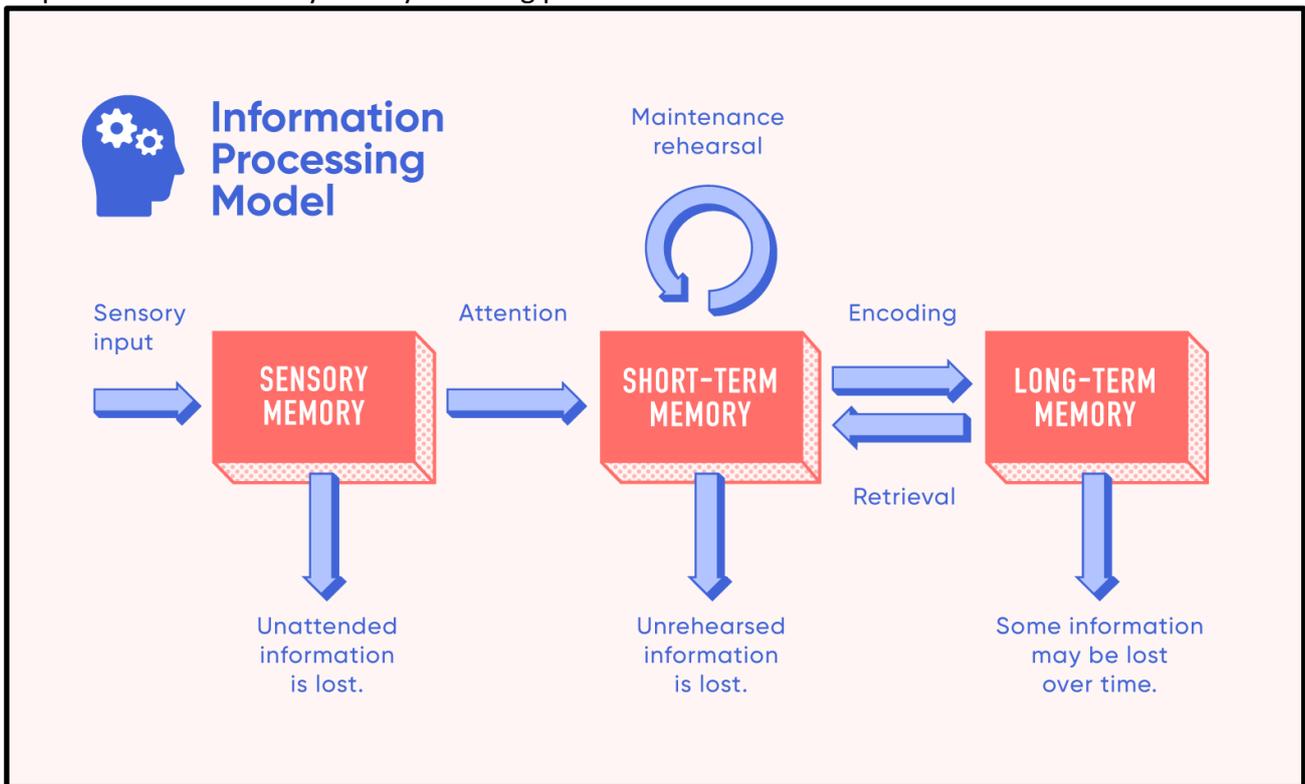
The foundation of all of our teaching at Hoe Valley School lies in the quality development of students’ long-term memories, to make them more intelligent and improve the quality of their whole life.

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 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 in a position to secure excellent academic outcomes, be work ready and engage with the global community as good citizens.

¹ 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

All teachers at Hoe Valley School have an understanding of how long-term memories are acquired (see the graphic below of information processing model) and are able to apply this to curriculum 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. TEACHING & LEARNING PRINCIPLES 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.

- Teachers embed principles of cognitive science and the development of metacognitive behaviours in their lessons and/or across learning sequences to facilitate the transfer of knowledge into long term memory. This includes the use of techniques such as:
 - knowledge retrieval
 - spaced practice
 - prior knowledge activation
 - skill practice
 - dual coding
 - management of extraneous cognitive load
 - metacognitive discussions
 - modelling

More Able students are quickly identified, in line with the More Able Policy, to develop their gifts and 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 a modern foreign language. 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 schema². Additionally, students are more likely to be motivated to learn where new knowledge and skills connect with their own life experiences and if they can see themselves in the curriculum, regardless of their background. Through this, students can develop ‘cultural capital’ through a curriculum at HVS that aims to reflect diverse cultural perspectives. Where appropriate, lessons will always be linked to the “big picture” rather than learning something “because it’s in the exam” and always emphasising the importance of the declarative/procedural knowledge they are obtaining.

There is much in the media about the ‘UK skills gap’ and 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 ‘work ready’ skills:

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

² 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”.

Lessons are planned with these skills in mind and openly talked about to develop further understanding of the importance and impact of these skills.

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).

Students should always be aware of how they are making progress in their learning and a range of feedback strategies (see Feedback Policy) will be employed by teachers to make that progress visible and for students to understand how to make further progress through action.

We also aim to engage students in developing key behaviours required for effective learning. At HVS, teachers will highlight and reward students when they show the following:

- use **d**igital skills to support their learning
- be **r**eflective and respond to their teacher's feedback
- be **i**ndependent and think for themselves
- use **v**erbal reasoning
- be **e**ngaged in group work
- be **r**esilient in their learning

We strongly believe student's use of these skills will help them be the 'driver' of their success.

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 design or varied scaffolding techniques 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.

3. INDEPENDENT STUDY

3.1 Independent Study

Independent study is work that is completed outside of curriculum lessons. Independent study activities constitute any element of learning that is not necessarily directly supervised by a teacher. Independent study activities represent an extension or consolidation of the activities of the school curriculum. 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 7 & 8 will be set in EBACC subjects only - 15 minutes per subject per week.

Independent learning for years 9, 10 & 11 is one hour per week per subject. Heads of Faculty have the freedom to direct their faculties to set different forms of independent study that are most suited to success in their own GCSE area.

Independent study for years 12 & 13 will be significantly greater to the nature of their studies ahead of heading into higher education or the 'world of work'. A level/Level 3 students are expected to complete an hour of independent study for each hour of teaching they receive. Approximately this will be 5 hours per week for each of their respective subjects and an iterative approach to revision of their studies.

This time will include 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 Independent Study Policy.

3.2 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 their independent study time.
- Teachers set work that does not require an independent study mentor/teacher 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 to independent study lessons are expected to set up their own routines for learning behaviours during an independent study lesson, which could include, but are not limited to, periods of sustained silent working.

4. QUALITY ASSURANCE

4.1 Aim of quality assurance activities

At Hoe Valley School we believe that every teacher should be working towards becoming an outstanding practitioner in their respective subjects and that the curriculum being delivered to students is of the highest quality. To achieve this, a range of activities take place throughout the academic year to support teacher's development and ensure students are receiving the best possible education.

4.2 Learning Walks

Members of the senior leadership team will conduct 15 minute 'learning walk' observations for every member of staff at least once a term, with feedback shared with the teacher and the direct line manager. These learning walks will inform the senior leadership team which staff require additional support within their faculty or what professional development is required for that member of staff. Additional learning walks maybe used in the event of concerns and can be used an evidence gathering exercise towards an informal support plan (ISP) being put into place (See Appendix 1). Data is also gathered from these learning walks to identify trends and help inform the design of professional learning sessions for all teaching staff. These professional learning sessions occur after-school, 3 times a half term.

4.3 Curriculum Review Weeks

During the academic year each faculty will receive at least one 'curriculum review week'. These aim to undertake a collaborative 'deep dive' into each faculty to quality assure the curriculum provision and identify areas of strength and targets for development. The week will involve learning walks, involving the Head of Faculty and senior leadership team, student voice activities, and an evaluation of student work through 'book looks.' A report will be produced to outline the areas of strength and areas for improvement, with any faculties of major concern having a second review week at the end of the year to ensure progress and improvement is made.

4.4 Lesson Observations

Heads of Faculty also have responsibility for the formal quality assurance of the teaching in their faculty areas. Every member of staff is visited by their Head of Faculty at least once per term for a lesson observation. During these lesson observations, Heads of Faculty will identify areas of strength and areas for development in a teacher's practice in order to support them to develop and improve their pedagogy. These lesson observations are recorded on the People Development platform to enable Heads of Faculty to analyse the practice across their faculty and tailor faculty meetings to the needs of the team. Additionally, the Assistant Head Teacher responsible for Teaching and Learning will analyse

practice across the school and look for patterns to inform the planning of whole-school professional development.

Lesson observations can have specific foci or seek to gauge the state of teaching expertise across each of our teaching and learning principles, 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, so that the profile/context of the class is known in order for the observer to be more precise in their feedback.

Teachers will be judged on their level of expertise within each of the teaching and learning principles, so that the feedback received from learning walks is developmental in nature. We aim to ensure that all staff are “highly effective” in each of our teaching and learning principles, 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:

Highly effective

Displays practice that meets all of our T&L principles to a high standard.

Effective

Displays practice that meets our T&L principles.

Developing

Displays practice that is aimed at showing our T&L principles but requires development.

Support Required

Has significant gaps in their practice which support is required to address.

Consistency of approach for lesson observations across Heads of Faculty is ensured through the linking of our teaching and learning principles to the National Teaching Standards. Additionally, Heads of Faculty will conduct paired observations twice a year and receive observation training and guidance on how to give feedback to staff, as part of leadership forum meetings.

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.

4.5 Concerns around teacher performance

Where concerns are raised regarding teaching performance through the activities outlined above, Heads of Faculty, with guidance from the senior leadership 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 Head Teacher will be consulted to decide on placing the member of staff onto an informal support plan (ISP) (See Appendix 1). This process is separate to the appraisals process and is overseen by a member of the senior leadership in direct collaboration with the 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).

5. REPORTING ON TEACHING & 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.

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 an ISP if their performance is judged as support required drawing on a range of sources (lesson observations, learning walks, data reports, student voice etc).

The ISP will be led by the headteacher who will allocate a member of the senior leadership team to deliver the process. This will not be the teacher's line manager. The teacher's line manager will be informed the ISP is taking place and the outcome of the ISP once completed.

The Programme

Each ISP lasts approximately 8 weeks and will be tailored to meet individual needs by the mentor and teacher working together. ISP's may include:

- An initial meeting with the headteacher to discuss concerns and identify objectives
- Allocation of a senior leadership team member to lead the process
- A bespoke 8-week support plan that would also be shared with other members of the leadership team for monitoring purposes
- Weekly observations to determine progress against the agreed upon targets
- Developmental meeting(s) between the staff member and the member of senior leadership team to complete support plan
- Following the completion of the 8 weeks, the senior leadership team member will present final recommendations to the headteacher
- The Headteacher will determine if enough progress has been made regarding the ISP objectives and discuss next steps with the identified staff member

Monitoring

At the end of the ISP if the teacher's performance improves, the leadership team will continue to monitor 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 ISP a review meeting will be held between the teacher and the headteacher.

Three possible outcomes will be considered:

If....	Outcome
The teacher's performance has improved so that practice is now potentially good	No further action- informal monitoring to ensure consistency of practise is being upheld.
The teacher's performance has improved but needs further support to become consistently good	Extended ISP
The teacher's performance is unlikely to make the required improvement	Performance review meeting with line manager
The teacher's performance fails to improve following performance reviews and coaching	The teacher will be put on capabilities.