



Teaching and Learning Policy

Rationale

Athlone Community College is committed to creating an atmosphere of excellence in learning and to providing high quality teaching, learning and assessment to enable all students to reach their full potential. In line with our Mission Statement we aim to equip students with the skills, knowledge and understanding to reach their intellectual, moral and personal potential to enable them to respond to an ever-changing society. We want learning to be a rewarding experience for everyone and recognise that the best teaching and learning experiences can help students to lead happy and fulfilling lives.

Legislative Framework

This policy takes note of relevant legislation including, but not limited to:

- The Education Act 1998
- Teaching Council Act 2001
- Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (see Appendix 1)

Aim

The aim of this policy is to clarify the school's standards and expectations and takes cognisance of all other relevant policies that support a framework of quality teaching, learning and assessment.

The teaching, learning and assessment policy and procedure aims to ensure that teaching in Athlone Community College is inspirational and of the highest quality by:

- Setting high expectations for all students and ensuring they have the opportunity to succeed and empower them to reach their full potential.
- Supporting students in developing effective learning strategies.
- Placing the students at the centre of the learning.
- Recognising and celebrating success.
- Using assessment both formative and summative to provide effective feedback to students to support them in their learning.
- Providing opportunities for teaching, learning and assessment to be discussed in among colleagues with examples of good practice and techniques being shared.
- Sharing good practise and provide other references to support planning outstanding lessons.
- Fostering students' self-esteem and help them build positive relationships with others - both peers and adults
- Focusing on students' attainment and progress

Effective Learning

We acknowledge that people learn in many different ways and we recognise the need to develop pedagogies and student's learning skills to enable all students to learn in ways that suit them. We equally embrace the new approaches as set out in the Junior Cycle Programme and embrace them across all programmes in the school. We offer opportunities for children to learn in different ways including:

- investigation, problem solving, and critical thinking
- research and project work
- group work, paired work and independent work
- effective questioning;

- presentation
- use of ICT
- fieldwork and off-site visits
- creative activities, designing and making
- use of multi-media, visual and aural stimuli
- participation in athletic and/or physical activity
- guest visitors and speakers
- other learning experiences

Underpinning Philosophy

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is a key aspect of effective teaching and learning and describes a philosophy of caring for the overall welfare of each student in our classes. It permeates through all interactions between students and staff. The caring atmosphere created by all staff towards students in their classes supports the creation of a positive learning environment for all and is embodied by the interaction between teachers and students.

Self-Esteem

The way pupils see themselves is crucial for responsible behaviour and achievement. Our aim is to build up the student's self-image as one capable of achievement. This enhancing of student's self-esteem is an essential element in all teaching. Teachers support students in developing a positive self-image by encouraging them to:

- Achieve to their academic and examination potential
- Develop a sensitivity towards the needs of others.
- Develop a sense of respect for themselves, others and property.
- Develop coping skills which will equip them to deal with the crises and responsibilities of adolescence and adulthood.
- Develop autonomy and self-discipline which will enrich their life and facilitate the development of his/her full potential.
- Develop refinement and respect.
- Acquire good etiquette, good manners and the social graces for all occasions.

Roles and Responsibilities

Management will:

- Provide opportunities for teachers to engage in relevant Continuous Professional Development.
- Inform teachers of expected good practise and innovative pedagogy.
- Inform teachers of the effective use of AFL to provide a framework for the planning of outstanding lessons.
- Support the creation of an orderly environment for teaching and learning in collaboration with teachers, parents and students.

Teachers will:

Make lessons purposeful by:

- Outlining what is to be taught in a simple way.
- Relating what is being taught to the experience of the student, thus facilitating assimilation and retention.
- Encouraging students by praise and acknowledgement of effort.
- Encouraging investigation, exploration, interpretation and application of what is learnt.
- Setting high expectations for all students.
- Encouraging neat and well-organised work

- Giving reasonable amounts of homework and correct it carefully.
- Consulting with colleagues.
- Helping student's work out revision programmes.
- Exploring study habits and examination techniques
- Maintaining application of students by regular assessment and positive feedback.
- Correcting coursework regularly and give positive constructive feedback.

Create an orderly environment for learning by:

- Implementing the Code of Discipline
- Being punctual for class
- Designating seats for classes
- Calling the register for every class
- Insisting on good manners
- Be the last to leave the classroom at 11:00, 12:35 or 1:15, 3:15 or 4:55
- Checking the classroom is left tidy, the blackboard is cleaned and the chairs are under the desks after each class
- Do not leave a class unsupervised
- Do not release classes before the bell
- At the end of the school day ensure that all chairs are left on desks, that the classrooms are left litter free
- Locking specialist rooms after all classes
- Not withdrawing students from other classes without the agreement of the class teacher

Students will:

- be reflective and take responsibility for their own learning
- be attentive, well-mannered and well behaved
- actively participate and contribute in lessons
- be on time for class
- have the necessary equipment
- complete homework fully and promptly
- follow the school's Code of Conduct
- be respectful of themselves and each other and respect the right of others to learn

Parents/Guardians Will:

We believe that parents/guardians have a fundamental role to play in supporting students in their learning. We inform parents about how their students are learning on a regular basis and we would like parents to:

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually
- Ensure that their child attend school in correct uniform
- Give due importance to homework and support their child in developing their skills in literacy and numeracy
- Support the implementation of the school's Code of Discipline
- Regularly check the child's journal for communications from school

Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning and is concerned with student progress and attainment. Assessment activities used in Athlone Community College will contribute to student learning and development by gathering relevant information to guide students further learning (AfL) and by providing information on each student's achievement at a particular point in time (AoL)

Purpose of Assessment

- Support students in becoming independent learners
- Monitor student learning
- Inform curriculum planning
- Gather and interpret data and analyse in relation to national norms
- Identify learning needs of students
- Compile records of student progress and attainment

Range of Assessment Methods

The following is a non-exhaustive list of assessment methods used in Athlone Community College.

Assessment for Learning Methods

- Sharing Learning Intentions
- Generating Success Criteria
- Teacher Observation
- Project/Portfolio work
- Presentations
- Effective teacher questioning
- Providing feedback
- Peer & Self Assessment

Assessment of Learning Methods

- Standardised tests
- State Examinations
- Mock Examinations
- House Examinations
- Classroom Examinations

Assessment Procedures

1. House examinations will be held as close to the end of term, with the exception of examination groups where term exams/assessments will take place in November.
2. Examinations will be timetabled where appropriate and supervision provided.
3. Formal mock examinations will be held for examination students in the second term.
4. Teachers throughout the year, in addition to the two formal tests, carry out informal tests/assessments.
5. Teachers record all test results in teachers' handbook. The parents/guardians of students will receive reports twice yearly.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of Policy

The Board, with input from teachers, students and parents, will monitor this policy. It will be reviewed and adapted as needs arise and in light of new developments in education.

Ratified by the Board of Management on

Signed:

Secretary, Board of Management

Chairperson, Board of Management

Appendix 1:

Extract from the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers - Teaching Council, 2nd Edition, 2016*

On behalf of the teaching profession, the Teaching Council sets out the following standards that apply to all registered teachers regardless of their position.

1. Professional Values and Relationships

Teachers should:

- 1.1. be caring, fair and committed to the best interests of the pupils/students entrusted to their care, and seek to motivate, inspire and celebrate effort and success
- 1.2. acknowledge and respect the uniqueness, individuality and specific needs of pupils/students and promote their holistic development
- 1.3. be committed to equality and inclusion and to respecting and accommodating diversity including those differences arising from gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, ethnicity, membership of the Traveller community and socio-economic status, and any further grounds as may be referenced in equality legislation in the future.
- 1.4. seek to develop positive relationships with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others in the school community, that are characterised by professional integrity and judgement
- 1.5. work to establish and maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect in their schools.

2. Professional Integrity

Teachers should:

- 2.1. act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their work
- 2.2. respect the privacy of others and the confidentiality of information gained in the course of professional practice, unless a legal imperative requires disclosure or there is a legitimate concern for the wellbeing of an individual
- 2.3. represent themselves, their professional status, qualifications and experience honestly
- 2.4. use their name/names as set out in the Register of Teachers, in the course of their professional duties
- 2.5. avoid conflict between their professional work and private interests which could reasonably be deemed to impact negatively on pupils/students.

3. Professional Conduct

Teachers should:

- 3.1. uphold the reputation and standing of the profession
- 3.2. take all reasonable steps in relation to the care of pupils/students under their supervision, so as to ensure their safety and welfare
- 3.3. work within the framework of relevant legislation and regulations
- 3.4. comply with agreed national and school policies, procedures and guidelines which aim to promote pupil/student education and welfare and child protection
- 3.5. report, where appropriate, incidents or matters which impact on pupil/student welfare
- 3.6. communicate effectively with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others in the school community in a manner that is professional, collaborative and supportive, and based on trust and respect
- 3.7. ensure that any communication with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as e-mail, texting and social networking sites
- 3.8. ensure that they do not knowingly access, download or otherwise have in their possession while engaged in school activities, inappropriate materials/images in electronic or other format
- 3.9. ensure that they do not knowingly access, download or otherwise have in their possession, illicit materials/images in electronic or other format
- 3.10 ensure that they do not practise while under the influence of any substance which impairs their fitness to teach.

4. Professional Practice

Teachers should:

- 4.1. maintain high standards of practice in relation to pupil/student learning, planning, monitoring, assessing, reporting and providing feedback
- 4.2. apply their knowledge and experience in facilitating pupils'/students' holistic development
- 4.3. plan and communicate clear, challenging and achievable expectations for pupils/students
- 4.4. create an environment where pupils/students can become active agents in the learning process and develop lifelong learning skills
- 4.5. develop teaching, learning and assessment strategies that support differentiated learning in a way that respects the dignity of all pupils/students
- 4.6. inform their professional judgement and practice by engaging with, and reflecting on, pupil/student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum development, ethical practice, educational policy and legislation
- 4.7. in a context of mutual respect, be open and responsive to constructive feedback regarding their practice and, if necessary, seek appropriate support, advice and guidance
- 4.8. act in the best interest of pupils/students.

5. Professional Development

Teachers should:

5.1. take personal responsibility for sustaining and improving the quality of their professional practice by:

- actively maintaining their professional knowledge and understanding to ensure it is current
- reflecting on and critically evaluating their professional practice, in light of their professional knowledge base
- availing of opportunities for career-long professional development.

6. Professional Collegiality and Collaboration

Teachers should:

6.1. work with teaching colleagues and student teachers in the interests of sharing, developing and supporting good practice and maintaining the highest quality of educational experiences for pupils/students

6.2. work in a collaborative manner with pupils/students, parents/guardians, school management, other members of staff, relevant professionals and the wider school community, as appropriate, in seeking to effectively meet the needs of pupils/students

6.3. cooperate with the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills and other statutory and public non-statutory educational and support services, as appropriate

6.4. engage with the planning, implementation and evaluation of curriculum at classroom and school level.