



Alban Wood Teaching and Learning Policy

Aims and Purposes

Raising standards at Alban Wood requires focus on what we do in the classroom. Continued and sustained improvement is dependent upon improving the quality of learning and teaching that is taking place on a daily basis.

At Alban Wood, the expectation is that all pupils are provided with high quality learning experiences that lead to consistently high levels of pupil achievement.

We expect every teacher to be a good teacher – no child deserves less.

By adopting a whole school approach to teaching and learning across the school, we aim:

- To provide consistency of teaching and learning across the school
- To enable teachers to teach as effectively as possible
- To enable children to learn as well as possible
- To give children the skills they require to become more effective lifelong learners
- To provide an inclusive education for all children
- To learn from each other, through the adoption of a collaborative, enquiry based approach to teaching and learning, where good practice is shared

This policy aims to outline some of the **elements** which are crucial to raising standards in teaching and learning. It also sets out a **broad structure** for lessons, based on best practice and research linked to how we learn best.

When reading this policy it is important to remember that adopting a broad template for structuring lessons does not preclude:

- Spontaneity
- Creativity
- Imagination
- Individuality

...unless you let it!

Lesson Structure

All lessons at Alban Wood should follow a basic structure made up of four parts.

- Phase 1: Set the scene, place learning in a wider context, link to prior learning; review previous lesson; provide the ‘big picture’; share learning objectives
- Phase 2: Pupils receive new information; instruction/exposition; (teaching)
- Phase 3: Pupils make sense of information; practice skills, process and understand their learning (learning)
- Phase 4: review information (plenary) There might also be opportunities for mini plenaries during phase 3.

Precise interpretation of the four phase structure will inevitably be very different in different situations. Age, ability, timing of the lesson, subject area and the particular focus for the lesson will all have a significant impact.

The boundaries between the phases will almost certainly be blurred.

Teachers may well scroll through the phases more than once during the lesson. For example, after a short period of exposition, pupils may be engaged in an activity designed to help them make sense of new material. This may be followed by another period of exposition and an appropriate activity.

The phases are not always sequential. Review, for example, is not confined to the end of the lessons. Good teachers weave review through the entire lesson.

Teaching and learning are not the same thing. Encountering information is not the same as understanding it. While the stages are inextricably linked, they are separate processes. This must be reflected in the lesson.

Phase One – Overview

Although this is relatively short in duration it includes a number of key features. The emphasis on this phase is on:

- **Creating an appropriate working atmosphere**
Pupils will not learn if they are not in an appropriate state to learn. At Alban Wood we use a range of strategies to establish a climate conducive to learning including:
 - Incorporating Philosophy for Children (P4C) strategies and language to support emotional readiness for learning
 - Creating a classroom environment that is stimulating, reassuring and organised
 - Being fully prepared for lessons
 - Ensuring resources are prepared and available in advance of lessons
 - Using additional adults to engage with any pupils who are not “ready to learn”
 - Greeting pupils with a smile

- **Linking the lesson to prior learning (using a range of AFL techniques)**
 Linking the lesson to prior knowledge, eg reviewing previous lesson:
 “Think about the three most important things you learnt in the last lesson, now tell your partner”.
 “In two minutes I am going to ask you what you learnt last lesson. You may talk with your partner if you wish”.
 “Today’s lesson is about the rainforest. Jot down on your whiteboards what you already know. Work in pairs”.
- **Providing an overview**
 The brain is more likely to absorb details when it can place them within a wider context. This is often referred to as “providing the big picture first”. At Alban Wood we use learning walls in English and Maths to enable pupils to see the ‘bigger picture’ and the process involved in their learning. Pupils should be invited to add their own questions and answers to the learning map and are encouraged to carry out their own independent research at home.
- **Sharing learning objectives with pupils**
 Pupils must know exactly what they’re going to learn and what is expected of them by the end of the lesson.
 For learning objectives to be shared effectively, teachers must:

 - Move away from saying “today we are doing” and instead say “by the end of today’s lesson you will all know/be able to/understand “
 - Make learning objectives specific
 - Use child friendly language (there is little point in sharing learning objectives when pupils don’t understand what you mean)
 - Often, but not necessarily always, relate the LO to Success Criteria or Steps to Success, supporting children with the process of achieving the LO
 - Write them down (success criteria may often be generated with the children during the lesson or during a previous lesson)
 - Refer to them at the start of the lesson, during the lesson and during the review phase.
- **Triggering the brain**
 The brain will tend to notice things if it has been primed to look for them. Beginning a lesson by saying “Today when I’m reading I want you to listen out for some really powerful adjectives that you can use in your own writing later on”, increases the chances of pupils doing exactly that. “For homework tonight, I am going to be asking you to write down the functions of the different parts of a plant. You will find out what they are in today’s lesson”.
- **Stimulating curiosity, generating interest and setting the challenge**
 When we capture the imagination and stimulate curiosity in the first few minutes of the lesson, we go a long way to ensuring a high quality learning experience.

Phase Two – Receiving new information

The emphasis in this phase is on:
Providing students with new information or skills.

This is the teaching phase. Although we want all pupils to understand the information as they encounter it, the emphasis during phase two is on providing the new information. New information is delivered in many ways:

- Exposition
- Audio- visual aids eg video clips
- Diagrams, pictures, mindmaps etc
- Computing – internet, computing programmes
- Demonstration
- Modelling
- Books

The quality of the input during this phase will have a big bearing upon the extent to which pupils understand information. While high-quality exposition does not guarantee understanding, it does make it significantly more likely.

We use a number of techniques at Alban Wood to ensure that the quality of input in phase two is kept high:

- **Periods of exposition are short**
Pupils have limited concentration spans. A widely used rule of thumb is that concentration span will be about two minutes in excess of chronological age. Periods of exposition are therefore kept short and punctuated by regular breaks or activities. In general terms, significantly more learning will take place when new information is transferred and explained in three bursts of 10 minutes than in one thirty minute session.
- **More than one beginning is created**
Pupils tend to remember more from the beginning of an experience. When exposition is chunked into 10-15 minute slots, a number of ‘beginnings’ are created in the lesson. Make the new start obvious. Use phrases such as; “now we are moving on to...” or “the next activity we are going to be doing is...” or “I want you to move back to the carpet for the next part of our lesson...”.
- **The input phase is punctuated with questions**
Although phase two is principally about exposition and delivering new information, it should be punctuated by regular questioning. Ask regular closed questions during the input. This will keep pupils alert and provide instant feedback as to whether they have heard correctly and have understood – although at a shallow level. Asking too many questions during an explanation can easily take a lesson off on inappropriate tangents. It also allows an individual to take the lesson off in a direction that causes other pupils to lose their train of thought.

Ask open questions before and/or after input. Posing an open question at the start of an explanation will prime the brain to notice detail and begin to form

an answer, even at a subconscious level, during the input. Asking an open question at the end of an input takes the learning into phase three and is designed to develop and assess deeper understanding.

- **The input phase is punctuated with activity**
Punctuate the input of new information (phase two) with activities designed to help pupils make sense of it (phase three). This kind of integrated, alternating pattern of “phase two, phase three, phase two, phase three” can often be more effective than an extended period of explanation.

For example, a teacher might be modelling how to write complex sentences. She might ask the children to work with a partner to write one together on a mini whiteboard before continuing with further instruction.

- **New information is presented in several different ways**
The fact that people prefer to receive information in different ways demands that information is transmitted in more than one way during phase two. A verbal explanation may well be clear, concise and of high quality; however, two thirds of the class may be working outside their preferred style or have English as an additional language and struggle to grasp what has been said.

At Alban Wood we aim to make learning multi-sensory so that pupils have opportunities to learn from seeing, hearing and doing.

Phase three – processing the information

The emphasis in phase three is on:

- Developing understanding
- Demonstrating understanding
- Assessing understanding

This is the key phase. It is the opportunity for pupils to make sense of information. We play a significant role during this crucial phase, encouraging and assuring at an emotional level and guiding, prompting and challenging pupils towards understanding.

The extent to which pupils will understand information depends on three factors:

1. Quality of interactions

It is adults who help pupils make sense of information. The frequency and nature of interactions between teacher and pupils is highly significant. We develop understanding by:

- Asking a large proportion of open questions
- Allowing sufficient processing time for pupils to think about their answers
- Allowing pupils to talk to each other
- Asking supplementary or extension questions to extend understanding
- Asking questions to encourage students to reflect upon their thinking
- Challenging thinking

2. Effective questioning strategies that we use include

- Using open questions
- Providing wait time – pupils need time to think through their answers before replying
- Providing thinking time by giving an advance warning, such as “In two minutes I am going to ask you” or “At the end of the lesson I am going to ask you...”
- Allowing pupils to explore and articulate their thinking by giving them time to discuss their responses in pairs or groups. Pupils then respond with “We think that..”
- Ensuring pupils fully understand the question by asking them to say it back or re-phrase it
- Extending and deepening understanding by asking follow-up questions such as “What made you think that?”
- Asking pupils to identify three possible answers and then select the best one (so they don’t always give you the first answer that pops into their head).
- Scaffolding thinking and answering – for example “In two minutes I am going to ask you X, but before I do, I’d like you to think about (or talk about) A. Now I’d like you to think about B. Now can you respond to my original question.”

3. Talking

When we talk we do more than articulate our current level of understanding. The very act of talking forces us to organise our thoughts and so deepens understanding. It is partly the reason why we remember so much of what we teach to others.

We learn
10% of what we read
20% of what we hear
30% of what we see
50% of what we see and hear
70% of what we discuss with others
80% of what we experience
95% of what we teach to others

William Glaser (1960s)

At Alban Wood we believe that **Talking** is central to learning. All lessons include planned and unplanned opportunities to discuss questions and extend thinking. Think/Pair/Share and Turn and Tell your Partner are regular features in all lessons. Pupils are trained to use appropriate body language when talking to a partner and pupils understand that their TALK is valued as much as their written work.

4. **Tasks that engage pupils and challenge them to think**

Making personal sense of information involves re-creating and assimilating it into existing understanding. It is an active process and demands that the learner actually does something! Activities in the third phase:

- Require pupils to do something at a cognitive level
- Provide a degree of challenge
- Require students to re-create rather than re-produce information
- Develop understanding
- Allow pupils to demonstrate understanding
- Give the teachers an opportunity to assess understanding
- Encourage pupils to work both independently and collaboratively
- Encourage pupils to work for a sustained period

It is important to spend time in the first half of the Autumn Term teaching children how to use these skills.

Phase four – review

The emphasis in this phase is on:

- Reviewing what has been learned
- Reflecting on how it has been learned

Review is a key to memory and certainly not confined to the end of the lesson. Good teachers weave review throughout the entire lesson and are constantly referring students back to the objectives of the lesson, and reinforcing prior learning. Reviewing material is a highly significant part of the learning process, not least because large amounts of information can be forgotten very quickly.

Key features of phase four are:

Pupils are actively involved

When teachers summarise what has been learned, the effect on pupils' memories is relatively insignificant. However when the pupils themselves identify what they have learned as the lesson draws to a close, their memories will be given a significant boost.

At Alban Wood we:

- Use prompts such as:

What are the three most important/interesting things you've learnt today?

What three questions could you answer now that you couldn't answer at the beginning of the lesson?

Refer back to the learning objectives.

Pupils end the lesson knowing what they know.

- Encourage pupils to reflect on what they have learned and what has helped them to learn.

Use prompts like:

What did you do today that you found most helpful when you were learning?
What did you do that you found less helpful?
If you had to do the task again, how would you do it?
If you had to give one piece of advice to someone tackling the same task tomorrow, what would it be?

- Aim to finish a lesson with a question mark – not a full stop.

Prime pupils by telling them what they will be learning in the next lesson. There is a chance that students will begin to think about the issue before the next lesson and maybe do some follow up work at home.

Key elements and principles of teaching and learning at Alban Wood – a practical guide!

All lessons across our schools should include the following key elements to ensure high quality teaching and learning.

All lessons have...

Clear Learning Objectives

- Learning Objectives are shared orally and displayed
- All learning objectives begin with ‘At the end of this lesson I will know/be able to/understand...’
- All learning objectives are written up and shared orally in child friendly language.
- Learning objectives are not muddled up with the context of the lesson.
- Children write the learning objective in their book.
- When marking children’s work, the main focus is on meeting the learning objective. Evidence of meeting the LO is highlighted.

All lessons have...

Well planned success criteria

- All pupils are clear about how they will achieve the learning objective.
- Success criteria are displayed for the children to follow during the lesson or drawn up with the children, eg Steps to success.
- Weekly planning includes success criteria for each learning objective.
- Children use the success criteria for each learning objective.
- Children use the success criteria to self assess their own or their partners work.
- Children are reminded of the success criteria during the lesson – often children’s work is used to illustrate the success criteria in action.

All lessons are...

Clearly differentiated to enable all pupils to access learning

- All learners are challenged appropriately.
- Planning shows clear differentiation.

All pupils are...

Actively engaged in learning

- Pupils are actively engaged during all parts of the lesson – teachers take into account children’s concentration span and ensure pupils are not sitting passively for long periods.
- Opportunities to Think/Pair/Share and discussions with a Talk Partner are regular features in all lessons. Pupils are trained to use appropriate body language when engaged in discussion with a partner.
- Mini whiteboards are used for short bursts of activity to develop understanding and to ensure children are active and engaged during the lesson.
- Visuals, artefacts, and auditory input are all used creatively as a way to enhance learning.

All pupils...

Receive regular and clear feedback which enhances learning

- AFL embedded in everyday practice and are used to inform teaching and learning.
- All pupils are clear about how they need to improve.
- All pupils know their targets, whether these have been set as a whole class, or within groups or for individuals.
- Marking is linked to the learning objective and identifies next step prompts
- Pupils are given regular time to address issues raised in marking.

All pupils experience....

Learning which is enhanced through the use of Computing and technology

- Technology is used to enhance learning wherever possible. Although technology is nearly always used at the start of lessons to engage children and in the plenary to consolidate learning, it is also used during the lesson as an aid to learning. The use of technology is highly visible and effective in all teaching and learning contexts at Alban Wood and teachers are continually searching for ways to use technology as a learning tool.

All pupils experience...

Learning which is enhanced through the use of consistent classroom management signals

- Clear management signals are designed to minimise the time spent on behaviour management and maximise the time to spend on learning. At Alban Wood we ask that all children learn to stop what they are doing, look at the teacher and actively listen when they see a hand raised with an open palm. In class, teachers may choose to use their own stopping sign: for example a bell, clapping or counting down from 5.

The expectation is consistent across the school that all children stop, all children look at the teacher and all children actively listen for the next instruction.

All pupils experience...

Learning which is enhanced through the effective use of adult support

- Additional adults are clearly directed to support learning.
- Teaching assistants are fully engaged with pupils on the carpet and tables during lesson times. **They are not photocopying work, sharpening pencils or sticking work in books during learning time!**
- They are clear about who they are supporting and why.
- Planning is shared in advance with teaching assistants.
- They sit next to the pupil/pupils they are working with, quietly engaging the pupils, explaining the task or using another resource, eg number line to facilitate learning.
- They are involved in assessing pupils' understanding, recording observations and making assessment judgements.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body bi-annually.
This policy was last reviewed in autumn 2014 and agreed by the Governing Body.
It is due for review in autumn 2018.

Signature Date

Head Teacher

Signature Date

Chair of Governors