



## EDUCATION SERVICES

### Policy: Learning, Teaching and Assessment

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1. Introduction.....	1
2. Rationale .....	1
3. West Lothian Practices – Learning and Teaching.....	2
4. West Lothian Practices – Assessment and Moderation .....	3
5. Teacher Professionalism and Professional Learning.....	4
6. Conclusion.....	4

#### Introduction

Every learner in West Lothian has the entitlement to the highest quality learning and teaching. This will support learners to learn in an environment which engages and motivates them. Teachers, in partnership with learners and support staff, should develop a classroom ethos where everyone respects one another. They should strive to have a positive learning environment that maximises learning and progress through high expectations. All learning experiences should be underpinned by the four capacities of Scotland's Curriculum Framework and based on developing learners' skills for life, work and learning.

#### Rationale

The purpose of an authority policy on Learning, Teaching and Assessment is to promote a common understanding amongst all school staff who are involved with learners of what constitutes highly effective practice which will support the vision that West Lothian has for its young people. The context within which learning takes place varies from school to school, sector to sector. However this policy acknowledges that there are principles of learning, teaching and assessment which have universal application. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment policy should be read in conjunction with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Council's Equalities and Inclusion Policies in order to ensure that all learning and teaching meets the needs of all learners, and that supporting information can be made available to parents in a way that meets their needs. Teachers should consider barriers to involvement arising from additional support needs, language, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender identity. This will apply to social needs, as well as learning and teaching needs.

#### West Lothian Practice

The establishment of an inclusive, positive learning environment and an ethos of achievement at classroom level are keys to effective learning, teaching and assessment. Learning experiences are set in the context

of an inclusive curriculum which supports high quality learning and teaching. Effective learning, teaching and assessment is also dependent on the relationships established at classroom level through interactions between staff and learners and between learners themselves in group or whole class settings. Effective partnerships between parents/carers and schools are essential in ensuring that learners make the best possible progress. Putting the learner at the centre of planning for effective learning, teaching and assessment ensures West Lothian teachers meet the needs of all learners in all our classrooms and places of learning. West Lothian encourages a partnership approach to support delivery of effective learning, teaching and assessment, and curriculum: - in partnership with parents/carers, teachers and learners; in partnership with other agencies; in partnership with all staff through quality improvement activities and improvement planning.

West Lothian Council, in consultation with staff, has developed an overview of the key features of effective classroom practice. These include:

### **Quality of Teaching**

- A clear lesson structure is apparent, whilst providing opportunities for flexibility based on ongoing assessment of learning throughout the lesson.
- Learning Intentions and Success Criteria are co-created with learners and are effectively revisited throughout the lesson. These should build on prior learning.
- Explanations and instructions are clear to all learners.
- A range of effective questioning techniques are used by the teacher with appropriate response or thinking time given and opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills.
- A balance of whole class, group and independent learning is used to meet the needs of learners.
- Pace, challenge and support are effectively planned in every lesson (effective differentiation).
- Plenaries are used consistently to 'round off' learning.
- Resources are appropriately used – including digital technologies.
- Teachers are actively engaged with-learners throughout the learning process – teaching, assessing and intervening.
- Staff / partnership working and/or interventions are apparent and meaningful.
- Staff regularly link learning to the four contexts of learning, and their relevance to the world of work.

### **Quality of Learners' Engagement**

- Learners are active participants who are fully engaged, resilient, highly motivated and interact well during lessons.
- Learners understand the purpose of their learning and lead the learning where appropriate (relevance and context of learning are present and clear).
- Learning is built on previous learning experience.
- Learning is challenging and well matched to the learners' needs and interests.
- Learners have choice and increasing responsibility for their learning.
- Digital technology is appropriately used to enrich, support and challenge learning.
- The language of learning provides and supports opportunities for learner dialogue.
- Learning from mistakes is recognised as vital for maximum development.
- Learners can apply their new learning in a range of unfamiliar contexts.
- A range of resources are used which are engaging and relevant for the learning experience.
- There is a positive, rich learning environment (classroom organisation, displays, accessibility to resources)

### **Assessment**

As outlined in '*Building the Curriculum 5*' the purposes of assessment are:

- to support learning that develops the knowledge and understanding, skills, attributes and capabilities which contribute to the four capacities

- to give assurance to learners, parents, and others, that children and young people are progressing in their learning and developing in line with expectations
- to provide a summary of what learners have achieved, including through qualifications and awards
- to contribute to planning the next stages of learning and to help learners progress to further education, higher education and employment
- to inform future improvements in learning and teaching

West Lothian has a robust and integrated approach to developing assessment and moderation approaches through its Raising Attainment Strategy, the Moving Forward in Learning (MFIL) model, cluster and school collaborations, Validated Self-evaluation activities, and national representation through Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officers (QAMSOs).

Assessment will be an integral part of daily learning and teaching. Staff get to know their learners well, build up a profile of their progress, strengths and needs and involve them in planning what they need to learn next. Teachers frequently take stock of their learners' achievements and progress in order to be able to plan ahead and to record and report on progress. This is vital in ensuring that learners' progress is on track and that action is being taken to address any problems at the earliest possible point. Taking stock of learners' achievements and progress is particularly important at transitions.

Assessment involves gathering, reflecting on and evaluating evidence of learning to enable staff to check on progress. Teachers use a range of assessment approaches to assess the different types of achievement across the curriculum. This range allows learners to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do. It is essential that staff use evidence of learning from a broad range of contexts to track and monitor how a learner is progressing and that learning is secure.

The evidence will be different depending upon the kind of learning being assessed, the learning activity and learners' preferences about how to share what they have learned. Evidence comes from day-to-day learning as well as from specific assessment tasks, activities, tests and examinations.

Judgements about learners' progress need to be dependable. This means that assessments must be valid and reliable. Assessment approaches should be proportionate and fit for purpose: different forms of assessment are appropriate at different stages and in different areas of learning. It is important that an overview is taken across all learners' assessment experiences to ensure breadth, balance and coherence in approaches. It is also important that arrangements do not place excessive burdens on learners and teachers which divert their time and effort from learning and teaching.

## **Moderation**

Moderation is the term used to describe approaches for arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations for the broad general education. It involves teachers and other professionals, as appropriate, working together, drawing on guidance and exemplification and building on existing standards and expectations to:

- plan learning, teaching and assessment
- check that assessment tasks and activities provide learners with fair and valid opportunities to meet the standards and expectations
- sample evidence from learners' work and review teachers' judgements
- agree strengths in learners' performances and next steps in learning
- provide feedback on teachers' judgements to inform improvements in practices

Moderation helps to ensure that there is an appropriate focus on outcomes for learners. Teachers' participation in moderation activities is a highly effective form of professional development.

## **Teacher Professionalism and Professional Learning**

In line with the National Improvement Framework, the Council recognises the strong link between teachers' professional skills and competences and the quality of learners' experiences. Ensuring the highest

professional standards for all teachers in West Lothian will ensure the highest standards and expectations for all learners.

The effective implementation of this policy at authority and school level, supported by the Quality Improvement Policy and Professional Review and Development processes for teaching staff, will assist in identifying the ongoing professional learning requirements for teachers. The local authority will deliver an annual professional learning programme, supported by regional, national and international developments, to continually equip and upskill teaching staff to deliver the highest standard of education.

Sharing Classroom Experience is a key part of school and teacher self-evaluation to support ongoing professional learning and ensuring the highest standards and expectations for all learners. Advice to schools on sharing classroom experience is given in Appendix 1.

## **Conclusion**

West Lothian Council's Learning, Teaching and Assessment policy is a clear statement of expectation to ensure a consistently high standard of provision across all schools and sectors. In the delivery of this policy, it is the responsibility of headteachers and their staff to contextualise what this means for their setting, as the decisions that shape the curriculum and education of learners are made at classroom and school level. The role of central officers will be to support the development of effective practices to ensure decision making within the system is focused on making improvements to learning in classrooms, and subsequently improving outcomes for learners.