



1. Introduction

At Aylesbury Grammar School we place learning at the centre of all we do. To be an exceptional and successful school we appreciate the need to have a shared vision of key habits and characteristics that will define effective learners (The AGS Learner). Students, staff and parents must be aware of the role they play in enabling and supporting high quality learning at AGS.

Learning and Teaching at AGS will promote students' intellectual and character development and thus prepare them for the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities of higher education, employment and adult life.

The majority of impact will come as a result of classroom based learning and associated home learning. However the wider curriculum, including assemblies, visiting speakers, activity days, visits, clubs, sporting and artistic activities are important in providing students with a variety of learning experiences which increase their awareness of learning as a life skill beyond school and help prepare them to become the leaders of tomorrow.

By ensuring our curriculum is broad and well matched to students' abilities and interests and by delivering teaching that is challenging and inspiring, we will provide the platform for our students to excel and develop into respectful and aspirational young men.

2. The AGS Learner

Feedback and discussions involving Students, Staff and Parents have identified the following skills and characteristics that are key to establishing The AGS Learner:

- **Ownership** Ownership is having the ability to manage your own learning, prioritise and set targets. It includes having self-respect and respect for others who support the learning process.
- **Motivation** Motivated students aspire to be - and understand how to be - successful through learning. They demonstrate a hunger to learn and to be inspired.
- **Resilience** Resilience is the strength not to give up in the face of challenge. Resilient learners have the resourcefulness to take learning forwards and carry it through to the end.
- **Innovation** Innovators are creative and adaptable. They enjoy the freedom to imagine what is possible.
- **Courage** Brave students try new approaches to their learning. They learn from their mistakes and make greater progress because of this.

It is important that all students are fully aware of the above and how they can plan and evaluate their learning to develop into successful learners. Staff need to ensure that lessons include activities that will aid the development of these key skills. The school needs to provide clear guidance to parents in order to effectively support their sons. Regular and positive communication between all groups is essential.

3. Inclusion (also see SEND Policy)

All staff need to appreciate that just as students differ in their natural ability, they also differ in the ways in which they best access learning.

The aim of Aylesbury Grammar School is to deliver high quality education that enables every student to achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.

Details regarding learning needs and challenges for students are shared with all staff who then in turn can adapt lessons and resources to ensure that learning can be suitably accessed by all.

Staff must become familiar with the abilities and needs of their students to ensure that learning can be differentiated – not necessarily involving a range of different activities but planning for effective use of activities that can suitably challenge students of all ability.

Some students will need extra guidance from subject staff, learning support staff and parents to help them manage their own learning. This should be supportive but must not result in students becoming less independent and less able to take ownership over their progress.

4. Home Learning

Home learning is an important factor in supporting the development of The AGS Learner.

Tasks set should support in-class learning, allow students to research ideas, revise and review key concepts and develop effective approaches for independent study.

It is the responsibility of each subject area to provide appropriate and challenging tasks, check and monitor progress, provide feedback and ensure that opportunities for reflection and acting upon feedback are included in lesson time.

All home learning tasks will:

- Build on or support in-class learning
- Provide suitable challenge to all students
- Be acknowledged or marked
- Include opportunities for feedback and reflection

5. Feedback and Assessment (also see Feedback and Assessment policy)

It is vital that students take ownership and are able to manage their own learning. However, staff have a key role in providing effective feedback to allow students to develop into independent, confident and self-aware learners.

Feedback from staff can take several forms including informal verbal comments in lessons, responses to questions and answers, written comments on marked learning, results (grades or comments) on assessments, verbal feedback at parents' evenings, report grades and comments.

Feedback is effective when:

- It reduces the gap between current and desired outcome
- It provides challenging and specific goals for the student to act on
- Time is built into lessons to allow students to reflect and act upon the feedback
- It allows students to redraft their own learning
- It is clear and given a short while after the learning has taken place
- It is motivating and supportive to students, rewarding effort and strategy not innate ability
- It forms a positive two way process between student and teacher
- It results in more effort, thought and time for learners than teachers

Across the school there are minimum expectations regarding written feedback:

- All students must receive at least one piece of high quality feedback each half term – this is likely to be more frequent in core subjects or in higher Key Stages and in exceptional circumstances this may not always be possible. This feedback should inform the students of how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. Evidence of this feedback will take a variety of forms, but there must be an opportunity for the students to provide evidence of acting upon the feedback so as to progress their learning.
- Some marking may be carried out by students themselves or by peers as this can further inform students of their progress as well as aiding collaboration.
- Some marking may be cursory and simply recognise the completion of notes.
- Not all learning needs to be marked.

Each department area will have additional guidance to staff covering effective strategies for effective learning and feedback, which will be reviewed annually.

6. Characteristics of outstanding learning and teaching

Teaching excellence is a universal characteristic of high achieving schools. Outstanding learning and teaching is defined as that which leads to improved student achievement. At AGS outstanding teaching empowers students to become independent learners, with the resourcefulness, creativity and understanding to succeed now and in the future. Characteristics of outstanding learning and teaching include the following:

- All students of the school make sustained progress which leads to outstanding achievement.
- Learners are motivated, challenged and engaged by their learning and with the support of teachers are committed to develop into successful learners.
- Excellent subject knowledge and subject pedagogy go hand in hand to respond and adapt to the learning needs of all students.
- All teachers have consistently high expectations of all students. High level, challenging and effective questioning, assessment and feedback are employed and their impact measured against student performance.
- All teachers extend and enrich their students beyond national specifications and guidelines to ensure engagement and aspiration in learning.
- Teachers are given opportunities for sustained professional learning using a formative teacher evaluation system.

7. Curriculum

Our broad, traditional yet contemporary curriculum is designed to offer students experiences which develop their character, knowledge and understanding. In addition, students are challenged to learn and achieve outside of their comfort zone.

Each subject area has a departmental handbook which provides details of how schemes of work are designed to ensure effective student learning and progress. Subject specific guidance needs to be given to staff relating to the development of the AGS Learner, including examples of strategies and resources which can be used with classes.

The sharing of good practice between subject staff is encouraged as an effective way of aiding staff development and should be a common feature of formal and informal meetings.

7.1 The Wider Curriculum (see also Educational Visit Policy)

It is very important for students to be provided with safe experiences that link learning in class to the wider world. As a school, we understand the limitations of the classroom environment and have a responsibility to ensure that students are equipped with skills and knowledge that they will need after leaving formal education.

Each subject department must seek to provide such opportunities that will enhance the enjoyment, engagement and motivation of learning in their area and therefore positively contribute to The AGS Learner, including enrichment in and out of lessons.

Planning of visits must include details of the learning and development benefits to students. In addition, after visits have taken place, staff should evaluate the effectiveness using the following to ensure that improvements can be made to any future activities:

- Formal review of whether the visit successfully met the initial aims, completed by the visit leader
- Formal and informal student feedback focussing on the impact of subject learning and the development of The AGS learner
- Formal and informal staff feedback focussing on the impact of subject learning and the development of The AGS learner

Although it is not always possible to measure or evidence the impact of trips on learning development, each department will review their activities and visits annually.

8. Research

Educational research on effective learning, neuroscience and social science is numerous and it is important that AGS keeps abreast of latest findings. In particular, Guy Claxton's Building Learning Power, Carol Dweck's Growth Mindset research and John Hattie's work on Visible Learning are recognised as having value to developing learning at AGS. Staff, parents and students will be able to access information on such research and how this aids the AGS Learner through the monthly school newsletter, half termly staff Learning Matters newsletter, staff and student forums and learning links via the school website. A significant part of the Lead Practitioner role is to monitor the latest research on learning and in particular, findings on supporting the learning of able boys. In addition, membership of groups such as the International Boys' Schools Coalition and Boys' Academic State Schools help to ensure that the school can be aware of and at the forefront of the latest research projects.

In addition to curriculum changes and leadership CPD, the improvement of learning and teaching forms the key focus of internal and external staff training. All staff need to reflect upon and evaluate any training opportunities for their effectiveness in promoting the development of The AGS Learner.

9. Roles, Responsibility and Accountability

All members of the Aylesbury Grammar School community play an important role in promoting exceptional learning and the development of the AGS Learner.

9.1 The Governing body is responsible for approving, reviewing and supporting this policy.

9.2 The Headmaster, working with the leadership team, is responsible for ensuring that:

- This policy is implemented across the school.
- The curriculum meets legal requirements.
- Learning and teaching are of the highest standard possible.
- Appropriate monitoring and evaluation are in place.

9.3 Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented in their subject area. This will be managed through annual departmental reviews and will be supported by their team of staff.

9.4. Teaching staff are responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented with their classes and for being aware of whole school and subject level guidance on all aspects of learning and teaching. All staff are responsible for supporting, cooperating with and encouraging their colleagues and students to promote outstanding learning. Professional development and support for staff will be managed through the annual appraisal system.

9.5. Heads of Year are responsible for ensuring that the key messages in this policy are shared in assemblies. Additionally they are responsible for monitoring the progress of students in their year group, in line with internal and external targets and supporting those at risk of underachievement.

9.6 Heads of House are responsible for monitoring the involvement and engagement of students, specifically in the wider curriculum and supporting and encouraging those who are not gaining the full benefit of learning experiences outside of the curriculum.

9.7 Form tutors are responsible for ensuring that the key messages in this policy are shared during tutor time. Additionally they are responsible for providing individual support to students through target setting discussions, mentoring and assessment tutorial reviews.

9.8 Students are responsible for being well prepared for their learning and acting upon guidance aimed to improve their skills in all aspects of the AGS Learner.

9.9 Parents/Guardians are responsible for supporting their sons in their studies and developments in all aspects of the AGS Learner. The school aims to support parents in this role through effective parental engagement and communication.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

The school regularly monitors learning and teaching through a variety of procedures. Appropriate recommendations for change normally are made through communication to the Headmaster and senior team, who will decide whether to include them in the School Development Plan. In order to monitor learning and teaching we use a range of indicators, which include the following:

- Examination results: analysed by subject area, analysed for value added (MIDYIS, YELLIS, ALIS), compared with similar schools
- Destinations of school leavers
- Annual Departmental review reports
- Observations of learning and teaching
- Student engagement
- Parental engagement
- Reports to the Governing Body
- Individual student indicators: progress grades, internal exam results

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every three years.