



AYLESBURY  
GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
*Founded 1598*

# LEARNING & TEACHING POLICY

## **CATEGORY B**

This policy is updated and approved by the Governors Learning & Teaching Committee (L&T) every three years.

This version was approved March 2025.

The next update will be due by March 2028.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

Richard Williams (Chair of Governors)



## LEARNING & TEACHING POLICY

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 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 (AGS Learner) and excellent teaching (Deliberate Practice). Students, staff and parents must be aware of the role they play in enabling and supporting high quality learning at AGS.
- 1.2 Deliberate Practice in the classroom enables learners to learn in a positive learning environment and to learn effectively. Deliberate Practice encapsulates:
  - Routines and Expectations, which are the foundation for a positive learning environment
  - Feedback and Assessment, which help students maximise their improvements based on previous performance
  - Development of Learners, which both support and challenge our students so that they all make excellent progress
- 1.3 Learning and Teaching at AGS will promote students' intellectual and emotional character development and thus prepare them for the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities of higher education, employment and adult life. By nurturing their character, we enable students to define for themselves their place in the world.
- 1.4 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, academic challenges, 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.
- 1.5 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 members of society.

### 2. AGS Learner

- 2.1 It is important that all students are fully aware of the AGS Learner and how they can plan and evaluate their learning to develop into successful learners. Lessons and Personal Development sessions include activities that will support the growth of these key skills. Guidance to parents is essential in order to enable them to effectively support their child. This is achieved through regular and positive communication between all groups.
- 2.2 Feedback and discussions involving Students, Staff and Parents have identified the following skills and characteristics that are key to establishing AGS Learner:
  - **Ownership:** Students who take ownership understand the global world and their responsibility within it. They are reflective, and take care of themselves, whilst showing empathy and compassion to those around them. They serve and respect others, valuing equity, diversity and sustainability

- **Motivation:** Motivated students commit to their aspirations and understand how to define and achieve their purpose through learning. Despite encountering difficulties along the way, they embrace challenge and demonstrate a hunger to learn and to be inspired
- **Resilience:** Resilience is the emotional strength to identify purpose and not to give up in the face of challenge. In order to advance, resilient students are adaptable and accept that sometimes they need to reflect and change direction in order to take their learning forwards
- **Innovation:** Innovators embrace curiosity and discovery as they seek to apply knowledge in fresh ways. They are adventurous in their thinking and enjoy the freedom to imagine what is possible, questioning assumptions or perceived limits
- **Courage:** Brave students find the inner strength to create their own path, admitting to self-doubt and reaching out to others to give and accept help. They learn from their mistakes and accept this as a key part of learning, making greater progress as a result.

### 3. Deliberate Practice (also see Appendix and subject specific guidance)

- 3.1 Research, external school visits and internal reviews have identified the following Deliberate Practice which is the essence of excellent teaching practice and student learning in the classroom.

Routines and Expectations	Feedback and Assessment	Development of Learners
Calm start and end of the lesson	Retrieval practice quizzes	Teacher modelling
Silence when the teacher is talking	Hands down questioning	Learning pitched for challenge
Chromebooks closed when not in use	Purposeful paired/group discussion	Subject specific literacy
A focussed/silent solo task at some point	Use of DIRT tasks	Development of oracy skills
Positive message at the end of the lesson	WWW and HTI for feedback	Encouraging innovation

- 3.2 Deliberate Practice - subject specific approach:  
Each subject team has carefully considered the list of deliberate practice strategies and tailored it to learning and teaching in their particular area. Each member of staff should be aware of the approach that should be followed in their particular subject area.

#### **4. Digital learning**

- 4.1 Digital learning is integral to whole school Learning & Teaching and is an important aspect of effective classroom practice, home learning and the development of character and life skills. Each subject team has a list of strategies to develop digital learning in their area - these strategies are reviewed on a regular basis.
- 4.2 Digital literacy is requisite for today's world. Digital literacy is how we help our students to develop the skills, knowledge and experience they need to be well equipped for life in the digital age, and as they move onto Higher Education and employment.
- 4.3 One-to-one chromebooks and headphones enable students to explore and access the curriculum (and beyond) in novel ways that stretch their creative problem-solving and nurture their collaborative ways of working. Access to online learning creates opportunities for tailored student learning, including resources that are responsive to students' individual needs and curiosity.
- 4.4 AI enables students to consume data in new ways. Generative AI is still an emerging and rapidly evolving technology, attracting the interest of governments and companies across the globe. It is clear that AI is part of life today and is an essential subject for students to build awareness, confidence and skill, in order to be prepared for their futures. Students need to understand what Generative AI means, the inherent opportunities and points of caution, and know how to use it well.
- 4.5 AI enables teachers to be at the forefront of modelling to students how generative AI can be used carefully and productively in learning and teaching. Teachers across departments are researching the potential opportunities and challenges of this technology, and piloting strategies within well defined parameters. The learning from teachers' research and pilot studies are shared between departments, furthering the insights of all teaching and learning practitioners.
- 4.6 Digital safety (also see the Child Protection and ICT Acceptable Use Policies). Digital safety is about equipping our students with critical analysis skills and developing their safe and responsible use of technology, including understanding the potential dangers and learning how algorithms work and the ethics and data privacy tenets of technology.

#### **5. Inclusion (also see SEND Policy)**

- 5.1 The aim of Aylesbury Grammar School is to create a learning environment where students feel valued and a sense of belonging.
- 5.2 Inclusion in Learning and Teaching is where learning is designed and delivered taking students' varied learning needs into account from the outset. By doing so, it aims to improve the educational experience of all students and so gives everyone an equal opportunity to achieve their full academic potential.
- 5.3 Inclusion in Learning and Teaching demonstrates that Aylesbury Grammar School values individual differences and recognises the benefits that diversity across our student body brings to the School. Inclusion removes barriers to learning and ensures students feel that they matter and belong. It supports them to be;

- able to identify and communicate their learning needs
- motivated to learn
- confident that they can participate, and encouraged to do so
- clear about what they are expected to do and achieve.

5.4 Teachers will know their students, communicate clearly with them, and ensure learning is accessible.

## **6. Home Learning (also see Assessment and Feedback policy)**

6.1 Home learning is an important factor in supporting the development of the AGS Learner and tasks should enable students to embed, improve, develop, extend or apply their learning.

6.2 Each subject area will have their own Home Learning policy to ensure that tasks set;

- Build on or support in-class learning
- Provide suitable challenge for students
- Allow students to research ideas and prepare for future learning
- Revise and review key concepts
- Develop effective approaches for independent study
- Enable the teacher to check and monitor progress
- Are acknowledged or marked
- Include opportunities for feedback and reflection in lesson time

## **7. Curriculum**

7.1 Our uncompromised 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.

7.2 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 is given to staff relating to the development of the AGS Learner, including examples of strategies and resources which can be used with classes.

7.3 The sharing of good practice between subject staff is encouraged as an effective way of supporting staff development and is a regular feature of formal and informal meetings.

7.4 Each subject area will provide a wide-ranging curriculum which promotes equality, diversity and inclusion, challenging stereotypes and celebrating contributions from all communities.

## **8. Wider Curriculum Opportunities**

8.1 Students are provided with safe experiences that link learning in class to the wider world. There are limitations of the classroom environment and we have a responsibility to ensure that students are equipped with the character, skills and knowledge that they will need after leaving formal education.

8.2 Each department provides opportunities to 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.

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

- 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

8.4 Although it is not always possible to measure or evidence the impact of visits on learning development, each department and extra-curricular area will regularly review their activities and visits.

## **9. Research**

- 9.1 To ensure that teaching and learning is based on up-to-date research.
- 9.2 AGS keeps abreast of educational research on effective learning. The School adopts new approaches where appropriate to its context, based on evidence of what has (and has not) worked before, using both internal and external evidence. For example, through staff- and student-led research projects; reviewing reports and publications including Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) guidance reports, the Chartered College of Teaching (CCT) Impact magazine and relevant academic journals; attending and providing training, events and conferences; and through the reading of relevant educational books, for example through whole-staff reading books.
- 9.3 Research projects can be initiated through several means, for example teachers looking to answer a question or solve a problem at the classroom level, research being commissioned by Heads of Department, SLT or Governors or AGS being involved in external research. The research projects undertaken in School each year are published in the School's in-house journal for evidence-engaged practice, Flagship, which is available to all staff, students, parents and the wider School community via printed copies and publication on the School website.
- 9.4 Membership of, and research projects within, collaborative networks also help AGS to monitor the latest research, for example the Association for Character Education, Challenge Partners network, the International Boys' Schools Coalition and Boys' Academic State Schools. AGS also collaborates with other schools both locally, nationally and internationally in the area of educational research to further our aims in this area and to ensure the School can be aware of and be at the forefront of the latest research projects.

## **10. Roles, Responsibility and Accountability**

- 10.1 All members of the Aylesbury Grammar School community play an important role in fostering deliberate practice in their teaching, promoting exceptional learning, and the development of the AGS Learner.
- 10.2 The Governing body is responsible for approving, reviewing and supporting this policy.
- 10.3 The Headmaster, working with the senior 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
- 10.4 Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented in their subject area. This will be managed through the annual departmental self-evaluation process and will be supported by their team of staff.

- 10.5 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.
- 10.6 All staff are responsible for supporting, cooperating with and encouraging their colleagues and students to promote outstanding learning. Professional learning and support for staff will be managed through the annual appraisal system.
- 10.7 Heads of Year are responsible for ensuring that the key messages in this policy are shared in assemblies. They are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the delivery of Personal Development sessions in their year group and supporting Form tutors where required. 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.
- 10.8 Heads of House are responsible for ensuring that the key messages in this policy are shared through assemblies as well as 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.
- 10.9 Form tutors are responsible for ensuring that the key messages in this policy are shared during PSHE and Personal Development sessions. Additionally, they are responsible for providing individual support to students through target setting discussions and mentoring.
- 10.10 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.
- 10.11 Parents/Carers are responsible for supporting their children in their studies and developments in all aspects of the AGS Learner. The School supports parents in this role through effective parental engagement and communication.

## **11. Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 11.1 In order to monitor learning and teaching, a range of indicators are used, including the following:
- Examination results: analysed by subject area, analysed for value added (MIDYIS, YELLIS, Progress 8, ALIS), compared with similar schools
  - Destinations of school leavers
  - Annual departmental self-evaluation reports
  - Observations of learning and teaching (including peer visits as well as departmental observations)
  - Student engagement
  - Parental engagement
  - Reports to the Governing Body
  - Individual student indicators: progress grades, internal exam results

## **12. Review**

This policy will be reviewed by the Governors Learning & Teaching Committee (L&T) every three years.

# Appendix

## Deliberate Practice strategies:

### 1. Routines and expectations

Established routines support students' learning, providing opportunities to embed key life skills and appreciate the need for effective learning habits. A teacher sets high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge students. These high expectations are supported by routines which develop students' learning behaviours and help them to prepare for and focus during their lessons to be ambitious learners.

#### **Calm start and end of the lesson**

Students need the opportunity to adjust to a change of subject. A calm start to the lesson allows students to recall prior learning and get ready for the challenges of the tasks ahead. A calm ending to the lesson allows time to summarise the learning and give the students a taste of the learning they can look forward to the next lesson.

#### **Silence when the teacher is talking**

Respect for others is a characteristic key to establishing an effective AGS learner. Students show this respect in their learning by actively listening when the teacher, or another student, is talking.

#### **Chromebooks closed when not in use**

Digital learning is integral to whole school Learning & Teaching and is an important aspect of effective classroom practice. However, screens can be a distraction and by ensuring that students close their chromebook lids when they are not actively working on their devices, this potential distraction is managed and students can be fully focused.

#### **A focussed/silent solo task at some point**

Students' understanding and innovative thinking can be deepened through the challenge of an individual silent task. Students may need to reflect and change direction in order to take their own learning forwards, and a silent task affords this opportunity.

#### **Positive message at the end of the lesson**

There are always positive aspects to students' learning within each lesson. Students leaving the classroom with those positive reminders will be motivated to broaden their knowledge and eagerly anticipate future learning.

### 2. Feedback and assessment

According to research, the most effective student learning comes from interaction with the teacher and their peers. The teacher is constantly observing their students to assess their learning and understanding and is regularly adapting their teaching to respond to students' learning. Successful teachers continually assess their students' learning and provide students with valuable feedback to advance their understanding.

#### **Retrieval practice**

Retrieval practice is not about focusing on getting information in but getting information out of students' heads. This practice supports recall and reinforces understanding, providing links of the existing knowledge to prior knowledge. Ideas include: quizzes, mini white boards, games, verbal recall and entrance/exit tickets. For example, a simple starter task requiring students to recall information from last lesson/week/module/term naturally introduces a range of easy to more challenging tasks. Asking "why" and "how" questions allows elaborative interrogation.



### **Hands-down questioning**

Making hands-down questioning our default habit teaches students that they are all expected to be attentive and ready to respond to all questions throughout the lesson. It helps avoid the scenario of passive students who might otherwise go through an entire lesson without participating. Hands-down works particularly well where the question is asked and followed by a short pause to allow all students to formulate their response before saying a name.

### **Purposeful paired/group discussion**

Purposeful paired/group discussion (a version of Think-Pair-Share) provides students with purposeful problems to solve or questions to answer and ensures that their discussion time is focused and productive. Working with a partner or group promotes students' attention and together they develop each others' understanding, communication and problem-solving skills. The teacher should consider what exactly they want the students to discuss and do, e.g. a general discussion may not be effective.

### **Use of DIRT tasks**

Directed Improvement and Reflection Time is a framework to use for a full or part lesson, to provide dedicated time for students to explore, understand and respond to their errors or misunderstandings, in order to improve their understanding and work. DIRT tasks move students away from the temptation to focus uniquely on their grade, by guiding them through a step-by-step approach to analyse their work. Templates that are useful in running a DIRT task include Group Feedback Slide, Memory Mat and Improvement Task Choices.

### **WWW and HTI for feedback**

Students benefit from a short number (between 1 to 3) of objectives to focus on in order to improve their work. Teachers are able to identify the top most useful and important objectives for a student to identify where they have achieved well (What Went Well) and where they can make improvements (How To Improve). This is very helpful to students who might otherwise struggle to know where to start or miss the activities which will reap the greatest reward for their efforts. By using specific language in the HTI targets, such as "*introduce setting* at the beginning of your writing" students have clarity on exactly what they need to do to improve and are more likely to be successful in their next work.

## **3. Development of learners**

As a school of character, we seek to nurture the character of our students in all aspects of school life. In addition to the explicit character curriculum, our wider range of extra curricular opportunities and leadership roles, a key area where we develop character is in all lessons. Teachers understand their role in developing student character, as part of teaching their subject and helping students to make academic progress. Every lesson and learning activity can develop the learning character of our students.

### **Teacher modelling**

Showing students (multiple) examples of what "excellence" looks like can be more successful and faster at helping students to develop the necessary skills, than by explanation alone. Modelling in the classroom could include highlighting and discussing the work of students who have excelled. Another example is live modelling cognitive thinking and working approach (e.g. live writing/drawing via the visualiser and simultaneously articulating out loud their thinking process). A further example is the teacher working with a student, or selecting two students to demonstrate pair work, so that all students have seen a fully or partially worked, modelled example of what they are expected to do in their pair work before they all start.

### **Learning pitched for challenge**

Students all learn from different starting points and at their own pace, so it is important that a combination of scaffolding and challenge is provided so that all students can be in their "learning zone" (which is where they are all working beyond their comfort zone but not so much that they are in their panic zone). Scaffolding can include questions which progressively remove the supported/worked examples, reference/cheat-sheet worksheets, or working as pairs/groups.

Challenge can include open-ended tasks, more complex questions, or students taking on a different role (e.g. circulating to help others, performing the teacher tasks, etc).

**Subject specific literacy** (Please also see the Literacy Strategy)

Every teacher is a teacher of literacy, and can improve students' literacy, including by explicitly teaching reading, writing and oral language, and key to this are the skills specific to individual disciplines. Subject leaders and classroom teachers should identify technical vocabulary across subjects and ensure that these words are explicitly taught and that the use of technical language is modelled for students during classroom talk. Every teacher is responsible for sharing approaches that improve pupils' writing, such as modelling and combining reading and writing tasks. Students should also be encouraged to read around subjects, write fluently in the style appropriate for the specialism, and discuss ideas in an articulate and engaging manner. Providing a literacy-rich environment supports students in the classroom in every subject, in their home learning and also in their future endeavours.

**Development of oracy skills**

Having strong oracy skills means that you have both the ability to structure your thoughts in a way that makes sense, but also the vocabulary required to say precisely what you want to say. In the workplace, communication skills are essential for success. Ways to encourage and incorporate oracy skills into the classroom include purposeful discussions which encourage stances or opinions on topics studied, oral presentations, either in groups or individually, structured debates and games such as 'Just a Minute' or 'Articulate'. Feedback can also be geared around oracy skills in these contexts: for example, when feeding back on presentations, a focus on presentation skills as well as the content will encourage students to develop further.

**Encouraging innovation**

Creativity and the ability to thrive with ambiguity are highly valued skills in the workplace. Introducing innovation into tasks is usually motivating for students and helps them to develop their curiosity and confidence in working with unknown/ambiguous problems. Ways to include creativity in the classroom include: an open-ended research-task with broad parameters, devising a new learning game, group presentation/performance and designing an experiment.