

The New School at West Heath

Policy on Differentiation

Introduction

Treating our students as individuals lies at the heart of everything we do. Our teachers are first of all focussed on students and secondly on their subject. This is the essence of what makes the New School special.

Our policy on differentiation is based on the understanding that each student is a unique individual. They are “different”. They have:

- diverse backgrounds with different experiences
- different emotional and physical needs
- differing abilities
- different interests and preferences
- different learning styles
- different social needs
- different personalities

Whilst they are entitled to be treated equally it is entirely inappropriate to treat them all in the same way. The objectives of a lesson will usually be the same or at least similar for all but a range of strategies will be needed to help students achieve them. This is the challenge and the skill of differentiation.

Aims and Objectives

Work will be differentiated in order:

- to help all students to access the curriculum as fully as practicable
- to help all students to fulfil their potential
- to deliver the curriculum to each individual in the way which is most appropriate, enjoyable and beneficial
- to identify opportunities for support in learning

Strategies

It is not the purpose of this policy to produce a comprehensive description of the many strategies that are available to the teacher. Many good books have been written on the subject. Below is a list of illustrative examples under 6 headings of some strategies which are available to the teacher. It is expected that schemes of work will provide details of how the work will be differentiated in order to satisfy the lesson objectives.

1. **By task:** - Students new to a group may need to fill gaps in their knowledge and understanding. In hierarchical subjects such as mathematics and languages students may work at different levels. A

variant of this is to provide a bank of task from which students may select or be directed according to their needs.

2. **By outcome:** The same task may be completed with varying levels of sophistication. In art, for example, one student may produce a piece of work showing a great deal of imagination and skill, while another will produce work of a much lower standard. Teachers are encouraged to set tasks that allow for success at a range of levels. Positive marking will both acknowledge this and point the way forward to higher achievement. (See marking policy.)
3. **By support:** A variety of methods are available including teacher support, the use of a support assistant, the use of templates for IT, vocabulary lists, cassette recordings, tutorial videos and CD ROM's to name just a few. Teachers are encouraged to find varied and imaginative ways to assist students to perform tasks. Support assistants are a much-valued part of our team. They have a detailed manual of guidance with subject-specific sections and should always be thoroughly briefed. Support assistants receive training from teachers on Staff Training Days and this will include an overview of the Schemes of Work as well as specific issues relating to that subject. This reduces the time needed to brief support assistants before and during lessons.
4. **By feedback:** This should be given in a way that is most appropriate for the educational and emotional needs of the students. Students with literacy needs should be given plenty of verbal feedback and any written comments within their literacy capability. Some people with low self-esteem react very badly to criticism. They need to have plenty of praise with deficiencies and areas for improvement pointed out with great sensitivity. It is important that students learn to take and even to invite constructive criticism.
5. **By objectives:** In a wide ability group it may be appropriate to devise a number of activities with a variety of objectives.
6. **By grouping:** It is sometimes helpful to group students positively to take account of friendships or negatively to avoid conflicts. Some students prefer to work individually.

Staffing and Resources

- Each teaching group has a support assistant attached. Some students with statements have individual support. Subject teachers have a subject budget with which they are expected to build up an appropriate selection of resources to meet individual needs.
- The School has produced its own Differentiation Planning Sheet available in a generic form and also customised for use in a range of subjects. A copy of this is attached to this policy. It is used both as a prompt and a planner.

- A programme of peer observation has been organised to enable teachers to benefit from the opportunity to see how their colleagues plan and teach. This is a helpful means for spreading good practice - one aspect of which is skilful differentiation.

Differentiation	
This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies: Curriculum, Assessment Recording & Reporting, Subject Policies, Work at Home	
Appendices:	
Monitoring of Policy Implementation is the responsibility of: The Senior Leadership Team	
Lead responsibility:	Vice Principal - Education
Relevant Legislation:	To be detailed in the next release
Approved by: S.S. Committee	Date approved:
Ratified by: Trustees	Date ratified: 10:2003
Reviewed – no changes	Date:
Reviewed – with revisions	Date:
Revision No.	1.0