



# **Elm Academy**

## **Teaching & Learning Policy**

**Reviewed: September 2020**

**Next review due: September 2022**

**ELM ACADEMY  
PART OF AMBITIONS ACADEMIES TRUST**

## Introduction

At Elm Academy, we believe passionately in helping our pupils achieve their individual best. At the heart of all our work is our belief that, 'High Expectations lead to High Achievers'. Our high expectations extend to all aspects of the Academy's work: academic standards, behaviour, respect, kindness and courtesy.

We deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, which provides opportunities for all our pupils to succeed through high quality, engaging, sequential and purposeful planning. We advocate a consistent approach to teaching and learning, strongly informed by research evidence into what works in the classroom. Our curriculum is characterised by two themes: academic rigour and creative learning experiences so our pupils grow into independent, confident learners across all areas of the curriculum. We believe that appropriate and differentiated teaching and learning experiences help children to lead happy and rewarding lives. We recognise the importance of personalising learning to the needs of individual children and classes. We are interested above all in doing what has impact. Our focus is upon all children in our classes making maximum progress across the curriculum.

## Rational for Teaching and Learning

At Elm Academy, we ensure that interactions with children follow these key principles;

### **1. (Pedagogical) content knowledge**

The most effective teachers have deep knowledge of the subjects they teach, and when teachers' knowledge falls below a certain level it is a significant impediment to students' learning. As well as a strong understanding of the material being taught, teachers must also understand the ways students think about the content, how pupils build upon prior knowledge to develop in-depth knowledge across the curriculum, be able to evaluate the thinking behind students' own methods, and identify students' common misconceptions.

### **2. Quality of instruction**

Includes elements such as effective questioning and use of assessment by teachers. Specific practices, like continuously reviewing and building upon previous learning, providing model responses for students, giving adequate time for practice to embed skills securely and progressively introducing new learning (scaffolding) are also elements of high quality instruction.

### **3. Learning Environment**

Covers quality of interactions between teachers and students, and teacher expectations: the need to create a classroom that is constantly demanding more, but still recognising students' self-worth. It also involves attributing student success to effort rather than ability and valuing resilience to failure (grit). Ensuring all pupils feel valued and develop their ability to self-evaluate and take ownership over their own learning.

### **4. Classroom management**

A teacher's abilities to make efficient use of lesson time, to coordinate classroom resources and space, and to manage students' behaviour with clear rules and expectations that are consistently enforced and are all relevant to maximising the learning that can take place. These environmental factors are necessary for good learning rather than its direct components.

### **5. Teacher beliefs**

Why teachers adopt particular practices, the purposes they aim to achieve, their theories about what learning is and how it happens and their conceptual models of the nature and role of teaching in the learning process all seem to be important.

### **6. Professional behaviours**

Behaviours exhibited by teachers such as reflecting on and developing professional practice, participation in professional development, supporting colleagues, and liaising and communicating with parents.  
***(The Sutton Trust – What makes great teaching - October 2014)***

## 1. Senior Leadership

The Senior Leadership Team sets priorities and targets for improvement at whole school level based on evidence gained from monitoring procedures as outlined in our school's self-review programme. Leaders track progress made across all areas of the curriculum on the Raising Achievement Plan, to ensure gaps are addressed swiftly and to enable pupils to move forward with their learning comprehensively. Teaching is continually supported and challenged through distributed leadership. Middle leaders, in addition to the senior leadership team, undertake a range of activities in order to challenge, support and scrutinise the quality of teaching and learning on a regular basis. This varied and wide-ranging set of activities is also used to ensure rapid progress in teaching and to ensure that standards are raised. Reassessment of teaching staff not found to be at least good will be undertaken through observation, deep dives, planning scrutiny and data scrutiny to prove rapid improvement has been achieved.

Supporting activities are as follows:

- Accountability of progress and attainment data at pupil/group/class/year group/phase/whole school level
- Lesson observations
- Learning walks
- Drop ins
- Team Teaching
- Coaching in class and at the planning stage
- Work scrutiny
- Planning scrutiny
- Moderation

## 2. Lessons

All pupils must be supported to enable them to make excellent progress within every lesson. **"Every second counts"** so learning opportunities must be engaging and purposeful, providing pupils with the opportunity to build on prior learning whilst developing a new skill; leading to consistent high quality outcomes which can be evidenced through learning walks, data outcomes, planning scrutiny and book scrutiny.

Lessons are:

- Carefully planned to ensure learning is sequential and purposeful; giving pupils the opportunity to build on previous skills learning to ensure no cognitive overload
- Based around a clearly worded, skills based (not contextual) WALT (We are learning to) *What are the children learning?*
- Supported by clearly worded and structured "Steps to Success" (STS). This guidance is specific and allows children a greater level of independence when completing any given work. When appropriate, this is generated with the pupils to develop their independence further. *How will we achieve the WALT?*
- Supported through modelling of an activity
- Explicit teaching of misconceptions
- Engaging
- Led by Assessment for Learning (AfL) with appropriate pace
- Interactive
- Focused.

### **3. Teaching**

At Elm Academy, we believe that the best teaching should include:

- A positive climate for learning
  - well developed
  - effective working relationships between staff and children and between children themselves
  - children are encouraged to have a go and take risks
  - when children make mistakes, they are encouraged to learn from this and unpick it, to deepen their understanding.
- Teachers and other adults work hard to plan effectively and create a positive climate for learning in lessons and children are engaged and interested
- Applies cognitive learning strategies to ensure previous learning is continuously built upon and developed to deepen pupil understanding of key skills.
- Rich variety of teaching styles and approaches designed to maximise learning opportunities through a creative curriculum and learning outside the classroom opportunities
- Enthusiastic staff who appear to be enjoying their teaching, promoting a thirst for learning, using highly effective questioning and allowing adequate time for the embedding and deepening of children's skills, knowledge and understanding
- Outstanding behaviours for learning – children showing a thirst for learning and resilience when taking risks/making mistakes
- Highly differentiated learning to provide support, scaffolding, challenge and extension to all, meeting the varying needs of the children
- Effective modelling and scaffolding taking individual needs into account
- Children's learning targets referred to frequently in lessons and children given opportunities to achieve them
- Well pitched and timely interventions, systematic checking of understanding where children respond readily to feedback
- Clear expectations – WALTs, STS are referred to at the start of the lesson and during the lesson – children know what they are learning
- Giving children opportunities to apply their learning in a range of contexts, deepening their understanding
- A variety of peer and self-assessment activities used as a tool to make outstanding progress in lessons
- AfL Strategies are embedded in lessons with good use made of mini plenaries and opportunities for misconceptions to be corrected
- High levels of pupil enjoyment and engagement in all parts of the lessons
- High quality resources prepared and inspiring learning environments
- Lessons that have pace and purpose
- Good subject knowledge
- A team approach which uses all adults effectively to enhance the curriculum
- TAs know the learning objectives and are able to support learning and progress proactively
- High quality consistent role modelling by all
- Strong relationships with pupils.

### **4. Learning**

We believe that the best learning takes place when:

- Children value their learning because they understand the connection between education and their future success.
- Pupils understand the learning sequence and how previous learning contributes to developing their understanding.
- Children have a good relationship with their teacher
- Children feel safe and secure

- Learning intentions are shared and are clearly understood by the children
- Children challenge their own and others thinking through effective questioning
- The journey of learning is valued and it is understood that it leads to reaching your full potential
- Children are aware of their targets, their next steps and how they can achieve them.
- There is time to reflect and develop independence in learning
- There are opportunities for whole class work, group work, collaborative learning, paired work, and independent work

## **5. Marking and Feedback**

Marking and feedback is integral to pupil progress and to offer the children opportunities to know what they have done well alongside areas to develop further.

- Every piece of work is marked by the teacher in green pen
- WALTs are ticked with 1, 2 or 3 ticks to indicate level of understanding
- Symbols are used, where appropriate, to ensure pupils understand the feedback given
- Positive comments are to be given on work
- TIPS are given with the expectation that they are something the children will do to improve their progress instantly.

## **6. Learning Environment**

We believe that for teaching to be really effective:

- Classrooms should provide the optimum environment for focused learning
- The front of the classroom will show the WALT, model and Steps to Success, as well as the date (long and short – underlined with a ruler). The area around the board is also kept free to minimise distraction.
- All areas around the classroom are clutter free to minimise distraction and support pupil focus: books are organised onto shelves/cupboards; coats and bags are hung onto pegs; water bottles and lunchboxes are kept in a specified area; teacher and TA areas are kept clear of any clutter.
- Individual whiteboards and pens are kept in specified areas of the classroom when not being used and pupil tables are kept clear.
- All resources in trays are clearly labelled.
- A visual timetable is displayed daily.
- Displays within the classroom all support learning. Displays are created for Literacy, Maths, Topic and Phonics in KS1. Age appropriate number lines and letter formation alphabets are displayed prominently in each classroom.
- Outside classrooms, high quality work from a range of curricular topics is displayed
- British Values and rights and responsibilities promoted and explored through displays, class and whole school assemblies and discussions.

## **7. Teaching Assistants**

For Teaching Assistants to be deployed effectively they will:

- Have a good understanding of planning, intentions & the social and emotional needs of children
- Have strong subject knowledge of the curriculum topic being covered
- Be professional and work as part of a team
- Set a good example and model behaviour
- Understand the ways in which children can learn
- Challenge and support children
- Be managed by the classroom teacher

## **8. Planning**

Good planning will:

- Include clear learning intentions - WALT and Steps to Success
- Short term planning will follow the Medium Term Plans to ensure lessons are progressive with key skills being recapped appropriately.
- Create opportunities for cross-curricular learning
- Include enrichment activities such as WOW days
- Build on assessment of prior learning
- Indicate how Teaching Assistants will support
- Be flexible, catering for all abilities and interests
- Reflect different teaching and learning styles
- Show clear differentiation including scaffolding and resources being used
- Identifying the key questions to be used in the lesson

## **9. Behaviour & Attitudes**

For teaching to be at least good:

- Teachers and children will have high expectations of behaviour
- There must be positive relationships and mutual respect within the whole school
- Children and adults will be respectful to all others in school
- Children should be encouraged to take ownership of their behaviour
- Children are actively involved in developing rights and responsibilities and understand what choices and consequences are in place
- The student voice will be encouraged to reflect on behaviours and attitudes

## **10. Achievement**

Social, physical, creative and academic achievements are celebrated in many ways as an ongoing process in all aspects of school life:

- Verbal or written praise by teachers, peers, senior staff and parents
- Displays of work
- Opportunities to perform and share
- Encouraging self esteem
- Awarding of stickers, house points and certificates
- Sharing success with the community
- Awarding trophies
- Communication with parents
- Weekly celebration assemblies

## **11. Role of the Academy Advisory Committee**

Our governors and supporting body determine, support, monitor and review the school's policies on teaching and learning. In particular they:

- Support the use of appropriate teaching strategies by allocating resources effectively
- Ensure that the school buildings and premises are effective in supporting successful teaching and learning
- Monitor teaching strategies in the light of health and safety regulations
- Monitor how effective teaching and learning strategies are in terms of raising pupil attainment
- Ensure that staff development and performance management policies promote good quality teaching
- Monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning policies through the school self-review processes. These include the Associate Principal's reports to governors and the work of the curriculum and school improvement committees.

## **12. The Role of the School in Supporting Parents**

We believe that parents have a fundamental role to play in helping their children to learn. We work hard to inform and support parents in how they can help further their children's learning and confidence at school.

We do all we can to communicate with parents about what and how their children are learning by:

- Sending information to parents
- Run parental workshops to inform parents of how their children will be learning and support them with how they can help at home.
- Sending Marvellous Me's
- Holding Parent consultations
- Sending reports twice annually to parents in which we explain the progress made by each child and indicate how the child can improve further
- Sending frequent newsletters
- Recording in planners when pupils have been read with, what they did well and how the parents can support at home.
- Providing opportunities to liaise with outside agencies that are working with individuals
- Sending regular homework
- Writing weekly comments in planners to communicate with parents
- Meeting with parents of SEND children to review progress and set new objectives
- Meeting or contacting parents upon request in addition to parent consultation meetings and at a mutually convenient time.
- Adding Knowledge Organisers and Learning Journeys to the website regularly to inform parents what their children will be learning and how they can support further.

## **13. The Role of Parents**

We believe that parents have the responsibility to support their children and the school in implementing school policies. We would like parents to:

- Ensure that their child has the best attendance record possible
- Ensure that their child is equipped for school with the correct uniform and PE kit
- Do their best to keep their child healthy and fit to attend school
- Inform school if there are matters outside of school that are likely to affect a child's performance or behaviour at school
- Promote a positive attitude towards school and learning in general
- Fulfil the requirements set out in the home/school agreement
- Ensure the school No Smoking Policy is observed
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time
- Checking reading folders, homework diaries for letters and information from school
- Volunteer for school trips when needed
- Volunteer to share their own knowledge and expertise from their own profession

*A further breakdown, with regards to expectations for each area, can be found in the individual policies for each area.*