

SINCLAIR HOUSE SCHOOL

CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY: DIFFERENTIATION IN TEACHING METHODS

This Policy, which applies to the whole Prep school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), is publicly available on the School website and on request a copy may be obtained from the School Office.

Our pupils have a wide ability and age range, and frequently English is their second language.

Introduction

At Sinclair House School, differentiation (the process whereby teachers attempt to help pupils of different ability to fulfil their potential through challenge or scaffolding) is central to teaching and learning and ensures that all learners can access the learning provided. Although teachers have always been concerned with differentiation, it has been given increased importance through the National Curriculum requirements for assessment and testing.

A curriculum that is differentiated for every pupil will:

- build on past achievements;
- present challenges to allow for more achievements;
- provide opportunities for success
- remove barriers to participation

In general there are two forms of differentiation - that within the work of a single learner and that between pupils as they progress through the school. Pupils learn at different rates, have different areas of interest and different levels of motivation. It is unlikely that all pupils in the same class will be at the same level in terms of attainment. Similarly, it is unlikely that any one pupil will be at the same level in all parts of a programme of study. Most classes will require an element of differentiation if the pupils are to meet all the learning outcomes. The following is a guide to how we attempt to achieve this, and to make tasks accessible to the whole range of pupils within a class.

Differences in learning styles (Visual, Auditory)

The differences in learning styles are often linked with personality and emotional factors. Teachers should be aware of this wealth of individual differences within their teaching groups, and maintain a flexible approach to teaching methods. The CAT4 assessments provide us with this information; all teachers are expected to know the learning styles of their pupils and have this detailed on their Medium-Term plans. A wide range of audio and visual resources is encouraged in order to create a greater variety within each lesson. Admittedly this is easier in some subjects than others.

Additional Educational Needs (AEN)

To differentiate effectively, teachers must recognise the differences in learners and create learning opportunities for all these pupils. This requires activities in which pupils can learn at different rates, to different levels and employ a range of strategies. There are obvious ways in which the curriculum does need differentiation for some individuals. Pupils with visual impairment will require enlarged texts in addition to the presentation of the lesson through a variety of media. Hearing impaired pupils will need to sit in the best possible position to make use of residual hearing and see the teacher in order to lip-read. Differentiation can be tackled from several standpoints, for example by presenting and setting tasks at various levels of complexity. It can also be addressed by the way in which the children are expected to carry out tasks, the groupings, resources, and mechanisms for feedback by teachers and children. The SENDCo is responsible for co-ordinating and supporting the teacher with Individual Learning Plans (ILP's). For children who do not have an ILP, the class teacher is responsible for creating and implementing a specific plan to support or extend a child, with the support, where needed, of the Academic Deputy.

Subject Differentiation:

We teach for mastery in English and Maths (see specific subject policies for further information). This means that pupils are taught together through whole-class interactive teaching, where the focus is on all pupils working together on the same lesson content at the same time. Instead of pupils being given differentiated learning tasks,

unless absolutely necessary, differentiation should happen through scaffold (e.g. the use of CPA in Maths, word banks and peer support in English) and extension (e.g. open-ended questions/problem solving questions in Maths and 'Deepening the Moment' in English). In other subjects, teachers should have the same high-expectations of all pupils, within reason, and ensure they are providing scaffold and challenge for those who need it.

Gifted and Talented

Gifted and Talented pupils may suffer from a decline in focus and motivation without some attention to differentiation. This can be addressed, to some extent, by extending the existing curriculum and setting more challenging homework assignments for these pupils. However, again, the uniformity in end of year assessments limits what can be achieved in this way. In Prep, Maths and English enrichment clubs are offered to children, based on their scores in their assessments as well as class teachers' assessments.

Learning environment:

The aim is to create a learning environment which encourages children to engage their abilities to the greatest extent possible, including taking risks and building knowledge and skills in what they perceive as a safe, flexible environment.

It should be:

- encouraging independence - tolerating and encouraging child initiative;
- accepting - encouraging acceptance of others' ideas and opinions before evaluating them;
- complex - including a rich variety of resources, media, ideas, methods and tasks.

Process modification:

At Sinclair House it is our aim to promote creativity and higher level cognitive skills, and to encourage productive use and management of the knowledge the children have mastered. This can be facilitated by encouraging:

- higher levels of thinking: setting tasks which involve logical problems, critical thinking and problem solving
- open-endedness: encouraging risk-taking and the response that is right for the pupil by stressing there is no one right answer
- group interaction: with highly able and motivated pupils sparking each other in the task, with this sometimes being on a competitive and sometimes on a cooperative basis (depending on the task and its objectives)
- variable pacing: allowing pupils to move through lower order thinking more rapidly but allowing more time for children to respond fully on higher order thinking tasks
- variety of learning processes: accommodating different pupil's learning styles
- de-briefing: encouraging pupils to be aware of and able to articulate their reasoning or conclusion to a problem or question
- freedom of choice: involving pupils in evaluation of choices of topics, methods, products and environments;
- grouping strategies: facilitating pupils to work with "like minds" and encouraging group interaction (see separate notes on ability grouping).

Language Considerations

It can be misleading to assume that the language used by a teacher will be understood by all the class. Some pupils have very weak linguistic abilities with both receptive and expressive language problems. They may miscomprehend simple commands and appear to be lazy or stubborn, when in reality they just don't understand the instructions. Bearing this in mind, the teacher needs to differentiate the language used, keeping it simple, again highlighting key words, and ask pupils to repeat the instructions of a given task in their own words.

Good Teaching Practices

In the main, teachers use a combined approach of whole class teaching, group work and individual attention. Within this structure, a number of methods of differentiation are employed, often simultaneously. These may be divided into 4 main categories:

- By Task- includes level of difficulty of task set
- By Outcome- the same task but different anticipated results

- By Differentiated Access to Resources- eg varying the duration of resource use or restricting its extent and variety
- By Differentiated Access to In-class Support- eg access to teaching time according to need

We believe that no one method is correct for any one child for the whole time. Teachers should get to know the pupils well, becoming aware of any factors which may affect their learning, e.g. minor hearing problems. Moving around the class will let pupils feel they have had the teacher's individual attention. An ethos should be established whereby a contribution from pupils is valued, with all achievements being celebrated and pupils being encouraged to become involved and to take risks with the articulation of ideas and suggestions. Constructive feedback should be given to pupils orally and in the marking of their work. Records of assessment, which indicate what each pupil has already achieved and their individual levels of understanding, are also kept.

Useful strategies to use in the Classroom

Readiness / Ability

Varying the level of questioning (and consequent thinking skills) is a useful strategy for accommodating differences in ability or readiness.

Adjusting Questions

During large group discussion activities, teachers direct the higher level questions to pupils who can handle them and adjust questions accordingly for pupils with greater needs. All pupils are answering important questions that require them to think but the questions are targeted towards the pupil's ability or readiness level.

Summary

Differentiation is not designing individualised teaching plans. It is the understanding that children have different learning styles and, wherever possible, taking these into consideration when planning and delivering lessons. Fundamentally, we believe that differentiation is about ensuring high expectations for all: employing strategies and resources that mean lower ability children are able to reach for these, whilst simultaneously ensuring high ability children are stretched and challenged.

The Headmistress undertake an annual formal review of this policy for the purpose of monitoring the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than September 2022, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require

Signed:



Mrs. Carlotta T.M. O'Sullivan
Principal

Date reviewed: January 2021
Review Date: September 2022