



3.6 Teaching and Learning Policy

Rationale

Sunshine Christian School seeks to provide a meaningful, relevant and quality education to all students in our community. Clear and consistent expectations in teaching and learning shared by students, staff and parents underpins all successful learning. This Teaching and Learning Policy is built on a foundation provided by the National School Improvement Tool published by the Australian Council of Educational Research.

Aims

- To provide an educational program of the highest quality to all students
- To document clear and shared beliefs regarding teaching and learning which empower staff to provide consistent and relevant learning experiences
- To build a clear understanding of good teaching and learning in the school community

Implementation

Essential agreements about teaching and learning

The following 8 statements underpin all teaching and learning at Sunshine Christian School:

- Every child is a unique creation of God and every child can learn
- Learning is nurtured by positive, supportive and committed student-teacher relationships
- Every child deserves at least one year of progress for one year of input
- Learning is accessible to all
- Learning outcomes and success criteria are made clear to students
- Feedback is timely, meaningful and supportive
- Teaching and learning are informed by best practice and driven by student data and analysis
- The school curriculum is founded on our school values and the LEA Christian Studies Curriculum Framework in partnership with the Australian Curriculum

These agreements manifest themselves across 8 domains:

1. Teaching and learning which views students as individuals in a community
2. Excellence in teaching practice
3. Evidence based teaching and learning
4. Relevant, targeted and rigorous curriculum
5. Targeted resourcing

6. A community of lifelong learners
7. Meaningful relationships with partnering organisations
8. School wide commitment to continual improvement

1. Teaching and learning which views students as individuals in a community

Every effort is made to ensure students are enhancing their whole self through the exploration of their God given gifts in order for students to use these gifts in service of others.

All staff view differentiated teaching as a strategy for supporting student engagement and learning. It is recognised throughout the school that learning programs need to be personalized to ensure all students are supported, extended and challenged. Differentiation is a feature of every teacher's practice supported by a belief that all children should be able to access learning.

Regular data on the achievements, progress, strengths and weaknesses of individual students are used in all classrooms to make judgements about individual needs, to identify appropriate starting points for teaching and to personalise teaching and learning activities. Learning opportunities are tailored to meet individual student needs and to support the progress of all students. Individual learning plans (ILPs) have been developed for students requiring them.

Successful teaching and learning is seen when all students make one year of progress for one year of input.

2. Excellence in teaching

Teachers are committed to operating at the AITSL Lead Teacher standard in classroom practice where:

The teacher supports students to use evidence, including prior learning experiences, in personalising and revising their learning goals and aligning them with the curriculum standards. They spontaneously adjust their instructions during the lesson to increase learning opportunities and improve students' understanding. The teacher designs challenging tasks that require students to generate knowledge and elaborate upon information. They explain the taxonomy used to structure the learning activity and to inform the assessment criteria, so that students understand the intellectual demands of the task.

Transitions are student managed and efficient, maximising learning time. The teacher makes students responsible for establishing deliberate practice routines. They provide students with a choice of learning activities that apply discipline• specific knowledge and skills including literacy and numeracy skills. The teacher facilitates processes for the students to select activities based on the agreed learning goals. The teacher supports the students to generate their own questions that lead to further inquiry. The teacher uses cues to differentiate between their responses to individual students throughout the learning time.

The teacher provides students with the opportunity to reflect critically on the strategies they have used to complete the learning task. They negotiate assessment strategies with students, ensuring these are aligned with learning goals. The teacher supports students to assess their own use of academic language and measure their own progress in this area. Class dialogue is distributed, so that teacher and students both take an active role. This includes the teacher facilitating students actively entering into intellectual dialogue with each other. They support students to critique one another's ideas, in order to increase the intellectual rigour of the conversation.

The teacher involves students in adapting the learning space to support everyone's learning.

The teaching staff of Sunshine Christian School are proficient in the fields in which they teach and have high levels of pedagogical knowledge including commitment to evidence-based teaching strategies. Teachers take personal and collective responsibility for improving student learning and wellbeing, working together and learning from each other's practices. The sharing and showcasing of best practice is valued. In team meetings there is an emphasis on the joint analysis of student work and on teaching strategies for improving student learning. Teachers collaboratively plan, deliver and review the effectiveness of lessons.

The school prioritises the ongoing professional learning of all staff and on maintaining a school-wide, self-reflective culture focused on improving practice. The school supports staff to continue formal study and celebrates professional success. All school staff maintain and utilise a Professional Development Plan to support their ongoing professional improvement.

All school staff, led by the principal, take personal responsibility for driving improvements in teaching throughout the school. They demonstrate a strong conviction that improved teaching is the key to enriched student learning and have clear and well-known positions on the kinds of teaching that they wish to see occurring. All staff are committed to implementing strategies that have been demonstrated through research and practice to be highly effective.

The principal and external specialists spend time working with teachers to improve their teaching practices, including modelling, evaluating and providing feedback on classroom teaching. Evidenced Based Observations (EBOs) are used as a key process to assist teachers to improve their practice.

3. Evidence based teaching and learning

School staff clearly articulate their belief that reliable data on student outcomes are crucial to the school's improvement agenda. The school Assessment Policy outlines procedures for the collection, analysis and use of a range of student achievement and wellbeing data.

Data are used throughout the school to identify gaps in student learning, to monitor improvement over time and to monitor growth across the years of school. A high priority is given to professional development aimed at building staff data literacy skills. Staff conversations and language reflect a professional understanding of student assessment and data concepts.

Teachers regularly obtain data for their classes using relevant tools to analyse, display and communicate data on individual and class performances and progress, including comparisons of pre- and post-test results. Teachers routinely use objective data on student achievement as evidence of successful teaching.

4. Relevant, targeted and rigorous curriculum

Sunshine Christian School's curriculum is clearly documented and is aligned with the Australian Curriculum and the Christian Studies Curriculum Framework. The curriculum is consistently implemented throughout the school and is shared with parents and the wider community.

Considerable attention is given to ensuring 'vertical' alignment of the curriculum so that there is continuity and progression of learning across the years of school, with teaching in each year building on to and extending learning from previous years. General capabilities, cross-curriculum priorities, school values and our Christian faith form powerful starting points for learning.

A high priority in curriculum is given to the progressive development of students' deep understandings of concepts, principles and big ideas within learning areas, as well as to the ongoing development of cross-curricular skills including critical and creative thinking and ethical and intercultural understanding.

When homework is set, it targets specific learning needs and is designed to support student progress.

We believe in the importance of a wide ranging curriculum which supports the development of the whole child. Staff believe in the great importance of off campus learning through excursions and camps and views these learning opportunities as core to the curriculum. This includes involving all students in a vibrant creative arts and physical education program.

5. Targeted resourcing

Staff give a very high priority to understanding and addressing the learning needs of all students at our school. This is reflected in the implementation of strategies for identifying student needs and the development of creative school-wide solutions for addressing those needs.

A school-wide process has been established for identifying specific student learning needs. This process includes testing to establish learning gaps and additional needs. School records of individual student needs, achievements and progress are maintained centrally and shared across year levels. The Students With Additional Needs (SWAN) program provides support and interventions needed to ensure all students can access the curriculum and progress.

A range of initiatives are used to make more effective use of available resources to enhance teaching and learning. The school deploys staff in ways that make best use of their expertise.

6. A community of lifelong learners

Our school ethos is built around high expectations, a commitment to excellence and fostering a lifelong love of learning. There is an expectation that every student can learn and progress. Classrooms are supportive and teaching time is protected.

We work to ensure high levels of trust are apparent across the school community. Interactions are focused on the learning and wellbeing of students and on continually improving the school's ability to meet student needs. The school values parents and families as partners in student learning and the school community works together in mutually supportive ways.

A strong collegial culture exists at Sunshine Christian School. Teachers have an overt and shared commitment to the improvement of teaching and an openness to critique by colleagues. Classrooms are open for coaching, mentoring and sharing of ideas. The school values the ongoing professional learning of all staff particularly the development that takes place through collegial conversations.

The school seeks to empower parents to model learning practices to their children and offer parents support to enhance their child's learning at home.

7. Meaningful relationships with partnering organisations

We make deliberate and strategic use of partnerships to access resources not available within the school for the purposes of improving student outcomes.

Significant partnering organisations include our supporting church, St Matthew's Lutheran Church Footscray, the Lutheran Church of Australia – Victorian/Tasmanian Synod, Lutheran Education Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania, Independent Schools Victoria, School Sport Victoria, the Allannah and Madeline Foundation, VRQA and the State and Federal Governments.

Careful consideration has been given to the benefits of the partnership to each participating partner. Explicit processes are in place to ensure ongoing and effective communication – sometimes across networks of partners – and there are documented plans for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of each partnership.

8. School wide commitment to continual improvement

The school council, principal and staff have developed and is driving an explicit and detailed local school improvement agenda. This agenda is embedded in the school strategic plan and is expressed in terms of specific improvements sought in student performances and wellbeing and includes clear targets with accompanying timelines which are rigorously actioned.

The school improvement agenda focusses, narrows and sharpens, the whole school's attention on core learning priorities. There is a sincere commitment by all staff to the school improvement strategy and a clear belief that further improvement is possible. All staff take responsibility for changes in practice required to achieve school targets and are using data on a regular basis to monitor the effectiveness of their own efforts to meet those targets.

Supporting documentation

- Australian Curriculum
- Lutheran Education Australia Lifelong Learners Policy
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Framework
- DECS Learner Wellbeing Framework
- Student Wellbeing Policy
- Staff Wellbeing Policy
- Sunshine Christian School Mission, Values and Aims
- National School Improvement Tool published by the Australian Council of Educational Research

Date Approved: September 2017
Origin: SCS
Date for Review: 2020