

## 4. THE CLASSROOM



**Extract**

### OVERVIEW

In this module, we will cover the following topics:

- The role of the teacher
- The set-up of a classroom
- The structure of lessons
- How learning takes place – formal and informal
- Types of learners
- What can inhibit learning?
- Working with individual pupils
- Working with groups

### INTRODUCTION

Classrooms are lively, dynamic environments, full of interactions that involve learning. This module seeks to help you understand how they work. It will also show you how teachers seek to enable their pupils to learn effectively.

You will learn how to recognise good practice and understand the process of learning. You will also be equipped to consider how to work most effectively with pupils in the classroom.

### THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Teachers have a ‘duty of care’ to pupils. This is a legal responsibility upon teachers to do everything reasonable to protect pupils’ health, safety and well being. Teachers must work within national, local education authority, and school guidelines to ensure they provide this duty of care.

A teacher has a dual role of care towards their pupils – pastoral and academic.

The personal and social well being of pupils falls into the pastoral sphere.

The development of pupils' knowledge and skills comes under the academic care label.

## PASTORAL CARE

All teachers have a pastoral responsibility to all their pupils, but there is a specific structure in every school. In primary schools one teacher usually has one class of pupils. They are responsible for both the pastoral and academic care of those pupils.

In secondary schools, pupils are usually in a form class. Here the form tutor is responsible for their pastoral care. A variety of subject specialist teachers provide the academic care of pupils.

The pastoral duties of teachers include:

- **Registering and monitoring attendance of pupils.** A teacher will contact parents to explain absences and report any concerns to the designated member of staff.
- **Considering the welfare of pupils.** A teacher must try to recognise and identify child protection issues (suspected cases of child abuse). They must then report them to the designated member of staff.
- **Behaviour management.** Teachers promote and reward good behaviour. They also manage disruptions and discipline in line with school policies.
- **Monitoring pupils' progress in all subjects.** In secondary schools the form tutor liaises with a pupil's subject teachers to monitor overall progress.
- **Dealing with bullying.** Teachers identify cases of bullying and deal with it according to school policies.
- **Emotional support.** Pupils should feel that they could go to their teachers for advice, guidance and support. Teachers may refer some issues to specialist members of staff, such as a counsellor.

- **The personal, health, and social education of pupils (PHSE).** There is a national curriculum for PHSE. The class teacher in primary schools, or the form tutor in secondary schools delivers this.

## ACADEMIC CARE

In primary schools a teacher usually teaches all the subjects to one class.

In secondary schools a teacher usually teaches one or two subjects only.

Academic duties of teachers include:

- **Curriculum planning** – planning programmes of study using the National Curriculum, school schemes of work and school policies.
- **Lesson planning and delivery** – planning lessons with clear objectives. This also involves setting homework, managing classes and maintaining discipline.
- **Assessment and record keeping** – monitoring and evaluating learning and identifying pupils who are not meeting or exceeding expectations.
- **Communicating with parents** – phoning parents, writing reports and attending parents' evenings.

## THE SET-UP OF A CLASSROOM

In primary schools a teacher usually teaches the same class in the same classroom throughout the day. Teachers cover a range of subjects in one room so there will be many different resources available. Staff often organise these into different areas.

Within primary schools there may be some subject specific classrooms, especially if the teacher needs to use special resources (e.g. an ICT room).

In secondary schools, a teacher usually has their own classroom where they teach a particular subject. Different classes visit the teacher over the day. This allows a classroom to become dedicated to a particular subject.

It's the teacher's responsibility to ensure their classroom provides an effective learning environment. Safety, layout, seating plans and displays are important considerations.

## SAFETY

- Classrooms should be clean, well maintained, well lit and at a comfortable temperature. There is usually a designated member of staff to deal with any maintenance problems in a classroom.
- Pupils should not have access to any dangerous items.
- Pupils should know the classroom rules.
- A teacher should never leave pupils unsupervised in a classroom.

## LAYOUT

- It should be easy to move around in a classroom.
- There should be a range of appropriate, accessible and labelled resources available to pupils.
- Resources and pupils' work should be kept in specific, well organised, clearly labelled areas.
- It should be possible to arrange the desks in a classroom in different ways. This means pupils can sit in small or large groups, face the teacher or each other.
- A teacher may change the layout of pupils' desks for different activities.

## SEATING PLANS

- Teachers should have seating plans of where each pupil sits in a class.
- In primary schools a class seating plan can change in different lessons.
- Seating plans should take into account school policy. Teachers have access to guidance on considering pupils' ability, gender and ethnicity when devising seating plans.

- Changing seating plans regularly allows pupils the opportunity to work with different groups.
- It's good practice to display seating plans in a class or a folder on the teacher's desk.

## DISPLAYS

- Classroom displays should be stimulating and engaging.
- Displaying pupils' work gives them a sense of ownership of their classroom.
- Teachers often ensure school and class rules are on display.
- Displays often highlight keywords for topics studied.
- Usually there is a separate noticeboard for pastoral issues.
- It's important displays are up to date and reflect what pupils are learning.

### **EXERCISE 4.1**

Think about the positive experiences you had at school. Consider the following questions.

1. Who was your favourite teacher and why?
2. What did they do that made them a good teacher?
3. What do you remember about your classrooms?
4. What did you like / dislike about your classroom environments?

## HOW LESSONS ARE STRUCTURED

Lessons generally follow a three-part structure – providing a beginning, a middle and an end. Depending on the school timetable, a lesson can last from half an hour to over an hour.

### THE BEGINNING

The beginning of a lesson should prepare pupils for what they are going to learn. It's good teaching practice to start by explaining the aims and objectives of the lesson clearly. Teachers often write these on a board, so they can refer to them again at the end of the lesson.

The teacher begins with a 'starter' activity, which aims to gain the pupils' attention and start them thinking. At the start of a lesson pupils are often at their most receptive. It's important to get them 'on task' as quickly as possible.

Starters are short (5-to-10 minute) activities that relate to the main activity of the lesson. They should engage all pupils, establish pace and provide challenge. A good starter will involve teacher input. But it will also allow pupils to work independently for some of the time.

Starters can help teachers establish pupils' prior knowledge and identify any misconceptions they may have. They enable pupils to connect with and share their prior knowledge, or think about a new idea or concept. Starters are often quite fun activities involving mental thought, discussion and verbal responses.

### THE MIDDLE

The majority of learning takes place in the middle of a lesson. There may be one or two main activities for pupils and these should build on work done in the starter.

Main activities may be teacher-led whole class activities, pupil group work, paired work or individual work. Regardless of how pupils are working, main activities usually involve high levels of direct, interactive teaching.

Direct, interactive teaching is lively and collaborative. The teacher expects pupils to play an active part by answering questions, working together and contributing to discussions.

The teacher will differentiate the main activities. This means they will match the work to pupils' differing capabilities. The aim is to ensure all pupils can participate. Differentiation can be achieved in several ways:

- Different ability groups receive different work
- Pupils all receive the same work but the teacher will expect different outcomes from different pupils
- There may be extension work available for more able pupils
- Help sheets may be available for less able pupils
- Targeted support may be available to some pupils

## THE END

The end of a lesson should help pupils recognise what they have achieved. The teacher may review the lesson aims and objectives in a whole class discussion.

A 'plenary' activity is completed, which aims to draw together the learning of the whole class and the individual. A plenary should highlight *what* pupils have learned and *how* they have learned it. It should also summarise key facts, consolidate learning and help pupils identify the next step in their learning. A good plenary engages all pupils, giving them the opportunity to extend and reflect on their learning.

Plenaries can help teachers review lesson objectives and assess individual and class learning. They can also help them to recognise and value achievements. They enable pupils to remember what they have learned and put the new learning in the context of past and future learning. They also give pupils the chance to consider how they have learned and communicate their learning.

## **REMINDER**

Have you completed the following exercises?

- Exercise 4.1
- Exercise 4.2
- Exercise 4.3

Tick each box when you have completed the exercises. Then you can move on to the assignment that follows.

## **SUMMARY**

1. You understand the role of the teacher.
2. You understand the set-up of a classroom.
3. You know the three-part structure of lessons.
4. You understand learning takes place formally and informally.
5. You know there are different types of learner.
6. You understand some of the factors that can inhibit learning.
7. You know what to consider when working with individual pupils.
8. You know what to consider when working with groups of pupils.

## ASSIGNMENT 4

Read the following case study, and then answer the questions.

Rachel is a teaching assistant at a secondary school. Here she describes a typical day:

“One of the best things about being a teaching assistant is that no two days are ever the same. I have a busy timetable and work in different parts of the school. I work with different teachers and pupils. The pupils I work with are 11 to 16 year olds, with all sorts of different backgrounds and abilities.

“I support a Year 7 pupil, Michael, in several of his classes. He has ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). This means he is hyperactive and has difficulty paying attention. He finds it really hard to concentrate in most of his classes. He also hates sitting still for more than 10 minutes. He has problems getting on with other pupils and can get quite aggressive.

“I support him by sitting next to him in some of his classes. I encourage him to stay focused, follow instructions and behave responsibly. I break his work down into short, achievable targets and give him immediate praise when he completes a task. I monitor Michael’s behaviour with other pupils and often ‘step in’ to diffuse situations and encourage more positive interactions.

“Michael works best in Design and Technology. He can be very creative, and I think he likes the fact he can move around the room. The school has recently refurbished the classroom, so there is a nice atmosphere. The teacher has displayed lots of pupils’ work on the shelves. Because Michael is comfortable in the class, he interacts with the other pupils more calmly.

“I also work with a Maths teacher supporting the teaching of a difficult Year 8 class. Most of the pupils in the class have problems with literacy, numeracy and behaviour. The teacher is very good with the pupils. He is quite strict but I think the pupils react well to the structure.

“They know what is expected of them and they know what to expect of the teacher. The teacher often does joint lesson planning with me. This

helps me support the pupils really effectively in his lessons, as I know exactly what to do to help the pupils' progress.

“Twice a week I support a small group of Year 10 pupils with their literacy. I take them to the library during their English lessons and help them with tasks specially planned for them. They are all EAL pupils (English as an Additional Language).

“I love working in the library with these pupils. It is a peaceful environment with a calm atmosphere. It encourages the pupils to concentrate on their work and work independently. It's nice to see the pupils finding things out for themselves from the books and IT resources.

“I have to record information on all the pupils I work with but it is made quite easy as there are forms for everything! I have access to information about the pupils too, which is useful to my planning. You have to remember that pupil information is confidential and treat it very carefully.

“There are policies for everything at the school; how to record and share information, how to praise pupils, how to manage behaviour. It's good because it helps all the teachers and teaching assistants treat the pupils consistently.

“At lunchtimes I enjoy doing the ‘rounds’, and I also help out in a lunchtime club once a week. These are good opportunities to get to know the pupils in an informal environment. I can keep an eye on the pupils and see what they are getting up to. Lots of the teachers do the same and I think it is something that keeps the school friendly.”

### **Questions:**

1. Discuss the good practice at Rachel's school with reference to the teachers, the classrooms and the lessons.
2. Rachel works with a range of pupils. Explain how they learn and discuss ways of supporting and encouraging their learning.

When you have completed this assignment, send it to your tutor for marking. If you email your assignment, make sure you include your name and assignment number at the top of your work.

If you send the assignment by post, attach the cover sheet, which is on the following page.

---

Well, that's the end of the extract. If you want to know more, you'll have to register!

We look forward to welcoming you on to the course, and helping you become a teaching assistant.