



Oatlands College

Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy

Introduction

Oatlands College is an Edmund Rice school community composed of students, staff, parents/guardians and management under the Trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust [ERST]. The central purpose of this community is the religious, moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and social education of the students. Inspired by the vision of Edmund Rice, as set out in the religious and educational philosophy of the ERST Charter, the school seeks to create an atmosphere of Christian care and concern in which students can grow to maturity. This Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy outlines the principles, practices, and expectations that underpin effective teaching and learning at Oatlands College. Our aim is to foster an inclusive, student-centred and collaborative learning environment that reflects the Edmund Rice ethos.

Vision

To nurture a community of lifelong learners who are confident, curious, and capable of contributing positively to society. All members of the school community will be empowered to contribute and create a cutting-edge, innovative, robust, and digitally mediated learning experience in an environment with clear, consistently applied structures. Grounded in our ethos of kindness and respect, we strive to inspire students to achieve their personal best while maintaining high academic standards.

In Oatlands College, we encourage our students to take more accountability for their academic goals, organise their work, and take responsibility for the impact which their actions have on themselves and others. Additionally, we aim to deliver an education which develops student skills, identifies their talents, broadens their horizons, and helps to prepare them for senior cycle and beyond.

Aims

At Oatlands College we aim to

- Provide a safe, inclusive, and stimulating learning environment.
- Promote active engagement, critical thinking, and creativity.
- Encourage collaboration and respect for diverse perspectives.
- Develop students' academic, personal, and social potential.

Core Principles of Teaching and Learning at Oatlands College

The following principles underpin the teaching and learning approach at Oatlands College. They reflect our commitment to creating an inclusive, engaging, and supportive educational experience that prepares students for success in the 21st century.

Inclusivity:

- All students are valued equally and supported to reach their full potential.
- Teaching strategies and resources reflect the diversity of the school community.
- We accommodate all levels of learners by providing appropriate support and challenge to ensure every student can thrive.

Student-Centred Learning:

- Students are active participants in their own learning.
- Opportunities are provided for inquiry-based, experiential, and collaborative learning.
- Students are encouraged to set personal learning goals and reflect on their progress.

High Expectations:

- Teachers set clear, high expectations for all students.
- A growth mindset is promoted to encourage resilience and perseverance.
- Achievement is celebrated in a variety of ways.

Wellbeing and Relationships:

- Positive relationships between students, teachers, and the wider school community are prioritised.
- A focus on student wellbeing underpins all teaching and learning activities.
- Restorative practices are used to resolve conflicts and build a supportive school culture.

Continuous Improvement:

- Teachers engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their practice.
- Reflective teaching practices are encouraged through peer collaboration and feedback.

- Data-driven approaches are used to inform teaching and learning strategies using the Athena Tracker to track results, identify learning patterns and encourage students to improve where relevant.
- Teaching strategies are grounded in evidence-based research to ensure their effectiveness and relevance.

Learning Environment

At Oatlands College, the learning environment encourages kindness and respect. It is designed to support and inspire all students, fostering a sense of belonging and a commitment to excellence.

- Classrooms are safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces.
- Resources are accessible and reflect the diversity of the school community.
- Displays in classrooms and corridors celebrate student work and promote a culture of achievement.
- Flexible seating arrangements and layouts support various teaching and learning activities. Seating plans are created, maintained and updated throughout the year.
- Outdoor and communal spaces are utilised to enrich the learning experience.
- The physical environment is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains conducive to learning and wellbeing.

Teaching Strategies

Our teaching strategies are designed to foster collaboration, critical thinking, and active engagement. Group work is a cornerstone of our approach, enabling students to learn from one another and develop essential teamwork skills. The examples below are indicative of the range of teaching strategies utilised in Oatlands College. Teachers are encouraged to integrate and trial new evidenced based strategies into their own practice.

Active Learning: Students engage in hands-on activities, discussions, and projects that encourage critical thinking and problem-solving.

Collaborative Learning: Group work and peer-to-peer learning are integral to fostering teamwork and communication skills.

Technology Integration: Digital tools are used to enhance learning and develop students' digital literacy.

Assessment for Learning: Formative assessment is used to provide feedback, guide instruction, and support student progress.

Collaboration

Collaboration among staff at Oatlands College plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Working together allows educators to share ideas, reflect on their practices, and foster a culture of continuous improvement. Collaboration not only benefits teachers but also contributes to a richer, more engaging learning experience for students.

- Staff members actively share and reflect on resources to ensure consistency and innovation in their teaching.
- Annual TeachMeets are organised as part of Croke Park Hours to share best practice between colleagues as part of our SSE staff collaboration initiative.
- Teachers reflect on their practices and collaborate with peers to ensure teaching practice is of the highest standard in lessons.
- Staff support each other as they strive for personal and professional growth.
- Peer observation of lessons is encouraged to facilitate mutual learning and the exchange of best practices.

Working with Additional Needs Assistants (ANAs):

- Classroom teachers collaborate with the AEN coordinator to establish clear plans and strategies to define roles and responsibilities for ANAs in lessons.
- Teachers and ANAs collaborate to align objectives, share feedback, and refine approaches.
- Teachers and ANAs collaborate to ensure their insights contribute to broader teaching strategies.

Team Teaching:

- Team Teachers collaborate in lesson design to define roles to leverage teachers' strengths and expertise to ensure seamless lesson delivery and maximise student engagement.
- Team Teachers reflect on lessons to evaluate team teaching effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

Individual Student Needs and Additional Educational Needs (AEN)

At Oatlands College, we are committed to supporting students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN) to ensure they thrive academically, socially, and personally. Our approach is

grounded in inclusivity and collaboration, with tailored supports in place to meet the diverse needs of our students.

- The school has a dedicated area for supporting students with AEN.
- Teachers have access to our VSWare software containing detailed information about the strengths and needs of AEN students, enabling them to incorporate this knowledge into their planning and teaching.
- Staff members collaborate closely with Additional Needs Assistants (ANAs) and the AEN team to ensure that AEN students receive the necessary support to succeed.
- Regular professional development opportunities are provided to help teachers address the needs of all students effectively.
- We recognise and support gifted students by providing opportunities to challenge and extend their learning through enrichment activities and additional challenge.

Planning for Teaching and Learning

At Oatlands College, we believe that all teaching should be of a high quality, leading to each student making significant progress academically, socially, and emotionally, as well as in relation to any specific needs or individual targets. Teachers are expected to plan and follow their lessons thoughtfully and effectively to maximise student learning. This involves:

- Planning lessons that outline clear objectives, key words and activities.
- Ensuring plans are aligned with departmental schemes of work, providing a coherent progression of learning.
- Consulting with the Additional Education Coordinator to address individual student needs and incorporate appropriate supports.
- Ensuring resources, activities and strategies are designed to cater to the diverse learning needs within the classroom, ensuring that all students reach their full potential.
- Using our Athena Tracker to set realistic targets for students based on summative assessments of their abilities.
- Use of effective questioning, feedback and reflection techniques to engage, challenge, encourage and develop students' understanding and progress.
- Monitoring student progress against their targets and implementing timely interventions where necessary.
- Encouraging students to engage actively in their learning and to take responsibility for their own progress.
- Establishing positive behaviour in class, consistent with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Assessment of Learning

Assessment is a vital tool for supporting student growth, guiding instruction and supporting student learning and development. At Oatlands College our approach to assessment ensures that all students, regardless of their abilities or learning styles, have equitable opportunities to demonstrate their learning in ways that align with their strengths and needs.

Classroom assessments are conducted regularly throughout the school year, as deemed appropriate by the classroom teacher. All assessments are meaningful, relevant, and engaging to motivate students to participate actively. These assessments are designed to provide ongoing feedback and guide instructional planning. As a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to assessment does not accommodate the diverse needs of learners, we integrate a variety of assessment methods, including:

Formative Assessments: Low-stakes, ongoing assessments such as quizzes, think-pair-share activities, and peer feedback to support learning in real-time with instant feedback to inform learning. Formative assessments are used continuously during lessons to monitor student progress and inform teaching. These assessments provide important feedback, helping students understand their strengths and areas for improvement.

Summative Assessments: End-of-topic evaluations may be topic class tests or assessments that allow students to showcase their understanding through creative outputs such as projects, presentations, essays or digital portfolios.

Self and Peer Assessment: Encouraging students to reflect on their own work and provide constructive feedback to their peers to develop metacognitive skills.

Whole-School Assessments:

There are three main school assessments during the academic year:

Christmas Assessments: These exams take place throughout the school for every student the final week of term in December.

Mock Assessments: These assessments are conducted in the two weeks before February mid-term for our 3rd and 6th year students.

Summer Assessments: These exams take place throughout the school for our 1st, 2nd and 5th year students the final week of term in May.

Reporting and Communication with Parents/Guardians

After the Christmas, mocks and summer assessments, parents/guardians will receive a written report on the students' progress. The report includes information on the student's performance in exams, work in the classroom, overall progress and suggested areas for improvement.

Support for Students with Additional Educational Needs

Students with additional educational needs will be supported during the assessment windows to ensure that they can demonstrate their learning effectively. The specific needs and supports for each student will be assessed and agreed upon in advance of the exams, in consultation with the Additional Needs Coordinator. These supports will be in line with the guidelines for the Junior and Leaving Certificate exams and may include accommodations such as extended time, modified materials, or other adjustments as required.

Timely and Constructive Feedback

Feedback is an essential element of effective assessment. In Oatlands College, we ensure that feedback is:

Timely: Delivered promptly to enable students to make meaningful improvements.

Specific and Actionable: Providing clear guidance on strengths and areas for growth.

Reflective: Encouraging students to engage in self-reflection and goal setting for continuous improvement.

Technology and Assistive Tools in Assessment

Digital tools play a key role in making assessment more accessible and engaging. We use technology to:

- Facilitate differentiated assessment through platforms such as digital quizzes, interactive presentations, and adaptive learning software.
- Support students with additional needs through assistive technologies like speech-to-text software, audiobooks, and screen readers.
- Promote collaborative and multimedia assessments that allow students to express their understanding creatively.

Inclusive and Equitable Assessment Practices

To ensure fairness in assessment, we are committed to:

- Using clear rubrics and success criteria that are accessible to all learners.
- Providing reasonable accommodations for students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN), in line with guidelines for Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations.
- Regularly reviewing and adapting assessment strategies to meet the evolving needs of our diverse student population.

Commitment to Supporting Teachers

The Board of Management of Oatlands College are fully committed to ensuring that the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy is effectively implemented and followed. The Board recognise that for the policy to be successful, it is essential to provide teachers with the support, resources, and professional development opportunities they need to continuously improve their practice and meet the diverse needs of our students.

Professional Development and CPD

To support teachers in the effective delivery of the curriculum and assessment practices outlined in this policy, the Board of Management prioritise the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of staff. Staff are encouraged to engage in relevant professional development opportunities that align with the goals of the school and their own professional growth. This includes access to training on best practices in assessment, teaching strategies, and the use of technology in the classroom.

In line with the provisions for professional development, and where appropriate, time may be allocated to support the continued learning of staff. This time may be used for collaborative planning, sharing of best practices, and participating in school-led CPD sessions. Management will work with staff to identify key areas for development and provide time for teachers to engage in these activities, ensuring that they have the skills and knowledge to implement the policy effectively.

Ongoing Support & Review

This policy will be regularly reviewed. A staff working group will be involved in the review process to gather input from teachers and students and ensure that the policy continues to meet the needs of both staff and students. This collaborative approach will continue to foster

a culture of open communication, where teachers can share challenges and successes, and where additional resources or adjustments can be made when needed.

By prioritizing professional development and providing dedicated time for teachers to engage in CPD, we are committed to supporting staff in delivering high-quality teaching and learning experiences for all students.