

A Learning and Teaching Policy for OBCS



A common framework for learning and teaching in Old Bawn Community School.

5 Key Principles are central to our approach to 'Learning and Teaching' in OBCS. They form the focal point for all of our continued professional development with teachers, students and parents.

While most are already embedded in classroom practice, over the next three years as part of our Strategic Plan, we will continue to embed these right throughout the school.

This is a live document awaiting consultation and review from the BOM and staff of Old Bawn Community School.

The mission statement of Old Bawn Community School embodies the principles and values, which underpin the practices within the school.

‘Our commitment is to learning in its broadest sense and our procedures and practices reflect this. Respect for the uniqueness of each member of our community commits us to maintaining a caring working environment in which we all can achieve fulfilment’.

We believe that this can only be achieved by the entire school community learning together. It is critical that students develop their capacity to learn, both independently and collectively.

We have developed five key approaches to learning that are used consistently and creatively across our community. These approaches are explained in this ‘Learning and Teaching Policy’.

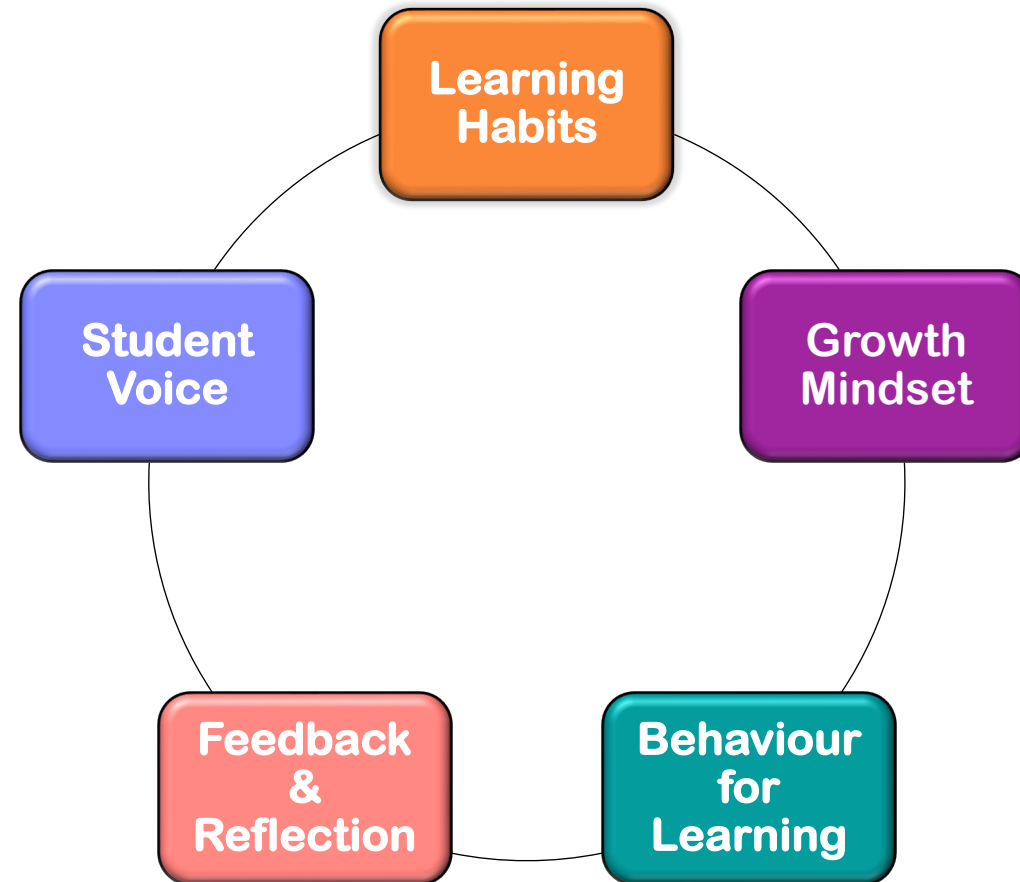
Introduction



5 Key Approaches

Our framework enables members of the school community to become creative, curious and courageous learners, capable of working independently and with others.

Reflecting the new Junior and Senior Cycle aims, our framework uses **5 key approaches** to build upon their key skill foundations to create strong learning habits, dispositions and attitudes.



Developing Learning Habits

At OBCS we believe one of the keys to becoming a successful learner is to develop good learning habits that, with lots of practice, become second nature.

Top learners are in the habit of:

- Persevering - they never, never, never give up in the face of difficulties
- Being curious - they ask questions and see connections between things
- Working well with others - they learn from others and help others to learn
- Reflecting on what they are doing - they make flexible plans and keep them under review

Our students are given the opportunity to build their strength as learners, not just in classes but in all activities that take place throughout the normal school day. Whether that be through Young Scientist, School Musical, Debating and Public Speaking or on the sports field.

Engaging in these activities helps develop and promote effective learning habits that make students more determined, ambitious, and flexible thinkers, as well as more successful and content in their personal lives.

Once students become aware of the habits they have, they can also see how to improve and make progress in these areas.

Learning to Learn in OBCS

- Understanding and adopting good learning habits can help us get the best from ourselves.
- We all need to learn how to break the habit of depending on others to do things for us.
- Our goal should be to take responsibility for ourselves whether we are working independently or in collaboration with others.

Try This...

Teachers: Give students the opportunity to create their own learning resources for revision.

Parents: Get your son/daughter to engage with feedback and reflect on their last test or piece of classwork. Ask them, how they could enhance their answer...what strengths they showed...what strategies they used...what their goal is and what they need to do to bridge the gap and achieve that goal.

Encouraging a Growth Mindset

A mindset is a belief and beliefs shape how we conduct ourselves on a daily basis. People with growth mindsets are more resilient and tend to push through struggle because they believe that hard work is part of the process and that failure is not a permanent condition. Those with fixed mindset on the other hand believe that success stems from innate talent and tend to give up easily.

In OBCS, we endeavour to facilitate our students to achieve to their optimum and in order to do so we try to assist students to develop a growth mindset. A simple shift in vocabulary can have a massive impact on their beliefs.

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
I am not good at this.	I am not good at this yet, but I will learn.
This is too hard.	This is difficult but I will try.
This is not good enough.	I can do better with more effort.
I won't be able to do that.	I am brave enough to try.
Plan A didn't work.	Good thing the alphabet has 25 more letters!

Growth Mindset in OBCS

By providing students with learning opportunities where they can take risks, experiment and learn, they can develop growth mindsets and surprise even themselves with the progress they make.

To encourage this progressive mindset we give feedback that:

- values and praises the effort, commitment and strategies that students use when addressing challenges and problems, and not merely the outcomes they achieve.
- we are specific and realistic in our feedback.
- we encourage them to work things out for themselves.

Try This...

Teachers and Parents: Praise the amount of effort that a student/son/daughter is putting into their work. Encourage them to embrace challenges. Remind students that the brain operates like a muscle-the more it is used the stronger it becomes.

Growth Mindset



Managing Behaviour for Learning

OBCS is committed to building strong relationships within our community of learning. This means placing respect for others, empathy, fairness, personal accountability and honesty at the centre of every interaction throughout the school. To support this commitment, OBCS seeks to adopt a restorative approach, in accordance with international best practice in relation to conflict resolution. Restorative practice gives everyone involved an equal voice, where everyone can be heard.

In order to develop students' ability to manage their own behaviour, we use restorative approaches to learning – in other words, we help individuals to gain a better understanding of themselves and their emotions, as well as the impact they have on others. Ultimately the aim is to enable all students to focus on the real reason for attending school: making progress in their learning.

Try This...

Teachers and Parents: Restorative Questions

- What happened?
- What were you thinking of at the time?
- What have you thought about it since?
- Who has been affected and in what way?
- How could things have been done differently?
- What do you think needs to happen next?



How We Encourage Behaviour for Learning in OBCS

In classes students:

- Adopt learning habits that develop social skills, such as listening to and understanding other people's views.
- Take personal responsibility for behaviour and attitude to learning as an individual and a contributor to a team.
- Help others in the classroom shine and make progress.

As a School, we:

- Use restorative approaches to help students understand emotions and improve social interactions.
- Use restorative approaches to solve conflict situations through discussion.
- Encourage a sense of belonging in our community.
- These approaches not only create a sense of social harmony and belonging in school, but also improve students ability to form positive social and personal relationships which will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives.

Feedback and Reflection

Feedback and reflection are among the most critical influences on student learning.

- ✓ Targeted feedback triggers an optimistic response from students.
- ✓ Feedback encourages them to keep trying. It outlines what to do differently the next time they attempt a task.
- ✓ Reflection provides students with the opportunity to use feedback to figure out the steps needed to achieve success.

Planning for student achievement:

- ✓ Teachers devise lessons with clear learning intentions that guide lesson focus and the selection of appropriate activities.
- ✓ Teachers use formative assessment through observations and questions to identify adjustments that can improve student learning.
- ✓ Formative assessments helps teachers evaluate what their students have learned and implement strategies to further aid them on their learning journey.

Try This...

Teachers: Deliver individualised feedback that instils student ownership of their learning, and outline the steps required to complete the journey or progress in it.

Parents: Engage in conversations where feedback is targeted, and achievable goals are discussed and determined.

Feedback and Reflection in OBCS

Quality information

- To inform their planning, teachers monitor engagement, participation and performance.

Learning conversations

- Teachers and students engage in conversations where feedback is targeted focusing on 'What worked Well' and 'How to Improve'.
- Peer feedback promotes student dialogue about what constitutes quality. It exposes students to new ideas, different perspectives and standards.
- It promotes respect and responsibility amongst students.

Feedback and Reflection



Student Voice

The wellbeing of young people is enhanced by appropriate experiences of freedom, choice, participation, and decision-making in a supportive environment. Structures, relationships, and democratic participation across the school can encourage all students participation, allowing them to find and develop their voices and increase their sense of community.

Authentic listening by the school is central to these experiences; this happens when the views and suggestions of young people are sought after, acknowledged, and responded to.

Students are central to everything we do in OBCS. Giving students a voice helps to develop their self-worth and encourages them to be leaders, offering up ideas and suggestions and taking personal responsibility.

Try This...

Teachers: Develop classroom 'norms' in conjunction with your class. Reflect on and discuss classroom positive environments. Ask students to unpack the examples for the behaviours that made the experience positive.

Student Voice in OBCS

How we encourage student involvement

In the Classroom

- Developing roles in group work for every student
- Encouraging students to give feedback to each other using supportive language.
- Asking students what they need to learn about a new topic.
- Giving students the opportunity to provide feedback on pedagogy.

In the School

- Inviting students to join the Student Council, to become student leaders as 6th year prefects, 5th year mentors, TY peer leaders, 1st/2nd/3rd year class reps and/or to join school committees.
- Enabling them to help shape the curriculum and environment.
- Asking them to take leading roles in organising and running school events.

*"Youths of Today are the Leaders of Tomorrow."
Nelson Mandela*

Student Voice

