

TEACHING POLICY

Members of the teaching staff at QM are well qualified professionals with excellent knowledge of their subjects. Both individuals and departments are encouraged to attend appropriate training in order to keep up to date with current developments in their subject, especially those offered by the relevant examination boards. Departments are required to have up to date schemes of work for every year group/course taught.

QM is academically selective and it is expected that all QM girls will be able to take GCEs and move on to some form of Higher Education. In addition to academic scholarships, awards are given to girls who excel in art, dance, drama, music and sport.

Lessons at QM should be stimulating and fun. Girls should have a clear idea of expectations, both in terms of subject matter and behaviour, and be encouraged to achieve at the highest level of which they are capable. Activities within a lesson should be varied and offer opportunities for comments and questions, while maintaining progress.

In preparing lessons teachers should take into account the following:

- classroom IEPs for individual girls with LDD (on the girls page of the database)
- girls with identified learning difficulties (Pupil Support section of the intranet – staff only)
- girls with English as a Second Language (EAL section of the intranet – staff only)
- girls with identified physical disabilities Pupil Support section of the intranet – staff only)
- different learning styles (see later in this document)
- any girls with identified behavioural/emotional issues (“brown envelopes” report card etc)

QM girls appear to gain most benefit from lessons in which they have some active involvement. They prefer to work in a well-ordered environment where the teacher is in control. The use of ICT in the classroom varies from subject to subject but is used to enhance teaching and learning.

Group Work

Group work, whether in pairs or larger groups, is a valuable means of engaging girls in learning. Teachers should, however, give careful thought to the organisation of groups. It is clearly harmful for any girl to feel unwanted, overlooked and eventually tagged on to an existing, self-selected group. It is best practice for the teacher to assign groups and to anticipate the problems of working in pairs in a class with an odd number. While girls may often prefer to work with a “best friend”, this does not always achieve the best educational outcome and discourages inclusion and integration.

Independent Learning

QM aims to produce girls who can take responsibility for their own learning and progress and have good study habits and intellectual curiosity. All teachers have an important role to play in helping their students attain independence by encouraging questions, challenging thinking and ideas and promoting academic risk taking. Teachers feel under increasing pressure to achieve excellent examination grades with their students but should resist pressure, whether from girls or parents, to “spoonfeed” exam classes.

Private Study

Teachers are expected to set work to be done outside lessons either to prepare for a subsequent lesson or to rehearse and consolidate learning. Any such work should be stimulating and offer challenge, whatever the ability of the individual student. Teachers should make very clear their expectations re quantity and the time needed to complete the task, adjusting where necessary for girls with IEPs etc. They should encourage girls to use their planners. Work completed outside the classroom should be scrutinised for evidence of plagiarism and any work which has not been completed to the expected standard should be returned to be re-done, and the girl’s tutor informed.

Use of Baseline Testing

QM uses the CEM baseline tests: MidYIS at KS3, Yellis at KS4 and Alis in the sixth form. The data are used to provide target grades (a value added measure of +1 is included when MidYIS or Yellis are used). Subject tutors and academic tutors use the baseline data to help monitor individual girls’ progress across all subjects. The assessments provide information that acts as a starting point for identifying the schools’ gifted and talented pupils: Overall MidYIS scores are used to identify the top 10% in a year group as well as those pupils defined as nationally Gifted and Talented (MidYIS scores of >130).

Marking and Assessment

Assessment lies at the heart of teaching and learning at Queen Margaret’s. Assessment seeks to monitor the skills, knowledge, understanding and interests of girls and inform future teaching. The assessment process aims to be a positive experience for girls promoting pleasure in learning. Assessment is carried out in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons. Marking is an integral part of assessment and all teachers are required to mark work regularly and provide the girls with suitable feedback to help them progress. Each department has a clear marking policy, which is used by all members of the department and the policies are explained and understood by all girls.

The ‘Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy’ provides full details of this key area of academic life.

Assessment for Learning (AFL)

At QM we aim to provide high quality teaching and ensure assessment opportunities are exploited to their full to enhance learning. Consequently we have been exploring different aspects of AFL. Trials have taken place with respect to questioning, marking and academic tutorials and these strategies are being

embedded in departmental practises as appropriate. Target setting is currently being explored and incorporated in normal classroom practise.

Differentiation

Teaching groups are set when possible, based on ability, as a means of aiding differentiation. However, teachers always aim to provide work that is appropriate to an individual's ability. Stretch and challenge is essential at all levels. At times, differentiation by outcome is acceptable but teachers aim to differentiate by task wherever possible. Simply providing additional work without reviewing and modifying the main activities for the more able is not considered to be acceptable practice at QM.

Different Learning Styles.

We recognise that different students have preferences for specific styles of learning: visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. However, we also consider it is essential that every girl learns to operate in a range of learning environments as this will be essential for her future career. Teachers aim to incorporate a variety of learning styles in their lessons but are not required to include all styles all the time. It is acknowledged that during the course of any given day the girls will be exposed to a range of different learning styles as their curriculum provides variety and balance.

Setting

Setting by ability is possible in some subjects. Departments should try to ensure that movement between sets is possible in order to help girls achieve to the best of their ability. Once provisional sets have been drawn up by a department the information should be passed to the relevant Year Head for comment and possible adjustment. The Director of Studies will make the final decision if there is any disagreement between the Head of Department and Head of Year.

Class sizes

Year I - V	20
At AS	16
At A2	12

These are useful guidelines but may occasionally be breached after consultation with the relevant Head of Department.

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