



Wallington County Grammar School

Culture & Ethos Policy

## We Believe!

We are outstanding. Not because we say it, but because we work hard at it.

We are dedicated, committed and focused. (self discipline)

We never fail because we never give up. (endeavour)

We will not falter on our quest to be the best we can be. (excellence)

We believe in ourselves.

We believe in each other.

We believe in Wallington County Grammar School.

## **Culture & Ethos**

This policy and the practice which flows from it are at the heart of the school's drive to deliver its vision. Promoting and maintaining excellent standards of behaviour is one of the school's key aims. That aim is fundamental to enable every student to achieve their potential and learn to become an effective, independent, self motivated learner.

High standards of behaviour and effective learning go together. Just as we teach and model effective learning in the subjects of the curriculum it is essential that we model and teach the excellent behaviour for learning we expect our students to display at all times.

This Behaviour for Learning policy provides a clear set of expectations for those who belong to our school community. It provides a clear framework for reporting and rewarding excellent behaviour for learning which will be clear to students, their parents and staff. The policy also provides a clear sequence of consequences and sanctions to ensure that all students understand the boundaries. The clarity and detail in this policy are an indication of the seriousness of our intention to ensure that every student learns to meet our high expectations in this key aspect of school life.

## **School Vision**

"To enhance and develop eager and enthusiastic young learners through challenging and engaging teaching in a stimulating environment, where achievement in all its forms is celebrated and rewarded.

To equip students with the knowledge and experience that will enable them to succeed and flourish in all areas of life as they mature into adults.

To nurture students so that they may become life long learners with a thirst for knowledge and discovery that will remain long after their school years, in a diverse cosmopolitan community where natural flair and raw talent thrives."

School Council – 2009

## **Procedures in the classroom**

The first action to ensure that poor behaviour is reduced or eradicated from the classroom is through improved pedagogy. By teaching 100% good or outstanding lessons we will reduce the number of times the behaviour policy is called upon. This does not mean that using the behaviour policy is a weakness in a person's pedagogy, it means that by reflecting and developing our teaching practice we are capable of putting the student's needs first and maximising the opportunity to reward rather than using sanctions. Saying this, sanctions are essential both as a deterrent and to set boundaries as a means to prevent more serious behaviour becoming common place. As a staff we need to recognise that by 'sweating the small stuff' we will reduce more serious behaviours.

The 'Teacher's Toolkit' is way of scaffolding support for teachers to find success in promoting a united culture and ethos.

## Teacher's Toolkit

1. Core Values
2. 100% Culture & Ethos
3. Our Community
4. 'Do right' language
5. SLANTing
6. Class discussions
7. Shared language
8. Rewards
9. Sanctions

## Core Values

As a traditional but innovative school our practice is guided by our core values. We arrive together at WCGS with individual knowledge and understanding, different backgrounds, experiences and expectations. For this reason it is essential that our clear values unite us and guide all of our work. Everybody is to understand why our values are there and what they mean as guiding principles for our daily work.

Self Discipline            We believe that we all have the right to work and learn in an industrious, orderly and respectful environment.

Endeavour                We believe that we will do what it takes to achieve excellence

Excellence                We believe that all of us will learn and that everyone can achieve excellence

## 100% Culture & Ethos

High expectations for behaviour need to be based on one single concept – 100%. Anything less than 100% good behaviour is not good enough and allows some students to interrupt their own or other students learning. At Wallington County Grammar School we will teach our students how to be 100% and empower our teachers to install 100% in their classrooms. High expectations for student behaviour must in turn be based on the teachers own high expectations of themselves and an instilled belief in their own ability to assert their authority and achieve 100% good behaviour in all of their classes.

Therefore the starting point for achieving high expectations for student behaviour must be the absolute teacher belief in:

The ability of every student to behave – with no excuses

The teachers own ability to assert his or her authority and enable every student to behave

100% can only be achieved when the expectations and rules the teacher introduces are 100% reasonable and clearly linked to the importance of learning in the classroom. 100% can only be achieved when 100% of the students are 100% clear about what is expected of them and why it is right that they should do that. The start, middle and end point for achieving 100% always lies with the teacher.

You will not achieve 100% if you are not giving 100%.

## **Our Community**

Wallington County Grammar School is a learning community where all adults and students have the right to spend each day in a safe, secure environment and where all are treated with respect. There are three aspects to our community:

i) The classroom - We will make learning our priority by understanding that there are no shortcuts and by:

Arriving on time with the correct equipment needed for the lesson

Being 100% prepared for learning

Wearing the correct, smart uniform

Entering the classroom calmly, greeting the teacher

Avoiding all distractions: putting away anything not required for the lesson

Only drinking water during lessons and never consuming energy drinks, sweets etc.

Being an active learner and engaging with the activities

Sitting upright, listening actively, positively articulating, nodding intelligently and tracking the speaker (SLANTing)

Showing respect for the sanctity of learning

Always recording and completing homework

Helping a classmate if they are finding the learning a challenge

ii) The WCGS community - We will help create a safe, clean school environment which respects the rights of others by:

Listening to each other and following instructions politely and calmly

Walking purposefully, not running or shouting, around the school buildings

Going straight to lessons and holding doors open for others when the corridors are busy

Ensuring that any electrical devices (smart phones etc.) are never seen or heard

Being a model for others, wearing uniform with pride, supporting others in times of need and demonstrating 'doing the right thing'.

iii) The wider local community - We will ensure that we model and actively demonstrate the core values of the school by:

Wearing school uniform with pride

Displaying expected high standards of behaviour and courtesy when travelling to and from the school and when visiting places of interest on school visits

Being polite and courteous at all times

Respecting the local environment, never dropping litter and never defacing or trespassing on private property

Never using language or actions that discriminate against or abuse another person or group of people because of their race, religion, gender or sexuality

## **'Do right' Language**

We aim to promote core values such as self discipline, endeavour and excellence within our students. One way of doing this is by using 'do right' language. Below are four steps to boost our student's success.

### i. "I believe in you!"

When our students feel that we believe in them, they grow to believe in themselves. When students doubt our confidence in their capabilities, they tend to lower their expectations of themselves and fall short of their potential. We must help paint a positive portrait for the students we teach.

Students at WCGS live up to our expectations. In response through our words, our looks and even our body language, we continually send messages to our students which help form their self-belief. This is done both intentionally and unintentionally. If students interpret our messages positively they will try and fit themselves into that view. On the other hand if our students feel that they can't accomplish much on their own, they may share a negative opinion and lower their expectations.

### ii. Set expectations that enhance success.

The most powerful determinant of our student's success is expectation. By learning to set expectations that encourage our students they will then try new possibilities, expand their potential, and work with us to nurture their self-confidence. The message we transmit is critical. Expecting too little limits their success because they lose the incentive to try new possibilities. Unrealistic expectations can also damage. Pushing people beyond their capabilities may be interpreted as 'You're not good enough.' Successful expectations generally stretch our student's potential to become their best without pushing them to be more than they can be. These expectations never destroy people's feelings of adequacy.

The expectations we set for our students are ones that stretch their potential without unintentionally diminishing their self-worth. They should be: developmentally appropriate, realistic, student orientated and success orientated.

### iii. Nurture strong, internal self-belief.

Students with poor self-belief often bombard themselves with a steady flow of derogatory messages. Their potential for success is greatly limited, because they don't believe in their capabilities. Students become their best by developing positive inner dialogues. Self-talk is a critical part of how we acquire beliefs about ourselves. One powerful way we help our students develop a firm belief in themselves is to teach them to practice positive self-talk. If they learn the skill now, they will use it forever.

Helping people break the habit of negative self-talk is not easy. We aim to be consistent and help students develop a more positive self-picture, modeling positive self-talk, confronting negative voices and turning negatives into positives.

iv. Help students see success and develop an “I can” attitude.

As adults we need to think we are improving, getting better at something and making progress. Knowing that we are doing well helps us believe in our abilities and causes us to forge ahead and make continued efforts. Awareness that we are improving is like a pat on the back to keep trying. Students also need to see progress, especially in school where their growth is constantly measured. When we give students evidence that they are succeeding, we help develop an “I can” attitude. It is therefore essential to get students to record their own progress. As they see their improvements their self-belief will grow.

The following activities build “I can” attitudes: Recording progress against aspirational targets in the student planner, displaying examples of outstanding student work, keeping portfolios of student work in each subject area and regularly updating student achievement boards. This makes success more visual and therefore more real.

As outstanding teachers, we have opportunities every day to reinforce our student’s self-belief. Our expectations for a student and our reactions and words to them can give them votes of confidence or chip away at their self-worth. Each day we must ask ourselves: “If self-belief were based only on my words and actions today, what would students believe about themselves?” Our answer should guide how we interact with those students in future.

## **SLANTing**

To SLANT means to Sit up straight, Listen actively, Articulate positively, Nod intelligently and Track the speaker. Students must SLANT at all times during lessons.

This is important because it teaches active listening and shows students how to show that they are actively involved in their learning at all times. It is also a key tool in ensuring we achieve 100% good behaviour. It creates a purposeful and focused learning environment where everyone in the classroom can feel listened to and feel safe enough to make mistakes and learn from them.

Each element of SLANT can be taught deliberately and students should know why it is important that they do it:

SIT UP - *What does this look like?*

Every child sitting up straight. Their bottoms should be firmly placed at the back of the chair with the chair legs on the floor at all times. The chair should then be pulled under the table reducing the space between the student’s body and the desk. This helps keep them up right

and comfortable. It also prevents students leaning back on their chairs or slouching down with their head on their hand or placing their head on the desk. Sitting upright opens up your lungs and increases the flow of oxygen to your brain. More oxygen in your brain increases your brain activity and keeps you wide awake and alert. So sitting up makes you smart!

#### LISTEN ACTIVELY - *What does this look like?*

Listening to others needs to be valued if not more than speaking. Adults need to model this by listening actively and responding to students. All students need to be taught to listen and show their interest and respect for every speaker. To show they are listening actively they need to Nod intelligently and Track the speaker. They should also ask and answer questions in response to what is being said.

Everyone deserves and has a right to be listened to when it is their turn to speak. The importance of instructions being listened to is obvious but we should equally stress the importance of students listening to each other. The speaker should not be interrupted unnecessarily but their learning should be supported by the class asking and answering questions, and helping them learn from their mistakes in a supportive atmosphere.

#### ARTICULATE POSITIVELY - *What does this look like?*

Every student must give full sentence answers with a positive attitude towards their learning at all times. This means showing enthusiasm and interest and understanding that negative comments can affect their own progress and others around them. There is a time and a place to share negative feelings but they should never interrupt learning. A positive attitude is about striving for excellence, working hard and being self-disciplined at all times. Students should be able to articulate their opinion giving precise reasons for their view.

Being positive means you will feel positive and this means that you will do well. Every member of the class has a responsibility to contribute towards making the classroom a positive place to be.

#### NOD INTELLIGENTLY - *What does this look like?*

Students need to show they have understood or that they agree with what is being said by gently nodding their heads. Nodding confirms understanding and can give confidence to those who are speaking. Nodding can create a productive and valued learning environment.

#### TRACK THE SPEAKER - *What does this look like?*

This is the physical sign of active listening and shows that every child is fully participating in learning. Everyone in the room turns to face and follow whoever is speaking. This must be insisted on in any whole class/group discussion, presentation or whenever someone is giving instructions. If the teacher does not want the students to track for any reason they can just say so.

Tracking shows that the speaker is valued and listened to. Tracking shows that even if you are not writing or doing an activity you are still active in your learning and ever present in the lesson.

## **Class Discussion**

Class discussion done well transforms the learning experience making it more challenging, more effective and more interesting. Done badly it is damaging and can undermine student's progress, self confidence and ability to achieve. There are 4 golden rules to class discussion that we insist on at all times:

### i. Full sentences

'Speaking and Listening' are a key element of literacy. If we are to make significant progress in developing every student's literacy skills, an essential approach must be insisting on full sentences at all times in class discussion. Students must attempt to use compound and complex sentences when responding to questions in class. Students should be encouraged to speak in short and simple sentences even if they are describing complicated concepts. Students should not 'opt out'.

### ii. Use of people's names

All teachers must be referred to by their full, preferred title and surname. Equally teachers and students should always use student's names, learning correct pronunciations quickly. This helps develop positive relationships quickly and engages all students in the learning taking place. As students develop their oratory skills they should develop the ability to use the teacher's name or other student names incorporating them naturally into the flow of the sentence rather than always putting it at the beginning or end of a sentence.

### iii. No opt out

Every child must know that they may be called on to contribute to the class discussion at any time. That will mean that the teacher does not accept 'I don't know' or a shrug or no answer. The teacher's high expectations mean that they will use a range of strategies to support the student in answering the question. They ensure that any sequence that begins with the student not being able to or not wanting to answer the question ends with them giving the right answer and demonstrating that they understand. Every student therefore experiences success and the teacher is creating a classroom where it is not possible to opt out of learning.

The teacher creates an atmosphere where all students can feel confident to 'have a go'. The notion that mistakes are to be learned from is an important aspect of this. Some students

will need careful handling in attaining this level of confidence particularly where bravado often disguises insecurity. Students should not be allowed to practice or resort to non-responsiveness but must be expected to participate in a supportive learning environment which always results in them experiencing success. The skilful teacher knows that if there is not a clear expectation that every child will have to participate many will chose not to and will therefore switch off and stop thinking.

Teachers will use a range of strategies to ensure that every student is expected to and can contribute to class discussion:

- No hands up rule
- Use of thinking-time
- Repeating the question
- Asking a simpler question and scaffolding student responses until they are able to answer the original question
- Ask the student to ask another student to help them answer the question.
- Encouraging an 'educated guess'

iv. The 'educated guess'...

Encourage students to use the sentence starter 'I am not 100% but my educated guess is...' An educated guess is not a wild guess but based on the facts or evidence before them. Even if it is wrong it always deserves praise because it shows that the student is thinking. The teacher and the rest of the class must then support the student in reaching the right answer.

This supports the key message that mistakes are a useful part of learning. Students need to understand that the process of learning is about 'making mistakes and then fixing them'. This is what they have come to school to do.

## Shared Message

To fix	The verb used to request that poor behavior is eradicated. Students who cannot 'fix' and therefore change their current behavior will receive further sanctions.
Self Discipline	A core value which ensures that students become self managers and through their own personal actions an industrious, orderly and respectful environment is created and sustained.
Endeavour	A core value which ensures that students do what it takes and do not give up when faced with challenging circumstances.
Excellence	A core value which identifies a standard which we all strive to achieve. An essential part of our self belief that all of us will learn and that everyone can achieve excellence.
I believe in you	Central to the positive encouragement to ensure that we meet high standards and push ourselves when faced with challenging circumstances.
Do what it takes	I will what it takes to ensure my own success and the success of others. I will go the extra mile.
Do the right thing	Appealing to the common sense and the positive attitude of the individual to make the right choices.
Do right language	Articulating and promoting a positive mental attitude to enhance the feeling that success can be achieved.
All of us will learn	An unapologetic statement that we can all make progress and learn from the actions of others by sharing good practice. A central belief that every child can achieve the highest standards.
100%	A culture of achieving the highest standards. Aiming for less than 100% is unacceptable.
High expectations	Always expecting the best results.
No excuses	Not allowing reasons to be given that suggest high standards cannot be met.
Our Community	Recognising that our culture and ethos permeates all areas of WCGS. The classroom, the corridors the playground, the dining hall, the area outside the school gates.
Prepared for Learning	Ready to learn. The correct equipment and homework completed.

SLANTing	The basic principles of a productive teaching and learning environment - Sit up straight, Listen actively, Articulate positively, Nod intelligently, Track the speaker.
Self talk	Showing the self discipline to create a positive mental attitude to ensure that the highest expectations can be achieved.
Aspiration	Unleashing aspiration to ensure that there are no limits to what can be achieved.
Full sentence answers	Encouraging students to articulate in a positive manner which demonstrates a full range of skills even when they may not be 100%.
No opt out	A shrug of the shoulders. A refusal to answer. Signs that students are lacking in motivation. We must not allow this culture to permeate our classrooms. There is a strict 'no opt out' rule.
Educated guess	To ensure students do not 'opt out' we will encourage the educated guess. A full sentence answer which uses common sense to form an educated guess demonstrates motivation and a 'have-a-go' attitude.

This glossary of terms forms the basis of our 'shared message'. It is this message that will ensure that the 'Culture & Ethos' of Wallington County Grammar School is one which unites every member of staff and every student in one vision. It does not need to be used as a shared language as this would erode the individual character of any member of staff or student. It does though need to inform the way that we and others model our behaviour for each other.

'Together we aspire, together we achieve'

National Motto of Trinidad and Tobago

Adopted by Full Governing Body on 10th November 2010