



FOREST HILL SCHOOL

POLICY FOR DIFFERENTIATIO N

September 2014

*Review: two year cycle, or as
required if a situation occurs which
necessitates amendment*

Differentiation: Teachers Make the Difference

Introduction

At Forest Hill School we believe that differentiation is an integral part of high quality, effective teaching. It is a way of **thinking** about teaching and learning and should not be regarded as merely a set of strategies. At Forest Hill we believe that a successfully differentiated classroom needs to be based on the following key principles:

1. **Engaging tasks**
2. **High quality curriculum**
3. **Student potential**
4. **On-going formative assessment**
5. **Flexible learning environment**

1. Engaging tasks

All students are given work that allows access to key skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject area. All students expect a range of work and are expected to exhibit higher order thinking skills.

2. High quality curriculum

We believe that all students have access to the highest quality curriculum. There needs to be absolute clarity about the key understanding, skill and knowledge that we expect our curriculum to deliver. At FHS we develop a culture of excellence for all.

3. Student potential

All staff constantly affirms an ethos that recognises effort and that it inspires students to strive for their very best. We recognise that both cognitive and emotional intelligence is not fixed but changes and can improve. Central to effective differentiation is the recognition of our learners as individuals with a wide variety of needs. We have a duty to connect with these individuals and strive to develop our teaching to accommodate differences. Students display a wide range of needs that go beyond the academic.

4. On-going formative assessment

It is essential to develop our knowledge of student performance, effort and achievement through a wide range of formative assessment strategies. This day to day working knowledge of our student's progress towards the key learning goals should in turn inform our teaching and differentiation strategies. Assessment is used to improve students' performance not only audit it.

5. Flexible learning environment

Students need a positive learning environment. As teachers we change our groupings to reflect our understanding of the students' different needs in different topics. Not all grouping should be by ability. Teachers explore a range of group sizes and experiment with the rationale behind the groupings.

Effective differentiation is an extremely powerful way to maximise progress and attainment and enjoyment for all students throughout the school. It is an integral element of teaching and learning and it is therefore essential that we employ strategies and procedures to ensure consistency of differentiation across the school.

In order to motivate individual students to learn, there needs to be a clear understanding of the student's ability, aptitude, skills, knowledge and learning style(s). We aim to include experiences to engage all learners. There must be equal access to a quality curriculum which challenges and supports students to reach and achieve their potential. The curriculum must be fully inclusive and engaging, raise aspirations, and recognise students as learners with different needs. A curriculum that is fit for purpose and inspiring will build on past achievements and present challenges. Differentiation plays a key role in allowing students to access the curriculum and remove barriers to participation.

Models of Effective Differentiation

<i>Content</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Product</i>	
Skills and Knowledge	Activities / Method of teaching	Evidence of Learning	
<i>Task</i>	<i>Resource</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Setting appropriate tasks for students of different abilities	Providing tailor-made resources to enable students to access learning	The students study the same materials, do the same activities, but receive different amounts of support from the teacher, TA, other pupils or from extra printed information	Setting up open-ended tasks allowing pupil response at different levels

At Forest Hill School we aim to use a range of different strategies of differentiation.

Strategy of Differentiation	Description
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Content	The content should address the same concepts with all students but be adjusted by degree of complexity for the diversity of learners in the classroom
Group Work	The pupils work in mixed ability groups. Pupils help each other by working together and interpreting the tasks at different levels
Gradation	The pupils are given the same information and activities. The activities become progressively more difficult. The pupils work through the activities at different rates and therefore only the more able do the more difficult tasks
Negotiation	The pupils study different materials within the same topic area and also do different activities. Teachers help pupils to select appropriate materials
Questioning	The pupils are set open-ended questions that can be interpreted at different levels
Role	The pupils carry out different activities depending on the role they are playing. The roles are matched to the abilities, aptitudes and needs of the pupil

This policy addresses the roles and responsibilities of teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders and **should act as guidance and a support material** for individuals responsible for developing curriculum areas.

Teachers

To achieve effective differentiation teachers should consider:

- Baseline data, FSM, SEN, target, assessment and evaluation of individual students
- The role that formative assessment plays in highlighting areas for improvement
- The use of differentiated learning outcomes (must do, could do, should do)
- A variety of differentiated resources
- A combination of whole group, small group, and individual activities
- Setting of clear targets for students to enable effective differentiation
- Effective seating plans to facilitate support for students
- Different student approaches to learning (learning styles)
- The planning process to support individual progress and identify resource needs
- Assessment of progress to enable reflective differentiation
- Identifying and addressing specific needs and gaps in learning
- How effective and regular recording and monitoring will support students
- Appropriately differentiated homework
- Varying levels of support (TA, Librarian, Learning Mentor)

Middle Leaders

To achieve effective differentiation middle leaders should:

- Lead on and monitor the use of data to inform planning within the department
- Develop a full understanding of differentiation within their team
- Support team members on all aspects of differentiation

- Provide team members with resources and ideas on how to differentiate effectively in their subject
- Ensure there is evidence within schemes of work of effective differentiation
- Provide opportunities for staff to observe colleagues who are ensuring effective differentiation in their practice
- Carry out regular monitoring in addition to lesson observation to ensure that students are experiencing differentiation consistently in lessons
- Lead on developing effective differentiation within their curriculum areas

Senior Leadership Team

To achieve effective whole-school differentiation senior leaders should:

- Identify key areas of development within teaching and learning and this should be reflected in the SIP
- Support Middle Leaders in developing effective differentiation within their curriculum areas
- Provide support materials and disseminate good practice around differentiation
- Provide the necessary support and training opportunities to enable staff to enhance their expertise with differentiation
- Use lesson observation evidence to monitor the use of differentiation throughout the school
- Use student voice to gauge impact of differentiation on learning

As a result of this policy we could expect outcomes such as:

- An increase in attainment for **all** student groups
- Teachers' planning and records focused on the needs of individuals and groups within the class
- More co-operative learning taking place
- Students working independently and displaying autonomy
- Students working in a variety of ways, and when appropriate working on a variety of tasks
- Students being actively engaged, well-motivated and on task
- Students feeling confident in selecting the level of their work (when appropriate)
- Teachers (and other adults within the class) adopting a variety of roles to promote learning
- A range of appropriate resources well suited to the differing levels of ability within the class