CASTLE MEAD ACADEMY

Growing a Community of Excellence

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

TMET
The Mead Educational Trust

Policy Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the academy. The policy along with other academy policies will be available on the academy website.

We are aware of the need to review this policy regularly so that we can take account of new initiatives, changes in the curriculum, developments in technology or changes to the physical environment of the school.

The Principal and Local Governing Body will review the policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness.

Version:	6.0
Date created:	March 2019
Author:	CFR/AHA
Ratified by:	C.French
Date ratified:	October 2026
Review date:	October 2027

Revision History:

Version:	Date:	Author:	Summary of Changes:
2.0	15.09.22	Chloe French	Minor updates to wording to encompass T+L at CMA
3.0	18.09.23	Chloe French	Streamlined key principles for learning Added section on oracy
4.0	31.10.24	Adna Harris	Minor updates to wording Removed section on oracy
5.0	30.09.2025	Adna Harris	No change
6.0	12.10.2026	Adna Harris	No change

Ethos:

At Castle Mead Academy we equip our scholars (and staff) to be lifelong learners, as part of a global community. We strive for scholars to get lost in the flow of their learning, as they master new skills and learn rich knowledge. Our focus on powerful knowledge means that every single lesson at Castle Mead helps us to realise our vision of giving our scholars access to the very best that has been thought and said. We believe that appropriate teaching and learning experiences help scholars to lead happy and rewarding lives in the future.

Rationale:

At Castle Mead Academy, we build a partnership between parents/carers, scholars and teachers that puts learning first. Our teachers are passionate about learning and are experts in their subjects. It is the method through which we deliver our curriculum and its implementation is the responsibility of all the members of our academy community.

The aim of learning is to generate a persistent change in knowledge (Kirschner et al., 2006). Thinking is the process that leads to such a change, a process governed by our working memory. We attend to information in our environment (or in our minds) and in attempting to make sense of it, we alter the very fabric of our memory (Cowan, 2010).

Teaching and Learning is central to life at Castle Mead Academy. The quality of teaching has the greatest impact on our scholars' learning and the standards that they attain. This is therefore, a key policy for our school. We acknowledge the importance of ongoing research into how people think and learn in what we do and value the strengths of individual scholars, teachers and support staff. As such our teaching is adjusted and flexible so as to respond to the developing needs of learners in the classroom, by varying instruction accordingly.

The more we know, the better we can think, and the better we think, the more we can know.

Our teaching is driven by our values. The protocols, routines and development of good learning habits are embedded across our academy and this policy assumes that all teachers will remain consistent in the way they are applied in the classroom. This is an important part of the teaching and sets the tone for the learning that follows. Expert lesson delivery, underpinned by the Castle Mead 'Invigorating Instruction' (outlined below), framework, will be shaped by teachers' subject expertise and deep knowledge of the curriculum narrative.

Teachers should make full use of our rewards system to ensure that scholars who consistently display excellent learning habits are recognised. It is expected that all lessons at Castle Mead Academy will consistently follow our routines and lesson protocols.

At Castle Mead we aim for all of our teaching to be highly effective all of the time. We aim the Professional Learning for all staff at achieving this.

Our Aims:

- To establish a strong culture of learning through an agreed set of practices and a shared language
- To develop teacher autonomy through providing a framework upon which lessons are planned in order to
- maximise scholar progress
- To develop a strong shared understanding of what constitutes great teaching and learning so that practice can
- be celebrated and developed, and where practice falls short, intervention is implemented to challenge and
- improve performance

- To ensure a common high quality of experience for all scholars to help maximise everyone's potential
- To help spread and share all great teaching and learning practice, making effective use of published research
- and literature

Key Principles:

At Castle Mead Academy we rely on research to show us the key principles of learning:

- What we know determines what we can learn
- We learn what we think about
- We can only think about a few things at once
- Thinking is invisible so must be exposed
- Fluency arises though consolidation, over time
- The only thing that matters with feedback is what students do with it

Teachers:

We believe our scholars learn best when:

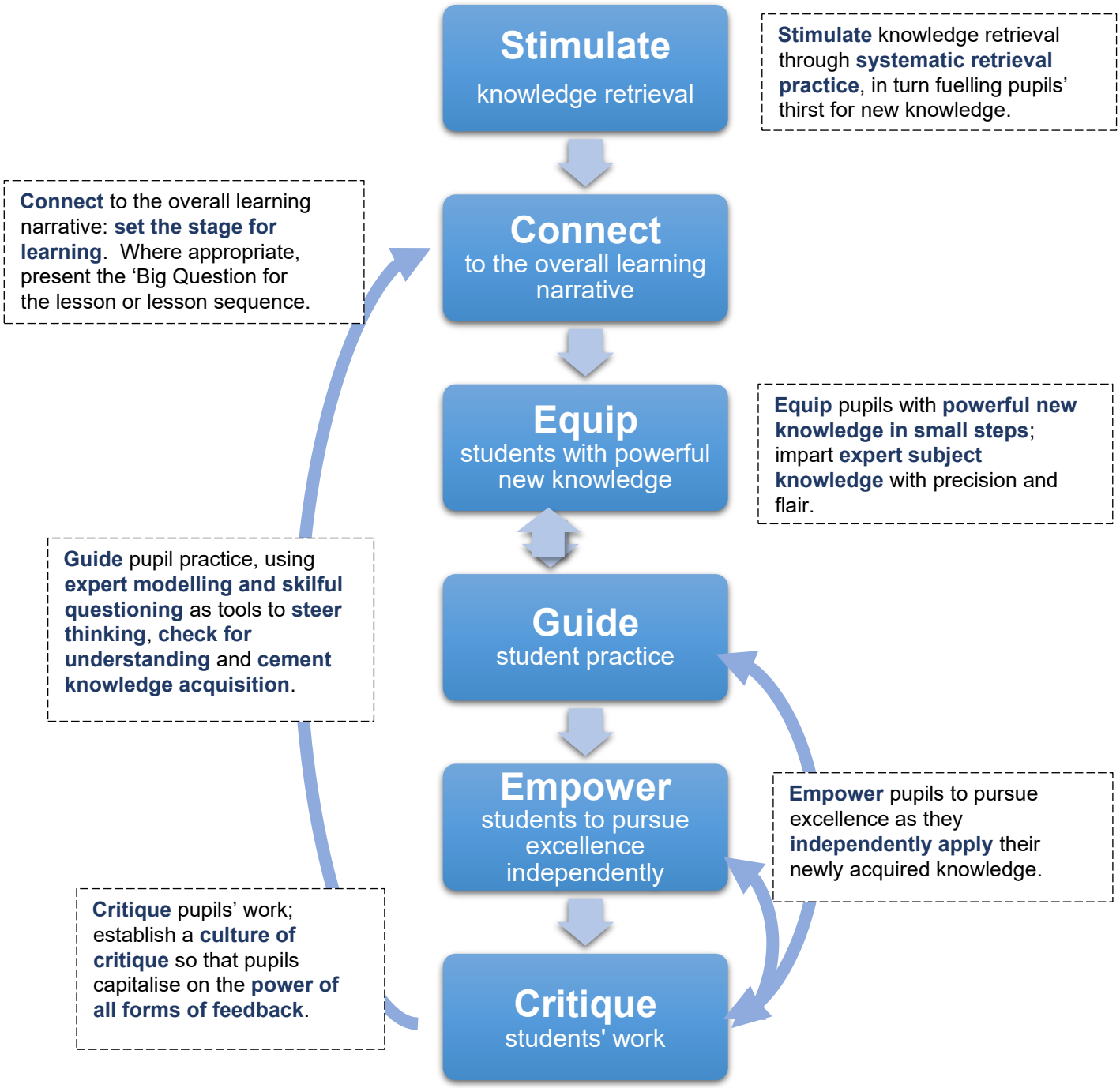
- Teachers begin lessons begin with a short review of previous learning, as daily review can strengthen previous
- learning and can lead to fluent retrieval. Retrieval content is judiciously selected so as to activate prior
- knowledge linked to new learning to be introduced, thereby strengthening scholars' 'cognitive architecture'
- Teachers carefully narrate links and connections when presenting scholars with a 'Big Question', so as to
- encode a sense of purpose and link to the overall learning narrative
- Teachers present new material in small steps with scholar practice after each step. Teachers should only
- present small amounts of new material at any time, so as not to overload working memory, and then assist
- scholars as they practise this material. Instructions and explanations given should be detailed when teaching
- new content
- Teachers ask a large number of questions and check the responses of all scholars, as questions help scholars
- practise using their newly acquired knowledge, connect new material to their prior learning and deepen their
- understanding. Teachers use 'cold call' as the default mode of questioning to maximise participation ratio
- Teachers think aloud- narrating their thought process- and provide models to support scholars in pursuing
- excellence independently
- Teachers check for understanding by asking scholars to explain what they have learned, as checking for scholar
- understanding at each point can help scholars learn the material with fewer errors. In this way, teachers
- relentlessly monitor understanding and enact responsive teaching
- Teachers provide regular opportunities for discussion, as appropriate, so that scholars can formulate their
- thinking and expand their ideas. As part of this, scholars are encouraged to 'Speak like a scholar', meaning
- they make clear, fluent and professional contributions and draw on their ever-expanding vocabularies
- Teachers in all subjects explicitly teach vocabulary appropriate to their discipline
- Systematic formative feedback and corrections are provided, so as scholars know next steps in their learning
- Teachers ensure scholars obtain a high success rate during classroom instruction, pausing to reteach and
- reexplain as required
- Teachers plan consciously with managing cognitive load in mind and orient attention towards essential
- content, as scholars do not learn effectively when their attention is directed to inessential information
- Teachers provide scholars with temporary supports and scaffolds to assist them when they learn difficult tasks
- Teachers guide scholar practice, as successful teachers spend more time guiding scholars' practice of new

- material. They then set and monitor independent practice, as scholars need extensive, successful,
- independent practice in order for skills and knowledge to become fluent automatic
- Teachers honour their subject, ooze passion and enthusiasm and teach with joy
- Teaching and Learning Policy, Castle Mead Academy

Based on the above principles pertaining to learning and teaching, we have developed the Castle Mead 'Invigorating Instruction' framework, composed of six elements. This is not a lesson-by-lesson checklist, and these elements may be implemented over a series of lessons, as appropriate. Expert lesson delivery, underpinned by this framework, will be shaped by teachers' subject expertise and deep knowledge of the curriculum narrative. It is important to note, however, that every lesson should begin with retrieval practice and teachers must always articulate a clear sense of purpose.

Invigorating Instruction

Lessons characterised by rigour, depth, drive and clarity of purpose



Learning Environment:

Filtering through information incurs a cost on our limited mental resources and performance (Willingham, 2017). Therefore, it is important where possible, to eliminate redundant information and distractions in the environment. These include social distractions (e.g. peers or other adults), environmental distractions (e.g. display boards or clocks), activity distractions (e.g. irrelevant images or tasks), or internal distractions (e.g. performance anxiety, mind wandering).

Learning will take place in a stimulating learning environment that:

- Promotes hard thinking and full participation, whether working independently or engaged in discussion
- Is calm and has no distractions
- Is welcoming, happy and caring, as well as being both challenging and supportive
- Celebrates success and supports scholars to realise their full potential
- Encourages mutual respect
- Is well organised, safe, tidy with well-presented displays
- Has curriculum resources that are well-designed and accessible
- Has an agreed code of expectations, with rigorous routines.

Celebrating Achievement:

Is a part of each lesson, and seen through:

- Opportunities for all scholars to participate fully and share ideas and opinions, promoting development of
- self-esteem and building belonging
- Precise praise
- Merits

Homework:

The majority of homework focuses on retrieval practice. Scholars may be asked to self-quiz in preparation for lesson quizzes/tests, respond to multiple-choice questions, or complete problems or questions to consolidate material learned previously. Consequences for poor or incomplete homework are detailed in the Behaviour Policy.

Responsibilities:

Teaching staff:

- Ensure scholars work in a calm and purposeful environment where expectations are high, enacting our key
- routines (threshold, STAR, raised hand, exit routine)
- 'Plan to the detail' to ensure that lesson substance and action have been carefully considered
- Ensure there is a clear focus given through a 'big question', which sets the stage for learning
- Ensure scholars are presented with opportunities to be inquisitive and master knowledge
- Question scholars using 'cold-calling' as the default method, to ensure all scholars participate fully
- Allow scholars to read aloud in lessons, using 'Control the Game' strategy, as part of our 'no opt out' culture
- Provide opportunities for scholars to produce extended writing in many lessons, as appropriate
- Model live, provide worked examples and exemplar to show scholars what excellence looks like
- Relentlessly monitor understanding through Active Observation, questions to check for understanding and other formative assessment tools as outlined in the Academy's Feedback and Assessment Policy
- Provide powerful feedback to scholars, in line with the Academy's Feedback and Assessment Policy
- Teach scholars to practise retrieving knowledge from memory
- Continue to widen their subject knowledge and developments in education

- Communicate with parents and keep them informed of scholars' progress

Scholars:

We believe a good learner is someone who:

- Shares ideas, tries their best and doesn't give up if it's hard
- Is cognitively active, participates fully and focuses 100% on learning
- Respects other scholars and all staff, and is considerate and thoughtful
- Respects the school environment and equipment
- Shows active listening and allows other people to talk and share their ideas
- Is positive and eager to make use of all opportunities
- Knows their next steps and how to improve in their work
- Is punctual and organised with appropriate equipment
- Has pride in their work, their class and Castle Mead Academy
- Takes responsibility for their learning

Families:

We believe that families have the responsibility to support their scholars and the academy in implementing academy policies. We would like families to:

- Ensure their pupils have the best attendance record possible and are punctual everyday
- Have a positive attitude towards school and learning, supporting the ethos and working with the academy
- Share responsibility for their scholars' learning, be realistic and support the academy's expectations with regard to behaviour and attitude
- Attend Progress Evenings and other such events
- Support the scholars in terms of homework
- Encourage independence in their scholars
- Communicate with staff any concerns about their scholars and if there are matters outside of school that are likely to affect a scholar's learning or behaviour at school
- Respect other members of the school community
- Make sure that their scholar is equipped for school with the correct uniform and P.E. kit
- Support the school's expectations regarding behaviour and attitude

Monitoring and evaluation:

The aims and objectives outlined in this policy are evident in the day to day working of the academy. This will be monitored through:

- Lesson visits
- The progress of the School Improvement Plan
- External inspection
- Culture of Critique quality assurance activities
- Progress data
- Teaching and Learning Policy, Castle Mead Academy
- Communication with scholars, parents and the rest of the school community