



Teaching & Learning Policy

Updating Policy Procedure

When a policy is due for review it will be emailed to the reviewer who will revise and highlight those updates and return the policy in full with the highlighted updates back to the Administrator.

When a policy reviewer becomes aware of **any updates** they will ask the Administrator to email the policy to them and follow the above procedure.

A policy is a statement of intent and the guidelines we follow, that is adopted by the Fortuna and Athena Federation's Governing Body.

Policy Reviewed by: Rosemary Brown

Updated on: April 2023

Date to be reviewed: April 2025



FORTUNA ATHENA

F E D E R A T I O N



Signed Date
(Executive Head of Fortuna & Athena Federation)

Signed Date
(Head of Athena School)

Signed Date
(Chair of Governors)



Our Pedagogy

At Athena School, pedagogy refers to **how we teach**. We recognise the significant importance of understanding the relationship between learning techniques and culture. As a school, we have taken the steps to ensure that we practice strategies linked to learning theories which promote the effectiveness of our teaching and the learning that our pupils experience.

What is our purpose?

The purpose of our policy is to ensure pupils' learning is developed continuously and progressively to a high standard. This is carried out in a nurturing environment, which is safe, warm, loving and unconditionally accepting of all individual pupils and their needs as outlined in the Athena/Fortuna Federation Mission Statement. Within this policy we intend to set the context for all other curriculum policies and in doing so provide a clear statement of the practice which will help us achieve our whole school aims. It will also enable teachers to reflect on their practice in an informed way making it is an essential tool for informing governors and parents about the ethos of the teaching and learning at Athena School.

The theories behind our practice...

- Cognitive Load Theory

'Cognitive load' is the amount of information our working memory can hold at any given time. The working memory is where we process information and is key to learning.

Three types of working memory

To support pupils to learn more effectively we want to reduce demand on pupils' working memory. There are three types of working memory:

1. Intrinsic load: this means how complex a task is. If a task or problem is really complex, then it can take over most of our working memory. If a task is simple, it uses less working memory.
2. Extraneous load: these are the instructions you are given or how questions are written. Incomplete instructions take up space in working memory and don't help you learn.
3. Germane load: this is the amount of work you put in to create a permanent store of knowledge.



Teachers can support pupils by reducing intrinsic load, reducing extraneous load and enhancing germane load.

How we at Athena support our pupils and promote their cognitive load:

Reducing Intrinsic and Extraneous Load	Enhancing Germane Load
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.Reduce the number of steps in instructions that are given at any one time.2. Refrain from giving multiple instructions verbally and/or at once.3. Break down more complex challenges to prevent overwhelm.4. Reduce the number of learning objectives or number of outcomes in one given lesson.5. Refrain from giving children outcomes that are unachievable due to gaps in their learning.6. Provide as little visible wording as possible on screens and worksheets.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.Break down tasks into manageable chunks2. Have written instructions visible on paper or on PowerPoint lesson slide3. Appropriately challenge pupils4. Learners are aware of what they are expected to learn through learning objectives and success criteria.5. Excluding the new task, ensure the requirements for the task has been retrieved in prior learning to ensure new learning is held in the working memory.6. Ensure worksheets and slides are clear and to the point, by keeping distracting images/texts to a minimum.

This is not an exhaustive list



- [A Constructivism Pedagogy](#)

Constructivism is a theory that people learn through experiences and reflection. A Constructivist pedagogy puts the child at the centre of the learning, and is sometimes called ‘invisible pedagogy’. A constructivist approach would incorporate project work, inquiry based learning, and might adopt a Montessori or Steiner method.

Constructivism is based on the pedagogical research of **Piaget (1896-1890)**. Piaget wrote extensively about ‘schemas’, an idea that learners come ready to learn, and the teacher must build activities to facilitate their learning. Younger children work through things physically, whereas older children tackle symbolic and abstract ideas.

A lesson might include individualisation, a slower pace, hidden outcomes, the mantle of the expert, and less teacher talk. Some adopters of this pedagogy would also place emphasis on being outdoors and engaging with nature.

How we at Athena support our pupils with this theory:

1. Use of Understand, Plan, Solve, Reflect (UPSR) in problem solving tasks.
2. Praise and support the interest of pupil’s questions and interests in tasks.
3. Tasks are based on building on prior knowledge.
4. Assessing prior knowledge through summative and formative assessment opportunities.
5. Opportunities for student led group/paired work, based on cooperation and teamwork.
6. Embedding Real, Engaging, Authentic, Learning (REAL), through project-based learning.
7. Encouraging a variety of modes for representation e.g., film, audio text, speakers, physical aids
8. Offer trips linked to the curriculum and life experience
9. Offer cultural capital opportunities (see cultural capital spreadsheet)

This is not an exhaustive list

- [A Social Constructivism Pedagogy](#)

A Social constructivism pedagogy is considered to be a blend of two priorities: teacher guided, and student centred. Cognitive psychologist, **Lev Vygotsky** developed social constructivism, building on the work of Piaget.

The teacher uses group work elements, but with smaller group sizes, and limit the choice in topics. The teacher may also use teacher modelling, questioning, and a mixture of individual, pair, and whole class instruction.



For children with SEMH needs, our main priority is to focus on – the motivation, the communication and interaction with other people, the skill of the teacher, for example. Responsive teaching strategies based on this approach typically focus on different aspects of teacher-pupil interaction, classroom dialogue, ‘real’ problem solving and practical classroom activities, pupil choice, and reflection on learning (Watson, 2001). Some social constructivist approaches explicitly hand over some of the teaching responsibilities to pupils via a process of modelling and guided practice (e.g. reciprocal teaching for developing reading comprehension in children at all levels of reading development (Rosenshine and Meister, 1994)

How we at Athena support our pupils with this theory:

1. Teachers question students’ answers, without regard to whether they are right or wrong, to make sure the student has a good grasp of the concept.
2. Learners are challenged to perform open-ended investigations, working to solve problems with realistic and meaningful contexts.
3. Pupils are active in their learning and take part in student led activities and projects
4. Adults scaffold tasks to learners, maintaining pupil interest and giving support where needed to increase their knowledge and reasoning.
5. Providing field trips and outings to promote active social learning.
6. Pupils are given tasks where they can use their experimentation and exploration skills e.g., science week, natural environment.

This is not an exhaustive list

- **Bloom’s Taxonomy Theory and Metacognition**

Bloom’s Taxonomy, (Benjamin Bloom, 1956), can be defined as an educational framework, a set of hierarchical models, or a tool for classifying learning objectives into different levels of complexity and specificity. The levels cover learning objectives in three domains – cognitive, affective, and sensory domain – out of which the first is most used in traditional education for structuring curriculums, assessments, and other evaluation strategies.

The way we support pupils’ metacognition refers to their ability to plan, monitor, evaluate, and make changes to their own learning behaviours in order to confront challenges more effectively. This can be defined as ‘thinking deeply about how one learns best’, but the elements of active monitoring and modifying of thought processes make it much more than this. It is also a form of self-regulation, involving self-awareness, critical analysis skills, and the ability to problem-solve.



Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning Infographic from the Education Endowment Foundation:

1

Teachers should acquire the professional understanding and skills to develop their pupils' metacognitive knowledge

- Self-regulated learners are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and can motivate themselves to engage in, and improve, their learning.
- Developing pupils' metacognitive knowledge of how they learn—their knowledge of **themselves as a learner**, of strategies, and of **tasks**—is an effective way of improving pupil outcomes.
- Teachers should support pupils to **plan, monitor, and evaluate** their learning.

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2

Explicitly teach pupils metacognitive strategies, including how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning knowledge

- Explicit instruction in cognitive and metacognitive strategies can improve pupils' learning.
- While concepts like 'plan, monitor, evaluate' can be introduced generically, the strategies are mostly applied in relation to specific content and tasks, and are therefore best taught this way.
- A series of steps—beginning with **activating prior knowledge** and leading to **independent practice** before ending in **structured reflection**—can be applied to different subjects, ages and contents.

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3

Model your own thinking to help pupils develop their metacognitive and cognitive skills

- Modelling by the teacher is a cornerstone of effective teaching: revealing the thought processes of an expert learner helps to develop pupils' metacognitive skills.
- Teachers should verbalise their metacognitive thinking ('What do I know about problems like this? What ways of solving them have I used before?') as they approach and work through a task.
- Scaffolded tasks, like worked examples, allow pupils to develop their metacognitive and cognitive skills without placing too many demands on their mental resources.

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4

Set an appropriate level of challenge to develop pupils' self-regulation and metacognition



- Challenge is crucial to allow pupils to develop and progress their knowledge of tasks, strategies, and of themselves as learners.
- However, challenge needs to be at an appropriate level.
- Pupils must have the motivation to accept the challenge.
- Tasks should not overload pupils' cognitive processes, particularly when they are expected to apply new strategies.

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5

Promote and develop metacognitive talk in the classroom



- As well as explicit instruction and modelling, classroom dialogue can be used to develop metacognitive skills.
- Pupil-to-pupil and pupil-teacher talk can help to build knowledge and understanding of cognitive and metacognitive strategies.
- However, dialogue needs to be purposeful, with teachers guiding and supporting the conversation to ensure it is challenging and builds on prior subject knowledge.

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6

Explicitly teach pupils how to organise and effectively manage their learning independently



- Teachers should explicitly support pupils to develop independent learning skills.
- Carefully designed **guided practice**, with support gradually withdrawn as the pupil becomes proficient, can allow pupils to develop skills and strategies before applying them in **independent practice**.
- Pupils will need timely, effective feedback and strategies to be able to judge accurately how effectively they are learning.
- Teachers should also support pupils' motivation to undertake the learning tasks.

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7

Schools should support teachers to develop knowledge of these approaches and expect them to be applied appropriately



- Develop teachers' knowledge and understanding through high quality professional development and resources.
- Senior leaders should provide teachers with time and support to make sure approaches are implemented consistently.
- Teachers can use tools such as 'traces' and observation to assess pupils' use of self-regulated learning skills.
- Metacognition shouldn't be an 'extra' task for teachers to do but should be built into their teaching activities.

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How we at Athena support our pupils with this theory:

1. Teachers should acquire the professional understanding and skills to develop their pupils' metacognitive knowledge.

- CPD opportunities to update knowledge and skills.
- Subject Leaders in place
- Planning using strategies that works best for the teacher as well as pupils.
- Employing different learning styles to cater for all.
- Terminology is displayed in classrooms.

2. Explicitly teach pupils metacognitive strategies, including how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning.

- RUBRICs
- Understand, Plan, Solve, Reflect (UPSR)
- KWL grids (what we already know (K), what we want to know (W), what we have learnt(L))
- Children have access to a wide variety of materials e.g., numicon, base10, dictionaries, displays.
- Following PEEL format in writing
- Self-evaluation – Traffic light system, thumbs up/thumbs down.
- Kind and Helpful Peer Assessing.
- Verbal feedback.
- Critique.
- Gallery Walks.
- Knowledge organisers
- Student questionnaires

3. Model your own thinking to help pupils develop their metacognitive and cognitive skills.

- Shared writing opportunities
- Showing a final, completed product.
- Step by step modelling
- Text analysis- breaking down tasks into manageable chunks

4. Set an appropriate level of challenge to develop pupils' self-regulation and metacognition.



- Verbal feedback during lesson to know how the pupil is accessing task.
- Pupils have multiple adults and peers to communicate with where appropriate during tasks.
- Tasks adapted appropriately for children's abilities.
- Structured formatting support resources

5. Promote and develop metacognitive talk in the classroom.

- Teachers ask challenging questions.
- Verbal feedback
- Promoting dialogue
- Teachers to guide and probe thinking to the pupils about their upcoming learning e.g., what did you find tricky? What could go wrong during this task?
- Use of talking partners
- Debating tasks and scenarios
- Scaffolded questioning

6. Explicitly teach pupils how to organise, and effectively manage, their learning independently

- Pupils can make active choices on how they achieve the same outcome e.g. a strategy that works for them best
- REAL project outcomes that are student led
- Problem Solving Tasks using UPSR
- Use of knowledge organisers to re-visit key concepts.
- Pupils can restructure their physical and/or social context for compatibility e.g. sitting in a group, working with a peer, holding a sensory toy.
- Self-marking
- Modelling and using supportive resources to support independent learning.

7. Schools should support teachers to develop their knowledge of these approaches and expect them to be applied appropriately.

- Strategies displayed clearly in the classrooms.
- CPD opportunities
- Regular staff meetings
- Time for implementation to work and have an effect on pupils.

These are not exhaustive lists



To make teaching and learning the best it can be at Athena, we recognise that...

Our teachers teach best by...

- having deep and fluent knowledge and flexible understanding of the content they are teaching and how it is learnt, including its inherent dependencies. Our teachers have an explicit repertoire of well-crafted explanations, examples, and tasks for each topic they teach.
- considering questions like 'why' and 'what would happen if...?' for higher-order thinking.
- understanding that positive outcomes depend on the effective relationship between adults and pupils.
- recognising that they must have the understanding of each learner's individual emotional, developmental and attachment needs.
- understanding the connections among different parts of the curriculum which is why we recognise the needs for sequencing. This coincides with our understanding of pedagogical content knowledge. For example, if we want students to learn a specific topic, what knowledge and skills must they have already to enable this new learning? If a student is struggling with a particular idea or technique, what kinds of gaps in underpinning knowledge might be the explanation? For each new idea, what connections do learners need to make with previous knowledge? This is something we know our teachers need to consider before teaching begins.
- embedding subject leaders to readily be able to generate or select learning activities that are appropriate for the level of challenge required or that elicit diagnostic information about learners' thinking.
- Emphasise the importance of providing opportunities for developing skills – for social interaction and access to the child's local environment; – Emphasise the importance of providing opportunities for developing – skills that promote the child's independence.
- Giving students an appropriate sequence of learning tasks; signalling learning objectives, rationale, overview, key ideas, and stages of progress; matching tasks to learners' needs and readiness.
- Adapting, scaffolding, and supporting to make tasks accessible to all, but gradually removing them so that all students succeed at the required level.
- Presenting and communicating new ideas clearly, with concise, appropriate, engaging explanations; connecting new ideas to what has previously been learnt (and re-activating/checking prior knowledge).
- Modelling new skills or procedures with appropriate scaffolding and challenge.



- Using questions and dialogue to promote elaboration and connected, flexible thinking among learners (e.g., ‘Why?’, ‘Compare’, etc.).
- Responding appropriately to feedback from students about their thinking/knowledge/understanding.
- Giving students actionable feedback to guide their learning.
- Giving students tasks that embed and reinforce learning. requiring them to practise until learning is fluent and secure.
- Ensuring that once-learnt material is reviewed/revisited to retain and consolidate learning.
- Consistently reviewing and tailoring the curriculum to meet the needs of our pupils.

We treat students best and manage their behaviour by...

- Understanding that learning can only take place when a student’s needs are met.
- Recognising that all behaviour has meaning and therefore the planning for pupils must be carried out at a deeply personal level.
- Promoting interactions and relationships with all students.
- Showing mutual respect, care, empathy and warmth.
- being sensitive to the individual needs, emotions, culture and beliefs of students.
- Promoting a positive climate of student-student relationships.
- Promoting motivation through feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness.
- Creating a climate of high expectations, with high challenge and high trust, so learners feel it is okay to have a go.
- encouraging learners to attribute their success or failure to things they can change.
- Knowing our students well as individuals, are well informed about the nature and requirements of our students’ specific needs and have strategies to accommodate them.
- Showing respect and paying attention to each other’s thoughts, so students feel safe to express their own thoughts which are more productive for learning.
- Managing time and resources efficiently in the classroom to maximise productivity and minimise transition times.
- Giving clear instructions so students understand what they should be doing; using (and explicitly teaching) routines to make transitions smooth and manageable.
- Ensuring that boundaries, expectations, and consequences for behaviour are explicit, clear and consistently applied.



- Preventing, anticipating and responding to potentially disruptive incidents; reinforcing positive student behaviours; signalling awareness of what is happening in the classroom and responding appropriately.

Our children at Athena learn best...

- when students respect and pay attention to each other's thoughts, and feel safe to express their own thoughts, are more productive for learning
- when students are motivated to study, learn, engage, and succeed
- when there is a positive atmosphere throughout the school
- when they are happy and secure
- when they feel valued
- when they are motivated and stimulated
- through practical, first-hand experiences within our cultural capital plans.
- through an investigative and constructivist approach
- through creative and imaginative expression
- when the learning environment is stimulating, engaging, challenging, relevant and immersive
- when given opportunities for independent learning
- when given opportunities to work collaboratively
- when there are clear, achievable goals
- when given opportunities to practise and reinforce previously learned skills in appropriate situations
- when all children have equal opportunities
- when there is consistency in the teaching
- when teachers have high expectations
- when parents/carers are actively engaged in the learning

How does our curriculum promote high quality teaching and learning?

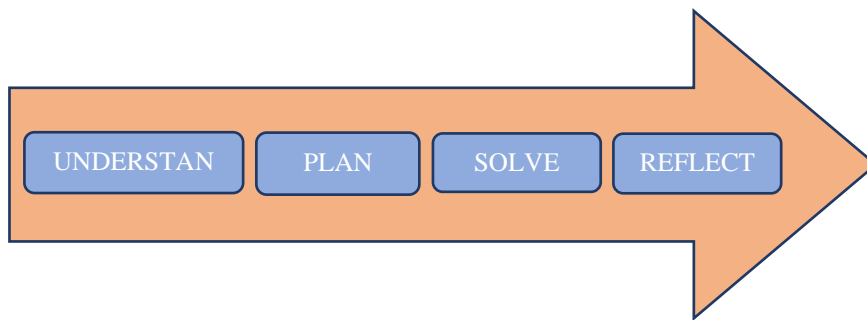
- At our school, we ensure that the strategies we use to support the teaching and learning of our pupils are clearly displayed in our classrooms. This allows for familiarity, continuity, and support for both teachers and learners. It will support our pupils' ability to become independent learners by having these strategies at face value, with the aim of students being taught and therefore being able to use metacognitive skills to find a strategy that supports them in the best way possible.

As Educators we have always known that children learn most when they are engaged, having fun and being **challenged by their learning**. The REAL project approach in KS3



allows children at Athena School to learn meaningfully while incorporating the 2014 National Curriculum requirements. In each of the KS3 year groups, the approach is the same.

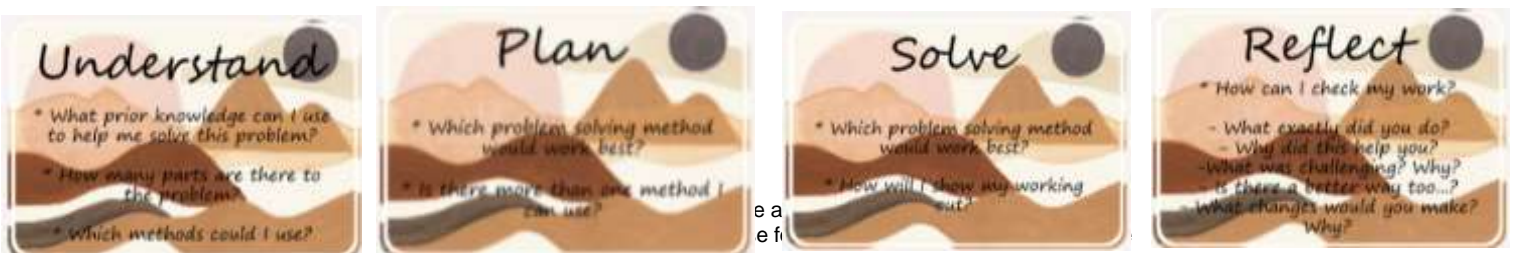
- WOW Lesson – This is the start of the project – something that the children will discover, find out, identifying what will capture the children’s imagination.
- Essential Question – Children will be presented with an open ended question they will need to solve throughout the term.
- Project Design – The teachers will design lessons which will engage the children and promote a high level of learning which is meaningful.
- Critique – Children will become critically engaged and be motivated in helping others improve their work and be motivated to critique and improve their own.
- End Product – This will serve a purpose. It may be as simple as an exhibition of high-quality pupil work, or it may be as extensive as to put on a fashion show or develop a new permanent area for the school.



We have worked hard on our ability to create opportunities for our learners to use problem solving across our curriculum. Our pupils, with SEMH needs, may find problem solving a challenge due to:

- Confidence
- Reading level
- Mathematical ability (Fluency)
- Comprehension
- Seeing things in different ways
- Our subject leaders decided that for our pupils to access problem solving tasks to a high standard, both our teachers and learners should follow a UPSR strategy.

UPSR stands for Understand, Plan, Solve and Reflect.





- This strategy allows our pupils to become reflective thinkers by understanding what they did, why they did it and why that is important. Our UPSR strategy can be used in all problem-solving activities and is clearly displayed in all of our classrooms to allow our learners to access this with support and independently.
- At Athena, we are proud of our curriculum and ensure it is consistently reviewed dependent upon any changes to the National Curriculum and the individual cohorts of children that run through our wonderful school each year. We strive for our students to be fully immersed and part of their learning, therefore being exposed to a quality and individualised curriculum during their time at Athena.
- We are proud of our cultural capital adaptations to the whole school curriculum in recent years. At Athena School, our curriculum is designed to instil high aspirations in all of our students, to encourage them to become resilient, life-long learners who embrace challenges and continue to grow and develop their cultural capital. Our students will be inspired and supported to follow whichever path they choose whilst being well-rounded, conscientious global citizens. Our understanding of SMSC and British Values enrich and underpin our curriculum to ensure our pupils are prepared and equipped to succeed in their futures in an ever-changing world.