Fairholme College Pedagogical Framework of Learning and Teaching

Our Vision and Values

Fairholme is a nurturing Christian school, committed to developing a vibrant learning community; one that challenges students to become confident and respectful contributors within our global society. Our values are based on five core principles namely:

- **Christ-centred faith**
- **Collaboration**
- **Enjoyment**
- **Respect**
- **Seeking excellence**

Our Academic Culture

At Fairholme College, our aim is both beautifully intricate and profoundly simple: that our students may develop into lifelong learners and thinkers.

Having the privilege of a vibrant and wonderfully unique mix of personality, learning styles, individual tastes and biological make-up amongst our students, we dedicate our energy and focus to these aspects in maximising each one's learning experience:

- Curriculum content: rich and stimulating, challenging yet achievable,
- Teaching staff and school officers: inspiring communicators, professional in all standards and each one possessing a fundamental desire to see our students excel,
- Delivery: articulate and intentional, supportive and explanatory, deliberately fun.

We celebrate both participation and excellence, individual achievement of the highest calibre and standard, and all that can be achieved through the joy and collaboration of teamwork. The academic reputation of the College goes from strength to strength with our students continuing to achieve outstanding results each year.

What is a Pedagogical Framework?

The pedagogical framework creates the structure around the philosophy of learning and teaching that underpins our teaching practice at Fairholme College. A set of guidelines enables teachers to evaluate and refine their practice. It is a consistent and commonly shared approach throughout the college and community. The pedagogical framework is designed to support teachers in the delivery of high quality learning and teaching based on best practice research and relate it to the most effective way that students learn.

Core Systemic Principles of our Pedagogical Framework

Research has consistently shown that different teaching approaches often result in substantial differences in both the ways students approach their learning and in the quality of that learning. In addition there is an increasing recognition of the importance of classrooms that can be characterised as 'learning communities'. In these classrooms, there is an emphasis on building rich meanings for ideas rather than completing tasks. Students in these classrooms are intellectually engaged, and they feel a sense of collaborative partnership with their peers and their teachers. Classrooms like these are extremely rewarding places to teach and learn.

At Fairholme College we have undertaken a significant exploration of learning and teaching methodologies with the aim of implementing a whole school approach to pedagogy. An approach that not only encourages a commonality to classroom instructional practice but one that also encourages the establishment of learning communities in the classrooms of the College. This philosophy of learning and teaching forms the structure of our pedagogical framework which is underpinned by the six Principles of Learning and Teaching (POLT) namely:

1. **The learning environment is supportive and productive.**
2. **The learning environment promotes independence, interdependence and self-motivation.**
3. **Students' needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests are reflected in the learning program.**
4. **Students are challenged and supported to develop deep levels of thinking and application.**
5. **Assessment practices are an integral part of learning and teaching.**
6. **Learning connects strongly with communities and practice beyond the classroom.**

A key component of the six principles is flexibility, which necessitates collaboration from teachers in their adaptation and implementation within the College environment. POLT serves as the framework for further discussions about the pedagogical practice at Fairholme College and drives future growth in pedagogical excellence.

The pedagogical framework aligns with the core systemic principles*:

1. **Safe, supportive, connected and inclusive learning environment** – Fairholme teachers build positive relationships with and values each student. Through teacher modelling and classroom strategies based on cooperation and mutual support, an environment is created where students feel comfortable to pursue inquiries and express themselves. They take responsibility for their learning (agility and agency) and are prepared to pursue and try out new ideas. (POLT Principle 1)

    Examples include:
    - Targeting questions, or responding to answers, in a way that acknowledges individual needs and potential contributions
    - Finding out about the interests and background of each student.
    - Focusing attention, when circulating, on students who have particular needs.
    - Encouraging all students to contribute.
    - Responding positively and non-judgmentally to student contributions.
    - Providing support for students through mentoring and pastoral roles and organisation of extra activities, such that relationships are built around multiple aspects of students' lives.

2. **Student-centred planning** – Fairholme teachers model practices that build independence and motivate students to work in an autonomous manner. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning (agility and agency). Our teachers use strategies (such as cooperative learning) to establish an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration. (POLT Principle 2)

   Examples include:

   - Providing opportunities for our students to make individual and collaborative decisions about how they will undertake learning tasks
   - Encouraging our students to set goals for their learning, to self-monitor their progress and, provide evidence to the teacher when they believe they have achieved their goals.
   - Establishing (perhaps in consultation with students) clear criteria or rubrics for assessment before "a piece of work" is begun.
   - Establishing what our students know already and providing the opportunity for students to build on prior knowledge in manageable steps.

3. **Evidence-based decision making** – Fairholme teachers utilise a range of teaching strategies that support different ways of thinking and learning. Teaching strategies are flexible and responsive to the values, needs and interests of individual students. Significantly, we build on our student's prior experiences, knowledge and skills and capitalise on their experience of a technology rich world. (POLT Principle 3)

   Examples include:

   - Varying the structure and delivery mode across a range of teaching sessions.
   - Providing for a range of learning styles or modalities within teaching sessions and from one teaching session to another in terms of both teacher input and student learning experiences.
   - Helping students to understand their own specific learning needs and providing choice to cater for the range of those needs.
   - Setting a variety of types of tasks during each unit and using a range of resources.
   - Ensuring each task has an open-ended aspect that allows students to work at different levels and paces.
   - Arranging for time in each teaching session to give individual support to students in need of particular attention.

4. **Targeted and scaffolded instruction** – Fairholme teachers challenge our students to explore, question and engage with significant ideas and practices so that they move beyond superficial understandings to develop higher order, flexible thinking. (POLT Principle 4)

   Examples include:

   - Identifying a series of generic skills and processes (such as problem solving, creative thinking skills, metacognition, etc.) that can become areas of focus across the curriculum.
   - Allowing activities to continue, where possible, while students are productively engaged.
   - Providing stimulus materials that challenge students' ideas and encourage discussion, speculation and ongoing exploration.
   - Encouraging students to raise questions or speculate or make suggestions.
   - Asking a high proportion of open-ended questions.

5. **Alignment of curriculum pedagogy and assessment** – Fairholme teachers design assessment tasks that require our students to demonstrate knowledge and skills at many levels including lower order processes such as basic comprehension and higher order processes such as synthesis and evaluation. It involves the assessment of a variety of forms of knowledge and practice such as reasoning skills, values and orientations. (POLT Principle 5)

   Examples include:

   - Using a variety of methods to assess student understandings at various points in a unit, including open ended questioning, checklists, project work, problems, practical reports, role plays
   - Assessing a range of types of understanding and practice, including knowledge of processes, conceptual ideas, the way the learning is used and practiced and different aspects of practice such as fluency, accuracy and capacity to innovate
   - Ensuring assessment incorporates a range of levels of thinking (comprehension, analysis)
   - Monitoring student perceptions and attitudes as well as knowledge and skills
   - Using a variety of reporting modes for assessment, including project reports using posters, multimedia, or student presentations, end of unit tests, reports of investigations and responses to set problems.

6. **High Expectations** – Fairholme teachers clearly signal an expectation that all students will achieve at a high level and put in an effort to produce quality work. This also involves teachers expressing and demonstrating confidence that students are capable of significant achievement. There is structured support to help students learn effectively so that this expectation does not occur in a vacuum. (POLT Principle 4)

   Examples include:

   - Using language that implies an expectation and a confidence that students will work effectively and achieve at a high level
   - Praising efforts towards the production of quality work, and its achievement
   - Providing support for students having difficulty on the basis that their work needs to improve to meet expectations
   - Signaling clearly the standard to be achieved
   - Not accepting work that is just 'good enough' and encouraging students to produce work at the standard they are capable of.

(*Based on DETE Pedagogical Framework 2013)