



**POLICY: LEARNING AND TEACHING**

(1 April 2019)

**Introduction**

1. The College is a centre of educational excellence in the schooling of boys and girls through institutions which work in synergy on a single campus. St Stithians College comprises of a co-educational junior primary school, primary and secondary boys' and girls' schools, together with Kamoka Bush School near Modimolle and the Thandulwazi Maths & Science Academy.
2. This policy outlines the overarching educational philosophy and practices of teaching and learning embraced by all schools under the St Stithians College banner.
3. Addenda to this Learning and Teaching Policy might include additional procedure documents related to specific areas of learning and teaching, such as assessment procedures, language procedures or academic support procedures (for example).
4. Each individual St Stithians College school may also have its own internal procedures and guidelines related to teaching and learning within the school, influenced by the age range of students, stages of development, and gender differences. It is essential that educational best practices within each school are aligned with the overall philosophy and approach outlined in this policy.

**Educational Philosophy**

5. The College aims to optimise educational and institutional synergies through collaboration between its schools, creating a community of belonging among our students, staff, parents and alumni.
6. The College is committed to being a leading and unique South African school, advancing transformation, embracing diversity, and creating an oasis of hope and social cohesion.
7. Combining tradition with innovation, and academic ambition with a diverse and holistic curriculum, the College's schools enable students and staff to grow and develop to their best potential.
8. The College aims to educate individuals to be lifelong learners who participate, lead and serve.
9. The College is committed to developing well-rounded individuals, prepared to inspire excellence and make a difference in South Africa, the African continent and globally.
10. The College seeks to provide a values-based and top-quality academic education, supported by a diverse extra-curricular programme.
11. The vision of educational excellence includes being a College with inclusive and differentiated practices, offering a wide spectrum of experiences which optimise personal learning.
12. The College recognises the need for partnership between stakeholders (parents, teachers, support staff, school management and any professionals working with the student, such as psychologists, remedial therapists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists etc.) in order to optimise educational opportunities for all students.
13. The College is committed to teacher development to refine, develop and implement best practice. This includes being a centre for research and innovation in educational best practice.
14. The College aims to live out a Methodist ethos, providing opportunities for staff and students to honour God, honour others and honour self; to know oneself, be oneself and to contribute as African and global citizens.

## **Educational Practice**

15. The College operates within the parameters of the National Qualifications Framework, the National Curriculum Statement and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements.
16. The College embraces the philosophy that underpins national education policy and legislation, such as the South African Schools Act and other relevant documents pertaining to schools and educational practice.
17. The Independent Examinations Board (IEB) is the College's assessment provider for the National Senior Certificate qualification.
18. The College embraces the Critical Outcomes as stipulated in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements Grades R-12. St Stithians aims to educate and develop students who are able to:
  - 18.1. Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
  - 18.2. Work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team;
  - 18.3. Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
  - 18.4. Collect, analyse, synthesise, organise and critically evaluate information;
  - 18.5. Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;
  - 18.6. Use science and technology effectively;
  - 18.7. Develop a sense of responsibility towards the environment and the health of others;
  - 18.8. Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation;
  - 18.9. As global citizens, to act locally and think globally.

## **Assessment Practices**

19. At the College, English is the language of learning and teaching and additional languages are offered according to the regulations of the National Senior Certificate and national educational frameworks. The educational practices regarding language offerings are outlined in the Addendum: Procedures for Language Offerings document.
20. Assessments are the core means of attaining measurable aspects of learning. Therefore, regular assessments will be given to students for diagnostic and reporting purposes. These might consist of internally and / or externally set tasks, and summative and formative assessments for learning.
21. The educational practices regarding assessment and reporting are outlined in detail in the Addendum: Procedures for Assessment. This document outlines the common educational practices related to assessment across the five St Stithians College schools.
22. The College recognises that there are other forms of assessment that may not form part of formal reporting processes and are used to enhance learning and teaching. These forms of assessment might include ongoing observation, the use of technology, enquiry-based learning, and visible learning, for example.
23. Externally set assessments will include a variety of assessments, drawn from both national and international assessment bodies.
24. The College may choose to participate in external assessments that are not aimed at assessing student performance, but rather at evaluating learning and teaching, usually in comparison with other schools or other systems of education. In principle, feedback of these results will not be given to the parents and students but are used as a diagnostic tool to inform learning and teaching practices.

## **School Attendance**

25. According to the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) school attendance is compulsory from the first school day of the year a student reaches the age of seven until the last school day of the year a child turns fifteen or Grade 9, whichever occurs first. However, in order to qualify to write the National Senior

Certificate examinations, regular school attendance is required until the last official school day of Grade 12.

26. St Stithians acknowledges that punctual and regular school attendance, for the whole school day, is essential for effective learning and teaching to take place.
27. Frequent absenteeism and/ or missed academic lessons has a negative impact on effective learning and teaching for the student, the teacher and the class dynamic. Frequent absenteeism may affect the promotion and retention of a student to the next grade in cases where significant academic time has been lost.
28. The South African Schools Act, along with the Department of Basic Education's Policy on Student Attendance (Act 27 of 1996), stipulates that it is the parents' responsibility to ensure daily school attendance, on time and for the whole school day, unless there is a valid reason for absence. These Acts further outline that parents are responsible for encouraging and assisting the student to make up for lost academic time when a student is absent from school.
29. The South African Schools Act, along with the Department of Basic Education's Policy on Student Attendance (Act 27 of 1996) acknowledge several reasons for a student's absence from school which are considered valid and acceptable. Unofficial holiday and study leave are not considered valid reasons for absence from school.
30. Schools are required to investigate when a student has been absent from school for more than three consecutive days without valid reasons or communication from parents/ guardians. In cases where students are absent without valid reason (e.g. truancy or frequent absenteeism without appropriate medical certificates), parents and/ or students may be charged with breach of the College's Code of Conduct.
31. The Department of Basic Education's Rights and Responsibilities of Independent Schools (2008) stipulates that independent schools may exclude students on the grounds that a contract between the parents and school has been broken, provided that fair procedure has been followed. In such cases, it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that the student attends an alternative school and that the student's education continues.
32. School procedures for missed assessments due to absence from school are outlined in this policy's Addendum: Procedures for Assessment.

### **Individualised and/or Differentiated Education and Student Support**

33. The College embraces the principle of inclusive education outlined in the Education White Paper 6 (2001), and other relevant international and national legislature, and functions as an academic, mainstream school with student support services.
34. The educational practices regarding inclusive education and student support are outlined in detail in the Addendum: Procedure for Academic Support document.
35. Student support refers to the services provided which address the social, emotional, developmental and academic needs of students at the College. Academic/ Learning Support refers to student support services which address learning and teaching and aim to meet the educational needs of students.
36. The College acknowledges that every student is unique, with individual strengths, challenges, interests, abilities, and learning needs.
37. The College is committed to diversifying its educational programme to take into account a spectrum of learning needs, according to available resources and the best interests of the child.
38. The College recognises that students require different levels of support along a continuum of learning needs. The College has therefore identified six such categories (adapted from the Department of Education's Draft National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support, 2014).
39. The categories of support are:

Category	Category description
1	<p><b>Full participation, with extension:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full Participation is understood to mean that students are not removed from lessons for any interventions and engage in the full curriculum expectations without modification or adaptation.</li> <li>• Students are extended above and beyond the standard curriculum and achieve at the level of academic excellence.</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Full participation, no support needs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no learning and teaching support interventions needed.</li> <li>• The students in this category are able to manage their learning and academic needs independently within the standard curriculum, without any additional support interventions.</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Full participation, with mild support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some barriers to learning or areas of development have been identified, which are mild in nature and require short-term support interventions to maximise learning outcomes.</li> </ul>
4	<p><b>Modified full participation, with moderate support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full participation, with moderate levels of support to maximise learning outcomes and address identified barriers to learning, which are mild to moderate in nature.</li> <li>• Adaptations and support are planned and managed by Academic Support specialists, with regular review and case management for interventions.</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Modified participation, with high support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in most activities with high levels of ongoing assistance and support to address identified barriers to learning, which are more intensive in nature.</li> <li>• Requires a specialist programme and additional support in a number of areas, including ongoing monitoring and adaptation of curriculum and assessment practices to facilitate participation and maximise learning outcomes.</li> <li>• Adaptations and support are planned and managed by Academic Support specialists, with regular review and case management for interventions.</li> </ul>
6	<p><b>Participation is not possible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There may be circumstances in which the College recognises that it might not be in the best interests of students to receive their education in the St Stithians environment.</li> <li>• The College is unable to offer the level of support required to meet the specific academic needs of the student and/or adequately accommodate the nature of their barriers to learning within the College's available resources and educational structures.</li> <li>• The decision that participation in the College's educational context is not possible is made in consultation with recommendations from professional stakeholders and takes into account national legislation and policies.</li> </ul>

**Adopted by the College Executive Committee: 14/06/2004**

**1<sup>st</sup> Amendment Approved by the College Executive Committee: 28/01/2008**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Approved by the College Executive Committee: 25/05/2009**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Approved by the College Executive Committee: 28/07/2011**

**4<sup>th</sup> Amendment Approved by the College Executive Committee: 21/09/2015**

**5<sup>th</sup> Amendment Approved by the College Executive Committee: 19/ 03/ 2018**

**Approved by the St Stithians Council 05/04/2018**

**6<sup>th</sup> Amendment Approved by the College Executive Committee: 01/ 04/ 2019**