

1 Aims and history

Aims

The aims of a department should encompass the school aims. However, it may be that the department will have specific aims particular to the subject. Neither the school nor department aims should be lengthy. They should be worded in such a way that they are easy to remember, ie short and succinct. The aims should be decided by the department as a whole and should be revisited on a regular basis to ensure that they are still relevant. **Master 1 Aims** (page 3) can be used for departmental members to briefly sketch out their ideas.

History of the department

A brief recent history should be filed at the beginning of the handbook. It should reflect comments on curriculum, staffing, timetabling, changes, innovations and particular concerns. Cross-references should be made to other sections in the handbook. Consider:

Curriculum, for example:

- Any recent changes in National Curriculum
- Introduction of new areas at Key Stage 3
- New GCSE/NVQ courses
- Cross-curricular work
- Schemes of work linking to primary schools/colleges.

Staffing, for example:

- Maternity leave
- Recent staff appointments
- Staffing requirements
- Supply teaching
- Technicians
- Effects on pupils learning.

Timetable, for example:

- Recent changes in time allocation
- Staffing suitability
- Option columns (if appropriate)
- National Curriculum entitlement
- Balance
- Status of subject in the curriculum.

Master 2 Recent history (page 4), sets out a simple framework for collating this information. Heads of department may wish to discuss the current position with departmental members. Prior to the meeting a copy of **Master 2**, could be used by the members to prepare notes.

4 Events

This section offers ideas and masters for links, the display policy, a departmental calendar and press releases.

Links

Often a department develops links with:

- the local community
- local business
- feeder primaries
- local colleges
- other subject areas
- the press
- parents.

All links should be noted and recorded for the departmental handbook.

Master 29 Links (page 41) can be used to list the events. It can be photocopied at intervals and passed to senior management for whole school collation.

Master 30 Links – Project details (page 42) can be used to keep a detailed record of the event.

Display policy

The environment reflects the organisation of the department. It is essential that it is kept tidy with the rules displayed. It may be necessary to formulate a display policy. Investment in a good camera is important for any department.

Displays should enhance the look of the environment. They should be visually stimulating and be of interest to pupils, staff and visitors. All displays should be labelled so that the aims of the project are clear. Once a display begins to look untidy it should be taken down.

Consider:

- which displays should be temporary and how often they should be displayed?
- which displays should be permanent?
- the variety of displays
- which aspects of the department lend themselves to display?
- keeping a list of events and displaying them on the departmental calendar.

What to display

The following could be displayed:

- Artefacts used as stimulus. Perhaps give an outline of the work with a few photographs
- Posters, maps, newspaper articles, extracts from literature
- Good examples of written work
- Examples and photographs from cross-curricular work
- Visitors performing for or working with pupils
- Primary liaison work.

Where to display

Some considerations as to where to display work are as follows:

- Try to spread the displays around the school to promote each subject. Consider here:
 - the immediate environment, ie inside and outside the department areas
 - other points, eg library, entrance hall
 - areas for future display.
- Don't display work in narrow corridors, it may get damaged.
- Invest in large poster frames for all permanent displays. It seems expensive but the displays will benefit in the way they look, they are protected and the credibility of the topic and your subject is increased.

Departments may wish to keep records of the displays so that the type of display, frequency of change, area of display, which groups make the displays can be monitored.

Use **Master 31** Permanent displays (page 43), **Master 32** Temporary displays (page 44) and **Master 33** Display work: Further considerations (page 45).

Departmental calendar

Keeping a record of projects, cross-curricular work, visits, workshops, etc is essential for the handbook and OFSTED. The record can be displayed in several areas of the school so that staff, students and visitors are aware of the various activities taking place. This simply means displaying a calendar of the department's events.

By monitoring the calendar you will be aware of any imbalances, for example, there may be three projects for one year group and only one for another. When planning activities for the next year you can consult the calendar and address any imbalances.

5 Discipline

Merits and certificates

Each school will have its own discipline policy. The discipline of the department should be a part of it yet at the same time attempt to deal with specific problems.

There should be rules clearly displayed and ways of acknowledging good work. Try to keep rules down to a minimum of ten. The rules should be reviewed each year by the whole department. In the five star merit system students are awarded merit stars for good work. Demerit stars are given for behaviour that causes concern. The teacher keeps a note of the stars in his/her register. Merit stars are marked to the right of the student's name and demerits to the left. Teachers will find it easier to simply mark with a dot. On obtaining five merits the student is awarded a commendation (or some suitable award appropriate to the school discipline policy). If a student has collected a demerit, then they would need six merits before they achieve a commendation.

Perhaps an exceptional student would achieve three commendations over a year. Some teachers may wish to impose the system with merits only. However, the noting of demerits means that the teacher has to hand information that can be fed into the school discipline and monitoring system. Constant poor behaviour is an issue that needs to be dealt with outside of the merit/demerit system. Linked to the system should be certificates that award participation in events such as school productions, concerts, sporting events, etc. These are useful for the student's record of achievement. The Year 11 certificate of excellence is awarded to students who have worked well and have clearly attained high standards in all their work (including GCSE). Teachers may wish to include involvement in extra curricular activities as part of the criteria.

The certificate of excellence (**Master 41**, page 55), can be amended to suit individual departments.

An example of the register page using the merit system and the commendation are shown on page 54.

Communication with parents

The merit/demerit system allows the students to share with their parents/guardian their achievement. Parents also need to be informed when a student is failing to achieve. Each department needs standard letters for detentions and coursework. **Master 42** Detention letter and **Master 43** Coursework letter (pages 56 and 57) are example letters.

Detentions should be recorded and monitored and **Master 44** Department detentions (page 58) could be used for this purpose.