



Belong... Believe... Achieve...

Islwyn High School

Curriculum Policy

Reviewed by: Mr O Williams Deputy Headteacher

Ratified by Governors: 14/12/2023

Date to be reviewed: 14/12/2024

Signed:

Mr J Hicks
Headteacher

Mr G Bryce
Chair of Governors

Specific time related Policy Transition

NB Currently we are following The National Curriculum in 2022 23, with

AOLE's being introduced in 2023 24

1 CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Islwyn High School aims to keep the curriculum at the heart of the education we offer. As a result, young people experience a rich, exceptionally varied curriculum, which is a conscious blend of the traditional and the contemporary. Students engage with a wide range of subjects through ambitious, well-designed courses, tailored to their needs.

The curriculum embodies our school values of **Belong, Believe & Achieve**.

Belong

- Students flourish socially and academically during and beyond their time at THEIR school. They learn to mix skilfully with adults and with each other, developing TRUST in people in tandem with progressing in their studies.

Believe:

- Students gain meaningful skills, knowledge and understanding which EMPOWERS them, enabling them to succeed in life with a DEEPER understanding of the world around them.
- Students experience a wide range of subjects, taught by TRUSTED PROFESSIONALS, who ensure a broad, deep SELF BELIEF for each individual.

Achieve:

- Islwyn High students develop into IMPRESSIVE people who contribute actively to the school and the local community and go on to ACHEIVE GREAT PROGRESS in the wider world.

Our curriculum supports these goals by being very carefully planned and constructed. Subject teams select content to be ambitious, inspiring and challenging, whilst at the same time ensuring that all students can access every lesson. Through careful sequencing, subject leaders have shaped the curriculum in order that skills knowledge and understanding (SKU) are built upon and core concepts returned to. We use thoughtful and rigorous assessments to identify and address misconceptions and provide structures to ensure that SKU is securely learned. Teachers carefully plan explanations and model precisely how to produce work which enables students to think deeply about the SKU they are taught.

We keep the curriculum as broad as possible, for as long as possible to allow all students a rich experience. Every subject a student begins in year 7 remains accessible up to year 11, enabling our young people to become knowledgeable and confident, with a deep academic and cultural understanding. Subject teams have reviewed their schemes of learning to meet the needs of the new curriculum and embedded these new approaches within subjects and

across AOLE's. This is also supported by a range of whole school strategies, including use of the Accelerated Reading Programme.

2 SUPPORTING STUDENTS

The learning experience of disadvantaged students (RADY Raising the Achievement in Disadvantaged Youngsters) and those with additional learning needs (ALN) are at the heart of our thinking on curriculum and teaching. We also provide support in a variety of ways and centre our approach for More Able & Talented students (MAT):

- Quality first teaching, where all tasks/activities are carefully modelled to ensure access.
- Subject specific approaches to reading which allow students to access rich and complex texts.
- Integrating Assessment for Learning (AfL) opportunities throughout the curriculum.
- Teaching Learning to Learn (L2L) strategies to encourage independent learning.
- Explicit teaching of language and terminology needed to access the curriculum.
- Never assuming prior knowledge and carefully specifying exactly what students need to know.
- Quizzing and other methods to ensure retention of knowledge over time.
- Routines driven approaches to ensuring a calm and purposeful classroom environment.
- Using local context as a key tool to engage students.

3 STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS

3.1 Equal opportunities

Entry to all programmes of study is based on academic suitability and appropriateness, regardless of sex, race, disability, religion or belief as outlined in the Strategic Equality Plan.

3.2 Disabilities

In accordance with the statutory requirements, the school aims to make the curriculum accessible to all pupils as far as is reasonably practicable. The school has an Access Policy and Strategic Equality Plan which is available to parents/carers on request.

3.3 Sex education

The school provides sex education in the basic curriculum for all pupils. Individuals are encouraged and guided by moral principles and taught to recognise the value of family life.

A full statement of the school's sex education policy is available to parents / carers. It has been drawn up in consultation with staff, pupils and parents / carers, and takes into account the views of representatives from the community. It has regard for the Welsh Government's guidance on Sex and Relationship Education Guidance (0116/2000).

In accordance with the law, the biological aspects of human reproduction remain compulsory for all pupils but parents/carers may withdraw their children from any other part of the sex education provision without giving reasons.

3.4 Career education and work related learning

The school provides careers education to all pupils through the PSE curriculum and through the scheduled Careers Wales programme. Work related learning is augmented by a cross curricular approach to enterprise education in the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Careers Wales, and other external agencies, support and enhance the provision for careers education and work-related learning. The school has the services of a dedicated Careers' Advisor at its disposal.

3.5 Political education

The promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school is forbidden by law. Political issues are introduced in a number of courses and are presented in a balanced manner, specifically as part of the PSE syllabus.

3.6 E-safety

Being aware of how to be safe when interacting with the wide range of ICT resources available to the school is an entitlement of all members of our school community. Staff follow the Acceptable Use Policy regarding ICT in school. Pupils are taught as part of their curriculum about how to recognise and avoid danger when using ICT resources. Through its Behaviour for Learning, and Anti-Bullying policies and the work of the Digital Competency Group, the school works to prevent any member of its community becoming the victim of online exploitation and/or cyber-bullying.

3.7 Disapplication

In accordance with the law, the school has the right to respond to individual needs by modifying the National Curriculum programmes to:

- allow a pupil with individual strengths to emphasise a particular curriculum

- area.
- allow a pupil making significantly less progress than other pupils of his/her age to consolidate his/her learning and progress across the curriculum.

3.8 Additional learning needs (ALN)

Pupils with ALN access a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which is differentiated to meet their individual needs. This is monitored and evaluated to ensure the curriculum promotes academic progress and self-esteem. Parents/carers and pupils are involved in decisions affecting their curriculum opportunities. Full details of the school's provision for ALN can be found in the ALN Policy.

4 CURRENT CURRICULUM

Years 7-9

NB New Curriculum for Wales in Y7 & 8 for 2023 24 and 7,8 & 9 by 2024 25

In Y7-9 our aim is to provide a rich curriculum so that it is a means to an end in itself – it doesn't function as a 'watered down' version of, nor is it primarily a preparation for, GCSE. As such our curriculum remains as broad as possible for as long as possible. In these first three years there is no attempt to put children on pathways. We put emphasis on a curriculum that teaches rich and powerful SKU from the start of Year 7. Students in Y7-9 are given access to an exciting curriculum (including Mathematics and Numeracy; The Languages, English, Welsh & Spanish; The Science, Technology and Digital Competency; Expressive Arts including Music, Art & Drama; The Humanities Geography, History & RVE as well as "Wellbeing" including Food & Nutrition, PE and Personal & Social Education) covering the new requirements of the National Curriculum for Wales (and occasionally going further) by the end of Year 9. Students with additional needs are carefully encouraged via multiple layers of support both academically and socio-emotionally. Therefore, children with additional needs flourish at Islwyn High. In Year 9, our students are supported to engage in selecting their subject areas for further study at GCSE. This process is carefully managed by providing tailored guidance through taster lessons and conversations with targeted individuals (mostly, but not exclusively ALN and eFSM) to ensure that we are not disadvantaging any students through this approach.

Year 7 & Year 8 - New Curriculum

The 'Education in Wales National - Our National Mission' is the Welsh Government's strategic plan to improve the prospects and life chances of young people through education reform. One of the key drivers is the implementation of the New Curriculum where each school can develop their own curriculum through areas of learning which embody the four purposes which are to develop learners as:

- Ambition capable learners.
- Ethically, informed citizens.
- Healthy and confident individuals.
- Enterprising and creative contributors.

At Islwyn High School we work closely with our cluster of primary schools and external partners to ensure we have worked closely with all stakeholders to offer the best possible learning experience to allow learners to make progress towards their personal goals.

Our curriculum will evolve through our own growth and current factors that reflect the ever-changing physical world and society.

Our vision

At Islwyn High curriculum leaders have developed our curriculum through stakeholder workshops with learners and governors and then refined our approach and values through parent surveys and feedback mechanisms.

Our vision is to cultivate global citizens and widen the horizons of our students to allow them to value and understand peoples' diversity, past and culture, including our own and across the globe. We want learners to understand the living environment and how they can make a positive and meaningful contribution to society through science and technology.

We endeavour to make all learners numerate to empower them to be able to use mathematics in order to flourish in their everyday life and help them become highly effective communicators who read with confidence and write with purpose to engage audiences and be digitally intelligent in preparation for the future world.

We wish to enable learners to recognise and represent feelings and emotions, both their own and those of others that shape their sense of personal, social and cultural identity at Islwyn High where learners can creatively express themselves through a range of experiences.

Learners will build on their skills, knowledge and understanding to grow the ability to apply and transfer thinking to different situations, develop emotional resilience and academic rigour in order to secure the best outcomes for lifelong learning and the wider world of work.

Year 7 and 8 Curriculum

Whilst our key stage four (GCSE) curriculum offer is by subjects, our curriculum for learners in Year 7 and Year 8 from September 2023 onwards will be taught through six areas of learning experience (AoLE):

Expressive Arts - Art, Drama & Music
Health and Well-being - Physical Education, PSE including RSE
Humanities - Geography, History & Religion, Values & Ethics* (RVE)
Languages, Literacy and Communication - English*, Welsh*, Spanish
Mathematics and Numeracy - Mathematics
Science and Technology - Science, Technology & Digital Communication (IT)

Each AoLE has between three and six what matter statements which provide guidance on the content we need to address. At Islwyn High School our curriculum offers wide ranging experiences in each area which focus on learning through exploration, refining skills and understanding, considering local and national perspectives in preparation for next steps and lifelong learning.

Our curriculum is mapped centrally against the AoLE for each year to ensure progression and we meet the New Curriculum. Our AoLE Curriculum Guide shares the vision and key learning activities/ topics for all stakeholders.

Assessment of the New Curriculum

The most important factor regarding assessment is that learners understand what they may need to do in order to improve their work. We call this 'assessment for learning' and it is seen in learners' work.

Within each AoLE 'what matter statements', there are five 'progression steps' that learners can achieve by the end of the key stage. Staff will record the progress a learner is making in each what matters statement in relation to their target along with their attitude to learning which is reported to the Senior Leadership Team and Governors. This information will be shared with parents through interim and full reports as published on the calendar.

In setting targets for our learners, we use prior data from the cluster school, Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs) and National Test results in literacy and numeracy to set AoLE targets for learners in Year 7 to 9.

Year 10 & 11

Our two-year GCSE program provides breadth and depth across at least 10 chosen subjects enabling our ambitious curriculum experience to continue. All GCSE Students study English Language and English Literature (Year 10 English literature, Year 11 English language), Maths & Numeracy, Double Award or Single Award Science (some study Biology, Chemistry & Physics). Welsh, Equality & Diversity, PE, Skills and PSE. Students are required to follow up to three additional courses leading to GCSE examinations. Students are also provided with a wide and ambitious range of further options. These lead to high levels of achievement and open up extensive options post-16, including access to Level 3 courses and progression into a range of career options. Some students choose, or are guided to take, additional lessons to support their English and Maths and Science. Students are taught in sets according to

ability in core subjects at GCSE and in mixed ability groups for option subjects and compulsory PE.

Carefully planned opportunities support students to make informed decisions about their futures, be those studying A2 levels or vocational qualifications at College, or through employment. There is a focus on independence and agency throughout the pastoral team.

In setting targets for our learners in year 10 and 11, FFT20 is used alongside prior attainment and teacher judgement, to give an accurate and challenging target to work toward achieving.

5 HOW WE ORGANISE OUR CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

At Islwyn High School we operate a two-week timetable where 50 hours of lessons are taught across “week one” and “week two”. We operate a three-year Lower School Program and a two-year Upper School program. It is this structure that allows us to provide a broad, ambitious curriculum for all our students.

6 HOW WE DELIVER PERSONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

At Islwyn High School we look for improvements in “pupil wellbeing” in our taught Personal & Social Development curriculum. Across all year groups, curriculum time is given to deliver a very well sequenced, age appropriate and context specific PSE curriculum. This timetabled curriculum is supported by additional mornings or afternoons for particular year groups. All of the above is planned and delivered by our Form Tutors. Integral to our approach is PSE which gives a deep understanding of key societal issues and how to approach them.

Through this curriculum, we aim to support our students to explore beliefs with respect and reflection and consider moral and ethical issues respectfully and sensitively. Students also learn about well-being and positive mental health, along with information relating to their own development as people and building healthy relationships. Students are shown how to become successful learners and are given age-related careers information, advice and guidance.

7 HOW WE ORGANISE TUTOR TIME AND ASSEMBLIES

At Islwyn High our form tutors play a key role in supporting students to be ready to learn and students in years 7-11 see their form tutor daily. Our tutors help to set their tutees up for success each day and carry out a planned series of activities supporting their academic and social development. We have very strong systems of pastoral support and expect all our students to be known as individuals. In addition, all year groups have a weekly assembly which across the year covers a range of themes connected to our school values of Belong Believe & Achieve. We also have a weekly “whole school assembly” delivered by a member of The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or by Progress Leaders (PL) with a focus on issues that help to connect our wider school community and build a sense of belonging.

8 HOW WE APPROACH EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

We have a wide range of extracurricular activities available to our students which change each term. These are divided into different themes which complement and go beyond the taught curriculum. Our approach is driven by our whole school ethos that puts emphasis on opportunity. We always look to respond to a student's request when a club or society doesn't exist. Students who are disadvantaged or who have Additional Needs are particularly supported by adults in the school to join in with our extra-curricular programme.

9 HOW WE SEEK TO IMPLEMENT OUR CURRICULUM

In lessons, children get a great subject-rich experience - it's academic but it's accessible. It pays attention to academic traditions/disciplinary aspects but also aims to be contemporary and relevant. Individual teachers show their passion and love for their subjects but in an environment which is well aligned with collegiate teachers sharing centralised resources and approaches. There is lots of care in the sequencing of content which will allow students to show deep understanding of important ideas and concepts. We are especially alert to how we implement our curriculum for our RADY students our MAT students and for those who have Additional Learning Needs.

In addition, our implementation is supported by:

- Subject level Curriculum Schemes of Learning (SOL) which explicitly outline the aspiration and ambition underpinning curriculum design in each subject and the ways in which this will be secured.
- Subject Specific Assessment policies and calendars designed to secure effective sequencing and help key learning to stick.
- Subject specific “core expectations” to support alignment in areas that make the most difference especially in the context of teaching core concepts, approaches to the retrieval of knowledge and methods for reading.
- Coherently sequenced curriculum summaries.
- All classes taught by subject specialists (or by well-trained/supported non specialists).
- High quality Centralised approaches across most curricular areas led by highly skilled leaders.
- High quality CPD which follows an annual plan based on the national standards for professional development.
- A well understood Behaviour for Learning system and a consistent approach to routines that helps our students to learn effectively.
- Deep thinking about effective Teaching and Learning built around our Teaching & Learning Policy.

- Systems of intervention and support for students (especially in the context of our RADY, ALN or MAT interventions)
- Deliberate strategies designed to avoid excessive teacher workload and support well-being of our staff.

10 HOW WE IMPLEMENT SKILLS AND CROSS CUTTING THEMES

In creating our new curriculum at Islwyn High, we have clearly mapped how we are developing our learners' skills; in literacy, numeracy and digital communication frameworks*. Our Skill Leaders have identified skills that are explicitly developed through linked AoLE and those that are delivered through everyday learning experiences. In addition to developing skills across the curriculum we run whole school strategies such as accelerated reading along with dedicated literacy and numeracy teaching assistants to give small group intervention sessions.

The four purposes are also underpinned by skills which should be developed within a wide range of learning and teaching. Our curriculum includes opportunities for learners to experience and develop:

- Integral Skills
- Creativity and innovation
- Critical thinking and problem-solving
- Personal effectiveness
- Planning and organising

Cross Cutting Themes

- Relationships and sexuality education (RSE): statutory guidance*
- Human rights
- Diversity
- Careers and work-related experiences
- Local, national and international contexts

11 HOW WE REVIEW THE IMPACT OF OUR CURRICULUM.

At Islwyn High School we continually seek to review the impact of our curriculum in a variety of ways.

These include:

- Student outcomes
- Student destination data at post 16 (and post 18 for past students)
- Internal student monitoring data including via Snapshots Data Reviews and Behaviour for Learning data.

- Well-developed systems for self-evaluation and impactful fortnightly conversations with subject leaders that follow an annual cycle and are regularly reviewed.
- Thoughtful quality assurance approaches that suit our context - “learning trails” and student work sampling is skilfully used to impact on staff training.
- Highly impactful Peer review work in conjunction with an additional Professional Learning Hour on top of the normal 10% PPA.
- Stakeholder voice.

We believe that the impact of our curriculum is extremely strong, as seen through:

- Our expectations – The Teachers & Support Staff at Islwyn High have the professionalism of supporting students to do exceptionally well. We expect students to achieve highly.
- Student outcomes.
- Good destination data at post 16 and post 18.
- High levels of internal progress and excellent behaviour/attitudes - our students embody our values of Belong, Believe & Achieve.
- The role the school plays in supporting curriculum development across Caerphilly CBC.

12 THE TIMETABLE CONSTRUCTION CYCLE

At Islwyn High School we aim to produce the timetable with pupil set lists by 1st July each year for the following academic year.

This means timetable & staffing are a year-round activity with many factors taken into consideration:

- Staffing needs within department areas.
- Stakeholder voice.
- Recruitment and retention.
- Options process for year 9.
- Financial constraints.
- Performance data.

13 FINANCIAL VIABILITY

There is always a balance to be struck to ensure that the timetable is financially viable. This can often present difficulties when deciding minimum and maximum class sizes. At Islwyn High School our ambition is to maintain class sizes not higher than 33 pupils where possible. This is reduced in Technology for Health & Safety reasons. At the other end of the scale, we would not normally allow class sizes to drop below 12 pupils to maintain a “minimum”

productive classroom environment and to maintain financial viability. Staffing and recruitment cannot always provide the optimal number of specialist teachers for each subject. Where this is the case, non-specialist teachers will be allocated to classes where they have the skills to do so or where they have previously taught a subject. These non-specialist staff will be allocated to classes where it is less academically challenging for them to teach.

14 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Governing Body should, through the Governor's sub-committee:

- work with the Headteacher to agree the strategic direction of curriculum development on behalf of the Governing body.
- make informed judgements when setting staffing levels to support curriculum development.
- agree action with the Headteacher to address changes to staffing levels when needed.

The Headteacher (alongside the Deputy Headteacher (DH) in charge of producing the timetable) should ensure:

- that there is a coherent strategy for balancing curriculum development with staffing requirements.
- governors receive updates on curriculum & staffing via the sub-committee.
- parents/carers receive information about the curriculum and options process.
- the Governing body receives updates as appropriate.
- that all statutory curriculum requirements are met in accordance with local, regional and national expectations.
- that the timetable & curriculum are evaluated in terms of value for money; that value for money indicators like pupil teacher ratios; class size and room usage is included within the school improvement plan and self-evaluation documents.

The Deputy Head (or SLT timetable)

- Work with the Headteacher and the relevant stakeholders to produce and implement clear, evidence-based improvement plans and policies for the development of the school and its facilities.
- With the support of the Headteacher and governing body, manage and organise the school environment efficiently and effectively to ensure that it meets the needs of the curriculum and health and safety regulations.
- make effective use of the support and challenge provided by the local authority, regional consortium and other relevant bodies.
- support the Headteacher and governing body in managing the school's financial and human resources effectively and efficiently to achieve the school's education priorities and goals.
- monitor, evaluate and review, in collaboration with the Headteacher and governing body, the range, quality and use of all available resources to improve the quality of

education for all learners and to secure value for money.

- work with the Headteacher and relevant stakeholders to develop and implement strategies that ensure a safe, calm and well-ordered environment for all learners and staff and secure high standards of behaviour and attendance, resulting in successful conditions for learning.

The Head of Department / Subject leader should:

- analyse their curriculum area and advise the DH about specific needs early in the timetabling process.
- communicate with individual learners/parents BEFORE timetable changes are made for the learner.
- monitor the efficacy of various different timetable anomalies e.g. split classes; double periods; non-specialist teachers etc.
- evaluate the efficacy of using specialist and non-specialist teachers against different groups of children.
- Include curriculum and staffing data in the departmental/faculty self-evaluation document along with action taken to address (where appropriate) within the departmental improvement plans.

The ALNCo should:

- analyse performance data and guide the DH on specific ALN groups within each year group.
- monitor the efficacy of having a small group of 15 pupils on one side of the timetable and 22 on the other.
- evaluate outcomes with reference to option choices made by specific groups of children within the options process.

The Classroom Teacher should:

- gain the necessary expertise and knowledge about the timetable and curriculum to plan effectively for the children in front of them.

Students should:

- take responsibility for their own timetable and bring the correct equipment for each day.

The Progress Manager should:

- analyse the cohort of learners in their charge and discuss any specific curriculum plans in year 8 with the DH.
- liaise with the HOD and communicate with individual learners / parents if concerns with the timetable need the pupil timetable to change.

- liaise with the DH and communicate with individual learners / parents about option choices in year 9.