



Belong... Believe...

Islwyn High School

Learning and Teaching Policy

Reviewed by: Mrs J Underwood
Ratified by Governors: 19th June 2025
Date to be reviewed: 19th June 2030

Signed:

Mr J Hicks
Headteacher

Mr G Bryce
Chair of Governors

Contents

- 1. Vision statement**
- 2. Guiding principles**
- 3. Learning and teaching objectives**
- 4. Pedagogical approaches**
- 5. Assessment and feedback**
- 6. Inclusion and wellbeing**
- 7. Our professional learning offer**
- 8. Partnerships with parents and the community**
- 9. Monitoring and Evaluation**
- 10. Conclusion**

1. Vision Statement

At Islwyn High School, our learning and teaching policy is rooted in the four core purposes of the Curriculum for Wales, which aims to help pupils become:

- Ambitious, capable pupils ready to learn throughout their lives.
- Enterprising, creative contributors ready to play a full part in life and work.
- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world.
- Healthy, confident individuals ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Our pupil centred approach to learning is underpinned by our belief that our school should develop pupils holistically, nurturing their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical wellbeing while promoting the Welsh language, culture, and global citizenship.

2. Guiding Principles

Our learning and teaching approach at Islwyn High School is driven by:

- Inclusive Education: recognising the diverse needs of all pupils, ensuring equitable access to learning for every individual.
 - Personalised Learning: Supporting each pupil's unique learning journey and promoting independent, reflective learning.
 - Active Engagement: Encouraging curiosity, critical thinking, and collaborative learning both within and beyond the classroom.
 - Progression: Ensuring all pupils make measurable progress towards becoming skilled, knowledgeable and well-rounded individuals.
-

3. Teaching and Learning Objectives

The policy aims to:

- Support the effective delivery of an engaging, challenging, and relevant curriculum that reflects the six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs):
 1. Expressive Arts
 2. Health and Well-being
 3. Humanities
 4. Languages, Literacy, and Communication
 5. Mathematics and Numeracy
 6. Science and Technology

- Incorporate integrated cross-curricular skills including literacy, numeracy, and digital competence.
- Promote Welsh language and culture through all areas of learning.
- Implement assessment for learning strategies, focusing on feedback that promotes progress for all pupils. (see Marking and Feedback Policy and ARR Policy for further details)

4. Pedagogical Approaches

To align with the Curriculum for Wales, we ensure our teaching strategies are:

- Pupil-Centred: Focus on the needs, interests, and learning styles of individual pupils.
- Inquiry-Based: Foster problem-solving, investigation, and creativity through questioning and exploration.
- Collaborative: Encourage teamwork, peer learning, and group problem-solving.
- Experiential: Provide real-world, hands-on learning opportunities that relate classroom content to life outside school.
- Reflective: Embed regular reflection and evaluation by both teachers and pupils to foster continual improvement and self-awareness.

This is evident in our PUPILS! model and in keeping with our TEACHER model found below:

 IHS LEARNING AND TEACHING Prioritising Pupil Progress 		
P	PROGRESS - pupils use their learning to make progress that is inline with or above modelled expectations - across lessons and over time.	
U	UNDERSTANDING - pupils demonstrate an increasingly sophisticated understanding of fundamental concepts across AOEs and can apply this to improve their work.	
P	POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS - pupils readily engage in their learning, sustaining concentration and avoiding distractions. They persevere when faced with difficulties and demonstrate respect for the contributions of others.	
I	INDEPENDENCE - pupils take responsibility for their own learning, confidently applying what they have learnt independently or in collaboration with other pupils - with sustained effort in a variety of contexts.	
L	LEARNING - pupils can articulate clearly what they are learning and why this is important. They have a secure understanding of success criteria and use these to improve their work and identify next steps.	
S	SKILLS - pupils can make links across the curriculum, transferring existing knowledge and skills into new contexts, with increasing confidence.	Literacy - pupils use effective listening, reading, speaking and writing skills to improve their work across the curriculum in a variety of contexts.
		Numeracy - pupils can apply and connect the 5 mathematical proficiencies in real life concepts across the curriculum
		DCF - pupils can confidently use a range of software and technologies to help them function and communicate effectively and can apply their DCF skills across the curriculum to enhance their learning.
		Cwricwlwm Cymraeg - pupils are able to confidently understand and respond to the use of incidental Welsh across the curriculum. They also use their understanding of the Welsh culture to improve their understanding of Wales and the wider world and apply it across the curriculum.
!	Focus for the term	

To enhance our pupil centred approach to learning, our pedagogical principles are aligned to the following acronym that forms the basis of our professional learning framework and that of the WAG Schools as Learning Organisations framework.

TEACHER
Time is taken to explain learning objectives
Engagement and Challenge
AFL
Circulate to Support Learning
Hands not up - Effective Questioning
Evidence of Skills
Respond to Negative/Positive Behaviours

Planning and Delivery:

At Islwyn High School:

- Teachers will design learning experiences that offer flexibility to adapt to different pupils' needs.
- Lessons will integrate the four purposes at their core, aiming to achieve holistic development in each pupil.
- Teachers will use data, feedback and professional enquiry to plan effective, personalised lessons for pupils to maximise outcomes.
- Learning outside the classroom (outdoor learning, community engagement, and enterprise activities) will be encouraged to enhance learning experiences.

- Our **Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY)** approach to learning will focus on planning and delivering targeted strategies to close the attainment gap. Our approach will set high expectations, raise aspirations and foster a culture of belief and belonging.
-

5. Assessment and Feedback

At Islwyn High School assessment will be:

- Formative and Summative: Formative assessment will be embedded within daily teaching to monitor progress and inform effective planning of next steps and consolidate any gaps in learning, while summative assessments will provide snapshots of achievement at key stages.
 - Pupil Centred: our pupil centred approach to learning will ensure that pupils are engaged in self-assessment and peer-assessment to foster ownership of their learning.
 - Progression-based: Tracking and reporting on individual pupil progress through clear stages rather than age-related expectations.
 - Constructive: Teachers will provide regular, specific feedback that highlights strengths and areas for improvement. Feedback will focus on skills development and progression.
-

6. Inclusion and Wellbeing

Inclusion:

At Islwyn High School:

- We will ensure that all pupils, regardless of background, language, or additional learning needs, can access and engage with the curriculum.
- We will follow an inclusive ethos where all pupils feel highly valued and supported.
- Additional Learning Needs (ALN): personalised support will be offered for pupils with specific learning challenges, guided by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.
- Our commitment to the **Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY)** classroom approach will ensure equity in learning and will allow all pupils to thrive in all areas of the curriculum.

Wellbeing:

- We will prioritise mental and physical health through a whole-school approach. This includes a focus on mindfulness, resilience, and healthy lifestyle choices.
 - We will embed the Health and Wellbeing AoLE in every aspect of school life, ensuring that pupils develop emotional intelligence and self-regulation skills.
-

7. Our Professional Learning Offer

What does Professional Learning look like at IHS?

At Islwyn High school we seek to offer a wide, varied and inclusive Professional Learning Offer that supports all staff in their continued development in accordance with the professional standards for teaching, leadership and assisting teaching. Our vision as a school is that our professional learning offer should:

- always be undertaken to benefit and meet the needs of all pupils and our school community.
- ensure that development of the workforce within the context of schools as learning organisations allows for continuous and coherent development overtime.
- be collaborative, allowing staff time to share their learning in order to strengthen pedagogy.
- provide staff with opportunities to evaluate the impact of their professional learning and involve reflection and enquiry into pedagogy.
- be enabled by leadership in learning organisations with the support of local, regional, national and international learning communities.

Our learning offer reflects our commitment to continuous professional development, inline with the ***Schools as Learning Organisations in Wales Framework*** and ensures that we are providing staff with opportunities to learn with and from one another and from the external environment and wider learning system. By providing staff with these opportunities, we believe that we are enabling them to react more quickly to changing external environments and allowing them to embrace changes and innovations that will strengthen their teaching and pedagogy. Our Professional Learning Grant is used to support both in school timetabled sessions, planned INSET time and active participation in external CPD offers.

Professional Learning Sessions [\(Promoting team learning and collaboration among all staff\)](#)

At IHS our commitment to continual professional development is such that we have invested in dedicated timetabled professional learning sessions for all teaching staff.

These sessions are run on a fortnightly carousel, as per our school timetable, and are an opportunity for staff to engage in continuous professional learning to ensure their practice is critically informed, up to date and is reflective of our inclusive, shared vision that aims to enhance the learning experiences and outcomes of all pupils. The sessions are flexible in the way that they are organised and can fall under one of the two following categories:

PLA - These sessions are an opportunity for grouped members of staff to discuss identified strengths and areas for development in pedagogy across the school. The sessions ensure that staff are fully engaged in identifying the aims and priorities for their own professional learning and promote a shared vision. They are led by the teaching and learning lead and facilitated by a range of staff from across the school, forming part of our sharing best practice model in line with the *Schools as Learning Organisations in Wales Framework*. During the sessions, all staff are encouraged to share best practice and use professional research to ensure that their understanding of learning and teaching is as current and informed as it can be in order to strengthen their pedagogical approach to the Curriculum for Wales.

PLB

These sessions are an opportunity for staff to put their research, enquiry and knowledge into practice. During these sessions, staff are encouraged to observe the practice of their peers in a non judgemental, professional learning manner. They may also undertake QA tasks, such as book looks, to observe the range of approaches across the school and can use the time for further collaborative professional enquiry and research.

CPD (Learning with and from the external environment and wider learning system)

All staff at Islwyn High School are given the opportunity to attend continuous professional development from external providers. Staff are encouraged to request attendance at courses that are inline with whole school, departmental and individual professional priorities (identified through the Performance Management process) and can be used to develop their own practice as well as contributing to the wider departmental and whole school development.

Upon completion of external CPD, staff are required to reflect on and evaluate the course content and how it will inform their practice moving forward. This is monitored by the senior lead through timely evaluation and, where appropriate, can be used to inform professional learning discussion in meetings and other such appropriate forums.

As well as external CPD opportunities, the school also offers a range of both mandatory and professional learning sessions that seek to improve practice and

enhance the learning experiences and outcomes of all pupils, through purposefully planned INSET days and staff meetings.

The school actively engages in supporting the wider learning system and is a designated Lead School for Literacy and DCF within the EAS consortium.

Induction, ITE and OU (Learning with and from the external environment and wider learning system)

The school seeks to form partnerships with higher education institutions, businesses and/or public or non-governmental organisations in efforts to deepen and extend learning. As such, the school works closely as a partner school with Cardiff Metropolitan University in supporting the delivery of the ITE PGCE Secondary programme to its pupils. The school also works in close partnership with the Open University in order to support its teaching programme of study and accepts pupils from the programme into the school in order to support their development within the profession.

Working Towards - Next Steps (Establishing a culture of enquiry, innovation and exploration)

The school is on a continuous journey of development and seeks to recognise itself as a lead establishment in professional learning and as such, has planned next steps to ensure that a culture of enquiry, innovation and exploration are established as part of its shared vision. In line with the ***Schools as Learning Organisations in Wales Framework***, moving forward IHS will aim to create a professional learning environment where:

- Staff are willing to take risks and experiment and innovate in their practice.
- The school supports and recognises staff for taking initiative and risks.
- Staff engage in forms of enquiry to investigate and extend their practice.
- Enquiry is used to establish and maintain a rhythm of learning, change and innovation.
- Staff are open to thinking about and doing things differently.
- Problems and failures are seen as opportunities for learning.
- Pupils are actively engaged in enquiry.

Sharing Best Practice

Our sharing best practice model is inherent in our professional learning model and our vision for learning and teaching across the school community. The sharing of best practice is evident at every level of the school and is delivered through a range of forums and activities such as some of those listed below:

- Sharing Best Practice Days - these are designated INSET days that are structured around the Golden Nuggets that are shared by staff during our PLB Teacher Trail Cycles.

- PLA Sessions.
 - The Islwyn High School Professional Learning Blog.
 - Islwyn High School Learning and Teaching Newsletter.
 - Our Learning to Learn Programme.
-

8. Partnerships with Parents and the Community

At Islwyn High School:

- We encourage active partnerships with parents and guardians, ensuring open communication about each pupil's progress.
 - Community involvement is an essential part of learning, fostering a strong connection between pupils and the local community that we serve, Wales and the wider world.
 - Parental engagement is promoted through regular updates, in school events, social media, newsletters and through various other opportunities that contribute to the learning process.
-

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

At Islwyn High School:

- Learning and teaching will be regularly reviewed and evaluated by senior leadership to ensure it aligns with the Curriculum for Wales.
- Self evaluation and monitoring activities such as classroom observations, pupil feedback, whole school reviews, teacher trails, stakeholder evaluations and data from assessments will inform continuous improvement and policy adjustments.
- Student and staff wellbeing, alongside academic progress, will be key metrics for success.

The link (an appendix) to the lesson observation form to accompany the new policy can be found here: [PUPILS! Lesson Observation Form](#)

10. Conclusion

Our Learning and Teaching Policy is designed to ensure that Islwyn High School meets the aspirations of the Curriculum for Wales, fostering a nurturing, dynamic, and inclusive learning environment. It focuses on developing well-rounded individuals who are equipped with the skills and values to thrive in the 21st century.

