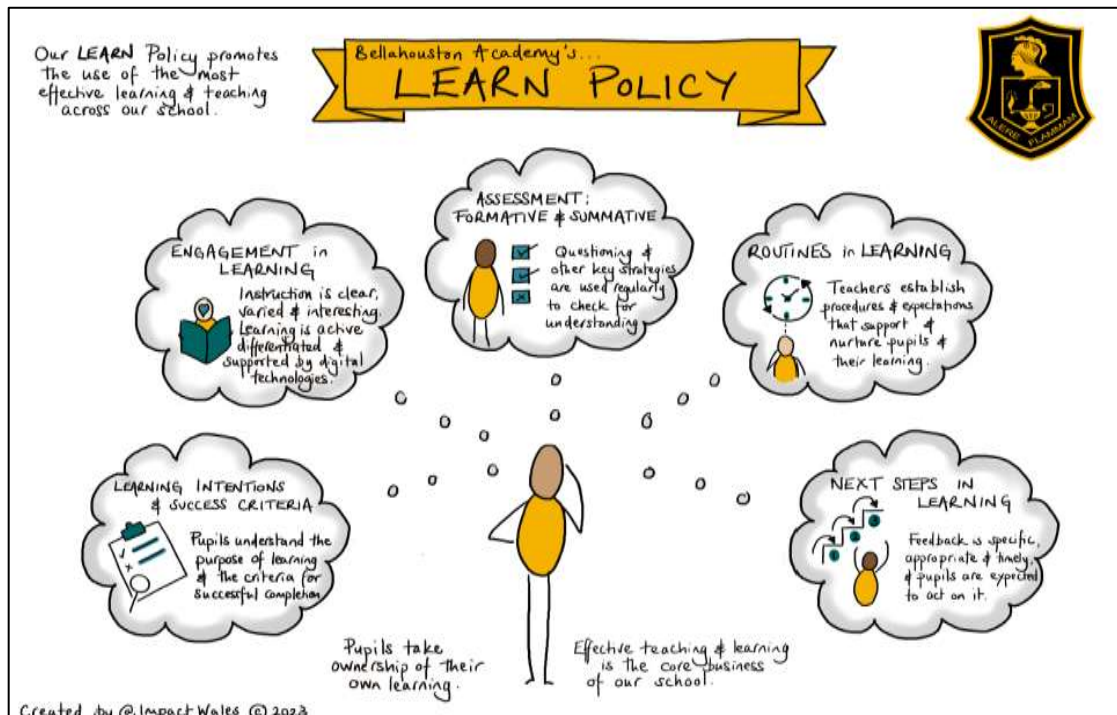




# LEARN

## Bellahouston Academy's Learning and Teaching Policy



# LEARN - Bellahouston Academy's Learning and Teaching Policy

## Introduction and Context

At Bellahouston Academy, we believe that high quality teaching is the basis for successful learning. A shared understanding of what constitutes effective teaching must inform everything that we do in the classroom and this, in turn, must be informed by the latest evidence.

This policy was initially developed by a Professional Learning Group of Bellahouston Academy teachers in session 2021-2022. The draft policy was then distributed to the wider staff group for consultation, and has been under regular review and development since then, as national, local and other school policies have shaped the provision offered by our school, and as we have engaged other stakeholders (such as pupils and parents) in a range of consultation and quality assurance activities.

In line with our broader school vision, aims and values, we are therefore committed to delivering high quality, teaching and learning in every classroom so that:



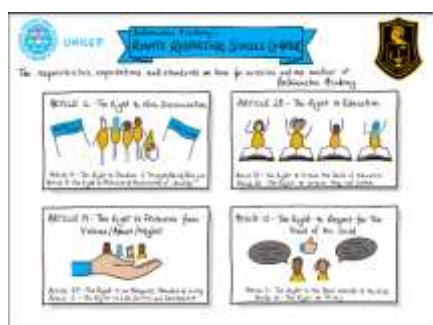
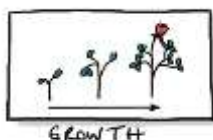
reflecting our school value of **Belonging** and **Achievement**, every young person, regardless of their background or any barriers they face is provided with a first-rate education which allows them to experience success;



reflecting our school value of **Respect** and **Aspiration**, we tackle the problems that young people face because of social deprivation and poverty of expectation;



reflecting our value of **Growth**, we can present learning as a life-long process, the pursuit of which will both liberate and reward the individual learner and benefit society as a whole.



Our LEARN policy also reflects our school's UNICEF Rights Respecting Charter, specifically Article 28 – The Right to Education; we believe that all young people – with positive encouragement, nurture and support – can develop strengths, experience success, and enjoy their learning.

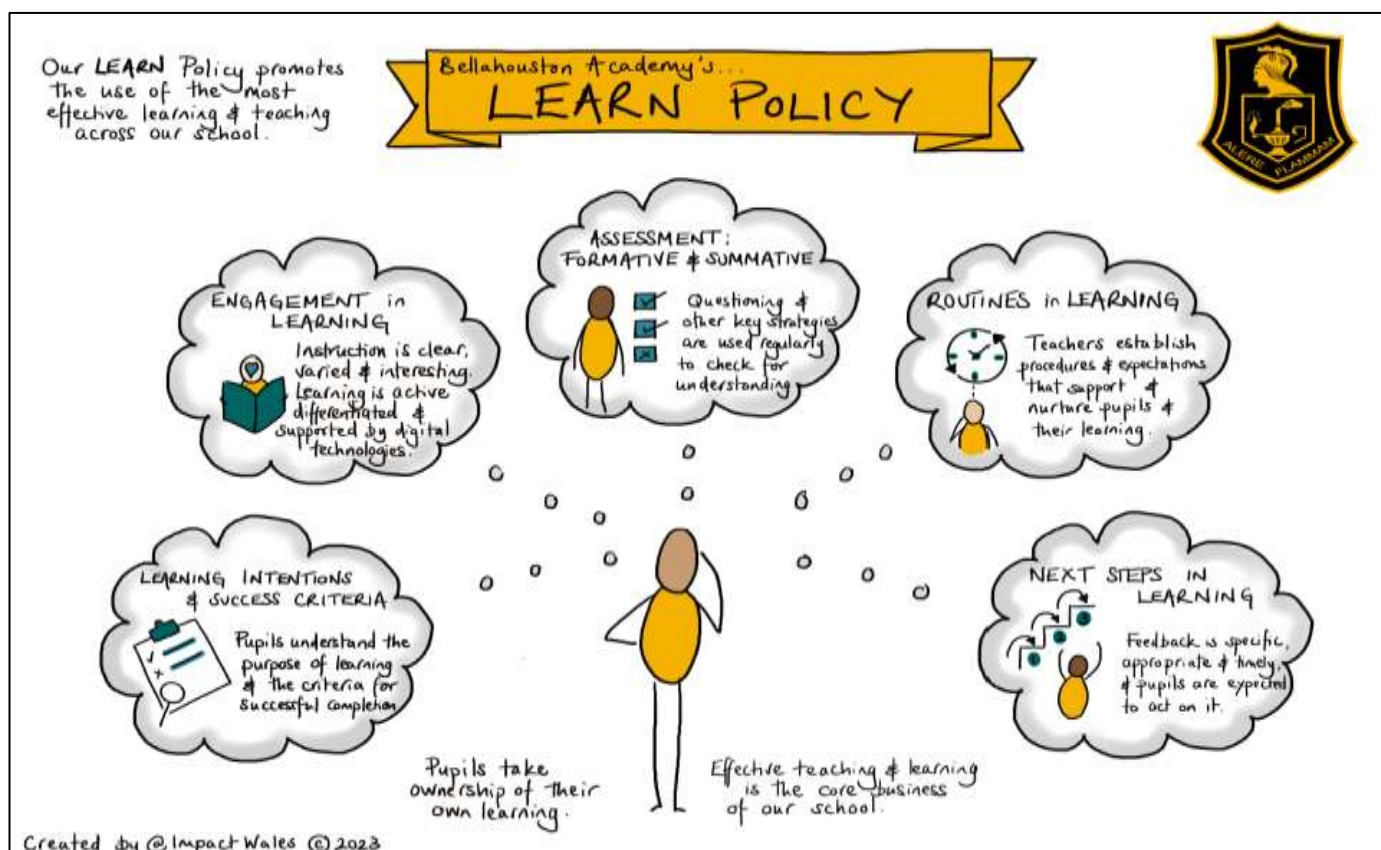


Our policy is evidence-based and is underpinned by the uniqueness of our context. It is intended to be a set of guiding principles for teachers as to what constitutes our understanding of effective learning and teaching. However, it is by no means a checklist of what should be present in every lesson, as learning can only be understood as a process which takes place over a period of time.

Our policy is therefore based on the following principles, which can be summarised using the acronym, LEARN:

- Learning Intentions and Success Criteria
- Engagement in Learning
- Assessment: Formative and Summative
- Routines in Learning
- Next Steps in Learning

Below, you will see a sketch-note we have had developed to help us identify, define and promote these key principles.



Glasgow City Council's *All Learners, All Achieving* policy – and specifically the Wellbeing and Learning grand challenge – emphasises our focus on preparing learners to thrive and contribute in a complex and changing world. In light of this policy commitment, Glasgow City Council Education Services have recently introduced the *Glasgow's Pedagogy* approach. Links to the relevant policy and supporting documents is available in the [Useful Links](#) section below.



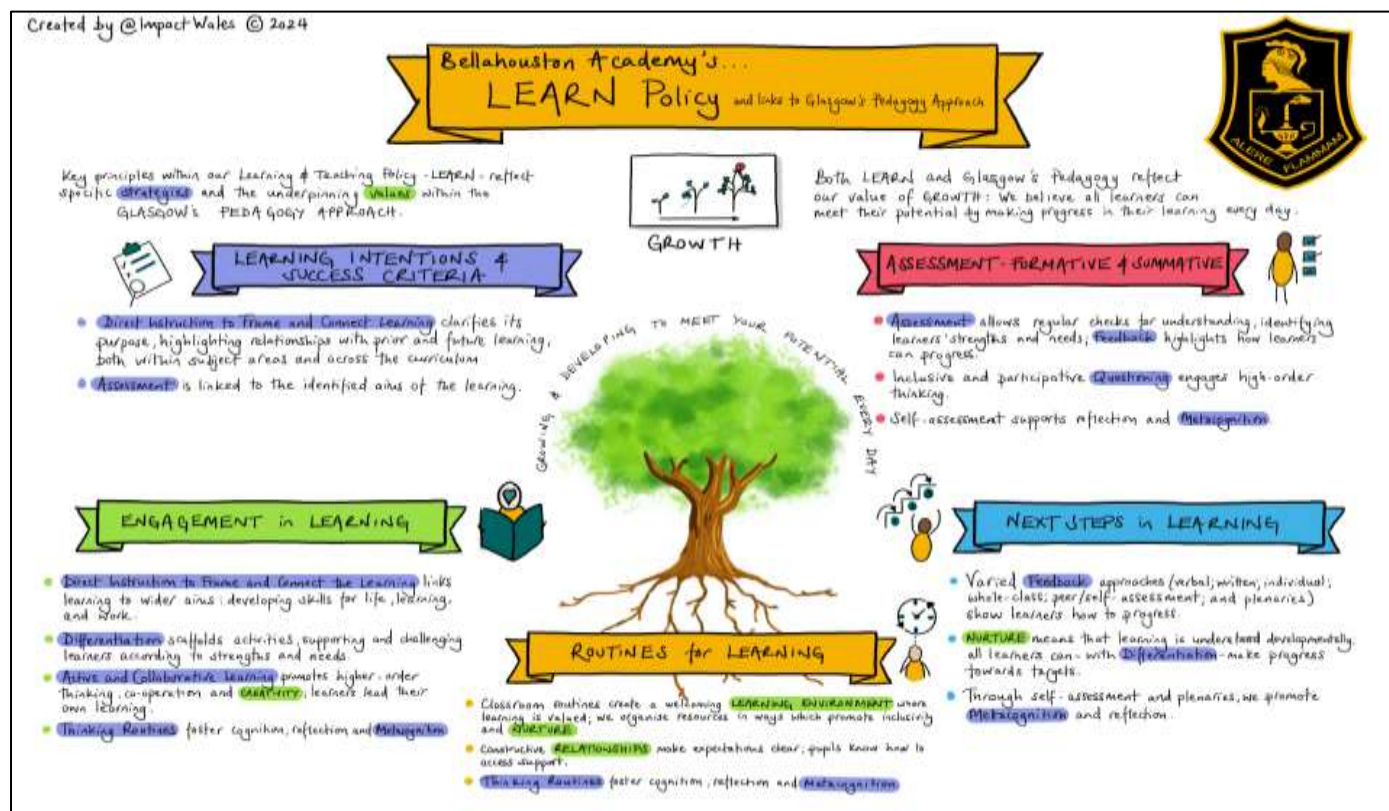
Glasgow's Pedagogy endorses a range of classroom approaches supporting high-quality learning and teaching. These approaches are:

- Direct Instruction to Frame and Connect Learning
- Active and Collaborative Learning
- Questioning and Feedback
- Thinking Routines
- Differentiation
- Metacognition
- Assessment

The values underpinning the Glasgow's Pedagogy Approach are: Learning Environment; Nurture; Relationships; and Creativity.



We are proud to belong in the Glasgow City Council local authority, and are confident that there is a close relationship between our school's LEARN policy and the Glasgow's Pedagogy approach. We have developed a sketch-note which makes clear where these overlap.



National policy, such as Education Scotland's *How Good is Our School 4* (particularly quality indicators such as 1.2 - Leadership of Learning, 2.3 - Learning, Teaching and Assessment, and 2.4 - Personalised Support) and its pupil-friendly counterpart *How Good is OUR School* (particularly Theme 2 – Our Learning and Teaching) underpin our approaches to delivering effective learning and teaching. The General Teaching Council of Scotland's published *Professional Standards* for registration inform our approaches to the continuous improvement of learning and teaching. The *Professional Standards* documents make clear the expectations of practitioners in Scottish schools. Of particular interest – in relation to our LEARN Policy – are sections 2.1 and 3.1 under the Professional Knowledge and Understanding and Professional Skills and Abilities heading which explore aspects of pedagogy.

**Links to the documents mentioned above are available in the Useful Links section near the end of this policy.**

# The Principles Of Our LEARN Policy

## Learning Intentions and Success Criteria

Learners learn best when they understand what they are learning and how to demonstrate success in learning. Learning intentions fulfil the former, while success criteria accomplish the latter, and are oriented towards the specific nature of the activities and tasks present in the lesson.

Learning intentions can be created for single lessons or a series of lessons, and while they do not need to be copied down by learners, always visible, or even always shown at the start of the lesson - which can lead to wasted time for students and teachers - they should be understood by learners and embedded in the learning activities, so that students can take ownership over their learning, a process known as metacognition (Perkins, 1992). It should be emphasised that learning intentions are not synonymous with learning activities (though success criteria may be). Learning intentions could also be separated from the specific context of learning to allow learners to apply learning to different contexts (Clarke, 2005). This is perhaps easier in maths and science than in language or humanities. The following example is from Wiliam (2011):

*'If a teacher teaches students to add fractions with a worked example such as  $1/2 + 3/5$  once she has done that she is no longer interested in the student's ability to add  $1/2$  and  $3/5$ . The students can do that problem because they have just been shown it! What the teacher wants to know is if the students can transfer their knowledge to a reasonably similar but different pair of fractions.'*

Success criteria are a means by which progress in learning can be benchmarked against the activities of a single lesson and as such are often more useful in the short term, given that real learning can only be judged over the long term. Success criteria should be closely tied to the learning intention. For example: 'Explain at least three reasons why life was difficult for soldiers in the trenches of the Great War', would be appropriate success criteria for a lesson in which the learning intention was: 'learning about the conditions faced by soldiers in the trenches of the Great War'.

Any differentiation of success criteria should be undertaken with caution. While it may be superficially beneficial to do so in the interests of inclusion and equity, this can lead to lower aspirations and a perpetuation of an attainment gap within the lesson as students aim for the minimum or, worse, if teachers plan for lower achievement for certain students or groups of students (Robertson, 2020).



## Engagement in Learning

Research has shown that engaging students in their learning increases their focus, motivates them to use higher order thinking skills and promotes a more meaningful learning experience. Engagement encompasses a range of domains within the classroom including presentation of content, student activities and differentiated support and challenge and promotion of positive behaviour.

According to Sweller, (1988) human brains have a limited capacity for absorption of new information. While the capacity of long term memory (LTM) is, as far as we know, limitless, short term memory (STM) is limited.

Information must pass through short term memory to enter long term memory. Therefore anything that reduces the load on STM is beneficial to the learning process. This has implications for the presentation of content in form and timing with, for example, simple PowerPoints, stripped of superfluous text and graphics preferable as a means of holding student attention than superficially appealing slides which distract students from the content.



Students should be instructed to give full attention to all tasks at all times, but in recognition of the limits of memory and attention, activities should be varied in length and 'chunked' where appropriate, to maintain attention.

The 'on task' phase of a lesson gives students the opportunity to practice what they have had explained to them. Practice can come in different forms. Generally speaking, practice should be guided when students are at the 'novice' stage of the learning cycle, and much more independent when at the later stages of learning. It should be noted that the stage of learning relates to knowledge of the content to be learned, not the chronological stage of the students. For example, novice learners benefit from a high level of teacher support, opportunities to check understanding and regular feedback, whereas learners further into the process can assume a greater degree of metacognitive responsibility.

The specific type of task (whether guided, or more independent) should also be considered. Evidence shows (Jones, 2018) that retrieval practice, the deliberate accessing of information from long term memory, is key to the strengthening of memory and 'is a more effective strategy than review by re-reading' (Brown, Redifeer, McDaniel, 2014).

It is important that all students are motivated and supported to succeed. In the Bellahouston Academy context, there are a significant number of students who are new to English. This has implications for support and challenge in the classroom. It should be emphasised that differentiated support and challenge, which is often referred to as 'differentiation', need not require multiple resources or indeed different lessons for individual groups in the class as due attention must be paid to the time/impact ratio of producing these as well as teacher workload. Instead, an ethos of support and achievement can be built with enhanced teacher guidance for particular students, support from peers, and adaptations to some whole class resources – for example, addition of pictures to text where appropriate – as well as input from specialist colleagues.

Finally, the notion of 'desirable difficulties' (Bjork, 1994) should be borne in mind when setting activities to promote engagement and learning. This refers to the 'sweet spot' where learning is sufficiently challenging but not so much as to discourage student participation and engagement. It has been noted that computer games designers have a well developed sense of this when designing appropriate level by level challenge in games (Impact Wales, 2023). Activities which encourage 'hard thinking' should be planned for all (in)dependent activities including identification of deliberate mistakes, creation of questions from answers, and retrieval practice.

Students being engaged in their learning can also have a positive impact on their behaviour. City, Elmore, Fiarman, and Teitel's (2009) proposes there are 3 main elements in the classroom that can affect engagement: the student, the teacher, and the content. High quality student-teacher relationships are critical in promoting student engagement. Knowing your students well and how to motivate them will in turn improve learning and teaching. The teaching methods used during the lesson need to be learner-centric, and different teachers will use different strategies. Below is a suggestion of some strategies which can be used:

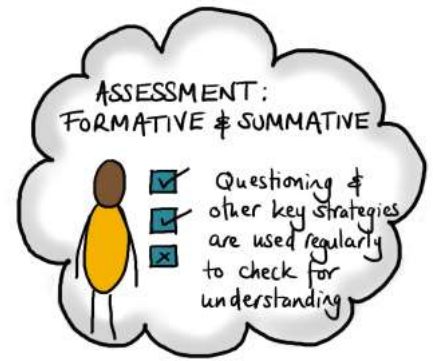
- Engaging with the students' interest;
- Connecting learning to the real world;
- Giving students a voice – using periodic check ins (asking if they need more help, or want to move on, providing choice of activities);
- Using active learning and collaborative learning strategies;
- Using mixed media – a mixture of digital and written resources;
- Scaffolding tasks;
- Using differentiated work;
- Encouraging students to present and share work regularly, making them accountable for their own learning;
- Filling 'dead time'.

## Assessment: Formative and Summative

Assessment plays a critical role in the learning process. It is vital that teachers understand the extent to which learners have made progress in their learning so that they can a) plan appropriate feedback to move learning forward and b) provide reliable information to pupils, parents and school/local/national authorities. Broadly speaking, assessment can be divided into that which is summative and that which is formative.

### **Formative**

Formative assessment, or 'assessment for learning' is placed at the heart of our pedagogy in our Bellahouston Academy context as it is proven to work in all contexts. The essential principle of formative assessment is that teachers collect information during the learning process and use this to adjust their teaching and provide feedback to move learning forward. This 'responsive teaching' can also be considered a form of differentiated support and challenge in the classroom. While the overall strategy is referred to by Dylan Wiliam (2011) as 'eliciting evidence of learner achievement' there are various techniques which can be used to apply this in class, some of which will better in some situations than others, and it is entirely at the behest of the teacher to make the 'best bet' (Elliot Major, 2019) as to which technique will work for their learners in the context of their class and in the particular context of Bellahouston Academy. These techniques should encompass the widest possible engagement and include but are not limited to: mini white boards, 'cold call' questioning, and 'hinge point' questions. These techniques involve the teacher assessing responses from the entire class before making a judgement about the extent of progress. This is why 'all class response systems', of which several are listed above, are very powerful in ensuring that the progress of all learners is taken into consideration.



### **Summative**

Summative includes class tests, prelims, and final exams: these are primarily for the purpose of benchmarking progress and allocating grades, rather than for improving performance. While formative assessment should be embedded in almost every lesson, summative assessment should occur more infrequently.



## Routines in Learning


Pupils respond well to routine and consistency with regards to their experience in a classroom. This ranges from very basic procedures such as how pupils are greeted at the start of the lesson to the more discreet art of promoting positive behaviour. Deviating from established routines can lead to confusion, especially with pupils with additional support needs. A consistent, calm approach to dealing with behaviour using de-escalation strategies in a positive manner is key.

Pupils also respond well to consistency in a teacher's expectations with regards to class work, homework and assessments. Routines can take a while to establish, but once in place they can be a useful aid to successful teaching and learning. They also help ease the cognitive load so that student mental capacity can be fully devoted to learning. The list below is not an exhaustive list of good classroom routines; they are merely examples.


- Greet pupils at the door at the beginning of each lesson.
- A commitment to building relationships with our young people in line with the school Nurture policy
- Calm, orderly entry to class.
- An up-to-date and enforced seating plan.
- Routine ritual with regards to the removal of jackets/non-uniform.
- A set procedure for the issuing of jotters and other resources.
- Clearly labelled and visible resources in a known location.

- A set routine for starting the class (e.g. lesson starters etc.)
- A consistent approach to letting pupils out to the toilet, in line with school policy
- A consistent approach to carrying out homework and assessments e.g. standards expected, time to complete, marking and feedback, prompt return.
- A clear routine with regards to ending the lesson/packing up e.g. return of resources, tidying up, and exiting class.
- An organised, controlled dismissal, (table by table, or row by row for example)

In session 2024-2025, we introduced our OPENS Routine, designed to ensure lessons begin in a consistently constructive and purposeful way. It outlines our school's standards and expectations in regards to our pupils' readiness to learn.



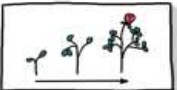
Teachers establish procedures & expectations that support & nurture pupils & their learning.




Bellahouston Academy's...  
**OPENS** Routine - The key to a great lesson is how it OPENS

Our **OPENS** routine reflects our school value of Growth, and Article 28 - The Right to Education in our Rights Respecting Schools Charter; by removing distractions, by encouraging pupils to take responsibility for the equipment they need, and by making sure lessons start efficiently, we create a classroom environment where effective learning can take place.

Our **LEARN** policy's focus on ROUTINES in LEARNING means that these expectations are consistent in every lesson.




GROWTH




ARTICLE 28 - The Right to Education

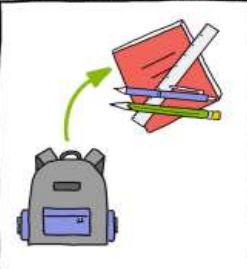
**OUTDOOR CLOTHING** should be removed




**PHONES** and...  
**EARPHONES** should go in your bag, or in the box



**NECESSARY EQUIPMENT** should be taken out of your bag



**STARTER ACTIVITIES** should be attempted



**Our pupils said...**

"Pupils have clear expectations of what to do when they are entering the classroom, so it makes the lesson start quicker."

"It makes people ready and comfortable."

"It helps pupils focus and not get distracted."

PUPIL COUNCIL - Sept - Oct 2024

**Our teachers said...**

"This approach means that pupils hear a consistent message about expectations in every classroom."

"A big improvement; it gives pupils more structure at the beginning of lessons and leads to better engagement."

INSET DAY CONSULTATION - Oct 2024

**Our parents said...**

"It is good that consistent messages about expectations are made clear across all departments, so that pupils always know what is expected of them."

PARENT COUNCIL - Sept - Oct 2024

Created by © ImpactWales © 2024

### Next Steps in Learning

Next steps, or feedback which moves learning forward, is an integral part of the learning process and the primary means by which learning outcomes can be improved at low cost. 'Done well, it supports pupil progress, building learning, addressing misunderstandings, and thereby closing the gap between where a pupil is and where the teacher wants them to be.' (EEF, 2021). As with questioning and other forms of eliciting evidence of learner progress, there is no single appropriate technique for every circumstance, and it is up to the teacher to make a professional judgement as to how they should best provide feedback.





Feedback should be:

- Positive
- More work for the recipient than the donor (William, 2021).
- Generally suitable for improving learning rather than a single piece of work
- Accessible to the learner
- Be emphasised in class with time provided for learners to utilise

Feedback should not be:

- Negative
- Marking every piece of work in every jotter
- Basic, generic comments e.g. 'well done', 'try harder'.
- Extensive written comments

Examples of appropriate techniques for providing feedback include:

- Verbal feedback
- Self or peer assessment using model responses
- Whole class feedback following teacher review of learner work/responses
- Questions put to the learner about their work which they are required to think about and respond to
- Identification of errors or misunderstandings without further comment, which the learner is required to investigate

## **How Do Ensure That Learning and Teaching is Continuously Improving at Bellahouston Academy?**

Like any school, we seek to promote and support the continuous improvement of learning and teaching in our school. The main ways in which we do so are:

- **Establishing a clear and shared vision of what we mean by effective learning and teaching**
- **Self-evaluation and quality assurance measures**
- **Coherent and evidence-driven improvement planning**
- **Appropriate professional development activities**

We have established **a clear and shared vision of what we mean by effective learning and teaching** primarily through the ongoing development of our learning and teaching policy (LEARN) and the accompanying resources. We also engage regularly with our Pupil Council and Parent Council to ensure that young people and their families have the opportunity to give their views on classroom experiences. We often do so through a workshop format, which allows us to exemplify the rationale for and potential benefits of particular pedagogical approaches.

We use a range of **self-evaluation and quality assurance measures** so that we can identify, share and adopt with greater consistency the good practice already evident, and so that we can understand our areas for development. Time is set aside for these activities within our School Improvement Calendar. Some examples include:

- **Class Visits**  
Class visits typically involve a member of the Senior Leadership Team or a Faculty Head observing and/or participating in a full 50-minute lesson led by a teacher within their own Faculty. At the end of the lesson, the observing teacher will give feedback – based on the principles of the LEARN policy – on what they have seen. The teacher being observed will also have the opportunity to talk through the decisions they have taken in designing and delivering the lesson. Trends in good practice and common areas for development are collated and then communicated to the whole staff group.
- **Learning Walks**  
Learning walks involve a member of the Senior Leadership Team and Middle Leadership Team undertaking, as a pair, three 15-minute visits to different classrooms within the same 50-minute period. At the end of the 50-minute period, the visiting teachers will complete a brief proforma - based on the principles of the LEARN

policy - on what they have seen. On a termly basis, the data arising from these proformas is collated and issued to Faculty Heads; this collated data then facilitates collaborative discussion at Faculty level, on the strengths and areas for development observed across all lessons. It is, therefore, designed to create a “snapshot” of the learning in teaching taking place across the school, allowing us to ask whether the principles of our LEARN policy are being applied as consistently as we would wish.

- **Validated Self-Evaluation**

During a Validated Self-Evaluation, two of our Faculties are partnered, and class teachers in each faculty have the opportunity to visit lessons in the other’s classrooms. Faculty Heads will also speak to Focus Groups of young people about their classroom experiences in the other faculty. At the end of the process, there is scope for each faculty to identify the strengths of the other, and adopt these - where appropriate - into their own practice. There is also the chance to identify any areas for development, and suggest ways in which the other Faculty may approach these areas differently or more effectively.

- **Faculty Challenge Questions**

On specified occasions during the session, Faculties will be asked to discuss and submit a response to a series of discussion questions taken from Education Scotland’s *How Good Is Our School 4* document. These questions will focus collegiate discussion on learning and teaching, and allow Faculties to consider how effectively and consistently they are delivering high-quality classroom experiences. Faculty responses are submitted to the Senior Leadership Team; these are then collated, with trends (in regards to patterns of strength and common areas for development) identified and communicated to the wider staff group.

- **Pupil Focus Groups**

On specified occasions throughout the session, Faculties are asked to engage with focus groups of young people, to take feedback on their learning experiences within the faculty. Focus Group questions are derived from Education Scotland’s *How Good Is OUR School* document, and are consistent across all Faculties. Faculty responses are submitted to the Senior Leadership Team; these are then collated, with trends (in regards to patterns of strength and common areas for development) identified and communicated to the wider staff group.

- **Parent Partnership Surveys and Focus Groups**

On two occasions per session we will issue online parental surveys which give parents/carers the opportunity to give feedback on their views of our practice (what we are doing well, and what we need to do next in order to improve). These surveys focus on specific themes within our School Improvement Plan. Once we have collated feedback from survey responses, we will invite selected parents to form focus groups, so that we can hear more detailed views on our practice from specific aspects of our school’s demographics.

We use the data arising from these self-evaluation and quality assurance measure to develop **coherent and evidence-driven improvement planning**, clearly identifying the key areas on which development work at whole school, faculty and classroom level should focus, whether this is on differentiation and equity, as in session 2022-2023, or pace and challenge in 2024-2025. This makes change feel manageable and purposeful, and supports collective efficacy (a belief that, by working together, we can deliver positive impacts). Some examples include:

- Our annual **Standards and Quality Report** details the work we are doing to continuously improve in core aspects of our practice, including learning and teaching; the commentary on learning and teaching within the Standards and Quality Report is often derived from the self-evaluation and quality assurance activities above.
- Our **School Improvement Plan** identifies the specific aspects of classroom practice on which our development work will focus over a specific school session.
- Our **Learning and Teaching Strategy 2023-2026** identifies the means by which – over a series of school sessions – we will make the more systematic changes supporting the continuous improvement of our learners’ classroom experiences.

All of these documents are available on our school website.

Our improvement planning includes building the capacity of our teaching staff through **appropriate professional development activities**. Some examples include:

- Learning and Teaching Workshop carousels on **Inset Days**, where our teachers have the opportunity to visit a series of short mini-lessons led by expert colleagues;
- We assign time within our school's Working Time Agreement to facilitate collaboration within our **Professional Learning Groups**, where groups of teachers work together on developing their own and the school's practice in areas such as curriculum or pedagogy;
- We use our School Improvement Plan and collated data drawn from colleagues' engagement with the Professional Review and Development process to design and deliver **Twilight Professional Learning Workshops**.

Our LEARN Policy, its accompanying resources, the quality assurance processes we use to identify our strengths and areas for develop, the subsequent improvement planning we undertake, and the professional development activities we deliver to build staff capacity, are all reviewed on an annual basis. This is because we believe that engaging and purposeful learning experiences for all young people - facilitated by effective teaching in every lesson and in every classroom - will lead to positive outcomes and improved attainment. Our vision of continuously improving learning and teaching is one which – reflecting our school's value of Growth – we will work to make a reality every day.

## Useful Links

### Policy Context

We are proud to belong to the Glasgow City Council local authority. Glasgow City Council Education Services has – over recent sessions – updated its vision of effective learning and teaching for all of our learners through the *All Learners, All Achieving - Our City, Our Learners, Our Future* plan and the related Glasgow's Pedagogy approach.

#### **All Learners, All Achieving – Our City, Our Learners, Our Future:**

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/gc/public/stmungosprimaryandnurseryclasswebsite/uploads/sites/11123/2023/05/22000412/Our-City-Our-Learner-Our-Future.pdf>

The General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS) have published a range of professional standards documents which make clear the expectations of practitioners in Scottish schools. Of particular interest – in relation to this policy document – are sections 2.1 and 3.1 under the Professional Knowledge and Understanding and Professional Skills and Abilities which explore aspect of pedagogy.

**Provisional Registration:** <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/documents/the-standard-for-provisional-registration>

**Full Registration:** <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/documents/the-standard-for-full-registration>

**Career-Long Professional Learning:** <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/documents/the-standard-for-career-long-professional-learning>

**Middle Leadership:** <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/documents/the-standard-for-middle-leadership>

**Headship:** <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/documents/the-standard-for-headship>

Education Scotland have published a range of self-evaluation resources, designed to help establishments to identify their strengths and areas for development, so that these evidenced judgements might inform improvement planning.

**How Good is Our School 4:** [https://education.gov.scot/media/2swjmnbs/frwk2\\_hgios4.pdf](https://education.gov.scot/media/2swjmnbs/frwk2_hgios4.pdf)

**How Good is OUR School Part 1:** <https://education.gov.scot/media/x44kf045/hgiours-part1.pdf>

**How Good is OUR School Part 2:** <https://education.gov.scot/media/l4ypcopt/hgiours-part2.pdf>

Our school's UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Charter references the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) articles 28 (The Right to Education) and 29 (The Right to Pursue the Goals of Education).

**UNCRC:** <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

### **Support for Practitioners**

Education Scotland's website offers a range of materials to support practitioners, including Learning Resources, Practice Exemplars, and Knowledge and Research. The search bar accessible through the link below can be used to focus more specifically on aspects of classroom practice, depending on practitioners' needs.

**Education Scotland Website:** <https://education.gov.scot/resources/>

Thinking Routines invite learners of any age to be close observers, organize their ideas, to reason carefully, and to reflect on how they are making sense of things. The link below will allow you to access a toolkit of thinking routines (for which there is a sound evidence base) which were developed during a study conducted by Harvard University.

**Harvard University Project Zero Website:** <https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>

Formative assessment is a strategy used frequently by teachers during lessons to assess progress. Effective formative assessment identifies what a learner knows, and the gaps which may still be apparent in their skills or knowledge. This allows the teacher to plan the learner's next steps; they may be ready to move on to more challenging activities which broaden knowledge or extend skills, but may also require some reinforcement activities to ensure that core concepts are soundly understood. The following links will direct you to some resources focused upon formative assessment.

**Dylan Williams' Website:** [https://www.dylanwilliam.org/Dylan\\_Williams\\_website/Welcome.html](https://www.dylanwilliam.org/Dylan_Williams_website/Welcome.html)

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