

Principles to Promote Learning

An Excellent Education for all by Working Together





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Introduction / Foreword

The Education and Skills Service Transformation Committee (STC) has examined the importance of common and clear expectations about the conditions in which individual learners are likely to make good progress with their learning in schools.

Following consideration about the emphasis on learner achievement (not just the final attainment of learners in examinations), including a range of evidence and feedback provided by partners from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD), Swansea's School Improvement Team (SIT), the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning and STC committee members themselves, a draft set of principles is formulated.

The STC's commitment to supporting policy and strategy to improve the wellbeing objective within the Council's Corporate Plan is sustained in its particular focus in 2024-2025 on teaching and learning.

The development of a set of guiding principles for emphasising the importance of pupil progression cannot be underestimated. Any policy developed must ultimately be useful for practitioners within Swansea schools. In order that Swansea's SIT can support and evaluate teaching and learning across the city, it is vitally important to articulate the local authority's expectation of what good looks like.

In recent years it has been important to develop policy in tandem with stakeholders. Much of the input into the draft policy has come from curriculum reform in Wales but also from existing effective practice in Swansea schools. In order to refine the policy further, officers sought participation from practitioners in formulating this final draft.

Stakeholder engagement to refine the policy, via Swansea's School Improvement Partnership (SIP) both on a face-to-face basis and via written response, was between 20 February 2025 and 31 March 2025. It is envisaged that the policy will support existing teaching and learning policy documents within schools, if adopted by governing bodies.

In a few cases, the principles of progression may already be developed and explicit in school policy documents. However, by creating a set of common guiding principles, it is hoped that more schools can be supported to adopt better practices to improve learner outcomes.

The policy document is not intended as a monitoring tool to hold schools to account but as a consistent, agreed approach in Swansea of how the core business of teaching and learning is re-addressed, particularly in a post-pandemic era.

Section 1 Teaching, learning and assessment to support pupil progress

1.1 Teaching approach

1.1.1 Pace and challenge

Move learning forward at an appropriate pace, ensuring all pupils, including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), and those impacted by poverty and disadvantage, are presented with an appropriate level of challenge and support tailored to their individual needs.

1.1.2 High expectations

Maintain high expectations for all pupils, encouraging them to reach their full potential and fostering a culture of high expectations, respect, and ambition.

1.1.3 Questioning and feedback

Employ questioning and feedback techniques that actively support pupils' progress and guide them towards further achievement.

1.1.4 Response to learning

Be adaptive, continually responding to pupils' learning needs both during lessons and over time. Modify teaching approaches as necessary to ensure pupils' learning is consistently supported

1.1.5 Promote self-awareness

Help pupils recognise their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering an environment where they can develop as effective and confident learners

1.1.6 Stimulating learning environment

Create an engaging and motivating learning environment that encourages curiosity, creativity, and enthusiasm for learning. Make use of current guidance from the Welsh Government around 'Enabling Learning.'

1.1.7 Tailored to additional needs

Ensure that teaching is well-matched to the needs of all pupils, including those with ALN, based on a deep understanding of their learning requirements.

1.1.8 Independence and collaboration

Provide opportunities for pupils to work both independently and collaboratively, cultivating essential teamwork and critical thinking skills.

1.1.9 Pupil autonomy

Where appropriate, offer pupils opportunities to influence their learning, allowing them to take ownership of their educational journey.

1.1.10 Staff involvement

Where necessary, integrate additional staff to support pupils in their learning, ensuring all pupils have the help they need to succeed.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

1.2.1 Skills acquisition

Pupils show the acquisition and application of essential skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy, and digital literacy.

1.2.2 Skills application across curriculum

Pupils demonstrate the application of these skills at an appropriate level commensurate with individual ability.

1.2.3 Holistic development

Pupils show the development of physical, social, and emotional skills that prepare pupils for later life and citizenship.

1.2.4 Welsh language proficiency

Pupils exhibit Welsh language communication skills, both in formal teaching activities and informal settings, irrespective of their starting points.

1.2.5 Positive attitude

Pupils show a positive attitude towards learning, with engagement, motivation, and a willingness to persevere when challenges arise.

1.2.6 Behaviour and participation

Pupils demonstrate positive behaviour and active participation in learning activities, contributing to a productive classroom atmosphere.

1.2.7 Perseverance and problem-solving

Pupils show perseverance and the ability to seek new solutions when encountering difficulties. They adopt a solution-focussed approach where autonomy is supported and promoted.

1.2.8 Positive relationships

Pupils show positive working relationships with both peers and adults, fostering a collaborative and respectful learning community.

1.2.9 Response to educational feedback

Pupils display positive and purposeful responses to feedback, indicating an openness to learning and self-improvement.

1.2.10 Involvement of parents and carers

Ensure parents and carers have the relevant information needed to be able to offer support to their child throughout the academic year.

1.3 Curriculum Design

1.3.1 Breadth and depth

Provide pupils with a broad and well-rounded curriculum, covering a range of areas of learning and experience, ensuring depth and progression.

1.3.2 Cultural and linguistic awareness

Foster understanding of the history, culture, and linguistic heritage of the local area, Wales, and the wider world, celebrating diversity and multiple perspectives.

1.3.3 Inspiration and aspiration

Inspire pupils and raise their aspirations, encouraging them to explore their potential and develop a love for lifelong learning.

1.3.4 Authenticity

Plan learning opportunities that are relevant to pupils. Consider local, regional, national and international topics which promotes engagement.

1.3.5 Understanding societies

Develop pupils' understanding of the complex nature of societies by raising awareness of the history of their own communities and communities which may differ from the pupils' own immediate experience, including Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people.

1.3.6 Creative and artistic development

Support pupils' creative and artistic development, encouraging them to express themselves and engage with different forms of art.

1.3.7 Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness

Promote spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, helping pupils to reflect on their values, beliefs, and relationships with others.

1.3.8 Respect for diversity

Foster positive and respectful attitudes to diversity, particularly within the context of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), emphasizing equity, rights, and advocacy for diverse identities and experiences.

1.3.9 Relationships, personal and social development

Support pupils' development in understanding healthy relationships, gender equity, and respect for all forms of diversity, including gender and sexuality, including in the context of LGBTQ+ lives.

1.3.10 Healthy lifestyle choices

Equip pupils with the knowledge and skills to make informed, healthy lifestyle choices, considering the impact of their decisions on their physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

1.3.11 Religion, values and ethics (RVE)

Develop provision that has regard to Swansea's agreed syllabus. Support pupils' spiritual development, allow them to make connections to the natural world, contemplate meaning, develop philosophical understanding and purpose, and be creative going beyond the everyday.

1.4 Assessment

1.4.1 Purpose of assessment

Assessment must support the progression of each individual learner across all age ranges.

1.4.2 Assessment process

Assessment is an ongoing, iterative process which is indistinguishable from learning and teaching.

1.4.3 Approaches

Learning across the breadth of the curriculum should draw on a wide range of assessment approaches, building a holistic picture of each pupil's development.

1.4.4 Progression in learning

Practitioners should plan to deepen and broaden pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills over time.

1.4.5 Supporting ongoing day-to-day progress

Embedded in teaching, processes should identify individual strengths, areas for development and barriers to learning. For example, regular dialogue with pupils, other practitioners and parents/carers.

1.4.6 Learner progress over time

Develop systems that record day-to-day observations (these should be wide-ranging) and enable practitioners to identify progress over different periods of time.

1.4.7 Reflecting on individual progress

Reflection should help practitioners to give specific and clear feedback to pupils, address misconceptions promptly, inform immediate next steps, plan future planning, inform challenge/support required, develop longer term pupil goals and report to parents/carers.

1.4.8 Group progress

Systems that use information about group progress will support schools to evaluate their effectiveness. For example, the way a school's curriculum supports vulnerable learners. Summative information may also support leaders to evaluate curriculum impact and pupil progression.

1.4.9 Informing pedagogy

Summaries of pupil progress across the school will support robust evaluation and improvement planning. For example, to better understand curriculum strengths and areas for improvement.

Section 2 Swansea's key principles of pupil progression

2.1 The 12 principles of pupil progression

Pupil progression refers to the ongoing development and advancement of a learner's knowledge, skills, and understanding as they move through their education.

It involves not just academic growth, but also social, emotional, and personal development. The 12 core principles of pupil progression are:

2.1.1 Continuous and holistic development

Academic and non-academic growth

Progression is not limited to academic achievement but includes the development of physical, social, emotional, creative and personal skills. An integrated approach ensures that pupils develop the capacity to pursue educational, vocational and sporting opportunities.

Social and emotional progress

Pupils should also make progress in their emotional regulation, social skills, and self-awareness. This includes developing resilience, confidence, and the ability to work collaboratively with others.

2.1.2 Individualised and personalised learning

Recognising diverse needs: Every pupil progresses at their own pace, and learning should be tailored to meet individual needs. Pupils with different learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds should be supported in ways that help them make meaningful progress. This should be underpinned by a sound knowledge of child development.

Learning journeys: Progression should be viewed as a personal learning journey, where each pupil's strengths, areas for development, and unique interests are acknowledged and nurtured and supported.

2.1.3 Clear expectations and high standards

Clear learning outcomes

There should be clear expectations for what pupils should know, understand, and be able to do at each stage of their education, including awareness of post-16 opportunities. These should be communicated transparently to both pupils and educators.

High expectations for all: Every pupil, regardless of their starting point, should be challenged to achieve their best. High expectations encourage pupils to push beyond their limits and believe in their potential for growth.

2.1.4 Support and challenge

Balanced approach

Pupils should be both supported and challenged in their learning. Adequate support, for example scaffolding or differentiation, should be provided to ensure they can overcome barriers to learning, while appropriate challenge should stretch their abilities and encourage them to take risks.

Scaffolded learning

As pupils progress, they should receive varying levels of support that gradually reduce as they develop greater independence and mastery of skills.

2.1.5 Feedback and reflection

Formative feedback

Regular, meaningful feedback should be given to help pupils understand where they are in their learning, where they need to improve, and how to make progress. Feedback should be constructive, specific, and actionable. Where appropriate, feedback should enable pupils to be able to describe the next steps in their own learning.

Self-assessment and reflection

Pupils should be encouraged to reflect on their own learning. Self-assessment helps them to identify their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering ownership of their progression.

2.1.6 Ongoing and varied assessment: Assessment should be continuous and varied, involving both formal and informal methods, for example, observations and quizzes. This provides a comprehensive view of a pupil's progress.

Formative and summative assessment: Formative assessments (conducted during the learning process) should be used to monitor progress and inform teaching strategies. Summative assessments (end-of-term/ year) should be used for measuring overall achievement.

2.1.7 Inclusion and equity

Inclusive education

All pupils should have equal opportunities to progress, regardless of their background, abilities, or challenges. Inclusive practices should remove barriers to learning, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, those with ALN, and those facing other personal challenges.

Equitable support

Support structures must be in place to ensure that all pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with additional learning needs, are given the resources they need to progress.

2.1.8 Pupil voice and autonomy

Learner-centred progression

Pupil voice should be central to the process of progression. Pupils should have opportunities to set their own goals, express their learning needs, and have a say in how their learning is structured and assessed.

Encouraging independence

Progression should support the development of independent learners. Pupils should be encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and become active participants in the learning process.

2.1.9 Motivation and engagement

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Progression relies on developing intrinsic motivation—driven by a desire to learn and succeed. However, extrinsic motivation, such as feedback, recognition, and structured goals, plays a key role in reinforcing this drive. Used effectively, it can enhance confidence and engagement, supporting the transition to independent learning.

Engaging learning environments

The learning environment should be stimulating, relevant, and engaging, encouraging pupils to take an active interest in their learning and progress.

2.1.10 Pace and consistency

Appropriate pace

The pace of progression should be appropriate to the individual's learning needs. A few pupils may need more time to master certain concepts, while others may be ready to move on sooner.

Consistency across stages

Progression should be consistent across different stages of education, with clear links between primary, secondary, and further education. Pupils should see how their learning builds over time and how their current learning connects to future goals.

2.1.11 Building on prior knowledge

Scaffolding progression

New learning should build on what pupils already know. Progression should connect prior learning with new concepts, ensuring that pupils can make connections between ideas and consolidate knowledge.

Spiralling curriculum

Concepts should be revisited and built upon at different stages, allowing for reinforcement and deepening of understanding over time.

2.1.12 Preparing for future success

Skills for life

Progression should support pupils to develop metacognitive skills—learning how they learn and prepare pupils not only for the next academic stage but also for future life challenges and destinations, including employment, occupations, citizenship, and personal well-being.

Real-world application

Pupils should be encouraged to apply their learning to real-world situations, preparing them for life beyond the classroom.