Learning and Teaching Policy

St Patrick's Academy

June 2026

Vision Statement

Vision

St Patrick's Academy places the teaching and learning process at the heart of the school and views it as a means of transforming young lives. That process is steeped in the ethos and cultural heritage of the Academy and is imbued with compassion for the well-being of the young people whom it serves and the teachers who, through their dedication and skill, are shaping young lives for the better.
The Academy will be uncompromising in pursuit of the standards set out in this policy and it will foster a climate of mutual support for each pupil and teacher in rising to the challenges presented.

All pupils, no matter where they start or what they bring to the class in terms of their prior skills …..and backgrounds, need safe and fair classes, need to be taught multiple strategies of learning, and need to be with teachers who provide the fuel (the learning skills, expectations, confidence) for tackling schoolwork.

The Learning Survey Cox, Duguid & Hattie (2022)

Rationale

In St Patrick's Academy quality learning does not happen in a vacuum but in the context of the experiences that young people have in their lives.
The Academy has a responsibility to transform the lives of young people and to influence them for the better. The Academy, therefore, sets out guidelines and principles that reflect the ethos and values of the school and make clear to all the aspirations that the school has for its pupils, its teachers and its leaders. These guidelines and principles are rooted in compassion for the individual pupil and designed to ensure that no child is left behind, that each child is facilitated to grow intellectually and spiritually and that each person who works in the school will be facilitated in their own professional and spiritual growth.

Aims

The aims of our Learning and Teaching Policy in St Patrick's Academy are consistent with the aims of 'Every School a Good School' and the 'Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework' published by Education and Training Inspectorate (ETINI).

We aim to:

- ensure the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum;
- ensure that pupils are exposed to the highest quality learning and teaching experiences which stretch and challenge them, allowing them to meet ambitious learning intentions in lessons;
- ensure the pupils have a positive and stimulating learning experience which enables them to achieve their potential at the highest possible level;
- equip pupils with the skills necessary to have a positive influence on their lives now and in the future;
- inspire our pupils to become well-rounded individuals as well as contributors to society and the economy, shaped by the Christian values of honesty, respect, generosity and compassion;
- encourage our pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and actively work to enable them to become independent learners;
- ensure that our teachers are dedicated to improving learning through their commitment, enthusiasm and positive relationships with pupils, parents and colleagues;
- prioritise high-quality professional development opportunities for all teachers;
- ensure that our teachers use strategies that cater for effective differentiation in the classroom, thus ensuring a personalised approach to learning which allow all pupils to learn effectively and to a high level;
- ensure that all forms of pupils' records and data are used effectively to inform learning and teaching and to promote improvement;
- ensure that pupils with special educational needs are identified, supported and offered early intervention to assist their performance and enable them to reach their full potential;
- ensure that rigorous self-evaluation is carried out by teachers and the whole school, using objective data and leading to sustained self-improvement; and ensure that system and structures are in place to closely monitor the quality of learning and teaching through careful curriculum planning, the co-construction of lessons, peer and collaborative observation;
- develop pupils' ability to peer and self-assess and to take accountability for reviewing their work and progress as a tool for setting targets, meeting potential and enhancing lifelong learning.

Learning and Teaching Cycle

At St Patrick's Academy teachers:

- have high expectations of all their students and intend to develop them to their full potential
- are passionate and knowledgeable about their subject matter
- actively engage in the learning process and skillfully incorporate subject content into it
- capture their students' interest and prioritise student engagement in learning
- have the confidence of their students
- use probing and challenging questions targeted to the spread of ability in the class
- create highly motivated learners who respond to challenges through the use of the 5 Rs (resilience, responsibility, reflective, reasoning, resourcefulness)
- articulate the learning process clearly for all students and in a variety of ways ensure that each student understands the process and expected outcomes

- individualise learning to respond to differentiated students' needs, adopting different methodologies to respond to varying learning styles
- are resourceful, always finding new or innovative ways to present the material
- use ICT appropriately to reinforce learning
- understand the importance of procedures for students and that students perform best when they know what is expected of them
- teach students how to manage themselves in the classroom and help them understand the consequences of not following instructions
- actively listen to their students so their students know that teachers will do all they can to help them learn
- develop positive relationships with their students
- prepare students for external examinations
- are reflective and evaluative practitioners, always reviewing their practice and openly asking for and giving support

Planning for Successful Learning

When planning for successful learning teachers will incorporate the following key areas:

- Knowing the needs of the learners
- Lesson Structure
- Classroom climate

Knowing the needs of the learners

Each teacher understands the needs of the pupils they are teaching by using all the available information.

- **Data**

Diagnostic, formative and summative pupil performance data is used to inform learning and teaching within the classroom. Teachers use this information to monitor pupil progress and compare targets which teachers and pupils collectively have set. Such targets are realistic but challenging and, where pupil achievement has fallen below realistic targets (defined as 'Under-achievement'), the teacher uses various intervention strategies for improvement, which are developed and agreed at departmental level.

Teachers are also aware of how the following factors affect their pupils and plan appropriately to meet these needs:

- **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**
- **English as an Additional Language (EAL)**
- **Gifted, Able and Talented (GAT)**

The following sources of data and evidence are available for teachers to analyse in order to identify and plan the most appropriate strategies for all learners. Available data includes:

- Cognitive Ability Test (CAT)
- Performance Test Mathematics (PTM)
- Performance Test English (PTE)
- Pupil Attitudinal School Survey (PASS)
- Individual Education Plans (IEP)
- Internal tracking data
- Formative assessment
- Relevant information from home and community

Teachers will also use their professional judgement, taking into account the personal circumstances of each pupil, to determine appropriate seating plans, and differentiation within the lesson.

- **Differentiation**

'Differentiating instruction means 'shaking up' what goes on in the classroom so that pupils have multiple options for taking in information, making sense of ideas and expressing what they learn.'

(Carol Ann Tomlinson)

Differentiation is therefore vital to successful learning and teaching.

St Patrick's Academy defines differentiation as the deliberate adjustment of the content, process, and products of instruction to make sure that each pupil can maximise his or her learning. It is the process of making the instruction a good fit for each pupil.

We believe that differentiation must consider the needs of all pupils and ensure that all pupils are set challenging learning targets and make expected progress.

Guiding principles on differentiation

Teachers:

- recognise that pupils have different needs;
- use baseline data when planning and preparing lessons;
- use a variety of strategies to match a range of different learning styles;
- reflect on what works well (reflective practitioner) with the particular class;
- provide clear and concise instructions;
- set appropriate levels of stretch and challenge within tasks to move pupils to the next stage in their learning. (This requires an understanding of progression in learning, for example Bloom's Taxonomy can help to structure these progressive activities which moves knowledge acquisition through to evaluation.)
- encourage answering aloud – this develops skills of oracy/speaking in public/oral communication skills;
- create opportunities for pupils to learn from each other (no fear of failure or of asking for help). (This encourages a spirit of cooperation with pupils developing their teamwork skills helping and supporting each other with their learning.);
- allow time to explain and explore new words (basic, abstract and subject specific words);
- careful use of exemplars to model excellence (what a good one looks like);
- devote time in lessons to checking pupils' understanding, e.g. effective questioning, pair and share, and guided learning;
- consolidate learning through taking time to 'Stop and Process' during the lesson as well as at the end (Plenary).
- provide constructive feedback (written and oral) that creates opportunities for pupils to 'Close the Gap' in their learning. Assessment tasks look forward, not back.
- create opportunities for all learners to celebrate their success and strengthen their regard as learners. (Positive and precise statements are made to pinpoint success and guide pupils to the next steps.)

Lesson Structure

There's no perfect lesson plan. However, there are a number of key elements which are essential when planning a lesson.

- **Prior Learning:**

What do you need to know before you begin your lesson planning for a class? Where will this learning lead to?
The teacher needs to 'know the learner' and consider the needs of all the learners in the classroom. Hence, differentiation will be an important component of any lesson plan.
Teachers need to know the scheme of work for the topic clearly and therefore will know what learning will have taken place in the previous lesson and in the next lesson before starting to write a lesson plan.

Lesson Introduction

At the start of the lesson the teacher will use retrieval questions or sandwich techniques to recap on previous learning, build on pupils' interests and stimulate curiosity. The teacher will state clearly the learning intentions and success criteria and take into account differentiation within the class.

- **Learning Intention**

The learning intention is what pupils will learn by the end of the lesson.

Learning Intentions are clearly shared with pupils and success criteria established to highlight the key stages of the learning, so that learners are clear about what it is they are going to learn, and what steps they must take to achieve the learning intention. The learning intention(s) is referred to during the lesson and reflected upon at the end of the lesson. Teachers use questions carefully so that they relate to the chosen learning intentions and success criteria, and encourage pupils to think creatively and deeply, moving from surface knowledge to deep knowledge.

It's important that the learning intention describes the learning taking place and not the tasks themselves.
Good examples of phrases such as:

- Pupils can analyse…(knowledge)
- Pupils can describe …(knowledge)
- Pupils can characterise… (attitudes)

The lesson intention should identify what pupils are going to learn rather than what they are going to do.

Setting Appropriate Learning Intentions	Learning intentions can be shared in a variety of ways:	Revisiting learning intentions can be done in a variety of ways:
• *The objective can be any or all of the following depending on the subject / stage of learning:* • **Subject content:** Knowledge and understanding of.... • **Skill set:** Ability to.... Which requires development of ... skills • **Learning:** What progress should be made by the learner in subject knowledge and skill set?	• Written or projected onto the board • Orally • As part of a 'hook' – the learners have to deduce what their learning will be from clues given by the teacher • Written by students in their books • Printed on handouts	• Students review their learning against the lesson objectives • Effective questions • Students record key points (individually or in pairs) • Teacher recaps.

- **Success Criteria**

Success criteria is about how pupils will demonstrate their learning. It includes the learning strategies, evidence, expected outcomes and criteria for achievement. Success criteria break the learning intention down into achievable steps, which then makes the learning intention inclusive of all abilities in the class.
Sometimes not all pupils in a lesson will fully achieve the aim. However, their success is still measurable through the success criteria or the small steps in learning they have met. The learning intention is the 'end' or 'goal.' The success criteria are the learning strategies, or the 'means' and evidence of success.

- **Differentiation**

There are lots of different ways to differentiate a lesson. This can include a well-chosen seating plan, focus group work, verbal support are some examples. Some of these strategies might be specific to SEN children. Inclusion of this in the lesson plan ensures provision has been considered for all pupils. This way all the pupils in the class can make progress and aren't being pushed too much or too little. Even with the simplest of lesson plans, every student's ability must be taken into consideration before the lesson.

- **Resources**

It is important that all the resources such as worksheets which are needed for the lesson are prepared to a high professional standard. Some subjects require specific resources e.g. science, technology, home economics and these should be requested within the department agreed timeframe.

- **Rough Timings**

Lessons will never fully go to plan and sticking to it too rigidly will probably have a negative impact on the flow of the lesson. However, it is still important to consider the timing of each learning section.

Lesson Development

During the lesson pupils will engage in activities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the content and to develop their skills.

- **Key Vocabulary**

The learning and retention of key vocabulary is vital to the learner's understanding of a particular topic/theme/concept. Therefore when planning a lesson, the teacher will include the vocabulary they wish pupils to focus on. By building on opportunities to revisit these key words into the lesson, pupils are more likely to remember them.

- **Assessment Opportunities**

Throughout the lesson, there will be opportunities built in to revisit the learning intention and assess how the pupils are progressing. These will naturally change as the lesson evolves. The **plenary** at the end of the lesson provides an opportunity for a final assessment.

Activities which most pupils do not find engaging are:

- Large amounts of note taking
- Copying large amounts of text from a the board or textbook
- Low order and closed questions
- Writing down notes they don't understand

Activities which most pupils do find engaging are:

- Summarise material in 50-100 words
- Effective questioning
- Ranking statements
- Summarising notes using fishbone, compare and contrast, flowcharts
- Discussion work

Lesson Plenary and Summary

At the end of the lesson teachers will check pupil understanding – referring to lesson intentions and using activities such as exit cards, post its, kahoot etc. Pupils often receive some homework directly linked to the lesson.

https://cte.smu.edu.sg/lesson-planning

Classroom Climate

Classroom climate encompasses several key areas: relationships, classroom management and physical environment.

Relationships

'All effective education is based on the right relationships. It allows the learner to flourish through a confident relationship with a responsible adult. Education …. is about changing pupils, about transforming them, ...so that their gifts and talents are available for everyone in order to make a better world as a result…. The way the teacher talks to the pupil …affects the self-worth and self-concept of the pupil.

(Bart McGettrick)

Professional, affirming and effective teacher pupil relationships are at the heart of life in St Patrick's Academy life, they are the outworking of the Catholic ethos underpinned by the philosophy of Professor Bart McGettrick.
At St Patrick's Academy our pupils are trying their best, working hard and focusing on improving performance.

Guiding principles of productive relationships in St Patrick's Academy

- **Creating a strong sense of community and partnership in the classroom** – focus is not only on improving relationships with pupils but also on enhancing the relationships among pupils. In these structures, they learn that they can depend on others for help, and they learn that different people bring different strengths to a partnership.
- **Teachers seek to empower pupils by promoting a sense of "connectedness"** – this will enable pupils to help one another to learn during lessons through paired work or group work. They use mentors, where appropriate, and provide opportunities for pupils to learn skills and develop habits that will benefit them throughout their lives.
- **Having high expectations for all pupils** – there is a belief that all pupils can succeed and develop as learners. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of attitude to learning, engagement and behaviour. This is supported through our approach to differentiation, catering to the needs of all learners. The setting of high expectations for all pupils is paramount in St Patrick's Academy. Teachers ensure that high aspiration and expectation will be key features of every lesson, every day and therefore the language employed by the teacher must be given careful consideration.

Language to encourage high expectations

- *Use of the word 'yet' at the end of 'I can't do this… yet.'*
- *'If it's not excellent it's not finished.'*
- *'Keep thinking about it. I'll come over in 5 minutes if you're still stuck.'*
- *'There is no such thing as clever.'*
- *'I know you can do it because I remember…'*
- *'If you're not struggling, you're not learning.'*

- **Valuing pupils' views and opinions** – teachers endeavour to create a positive, inclusive, supportive, challenging yet safe environment where pupils will not be afraid to fail. We allow and encourage all pupils to participate in discussions and interaction, e.g. all pupils are called upon, not just those who respond most frequently.
- **Use of authentic praise** – teachers encourage appropriate positive behaviours by rewarding pupils with a smile, a "thank you", praise, good SIMs comments…. · or any strategy that reinforces the positive behaviour. We encourage pupils to see FAIL as the *First Attempt In Learning*, guiding them in their appreciation of the difference between 'successful' and 'not-yet-successful', in terms of the amount of effort expended.
- **Emphasise effort over ability** – we give more importance to pupils' efforts than to their "innate" ability. (Carol Dweck). One way to encourage effort is to provide specific feedback to pupils that recognizes and praises effort. We seek, whenever possible, to promote the 'growth mindset' of pupils in all their interactions with their work, teachers and other pupils.

All pupils and staff play their part in establishing a positive and happy classroom climate based on respect, empathy and genuineness underpinned by our strong Catholic ethos. The relationship between the teacher and the pupil is paramount to success.

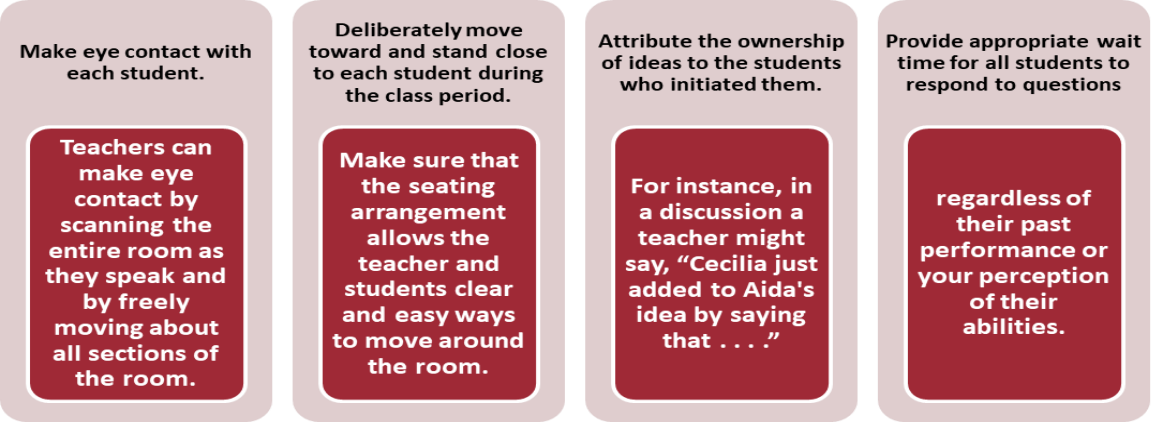
Teachers

- show personal interest in all pupils;
- and pupils interact with each other in a respectful and friendly manner;
- avoid expectations of poor work and/poor behaviour;
- praise pupils, when appropriate, for the effort they put into their work, their behaviour and their attitude;
- praise with a clear indication of next steps for improvement;
- attribute learner success to effort rather than ability;
- value resilience when faced with challenge and difficulties;
- display clear agreed rules that highlight positive expectations for behaviour in the classroom;
- will avoid shouting and using raised a voice

Classroom Management

Teachers at St Patrick's Academy demonstrate effective classroom management techniques and are always approachable to pupils who may need further assistance. Teachers will role model the behaviour they want to see in their pupils. We encourage a stepped approach to behaviour management in the classroom. Teachers ensure that pupils understand the importance of the balance between teacher actions that provide clear consequences for unacceptable behaviour, and teacher actions that recognize and reward acceptable behaviour. (Positive Behaviour for Learning Policy)

Some examples of effective classroom management strategies are outlined below:



(Kerman, Kimball, & Martin, 1980).

Physical Environment

We believe that teachers have the main role to play in helping to create a 'Classrooms for Learning'. They achieve this by controlling the physical environment as much as possible.

Within all classrooms:

- there is a clear subject identity;
- lesson intentions/outline are shared clearly;
- presentational aids to learning are clearly displayed;
- a tidy and ordered environment is maintained;
- seating arrangements are conducive to activity/task and the learning needs of the pupils;
- opportunities are made for pupils to participate in active learning, delivered through a variety of strategies catering to different learning styles.

Wall Displays

These should be current and include the following information:

- career pathways of pupils;
- pastoral/form class information;
- literacy and numeracy focused resources;
- pupil work is displayed, celebrated and regularly refreshed;
- key and command words- these form integral components of the learning;

Visuals should be

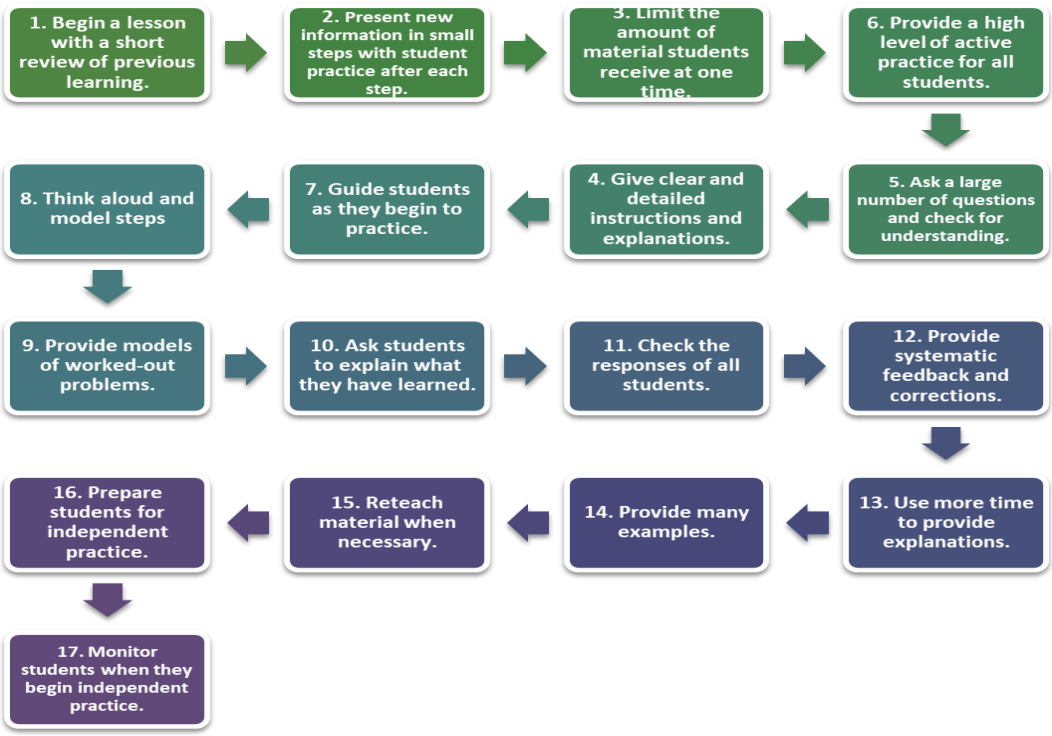
- easy to read and understand
- support learning

Commonly observed classroom routines for pupils in St Patrick's Academy

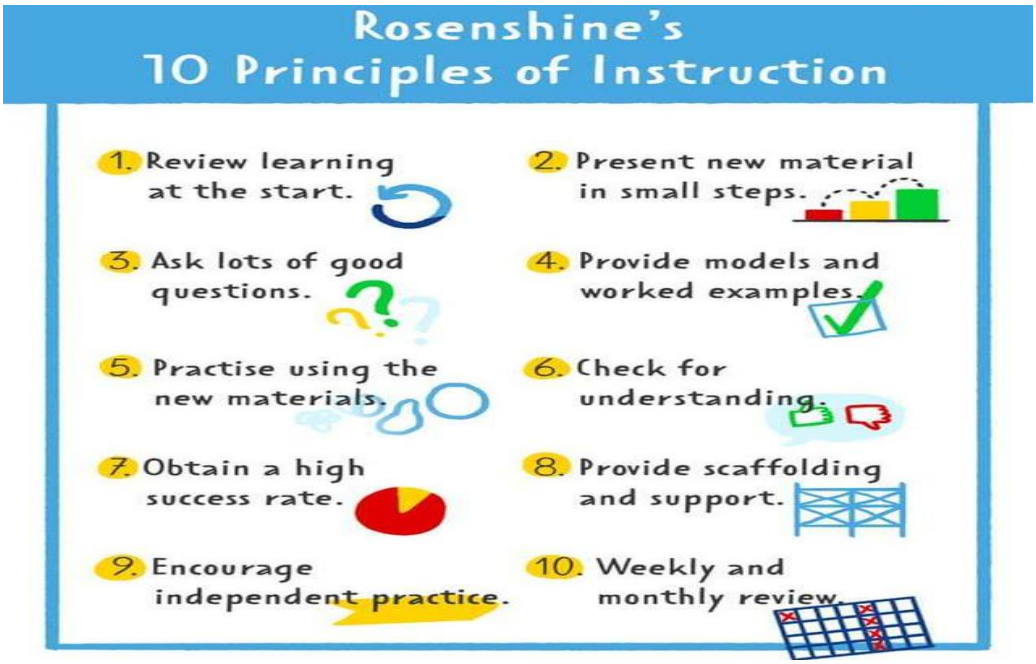
- All adults and fellow pupils in school are treated with respect and everyone acts with good manners at all times;
- The school is kept clean and tidy with the building treated with respect;
- Pupils arrive at lessons on time with all their materials, ready to engage with the lesson;
- Classrooms are only entered with the permission of the teacher and while waiting on the teacher's arrival pupils queue quietly outside the room
- Uniforms are neat and tidy at all times, including before entering each room, at the end of each lesson and between classes.
- An attendance register is taken as early as possible. Any unexplained absences are investigated as a matter of urgency.
- All necessary equipment such as pencil cases, books, including homework diaries, are taken out at the start of each lesson. All homework is written in homework diaries, allowing them to be checked by the pupil, parent, form tutors, class teachers, principal and others;
- Learning intentions and success criteria are displayed and/or explained at the start of each lesson, allowing pupils to know what they are learning and how it fits into the programme of study;
- There is active participation in all lessons. A range of effective questioning strategies are used and all pupils are given equal opportunity to contribute.
- Classroom books, homework books and files are neat and up-to-date and graffiti-free, teachers are looking at them regularly;
- Time is taken at the end of lessons to recap on learning. Plenaries are seen as an important part of lessons, as it may provide an opportunity to check what has been learned.

Teaching for successful learning

Barak Rosenshine identified seventeen ‘instructional procedures’, the actions which ‘master’ teachers regularly employed within their lessons to enable learning to occur.



From these Rosenshine formulated ten key principles, which he argued underpin any effective approach to instruction in lessons:



https://www.innerdrive.co.uk/blog/guide-rosenshine-10-principles/

The Sutton Trust Report into 'What makes great teaching?' (Oct 2014) highlights the quality of instruction in the classroom as having a strong impact on pupil outcomes.

Robert Gagne proposed a nine-step process called the events of instruction, which is useful for planning the sequence of a lesson. Gagne's nine step process in conjunction with Bloom's Revised Taxonomy of Educational Objectives provides support for the class teacher in designing engaging and meaningful instruction.

https://cte.smu.edu.sg/lesson-planning

St Patrick's Academy and its staff believe that the following **six principles** encompass its pursuit of high-quality learning and teaching in the classroom:

- **Provide stretch and challenge for all learners at every opportunity:** we have high expectations of all pupils at all times and believe that pupils are likely to learn most when they are stretched and challenged. It is good for them to struggle just outside of their comfort zone. This involves high challenge, low stress and deep thinking which leads to effective learning. We believe pupils embrace challenges most effectively when they adopt a growth mindset to their work.
- **Effective questioning** by both the teacher and learner is one of the most effective ways to deepen understanding and it is important to focus on the

quality, not the quantity of questions asked in a lesson. Most questions should be planned and be varied to challenge all pupils. Bloom's Taxonomy is a useful reference to ensure progressive cognitive questioning is achieved.

"Asking meaningful and appropriate questions that target essential learning, collecting and interpreting a response from every student, and responding to the results, all in real-time in the flow of a lesson, is hard to do well."

Coe et al. (2020)

Highly effective questioning is fluid and occurs in different forms and during each part of the learning and teaching cycle. It sows the seeds of rich discussion which engages, activates, connects and deepens knowledge. It is important to allow 'thinking time' for pupils, allowing them to go beyond basic recall and construct new learning. The teacher should prompt pupils to encourage extended responses and encourage collaborative responses to questions (e.g. think-pair-share). Pupils should be given the opportunities to ask relevant questions.

- Ensuring **effective modelling**, breaking complex processes into steps, providing time to check understanding and making sure pupils have opportunities to ask questions

  Coffey (2008) describes it as *"an instructional strategy in which the teacher demonstrates a new concept or approach to learning and pupils learn by observing."*

  As a school, we believe that it is our duty to show pupils how to use and manipulate their knowledge to form end outcomes and to ensure that these outcomes are as high a standard as possible. For the modelling to be successful, teachers need to plan the modelling experience carefully. Effective modelling can be undertaken in a range of ways, including live modelling, prepared modelling, peer modelling, expert modelling and the sharing of multiple models;

- Providing appropriate practical activities which **scaffold** the learning for pupils. Scaffolding begins with what is near to the pupils' experiences and builds towards what is further from their experiences. The best scaffolding will support pupils' thinking and their ability to integrate new concepts, as well as providing a structure;

- Ensuring pupils are given the opportunity for guided **independent practice** to allow for mastery through differentiation by outcomes. We believe pupils should be given the time they need to practise new material; repetition is the

key. To memorise something pupils need to return to it time and time again and practise retrieving it from memory;

- Providing **formative assessment and feedback** to guide planning for, implementation and evaluation of effective Learning and Teaching strategies used in the classroom.

'Improving the quality of feedback can lead to the greatest levels of progress being made by pupils.'

Professor John Hattie

Feedback has been shown to have a positive impact on learning outcomes. for very low cost. Feedback | EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)

Effective feedback is used to encourage learners. It will recognise when learners have successfully met the learning intentions and it will enable learners to address any 'learning gaps' i.e. something the pupil cannot yet do or does not yet know.

The feedback provided is specific, accurate and clear (e.g. "It was good because you..." rather than "correct") and gives pupils an explanation of what they are doing correctly AND incorrectly.

Teachers will help pupils to realise that understanding and performance can be developed and that receiving and acting upon feedback plays a key part in this process. It is important that feedback is provided in a timely manner and should be sensitive to the individual needs of the pupil. Feedback should consider:

What can the pupil do?
What can't the pupil do?
How does the pupil's work compare with that of others?
How can the pupil do better?

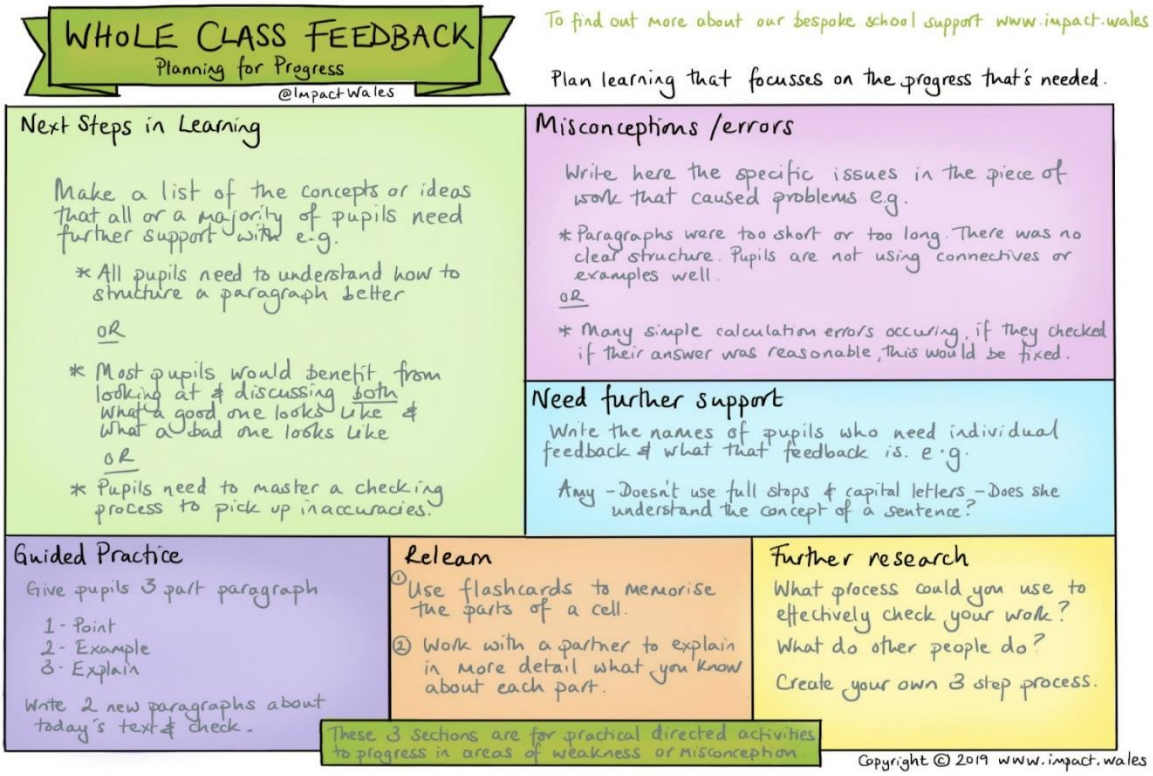
Feedback can take a number of different forms. It can be given verbally, non-verbally or in written form and can come from teachers or the pupils' peers.

Feedback can occur at various points in the learning process, including during learning. It can also vary in length; some feedback might address misconceptions during a lesson while other forms may involve a tracking process over a period of time.

Teachers are encouraged to allow for DIRT time i.e. Directed Improvement and Reflection Time. Feedback is primarily aimed at moving learning forward.

[Providing feedback that moves learning forward (Dylan Wiliam)]

In addition to individual feedback, whole class feedback can be a valuable method of highlighting common misconceptions and how to address these.



We are all teachers of literacy and numeracy. The quality of both pupils' and teacher's language, such as in razor sharp instructions and questioning, are significant determinants of progress.

' I do; we do; you do ' or modelling is a key teaching strategy that, when coupled with high expectations, supports pupils to make maximum progress. By using a metacognitive approach and explaining or demonstrating to pupils what is expected of them, pupils are better able to respond effectively to tasks. It is particularly important that this strategy is used when expecting student to complete any form of extended writing.

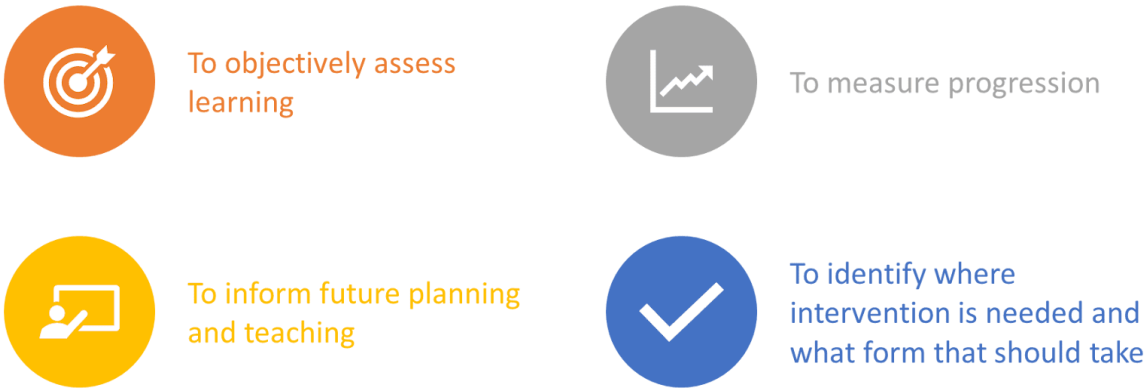
Assessment of and for Successful Learning

While assessment for learning tends to be day-to-day and designed with individual student growth in mind, assessment of learning gives a birds-eye view of how a class or student is performing in relation to other students.

Assessment of learning 'uses evidence of student learning to adapt teaching and learning, or instruction, to meet student needs'

Dylan Wiliams

Why do we assess?



In St Patrick's Academy we use a range of assessments.

- Formative assessment for learning refers to tools that identify misconceptions, struggles and learning gaps along the way and assess how to close those gaps such as class discussions, low stake group work, weekly quizzes, homework assignments and surveys. Dylan Wiliams explains what formative assessment is in the following link:

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZI4rO2ntQo

- Summative assessment of learning evaluates student learning, knowledge, proficiency or success at the conclusion of an instructional period like a unit, course or programme such as standardised test, final projects, end of term exams, mock exams.
- Continuous assessment can include a mix of summative and formative. It refers to the ongoing assessment of pupils' work such as end of topic tests, essays, practical write ups.

Examples of formative and summative assessments

Formative	**Summative**
In class discussions	Instructor created exams
Clicker questions	Standardised tests
Low stakes group work	Final projects
I minute reflection writing assignments	Final essays
Weekly quizzes	Final presentations
Homework assignments	Final reports
Surveys	Final grades

In St Patrick's Academy assessments are consistent with the learning intentions set for the lesson or series of lessons. The nature of the **Assessment of Learning** is shared with the pupils from the outset alongside the success criteria, with explanations about how each aspect of the assessment will demonstrate the pupils' learning.

The assessment identifies the processes / skills / knowledge base to be learned by the student.

Questions that help the planning of the summative assessment are:

- What will the pupils have to do to demonstrate that they have learned what they need to learn?
- What different aspects of their learning will I be assessing?
- How will the mark scheme design incorporate those aspects

Assessment for learning is a process used during lessons which gives pupils more control over their learning by helping them to identify where they are in their learning, what they need to do next and how they can improve. Therefore, our teachers make it central to their practice.

A range of assessment strategies are employed allowing the teacher to give meaningful oral and written feedback to pupils so that they are clear about how they can improve. Pupils are also given opportunities to engage in self and peer assessment supporting the development of their independent learning skills.

Guidance in marking for improvement:	Learning can be assessed during lessons in a variety of ways:	**Continuous Assessment**
• Less grading and more comment only marking • Focus on ongoing errors and not always on the small mistakes • Get students to consider and do something with the marking • Create a dialogue with the students based on their strengths and areas for improvement • Set clear and specific targets and remind pupils of them • Frequency and speed are good but it's quality that counts	• Thumbs up • Marks out of 10 for understanding • Traffic lights • Each one teach one • No hands up – think time and direct questioning • Post-it notes on board • Peer assessment – 2 stars and a wish • Five-minute takeover • Pupils quiz teacher • Being vigilant about students who appear not to be fully engaged in the learning process	• In keeping with the principles of Assessment for Learning, it is the school's policy that pupils are assessed on a regular basis, both through homework and through class-based continuous assessment tasks. Further details can be found in the school's Assessment Policy.

When children don't understand – there are numerous possible reasons: lack of prior knowledge, insufficient fluency, problems with sustaining mental attention. Teachers need to be conscious of the potential for this to be happening across the class.

https://teacherhead.com/2021/10/17/check-for-understanding-why-it-matters-and-how-to-do-it-redsurrey21/

When teachers only select pupils who volunteer and are worried about getting through the material, they tend to ask less demanding questions in order to keep going forwards:

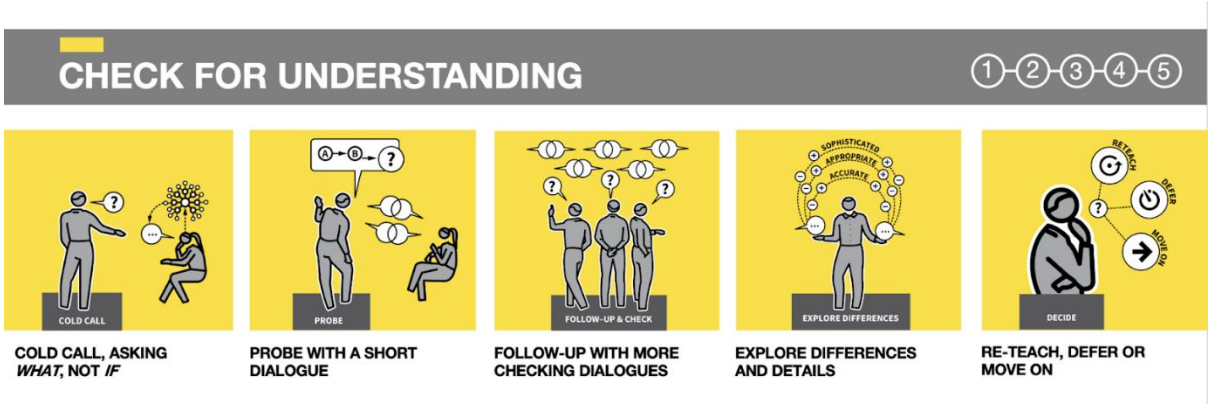
'The teacher by lowering the level of questions and accepting answers form the few, can keep the lesson going but is out of touch with the understanding of most of the class.'

Inside the Black Box Black & Wiliam

Checks for Understanding

The techniques the teacher uses to discover what pupils understand will make a big difference to their learning. Checks for understanding, as part of formative assessment, are used as a learning strategy, not an assessment tool. They are used as a low stakes activity to help pupils and teachers identify gaps and to adjust their learning and teaching both in the moment and in the future. The teacher uses the checks to decide can judge if the pupils are ready to move onto the next stage, or if re-teaching is required.

Rosenshine tells us how **not** to check for understanding – ie by simply asking 'have you understood?' This tells us almost nothing – as pupils rarely so no or could be wrong in saying yes. But, most importantly, there are always degrees of understanding. Instead of asking *if,* we should ask *what* student have understood. Rosenshine gives us a nice list of ways teachers can check for understanding.:



https://teacherhead.com/2021/10/17/check-for-understanding-why-it-matters-and-how-to-do-it-redsurrey21/

https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/general/checking-for-understanding-how-to-use-classroom-rosenshine-principles

There are many different strategies for checking for understanding. In a recent survey in our teachers used a variety of strategies to check for understanding such as: cold calling, brain dump, retervial practice, exit post its, exit surveys, live feedback on Google Classroom , mini whiteboards, online whiteboards, traffic lights, kahoots, flash cards and quizlets.

For new knowledge to be encoded in long-term memory, we must drive thinking and ensure that pupils are cognitively engaged throughout the lesson.

Jamie Clark 2024

https://x.com/xpateducator/status/1792009222269644946?s=48

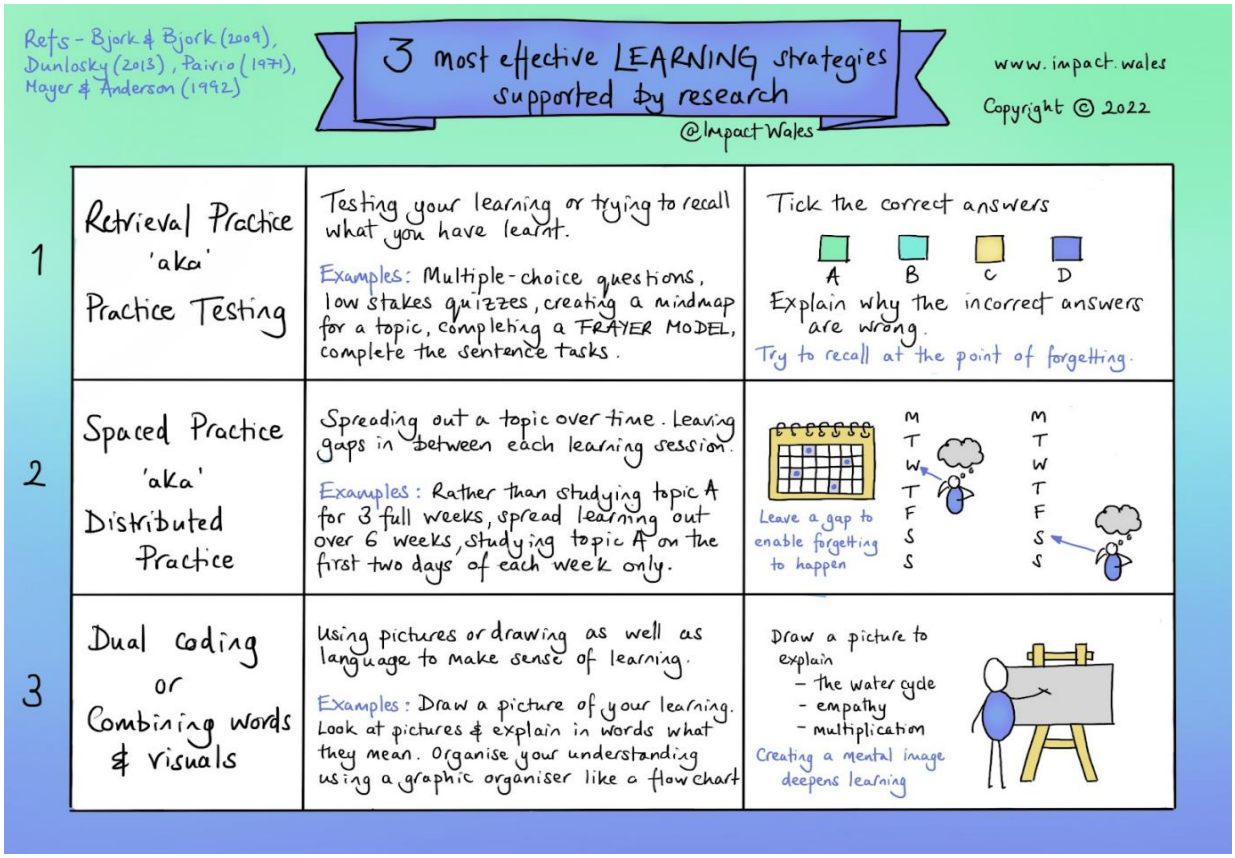
Metacognition and self-regulation approaches to teaching support pupils to think about their own learning more explicitly, often by teaching them specific strategies for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning.
Interventions are usually designed to give pupils a repertoire of strategies to choose from and the skills to select the most suitable strategy for a given learning task.
Self-regulated learning can be broken into three essential components:

- cognition – the mental process involved in knowing, understanding, and learning;
- metacognition – often defined as 'learning to learn'; and
- motivation – willingness to engage our metacognitive and cognitive skills.

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit

There are many different strategies to help pupils learn. These include

- Retrieval Practice,
- Spaced learning
- Dual Coding
- Cold calling
- Think-Pair-Share



Homework

Homework is part of curriculum planning, including schemes of work. It is an extension to the pupils' learning day and contributes to raising achievement. Homework is also an opportunity for pupils to develop their ability to work independently, to research and to extend their learning. It can take the form of separate tasks set each week and it can also consist of a project, or a number of tasks to be completed over a defined period of time. The amount of homework expected to be set by departments is in proportion to curriculum time. Homework refers to tasks given to pupils by their teachers to be completed outside of usual lessons. They must be designed to facilitate learning and not keep pupils busy.

If pupil work is marked regularly, it means they get regular feedback and the opportunity to improve. If pupils do not engage with the feedback, there is no impact.

Marking of homework needs to be meaningful, manageable and motivating. The marking code must be displayed in every classroom in at least size A1. The pupils must feel that their work is marked in the same way across the school. Symbols from the code should be predominantly in the margin in written work; the key is that pupils understand where they are making mistakes, or their work needs to be improved. The same symbols should be used when marking electronically.

Teachers should ensure that pupils at least record homework in their planner as a prompt, even if they do not always write it in full. The purpose of the student planner is to develop independence and resilience in managing their learning. They should capture both what they have done and what they plan to do over the week.

Independent learning

St Patrick's Academy understands that creating independent learners is a long-term process. It is about the cultivation and the development of habits of mind over time. Today there is a challenge in education to develop independent learners and challenge the culture of dependency. Therefore dialogue between teachers and pupils is about what needs to be improved and how to improve it based upon honest and challenging discussions centred on analysis of available evidence (internal and external data). The aim is to generate solutions that are concrete, measurable and agreed. Guided by the teacher, pupils develop the skills, attitudes and confidence to take responsibility for bringing about their own improvement.

Guiding principles on independent learning:

- pupils are active learners as opposed to being passive learners;
- pupils work out the answers rather than being given them;

- pupils want to study because they want to understand more, rather than taking a utilitarian stance that they are doing this because they want to pass assessments/examinations;
- pupils develop the skills for 21st century learning and living i.e.TSPCs; Managing information, thinking, problem solving and decision-making, being creative, working with others and self- management.

To facilitate Independent learning teachers:

- design and promote opportunities for skill development including teamwork, independent enquiry, self-evaluation, problem solving, time management, effective communication and critical/creative thinking;
- ensure that classroom environments promote skills-based learning where independence, thinking skills, collaboration and active learning are developed at the same time as knowledge is acquired;
- alter mindsets, they resist the instinct to help the pupils they teach as soon as they have a problem;
- they understand that excessive help and support *denies pupils the opportunity to think for themselves and stops them having to work through difficulties or solve problems. The tacit message is that there will always be someone else there to do it for them.*
- help pupils to assess their own progress and to learn that feeling stuck, working hard and persevering are all valuable parts of their learning journey;
- use critical thinking to assess whether or not to intervene in any given situation. They understand that sometimes it will be appropriate, necessary even and sometimes it won't:

Pupil Voice

Pupil voice plays an important role in any school's improvement. Therefore pupils are involved in self evaluation, planning and decision making processes. Pupil voice may take the form of surveys/questionnaires, Google forms and focus groups Pupil voice is a valuable method of determining the views of pupils in relation to key areas such as homework, assessment, learning strategies and course content. The data generated will identify the strengths of the department and areas in which provision can be improved. Subsequent pupil voice will determine the impact of the actions taken.
https://cris.brighton.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/4979678/Engaging_with_pupils_Listening_to_the_voices_of_children_and_young_people.pdf

Staff Professional Learning

The Sutton Trust Report into 'What makes great teaching?' highlights the fact that demonstration and knowledge of content and pedagogy of teaching staff has one of the strongest impacts on pupil outcomes. It states that:

'When a teacher's knowledge falls below a certain level, it becomes a significant impediment to pupils' learning. All teachers should endeavour to keep up to date with the latest developments in their subject area and understand the ways in which pupils think about the content, enabling them to effectively evaluate the thinking behind pupils' own methods, and identify pupils' common misconceptions.'

In St Patrick's Academy staff avail of opportunities to keep abreast of the latest research and development in their subject area through well-conceived, robust and effective professional development opportunities.

Additionally, staff are encouraged to involve themselves in the following professional development activities:

- attendance at CCEA events and Agreement Trials;
- attendance at subject-specific courses and conference;
- in-house training on learning and teaching;
- regular checks on the school TPL site
- use of external agencies that provide bespoke training linked to the School Development Plan's priorities;
- bespoke training in collaboration with the Education Authority;
- use of internal systems such as PRSD
- sharing with leading practitioners in other schools / institutions.

Reviewed: June 2026

To be reviewed: June 2027