

INVERNESS ROYAL ACADEMY

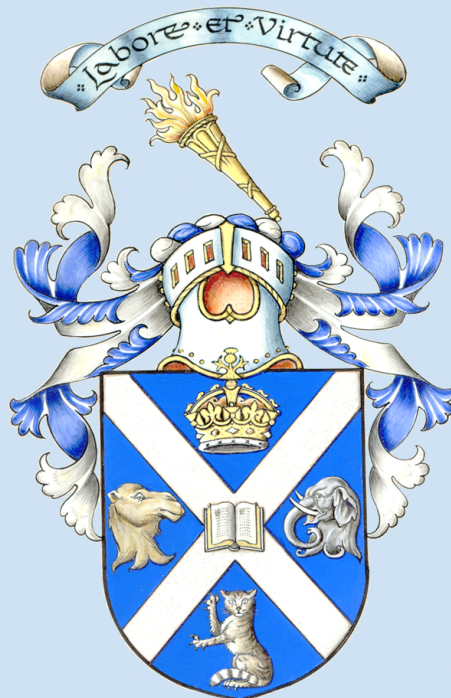
LEARNING & TEACHING POLICY

"At Inverness Royal Academy we strive to bring out the best in all of our pupils"

COMMITMENT COMPASSION HONESTY RESPECT RESPONSIBILITY

The IRA Lesson

At Inverness Royal Academy we strive to bring out the best in all of our pupils.



WE ARE A UNICEF GOLD RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL



Children's rights are learned, understood and lived in this school.



INTRODUCTION

Inverness Royal Academy is committed to providing exceptional learning and teaching experiences for all young people, enabling them to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors. Our approach is grounded in the principles of equity, excellence, and empowerment, ensuring every young person can access a sustainable and prosperous future.

As a Gold Rights Respecting School, we place the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) at the heart of everything we do. We recognise that:

- Every child has the right to an education that develops their personality, talents, and abilities to the fullest (Article 29)
- Every child has the right to express their views and have them taken seriously (Article 12)
- Every child has the right to access information and materials that promote their wellbeing (Article 17)

This policy reflects our commitment to these rights and to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4: Quality Education.

RATIONALE

"It is not what we teach but how we teach and how children learn that will make the difference"

High-quality learning and teaching is the cornerstone of educational success. At Inverness Royal Academy, we are dedicated to providing consistency of experience across all curriculum areas through **'The IRA Lesson'** – our agreed approach to lesson structure and delivery.

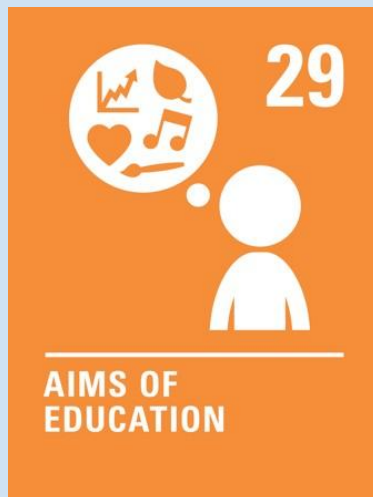
This policy recognises that:

- Effective learning should be meaningful, motivational, and engaging, requiring highly skilled practitioners
- High-quality learning and teaching reflects and shapes the positive ethos and culture of our school, embedding our core values: Commitment, Compassion, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility
- Young people learn in diverse ways, and our teaching approaches and learning environments must be responsive to individual needs
- Young people's experiences should be challenging, enjoyable, and promote independence, curiosity, and confidence
- Assessment, including high-quality feedback, is integral to the learning process and should actively involve young people in understanding their progress and next steps
- The rights of every child must be protected and promoted through our learning and teaching practices

OUR VISION FOR LEARNING

At Inverness Royal Academy, we define learning as:

- Activities that challenge and extend the learner beyond their current capabilities
- A unique and personal process that honours individual differences
- The active processing and application of new knowledge, understanding, and skills
- A motivating and engaging experience that inspires curiosity
- A reflective activity that develops metacognition
- The foundation for achieving success in all its forms
- An embodiment of our school values: Commitment, Compassion, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility
- A right that every child possesses (UNCRC Article 28)



THE IRA LESSON: OUR FRAMEWORK FOR EXCELLENCE

At Inverness Royal Academy, we have developed 'The IRA Lesson' – a consistent approach to lesson structure that ensures high-quality learning experiences for all young people. All lessons follow this framework, which comprises four key phases with ongoing checking for understanding throughout.



STARTER: DAILY REVIEW

Purpose: To focus learners' minds, activate prior knowledge, and prepare for learning

What teachers do:

- Set a quick, focused activity that pupils complete as they enter the classroom
- Design tasks that may review prior learning or develop general subject skills
- Ensure activities stimulate interest and cognitive engagement

What pupils experience:

- Arrive on time and ready to engage
- Focus their minds on the subject matter
- Feel prepared and ready to learn

BEGINNING: SETTING THE DIRECTION

Learning Intentions and Success Criteria

Purpose: To ensure clarity of learning goals and success measures

What teachers do:

- Share clear, accessible Learning Intentions (LI) that explain what pupils will learn and why
- Present Success Criteria (SC) that define what success looks like
- Use Bloom's Taxonomy to frame learning at appropriate cognitive levels (remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate, create)
- Involve pupils in creating or adapting success criteria where appropriate
- Link learning to prior knowledge and future applications

What pupils experience:

- Feel confident about what they are learning and why it matters
- Understand what is expected throughout the lesson
- Know how they will demonstrate their learning
- Experience their right to be informed and involved in their education (UNCRC Article 12)

High-Quality Explanations

Purpose: To provide clear, accessible instruction that builds understanding

What teachers do:

- Deliver clear explanations using presentations, demonstrations, or combinations of approaches
- Break down complex concepts into manageable components
- Use effective modelling to demonstrate thinking processes
- Check for understanding before moving forward
- Utilise appropriate resources and examples
- Make connections to real-world contexts and pupils' experiences

What pupils experience:

- Give full attention to teacher explanations
- Avoid distractions and maintain focus
- Process, understand, and retain information effectively
- Experience their right to access information that supports their development (UNCRC Article 17)

MIDDLE: ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT AND PRACTICE

Monitored Learning Activity

Purpose: To provide opportunities for pupils to practise, apply, and consolidate learning

What teachers do:

- Design learning activities that allow pupils to practise skills and apply knowledge
- Create opportunities for independent work, pair work, and collaborative learning
- Ensure activities are appropriately differentiated to meet diverse needs
- Provide choice where appropriate to promote autonomy
- Foster problem-solving and critical thinking
- Encourage pupils to lead their own learning

What pupils experience:

- Take responsibility for their own learning

- Remain actively engaged and think deeply about their learning
- Work independently or collaboratively as appropriate
- Experience their right to participate meaningfully in their education (UNCRC Article 12)
- Feel motivated and interested in their learning

Appropriate Support and Challenge

Purpose: To ensure all learners can access learning while being appropriately challenged

What teachers do:

- Continuously monitor pupils' progress during learning activities
- Adjust levels of support and challenge based on individual needs
- Provide timely interventions to support struggling learners
- Extend learning for those who are ready for additional challenge
- Create a safe environment where mistakes are valued as learning opportunities
- Use assessment information to inform teaching decisions in real-time

What pupils experience:

- Always try their best
- Feel supported and challenged appropriately
- Contribute confidently to discussions
- Ask and answer relevant questions
- Experience their right to an education that develops their talents to the fullest (UNCRC Article 29)

END: REFLECTION AND CONSOLIDATION

Self-Reflection

Purpose: To enable pupils to evaluate their learning and identify next steps

What teachers do:

- Provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their progress against Learning Intentions and Success Criteria

- Facilitate plenary activities that consolidate learning
- Encourage self-assessment and peer assessment
- Support pupils to identify their strengths and next steps
- Make connections to future learning

What pupils experience:

- Assess their work against Success Criteria
- Recognise strengths in their learning
- Identify clear next steps for improvement
- Feel a sense of achievement and progress
- Understand what they have learned and how well they have learned it

THROUGHOUT THE LESSON: CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Effective Questioning

Purpose: To assess understanding, deepen thinking, and promote discussion

Questioning is at the heart of effective learning and teaching. It should be purposeful, planned, and permeate all phases of the lesson.

What teachers do:

- Ask questions to check understanding at different moments throughout the lesson
- Use a range of question types, balancing lower-order and higher-order questions
- Employ open questions that promote enquiry and discussion ("What do you think...?")
- Ask follow-up questions that probe deeper ("Why? How do you know? Can you give me an example?")
- Provide thinking time (wait time) to allow pupils to formulate thoughtful responses
- Create opportunities for pupils to discuss answers with peers before sharing
- Ensure questioning is linked to Learning Intentions and Success Criteria
- Encourage pupils to ask their own questions

Types of questioning:

Lower-Order Questions (Remember, Understand, Apply):

- Organise behaviour and maintain focus
- Ascertain existing knowledge
- Create interest in a topic
- Check basic understanding

Note: Pupils retain 5-30% of learning from lower-order questioning alone

Higher-Order Questions (Analyse, Evaluate, Create):

- Encourage pupils to ask their own questions
- Provide opportunities to reflect and learn through discussion
- Develop deeper understanding and critical thinking
- Promote creativity and problem-solving

Note: Pupils retain 50-90% of learning from higher-order questioning

What pupils experience:

- Feel confident to contribute
- Have time to think before responding
- Welcome questions as opportunities to demonstrate understanding
- Ask their own questions to deepen understanding
- Experience their right to express views and be heard (UNCRC Article 12)

HIGH-QUALITY FEEDBACK: THE KEY TO PROGRESS

Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement. At Inverness Royal Academy, we are committed to providing feedback that is timely, specific, actionable, and empowering.

Principles of Effective Feedback

- Feedback should focus on learning, not just performance
- Feedback should be timely – provided when it can be most effectively used
- Feedback should be specific and relate directly to Learning Intentions and Success Criteria
- Feedback should identify strengths and next steps

- Feedback should be actionable – pupils should know what to do to improve
- Feedback should involve pupils actively in the process

Types of Feedback

Verbal Feedback:

- Provided during lessons as teachers monitor learning
- Immediate and responsive to pupils' needs
- Allows for dialogue and clarification
- Should be specific and linked to success criteria
- Most effective when pupils are given time to act on feedback immediately

Written Feedback:

- Provided on written work, assessments, and assignments
- Should be manageable for teachers and meaningful for pupils
- Must identify specific strengths (What Went Well - WWW)
- Must identify specific next steps (Even Better If - EBI)
- Should use subject-specific language where appropriate
- Pupils should be given time to read, respond to, and act on written feedback

Self-Assessment and Peer Assessment:

- Enables pupils to develop metacognitive skills
- Promotes ownership of learning
- Should be structured using Learning Intentions and Success Criteria
- Requires explicit teaching of assessment skills
- Should create a culture of mutual support and respect
- Reflects pupils' right to participate meaningfully in their education (UNCRC Article 12)

Responsibilities for Effective Feedback

Teacher Responsibilities:

- Use assessment information to inform feedback
- Ensure feedback is personalised and specific

- Provide opportunities for pupils to act on feedback
- Model how to give and receive feedback constructively
- Create a classroom culture where feedback is valued and expected

Pupil Responsibilities:

- Be open to receiving feedback
- Try hard to answer questions honestly
- Welcome feedback as an opportunity to improve
- Act on feedback provided by teachers and peers
- Engage in self-reflection and self-assessment
- Provide thoughtful feedback to peers

ASSESSMENT: UNDERSTANDING PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

The key role of assessment is to support learning. Assessment should provide an emerging picture of pupils' strengths and next steps, informing the teaching process and enabling pupils to understand and demonstrate their progress.

Why We Assess

- To support learning and inform planning
- To promote learner engagement and motivation
- To ensure appropriate and timely support and challenge
- To report on progress and achievement
- To identify next steps in learning

When We Assess

- Continuously as part of ongoing learning and teaching
- In every lesson through checking for understanding
- At key points through summative assessments

What We Assess

- Knowledge and understanding
- Skills and their application
- Attributes and capabilities
- Progress toward achieving Curriculum for Excellence Benchmarks

Formative Assessment (Assessment for Learning)

Formative assessment is ongoing and integral to effective learning and teaching. It involves teachers and pupils working together to identify how learning can be improved.

Key features:

- Clear Learning Intentions and Success Criteria shared and understood
- Regular checking for understanding throughout lessons
- High-quality, timely, and actionable feedback
- Pupil involvement in self-assessment and peer assessment
- Use of assessment information to adapt teaching in real-time

Methods include:

- Starter activities and exit passes
- Questioning and dialogue
- Think-pair-share and other collaborative strategies
- Observation of pupil engagement and understanding
- Analysis of pupil work during lessons

Summative Assessment (Assessment of Learning)

Summative assessment evaluates learning at the end of a unit, course, or period of study.

Examples include:

- End of topic tests measured against benchmarks
- SQA examinations and assessments
- Practical assessments and performances
- Projects and portfolios

Effective assessment should:

- Use a variety of approaches to allow pupils to demonstrate their learning
- Be appropriate to individual learning needs
- Provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their strengths and next steps
- Inform future teaching and learning
- Be manageable and meaningful for both teachers and pupils

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Teachers

- Implement The IRA Lesson framework consistently
- Plan engaging, challenging, and appropriately differentiated learning experiences
- Use assessment information to inform teaching and provide high-quality feedback
- Create rights-respecting learning environments
- Engage in professional learning to continuously improve practice
- Collaborate with colleagues to share effective practice
- Build positive relationships with pupils and families
- Monitor and support pupil progress and wellbeing

Pupils

- Engage actively in their learning
- Take responsibility for their learning and behaviour
- Act on feedback provided by teachers and peers
- Respect the rights of others
- Support peers in their learning
- Communicate when they need help or support
- Reflect on their progress and set personal goals

Parents/Carers

- Support their child's learning at home
- Engage in dialogue with the school about their child's progress
- Attend parent meetings and events
- Encourage their child to take responsibility for learning
- Communicate any concerns about their child's learning or wellbeing

Senior Leadership

- Provide strategic direction and support for learning and teaching
- Ensure resources and professional learning opportunities are available
- Monitor and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching
- Celebrate and share effective practice

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The quality of learning and teaching will be monitored and evaluated through:

- Classroom observations
- Analysis of assessment data and pupil progress
- Pupil voice and feedback
- Parent/carer feedback
- Professional dialogue and self-evaluation
- Departmental reviews and quality assurance processes
- School improvement planning processes

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

All staff are committed to continuous professional learning to enhance the quality of learning and teaching. This includes:

- Engagement with pedagogical research and educational literature
- Participation in school-based professional learning opportunities
- Sharing effective practice through department meetings and peer observation
- Engaging in professional dialogue about learning and teaching
- Undertaking formal professional qualifications where appropriate
- Reflecting on practice and responding to feedback

CONCLUSION

At Inverness Royal Academy, we are committed to bringing out the best in all of our pupils through high-quality, consistent, and rights-respecting learning and teaching. The IRA Lesson provides a clear framework for excellence, ensuring that every pupil, in every lesson, experiences teaching that is engaging, challenging, and supportive.

This policy reflects our core values of Commitment, Compassion, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility, and our dedication to upholding the rights of every child as enshrined in the UNCRC. By working together – teachers, pupils, parents, and the wider community – we will ensure that every young person at Inverness Royal Academy achieves their fullest potential and is prepared for a successful, fulfilling future.

"At Inverness Royal Academy we strive to bring out the best in all of our pupils"

Policy Review Information

Policy Review Date: 16th January 2026

Next Review Date: January 2027