



Report of the Director of Education

Education & Skills Service Transformation Committee - 9 April 2025

Policy on the Principles to Promote Learning

Purpose:	To create a clear set of principles for Swansea schools as a framework to support pupil progression and refine schools' teaching and learning policies.
Policy Framework:	Curriculum for Wales and Swansea Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028.
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) The committee consider the wider stakeholder views expressed since the drafting of the policy. 2) The refined draft policy is considered and recommended to cabinet for approval.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Curriculum reform in Wales has placed a fresh emphasis on learner achievement, whether that is progress of individual learners in lessons, over time or as part of a group.
- 1.2 In supporting the transformative reform agenda of the Curriculum for Wales in Swansea, the school improvement team has been working with the Education and Skills Service Transformation Committee to highlight the importance of individual pupil progression and what the consistent expectations might be across schools.

- 1.3 The committee has already received insightful presentations on what is meant by assessment and progression. Following stakeholder engagement, further valuable input has been gathered, and the draft principles have been refined to reflect this feedback. The revised principles are intended to be used consistently to maximise pupil progression.
- 1.4 The committee has worked closely with senior officers, including the Principal School Improvement Adviser and the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning on the topic of pupil progression.
- 1.5 The committee is asked to review the amended Principles to Promote Learning Policy document, which incorporates stakeholder feedback. The refined draft policy is now for final approval.
- 1.6 This report strives to address and include many of the prior considerations, comments and input by both the committee and stakeholders into a coherent draft policy document in Appendix A.

2. Key considerations to date

- 2.1 In drafting a set of principles to promote learning in Swansea schools, consideration has been given by the committee to capturing existing effective practice and supporting the interpretation of pupil progression across schools and settings within the local authority.
- 2.2 The committee has considered that overall progression in learning is a process of developing knowledge, skills and understanding over time. The aim at the conclusion of their compulsory education is for each young person to reach their individual potential. This means they should be successful and ready for post-16 educational opportunities or the world of work.
- 2.3 It is acknowledged that one of the requirements for each school and setting is that it has to publish, through its governing body, its arrangements for curriculum and assessment. Ongoing assessment should be in place for every learner and the core purpose of assessment is to support pupil progression.
- 2.4 The local authority has already facilitated professional development and a shared understanding of linear progression for pupils from 3-16. The school improvement team has also recently supported schools to evaluate pupil progression and invested in school improvement professionals to help support pupil progression.
- 2.5 The committee is appraised of the aim for teachers and school leaders to build the new curriculum from the ground up. Evidence suggests a balance needs to be struck between top down and bottom-up approaches – a midway point is needed between the tighter elements of

policy which offer signposts and the space for local variation, increasing expertise. This draft policy serves both requirements.

- 2.6 It is appropriate that the committee has agreed on a set of principles to promote learning because improving teaching and learning is a key theme within improving Education and Skills within the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 2.7 The committee has consistently emphasised the importance of having the same educational aspirations for all with an imperative of not disadvantaging learners because of the impact of poverty.

3. Stakeholder Engagement Feedback

- 3.1 During the stakeholder engagement period (20 February – 31 March 2025), a range of valuable input was received from headteacher colleagues and professional partners in response to the draft *Principles*. Feedback was gathered both via written responses and through direct commentary on the structure and content of the draft policy. Overall, there was broad support for the intent and scope of the document, with stakeholders recognising its potential to unify practice across the local authority and support the progression of all learners in a consistent, inclusive and evidence-informed way.
- 3.2 Respondents welcomed the emphasis on holistic development, individualised learning and inclusive pedagogy. However, a recurring theme was the need to clarify how the local authority's principles add value beyond existing Welsh Government (WG) and Curriculum for Wales (CfW) guidance. Several stakeholders noted overlap with national documentation, with calls to streamline some sections and articulate more clearly what is distinctive about Swansea's local interpretation—particularly in terms of practical application and expectations at school level.
- 3.3 Additional suggestions included the need for clearer definitions (e.g. “environment of excellence” and “independence”), broader references to all learners rather than focusing solely on those with ALN and greater emphasis on formative assessment that informs planning and addresses misconceptions promptly. Contributors also proposed enhancements such as referencing the Enabling Learning guidance, incorporating metacognition and ipsative assessment and including areas like creative arts and mental health more explicitly.
- 3.4 Importantly, many school leaders expressed the need for the final document to be practitioner-friendly, avoiding duplication of existing resources and instead offering clear, actionable guidance that supports implementation. There was support for including worked examples or case studies as well as recognition that the principles should empower schools rather than act as an additional layer of accountability

4. General Issues

- 4.1 Appendix A now provides a final draft set of principles for approval by the Education and Skills Service Transformation Committee.
- 4.2 Following a period of stakeholder engagement, a number of thoughtful and constructive suggestions were received from school leaders and colleagues across the sector. As a result, several amendments have been made to strengthen the clarity, inclusivity and practical application of the *Principles*. These changes aim to ensure that the final version is both locally meaningful and supportive of national policy.
- 4.3 To improve clarity, several terms and phrases were refined. For example, “environment of excellence” has been defined more clearly to reflect high expectations, mutual respect and a culture of curiosity. Similarly, references to “independent learning” were clarified to recognise that independence can take different forms depending on pupil age and stage, including choice-making, self-reflection and managing tasks with increasing autonomy. In response to feedback, inclusive language has been strengthened - for instance, references to pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) now explicitly include *all learners* to reflect a broader commitment to equity.
- 4.4 Additional content was incorporated to enhance the practical relevance of the document. The guidance now includes references to the Enabling Learning framework available on Hwb, highlights the importance of metacognition in supporting learner autonomy and introduces the concept of ipsative assessment as a way of tracking pupil progress over time. Mental health has been added to sections relating to well-being and healthy lifestyle choices and minor typographical errors were also corrected for clarity.
- 4.5 Furthermore, the role of assessment has been reinforced throughout the document, with clearer emphasis placed on its formative purpose. Changes clarify that assessment should inform future teaching, address misconceptions promptly and support both individual learner growth and group-level curriculum planning. Where appropriate, the use of assessment information to inform governance and evaluation processes has also been acknowledged.
- 4.6 Collectively, these changes reflect a genuine co-construction process and aim to ensure that the Principles are not only theoretically sound but also practically supportive for schools across Swansea as they continue to embed progression at the heart of their curriculum and teaching practices

5. Post-Adoption Development Opportunities

- 5.1 While a number of refinements to the Principles have been made in response to stakeholder feedback, several valuable suggestions are more appropriately addressed through continued development work after the policy is adopted. These areas offer opportunities to build on the strong foundation of the Principles and ensure they are embedded meaningfully across Swansea schools.
- 5.2 One key area for future development is the creation of practical tools and case studies to support implementation. Stakeholders emphasised the need for guidance that goes beyond theory and reflects real-world classroom practice. As such, a suite of practitioner-facing materials - such as worked examples, templates and snapshots of effective approaches - can be developed to illustrate how the Principles translate into day-to-day teaching, learning and assessment.
- 5.3 There is also scope to offer professional learning opportunities to further unpack complex concepts within the Principles. Terms such as "independence", "environment of excellence" and "metacognition" could benefit from shared discussion and exploration across schools to ensure a consistent understanding and application. In addition, further work can support schools to refine their assessment practice - particularly around formative assessment, addressing misconceptions promptly and exploring the use of ipsative approaches that track individual learner growth over time.
- 5.4 Finally, links with wider policy frameworks and strategic school improvement processes can be strengthened. This includes developing supplementary guidance that aligns the Principles with national resources such as the Curriculum for Wales, the Enabling Learning guidance and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) frameworks. Support for school leaders and governors in using progression data to inform evaluation and planning could also be incorporated into future improvement cycles.
- 5.5 These ongoing actions will ensure that the Principles not only reflect local priorities but also empower schools to embed them effectively and sustainably.

6. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 6.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

6.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

6.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

6.1.3 An IIA Screening Form (Appendix B) has been completed with the agreed outcome that a full IIA report was not required due to the positive impact for learners and practitioners in schools.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A	Final Draft Principles to Promote Learning Policy
Appendix B	IIA Screening Form