

# Lurgan Junior High School

Learning & Teaching Policy

Personnel Responsible: Vice-Principal (Curriculum) Approved by Board of Governors: 19th June, 2024. Period & Date for Review: Bi-annually; June 2026.

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#### **Section A**

## **Introduction to our Learning & Teaching Policy**

Our school's Mission Statement is: *Empowering you to reach your full potential, to feel respected, cared for and equal'.* 

Our vision for Learning and Teaching is underpinned by consultation with stakeholders and by the findings of educational research and has been defined as follows:

'To promote, through high quality learning and teaching experiences, a culture of effort, aspiration and achievement which allows all our pupils to become the best person that they can be.'

Our policy has also considered the 2023 Independent Review of Education in Northern Ireland which stated that:

'The curriculum must rest on a proper understanding of how people learn. Progressively building up educational capital is fundamental. That has to involve the acquisition of knowledge (including practical knowledge) and its commitment to long-term memory. The learner must be assisted to translate knowledge into understanding and to be able to apply that understanding.

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/121HhVUFaKHMdhGcQyrHaOmpQpMKCDcDojzFo88 mKWyM/edit?usp=sharing)

This is further encapsulated in a statement from Professor Bart J. McGettrick in *Thinking about Thinking*, (2004):

'The curriculum is not the purpose of education but the means to the end. Among the most significant purposes of education are forming people who have an awareness of their inner self and what it is to be a human being; and ...fostering...a belief that we can become someone more than we thought we could be.'

As a result of these factors and beliefs about the purpose and role of education, Lurgan JHS places much value on the acquisition of knowledge and in the imparting of knowledge through a bespoke knowledge-rich curriculum at Key Stage 3. It firmly believes that such a curriculum is the best way to provide equity of opportunity and access for pupils of all abilities, regardless of their educational starting point.

Our 2023/24 review of our Learning & Teaching Policy has been driven by the following objectives:

- To meet the needs of the children at Lurgan JHS.
- To reflect our values and our Christian ethos and to fulfil the overall Mission and Aims of the school outlined above.
- To define a curriculum that is distinctive to our school in the context of its children, its community, and the unique secondary school system it is part of.
- To use robust and up-to-date educational research and views of stakeholders to ensure we employ the most effective Learning & Teaching approaches.
- To meet statutory requirements.

Our review has also included lessons learnt from reading the following books thereby helping to shape our understanding of what makes good learning and good teaching:

Sherrington's (2018) Rosenshine's Principles in Action, Sherrington (2020) Walkthrus: Vol's 1, 2 and 3, Sherrington (2017) The Learning Rainforest, Christodoulou (2017) Making Good Progress, Allison and Tharby (2015) Making Every Lesson Count, Lemov (2015) Teach Like a Champion, Strickland (2020) Education Exposed Vol 2, Willingham's (2021) Why Don't pupils Like School?

Our exploration of these texts has helped refine our understanding of effective learning and teaching and, consequently, school has formulated the following Learning & Teaching Aims:

- To afford pupils the opportunity to develop a good understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses and encourage them to develop a clear pathway to further study.
- To impart a body of core knowledge in every subject across the curriculum, to equip children to deal with challenges throughout the Key Stage and also provide a sound basis for further study at Key Stage 4.
- To furnish pupils with the core curriculum, regardless of their starting academic standpoint, gender or background.
- To foster a culture of resilience by encouraging competition and allowing our pupils to win and lose, succeed and fail.
- To ensure the curriculum allows pupils to be knowledgeable enough about the world around them to transform it in the future.
- To deliver teacher-led lessons where every pupil benefits fully from the subject expertise of the teacher.

#### **School Context**

This policy reflects our context in a unique educational system within the Craigavon Area, commonly referred to as the Dickson Plan, and our unique Key Stage 3 only Curriculum, which by its nature must be cognisant of the curriculum at Key Stages 2 and 4.

As a Key Stage 3 only school, we deliver a specialised curriculum and enjoy the benefit of most of our subjects being delivered by subject specialists.

This helps to overcome the disadvantages recognised by reviews of 11-18 education which have included the suggestion that KS3 is simply 'the wander years' where children wander through the formative years of secondary education with a lack of focus and understanding of any end goal, as these schools tend to focus on examination classes at KS4 and Post-16.

School recognises that it is one of very few schools in NI that enjoys an intake of 250 pupils per Year Group. This means that we enjoy working with children at all levels of ability, from pupils in Specialist Provision in Mainstream School (SPiMS) to the Gifted and Talented.

Under the system of open enrolment, pupils attending Lurgan JHS do so on the basis of criteria set by the Board of Governors. This set of criteria does not involve any type of entrance/selection examination although admissions criteria (available in the current School Prospectus) are set and reviewed annually by the Board of Governors.

As part of the Dickson Plan, all Junior High schools set their own internal examinations. Parents are able to use these examination results to apply for their child to attend either a local Grammar or Secondary School in Year 11.

This policy also reflects the requirements of the <u>Northern Ireland Curriculum Programmes of</u> Study.

Furthermore, it reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the <u>Special</u> <u>Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014</u> and the <u>Equality Act 2010</u>

# Roles & Responsibilities in relation to our Learning & Teaching Policy

#### Role of the Board of Governors

The Board of Governors will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and support the school in its implementation.

The Board of Governors will also ensure that:

- A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets.
- Enough teaching time is provided for pupils to cover the NI Curriculum and other statutory requirements.
- Proper provision is made for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs (SEN).
- The school implements the relevant statutory assessment arrangements.
- It participates actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum.
- Pupils from Year 8 onwards are provided with independent, impartial careers guidance, and that this is appropriately resourced.

## Role of the Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to, and that:

- All required elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the school
  chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and
  indicate how the needs of individual pupils will be met.
- The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the governing board.
- They manage requests to withdraw children from curriculum subjects, where appropriate.
- The school's procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements.
- The governing board is fully involved in decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum.
- The governing board is advised on whole-school targets in order to make informed decisions.
- Proper provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with SEN.

#### The Role of other staff

The Vice-Principal and the Senior Teacher (Curriculum), along with the Principal, make up the Curriculum Team which has responsibility for short, medium and long term planning and implementation of this policy.

The Curriculum Team will communicate with Heads of Department, Coordinators and Subject Teachers and they will together ensure that the school curriculum is implemented in accordance with this policy.

## **Curriculum Organisation and Planning**

#### Curriculum Model

Key Stage 3 applies to pupils aged 11-14 in school Years 8, 9 and 10. Lurgan JHS is part of a unique local context with children transferring from a wide range of Primary Schools into a three-year comprehensive setting and our curriculum approach is shaped by this context.

Examination results from Years 9 &10 Lurgan JHS pupils are used by local Key Stage 4 schools to either admit pupils (to a 14-18 Grammar School setting) or to place pupils in subject option bands (in a 14-16 Secondary School setting).

At Key Stage 3, the curriculum is delivered through Areas of Learning, organised as subjects and taught by subject specialists.

pupils at Lurgan JHS are taught in a combination of broad banded ability groups, with a nurturing group. The timetable is based on 40 lessons of 40 minutes over a one-week period; other timetable allocations were used in the past but experience within our context has proven that this is the most efficient use of time and is most suitable for the age group we teach.

## Subjects taught at Key Stage 3

Allocations for subjects are weighted according to statutory requirements and the needs of the pupils in addition allocations are determined in order to provide equality of opportunity to the whole curriculum, including the study of a second language, for the vast majority of pupils.

Environment and Society - History, Geography.

Science & Technology - Science (In Year 10 A1-10 have Biology, Chemistry and Physics) and Technology & Design.
English.
Maths.
ICT.

Religious Education.

Modern Languages - French, Spanish (9A1-A10 and 10A1-A10).

Learning for Life and Work - Personal Development, Home Economics, Employability, Local and Global Citizenship.

Years 8 & 10 have 15 subjects, Year 9 have 16 subjects.

## Class Sizes (In accordance with advice from DE Circular 2016/11)

Our aim is to ensure class sizes are manageable for pupils and staff.

Class sizes in post-primary schools are governed by the *Secondary School (Grant Conditions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1973*, which provides for a maximum class size of 35 pupils; and, for those subjects defined as "practical", a maximum class size of 20 pupils, except where approved by the Department.

The practical subjects defined by the Department of Education (DE) (detailed in DE Circular 2004/05) are Science, Technology and Design, Home Economics, Art and Design, Physical Education (PE) and Music.

### Flexibility for Class Sizes for some Practical Subjects

DE Circular 2004/05 provides schools with some flexibility in determining class sizes for Science, Art and Design and PE where the school authorities have assessed the health and safety risks of practical activities in these subject areas and satisfied themselves that the activities are unlikely to present any risk to the health and safety of the pupils in the class.

The Department is prepared to approve a class size in excess of 20 and up to a maximum level as set out in Annex 1 of the circular, for Technology & Design, Home Economics and Music, in circumstances where the activities are unlikely to present any risk to the health and safety of the pupils in the class or the teaching and support staff involved in the class.

If setting the class size in excess of 20 pupils, there must first be a health and safety risk assessment by a qualified member of Lurgan JHS staff.

The maximum class sizes for all six practical subjects are set out below:

Subject	Pupils
Science	26
Art & Design	26
PE: (Gymnasium and Assembly Halls) (Playing Pitches and Sports Halls	25 30
Music	26
TD	26
HE	26

### Special Educational Needs and Children with Additional Needs

We recognise that all pupils are individuals and have their own needs. Some pupils require support in addition to that provided for everyone and are placed on the school's SEND Register. There are a range of strategies used for those who have specific or general learning difficulties.

Pupils who enter the school below expectations in literacy or numeracy receive specific, targeted support as part of the curriculum. This support will continue as pupils' progress through the school based on individual needs. The majority of learning support takes place within the classroom, but some individuals and groups may be given extra support in areas of weakness.

#### **Nurture Class**

Those pupils who find it difficult to access the full NI Curriculum at KS3 are allocated a place in a class with smaller numbers in order to receive more intensive support from their subject teachers. In addition, we aim to offer these pupils a more personalised curriculum to support their successful completion of KS3.

# Positive Impact Centre (PIC), with Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools (SPiMS)

Historically, primary schools in the local area with pupils in a Learning Support Centre setting had to progress to similar settings at Key Stage 3 outside of their locality.

In September 2023, Lurgan JHS as a school located in the heart of its community, established a SPiMS provision housed within the school's Positive Impact Centre. This has meant that Key Stage specialist provision is now offered in the local area.

The PIC comprises a Social Communication Class for children with a Statement of Special Educational Need for Autism, bespoke English as an Additional Language (EAL) support, a Supported Learning facility, the Special Educational Needs department and provision for pupils who are recognised as Gifted & Talented.

## Relationships and Sexuality Policy

The teaching of relationships and sexuality in Lurgan Junior High School is primarily addressed through Year 8 Personal Development lessons. However, in Year 9 and Year 10, pupils will continue this process through engagement with outside agencies, specifically tasked with delivering our Preventative Curriculum in RSE. During the three years in which pupils attend our school, they will be introduced to the values, skills and knowledge needed to equip them to build healthy interpersonal relationships.

At present, Lurgan Junior High School engages with the following outside agencies in the delivery of RSE/PD:

The REACH Team, Lurgan. Love for Life – Waringstown. CAMHS – Portadown.

Personal Development teachers will, at times, be assisted by the additional support and input of visiting outside staff in the delivery of RSE/PD projects. Classes may engage in short-term projects, which examine topics or issues of concern in a supervised but more informal setting (usually Lurgan Youth Annexe).

At present we have classes working closely with Fpcmission4youth – Dungannon and Learning Together Programme – Youth Service (Mr A Barr) encouraging a shared values approach to the issues addressed in Personal Development & RSE.

### Careers Education, Information and Guidance (CEIAG)

The aim of the CEIAG curriculum is to ensure that all young people develop personal qualities, skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes which will give them a strong foundation for lifelong learning, work and citizenship in a rapidly changing economic environment.

Pupils will be guided in relation to GCSE choices, Career Exploration and Career Management.

Pupils experience Careers education through weekly lessons in LLW in Year 9, seminars provided by Young Enterprise, access to self-learning through school library and IT suites, Year 10 form class talks by DEL advisors and interviews with a Careers teacher on request, information evenings / interviews organised by Lurgan College and Craigavon SHS and contributions from various departments.

Education for Employability (Careers Education in LLW) comprises three objectives: Work in the Global Economy.

Career Management/Personal action planning.

Skills and Qualities for Work.

## Online/Remote Learning

As a result of the 2020 closure of schools which suspended face to face learning, the Principal and School Improvement and Leadership Team of LJHS devised a policy to manage online learning with our pupils. A Remote Learning Handbook for staff, parents and pupils has been developed and is reviewed annually.

### Aims of Online Learning

E-learning resources should seamlessly integrate with the school website, Facebook page and other online platforms and although not physically open, online resources should be deployed in order that the school body should be open and accessible.

In doing so we aim to -

- (i) enable students to learn effectively with the support of appropriate e-learning resources that meet their diverse learning needs.
- (ii) support whole-school participation, and enhance student achievement.
- (iii) provide students with the opportunity to develop skills enabling them to work and participate in a technology-rich and connected society.
- (iv) maintain positive home-school links and monitor and support the health and well being of our pupils and staff

#### Online Curriculum

Teachers will plan activities that relate as closely as possible to current class content or skills. The activities will reinforce existing understanding or introduce new content as planned in regular schemes of work.

Evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) found that the basics of effective teaching are still essential in online learning; these include clear explanations, scaffolding and feedback.

\*Parents will not be placed in the role of the teacher any more than they are during the regular school day.

Students will be able to carry out the tasks assigned by teachers independently, including accessing the material. The submission of work will vary according to the nature of the subject and according to the task set. However, submission details will be clearly set out by the teacher on Google Classroom.

## Technology / Online Platforms

We have chosen to use Google Classroom as all staff and students are familiar with the platforms. Parents will find many useful videos and guides on YouTube and Google. Support for those with limited online access

Materials and resources can be collected from school by parents from the school at a time to be arranged. For the most part, all resources are online, but should teachers need hard copies of resources to be given to pupils, this will be indicated on the online platforms or by text message.

## **Monitoring Arrangements**

Governors monitor coverage of NI Curriculum subjects and compliance with other statutory requirements through:

School visits, meetings with the school council, teaching and nonteaching staff.

The Curriculum Team monitors the quality of learning and teaching throughout the school through:

- Identification of curriculum targets within the School Development Plan and monitoring where focus should be through consultation with stakeholders.
- Meetings with the Heads of Department and Coordinators, PRSD/BT/EPD processes, meetings with parents and pupils school council, meetings with Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 partners, meetings with external agencies and training providers and through the creation of a tailored TPL programme for all staff.
- Regular review of assessment data, planning of curriculum materials, assessment tasks, lesson resources and online platforms.

Heads of Department and Coordinators monitor the way their subject is taught throughout the school by:

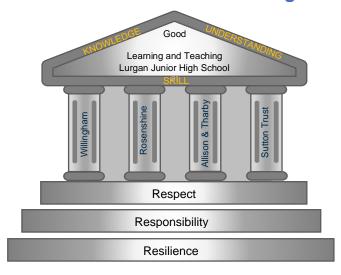
 Regular meetings with department members to examine resources and pupil outcomes, attendance at HOD Forum and implementation of strategies discussed at same, creation and review of annual Action Plan.

Heads of department also have responsibility for monitoring the way in which resources are stored and managed.

#### **Section B**

# The City Four Square: The Architecture of Good Learning and Teaching at Lurgan Junior High School

The 4 Pillars of Good Learning & Teaching



The architecture of good learning and teaching in Lurgan Junior High School is upheld by four pillars of pedagogy, emerging from the work of educational research. In particular, research carried out by Willingham (2021), Tharby and Allison (2015), Rosenshine (Sherrington, 2019) and the Sutton Trust Report (2014).

The graphic above illustrates the equal importance that school places on these eminent pieces of research and highlights how they uphold the importance of knowledge, understanding and skill in a complimentary and symbiotic fashion.

What follows is a brief description of these important Pillars.

#### Pillar 1: Fundamentals of the Mind

In *Why Don't Students Like School* by Daniel T Willingham (2021), nine principles of the mind are discussed and their implications for learning and teaching.

We believe these principles provide a sound exposition of current knowledge of cognition and its implications for learning and teaching.

They are as follows:

Cognitive Principle	Required Knowledge about Pupils	Most Important Classroom Principle
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1. People are naturally curious, but they are not naturally good thinkers.	What is just beyond what my pupils know and can do?	Think of to-be-learned material as answers, and take the time necessary to explain to pupils the questions.
2. Factual knowledge precedes skill.	What do my pupils know?	It is not possible to think well on a topic in the absence of factual knowledge about the topic.
3. Memory is the residue of thought.	What will pupils think during this lesson?	The best barometer for every lesson plan is "Of what will it make the pupils think?"
4. We understand new things in the context of things we already know.	What do pupils already know that will be a toehold on understanding this new material?	Always make deep knowledge your goal, spoken and unspoken, but that shallow knowledge will come first.
5. Proficiency requires practice.	How can I get pupils to practise without boredom?	Think carefully about which material pupils need at their fingertips and practise it over time.
6. Cognition is fundamentally different early and late in training.	What is the difference between my pupils and an expert?	Strive for deep understanding in your pupils, not the creation of new knowledge.
7. Children are more alike than different in terms of learning.	Knowledge of pupils' learning styles is not necessary.	Think of lesson content, not student differences, driving decisions about how to teach.
8. Intelligence can be changed through sustained hard work.	What do my pupils believe about intelligence?	Always talk about successes and failures in terms of effort, not ability.

 Teaching, like any complex cognitive skill, must be practised to be improved. What aspects of my teaching work well for my pupils, and what parts need improvement?

Improvement requires more than experience; it also requires conscious effort and feedback.

### Pillar 2 – Fundamental Principles of Instruction

Barak Rosenshine was a professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Illinois. Rosenshine's research focused on learning instruction, teacher performance, and student achievement.

We agree with Tom Sherrington's interpretation of Rosenshine's work and in his belief that Rosenshine's research is still "the best, most clear and comprehensive guide to evidence-informed teaching there is."

Rosenshine's 17 Principles of Instruction are given below:

- 1. Begin a lesson with a short review of previous learning.
- 2. Present new material in small steps with student practice after each step.
- 3. Limit the amount of material pupils receive at one time.
- 4. Give clear and detailed instructions and explanations.
- 5. Ask a large number of questions and check for understanding.
- 6. Provide a high level of active practice for all pupils.
- 7. Guide pupils as they begin to practise.
- 8. Think aloud and model steps.
- 9. Provide models of worked-out problems.
- 10. Ask pupils to explain what they have learned.
- 11. Check the responses of all pupils.
- 12. Provide systematic feedback and corrections.
- 13. Use more time to provide explanations.
- 14. Provide many examples.
- 15. Reteach material when necessary.
- 16. Prepare pupils for independent practice.
- 17. Monitor pupils when they begin independent practice.

#### Pillar 3 – Fundamental Features of a Great Lesson

The six evidence-informed pedagogical principles that make up the basis of the 2015 book by Shaun Allison and Andy Tharby, *Making Every Lesson Count*.

As Jill Berry, former Headteacher commented, with this framework they have created "...a climate within which excellence and growth will take root and flourish."

At Lurgan JHS we believe these principles are key to effective learning and teaching. They are as follows:

1. Challenge - so that pupils have high expectations of what they can achieve;

- 2. Explanation so that pupils acquire new knowledge and skills;
- 3. Modelling so that pupils know how to apply knowledge and skills;
- 4. Practice so that pupils can achieve fluency of practice and the struggle of deliberate practice.
- 5. Feedback so that pupils think about and further their knowledge and skills;
- 6. Questioning so that pupils are made to think hard with breadth, depth and accuracy.

### Pillar 4 – Fundamental Elements of Great Teaching

#### The Sutton Trust (2014) Report - What Makes Great Teaching?

This report, written by Robert Coe, Cesare Aloisi, Steve Higgins and Lee Elliot Major, is a systematic review of over 200 pieces of research to identify the elements of teaching with the strongest evidence of improving attainment.

The report identifies the following as the factors that are most likely to improve outcomes for pupils.

- 1. (Pedagogical) content knowledge of the teacher.
- 2. Quality of instruction. Specific practices, like reviewing previous learning, providing model responses for pupils, giving adequate time for practice to embed skills securely.
- 3. Classroom climate, which covers quality of interactions between teachers and pupils, and teacher expectations.
- 4. Classroom management: A teacher's abilities to make efficient use of lesson time, to coordinate classroom resources and space, and to manage pupils' behaviour with clear rules that are consistently enforced.
- 5. Teacher beliefs and high expectations.
- 6. Professional behaviours.

Again, Lurgan JHS teaching staff, in their bid to enhance Knowledge, Understanding and Skill levels of all pupils, places great emphasis on the 6 aspects above as the main drivers in furthering the life chances of the children in its care.

# **Knowledge-Rich Curriculum**

Stemming from the belief that knowledge always precedes skill, Lurgan JHS Curriculum Team has embarked on the introduction and implementation of a Key Stage 3 Knowledge-Rich Curriculum which aims to place the acquisition of core knowledge in all subjects at the centre of school life.

This has involved the identification of core knowledge across the curriculum and the creation of Schemes of Work to reflect core subject content.

Broadly speaking the Knowledge-Rich approach is composed of three strands:

- 1. The creation and promotion of knowledge organisers in all subjects to enhance the acquisition of subject content into Long Term Memory (LTM) and to provide relevant cultural capital for all pupils regardless of academic starting point.
- 2. IXL programme: to enhance the retention of literacy and numeracy key concepts through regular retrieval guizzing in these areas.
- 3. A bespoke 'Learning to Learn' programme designed to enhance pupils' knowledge of how they learn and techniques they can use to further their understanding of revision and preparation for examinations.

The implementation of the knowledge-rich approach will be rolled out over a three-year cycle, moving from Year 8 to Year 10, from September, 2023.

### **Teacher Professional Learning**

At Lurgan JHS, we subscribe to the *WalkThrus* professional development programme which includes a selection of 150 evidence-based teaching strategies rooted in a deep understanding of how learning works.

This programme was created by Tom Sherrington and is based on evidence from cognitive science which provides a clear model for learning, as well as evidence from the study of effective professional development. The Curriculum Team has decided that this is a clear vehicle through which the areas identified in the 4 Pillars above can be explored and developed with the teaching staff of Lurgan JHS.

Through the *WalkThrus* programme, we draw on the work of prominent researchers and cognitive scientists including Dylan Wiliam, Barak Rosenshine, Dan Willingham, Graham Nuthall and Efrat Furst. Indeed, their ideas are summarised in the 'Why?' section of *WalkThrus*.

Through our scheduled meetings planner, staff development days and twilight programme, professional development opportunities are kept to the fore and remain the central focus of the work that we do at Lurgan JHS.

In addition, all members of staff are provided with a tailored research folder which includes articles and extracts contributing to our shared understanding and common language in connection with effective learning and teaching. This is regularly updated, and copies are provided for all staff.

A Lurgan JHS Staff Training Google Classroom is also maintained and has a bank of useful resources from in-house research and support to external provision such as that delivered by EANI or through the *Walkthrus* initiative.

A record of annual TPL is maintained and provided to the governing body of the school.

# Links with other policies

This policy links to the following Lurgan JHS policies and procedures:

- Assessment and Reporting
- SEN

- EAL
- Subject specific policies
- RSE
- Pastoral

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually by the Vice-Principal (Curriculum) and the Curriculum Team.

At every review, the policy will be shared with the full governing body.