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Summary

Who is this document for?

Students, their parents/carers and staff.

Key definitions / acronyms used throughout the policy include:

EEF [Education Endowment Foundation](#)

NPQ [National Professional Qualification](#)

NPQs are nationally available, voluntary qualifications that have been designed to support teachers' and leaders' professional development. They are available for teachers and leaders who want to develop their knowledge and skills in school leadership and specialist areas of teaching practice.

PD Professional Development

[Pedagogy](#) is defined simply as the method, and practice, of teaching. It encompasses three main areas:

- [Teaching approaches](#)
- [Teaching theories](#)
- [Feedback and assessment](#)

When people talk about the pedagogy of teaching, they will be referring to the way teachers deliver the content of the curriculum to a class.

QA Quality Assurance

[SHAPE, SLANT & STEPS](#)

SIP School Improvement Plan

SLT Senior Leadership Team

WWF Warm, Welcoming and Friendly approach

Effective date

This document is effective from January 2026. It will be kept under review and updated at least every two years.

Related Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with any other relevant [policies](#) issued by the Department of Education, Sport and Culture (DESC) or [school](#), including the Behaviour Policy.

Further Resources

Alison and Tharby – [Making Every Lesson Count](#)

Fletcher-Wood – [Improving Teaching](#)

Rosenshine – [Principles of Instruction](#)

Policy

1. Roles & Responsibilities

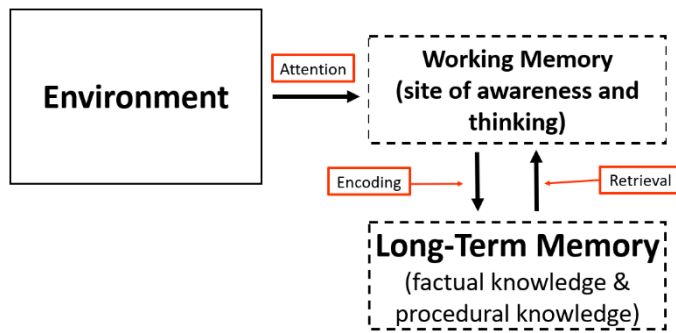
- 1.1. Students will understand school's expectations for them
- 1.2. Parents/carers will understand the school's approach and how they will achieve their aim
- 1.3. Staff should understand their responsibilities and how the school reinforces this policy
- 1.4. The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of the school are responsible for the implementation of this policy. They will review, approve and ensure that the policy is applied consistently by staff
- 1.5. The Governing Body will monitor the overall effectiveness of the policy and on occasion, may recommend adjustments

2. Aims

This policy outlines Ballakermeen's approach to teaching and learning. We aim for all our classrooms to be engaging, productive and free from disruption. Our pedagogical approach draws from the latest research and references the work of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), Rosenshine and Fletcher-Wood amongst many others. We are an outward-facing institution, and we are always looking to improve. This ensures our students experience the highest quality of teaching in every lesson, every day, as we relentlessly pursue academic excellence.

3. Core principles

- 3.1. At Ballakermeen our teaching and learning practice is research-led and guided by cognitive science. Our pedagogy is based around the principles of Responsive Teaching namely:
 - 3.1.1. Setting clear goals and planning learning carefully
 - 3.1.2. Clear and explicit exposition
 - 3.1.3. Checking for understanding and addressing misconceptions
 - 3.1.4. Clear and explicit feedback that drives improvement
- 3.2. All professional development is developed using the guidance provided by the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) (EEF) and leaders reference a range of well-respected publications when developing sessions
- 3.3. We aim to ensure that our students experience the highest quality of teaching in every lesson, every day and that every second of learning counts
- 3.4. Research-driven practice: We integrate evidence-based strategies into teaching and learning, using research to continually refine and improve our approaches
- 3.5. Consistency and high Standards: All lessons across the school reflect a consistent commitment to rigour and excellence
- 3.6. Focus on every lesson, every day: Every moment of teaching is purposeful and impactful, ensuring students make meaningful progress. We believe that 'every second counts'
- 3.7. Willingham's Memory Model: All teachers at Ballakermeen have a solid understanding of cognitive science. Teachers consider a simple memory model when planning and delivering lessons



4. Structure of a typical Lesson

4.1. Meet, greet and top corner

4.1.1. *What it looks like:* Teachers greet students at the door whilst modelling a warm, welcoming and friendly (WWF) approach. Students enter in a calm and orderly manner and place their lesson equipment and planner in the top corner of their desk

4.1.2. *Why we do it:* This sets the tone for a focused and respectful learning environment, ensuring a calm and purposeful start to the lesson. Students feel valued

4.2. Do now activity

4.2.1. *What it looks like:* A short, focused task is ready for students as they enter the classroom, requiring minimal teacher explanation

4.2.2. *Why we do it:* This ensures students are immediately engaged, reinforces prior learning, and provides an opportunity for retrieval practice

4.3. Clear learning objectives

4.3.1. *What it looks like:* Learning objectives are shared at the start of the lesson, outlining what students will learn and achieve

4.3.2. *Why we do it:* Clear objectives help students understand the purpose of the lesson and focus their efforts

4.4. SLANT is used

4.4.1. *What it looks like:* Attention is gained and maintained via the use of SLANT. Content is not delivered until full attention has been achieved

4.4.2. *Why we do it:* Attention is the gatekeeper of learning. Students can only consciously attend to a handful of stimuli at a time so we have to minimise distraction and maximise focus

4.5. SHAPE is used

4.5.1. *What it looks like:* Students are encouraged to develop SHAPE answers when making verbal responses in lessons

4.5.2. *Why we do it:* Knowledge and understanding effectively articulated and answers well-rehearsed meaning that students demonstrate confidence and capability

4.6. Teacher-led input with modelling

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4.6.1. *What it looks like:* Teachers provide clear expositions and use a range of modelling techniques and examples to ensure students understand the content. Material is broken down into manageable chunks and cognitive load is considered

4.6.2. *Why we do it:* Modelling demonstrates expectations, reduces misconceptions, and builds confidence in tackling tasks. Chunking lesson material reduces the load on the working memory and supports understanding

4.7. Guided practice

4.7.1. *What it looks like:* Teachers work through tasks with students, providing support and scaffolding as needed

4.7.2. *Why we do it:* This helps to build understanding and ensures students are ready for independent work

4.8. Checking for understanding

4.8.1. *What it looks like:* Teachers continually check for understanding via a range of formative assessment strategies including cold calling, mini whiteboards and hinge questioning

4.8.2. *Why we do it:* This helps teachers to promptly identify and address misconceptions. Lessons can be adjusted on the basis of the feedback received

4.9. Independent practice

4.9.1. *What it looks like:* Students work independently on tasks that consolidate their learning, with teachers circulating to check understanding and provide feedback

4.9.2. *Why we do it:* Independent practice allows students to think deeply about lesson content and apply what they've learned. This, in turn, makes it more likely that lesson content will be retained in the long-term memory

4.10. Plenary and review

4.10.1. *What it looks like:* The lesson concludes with a review of key learning points

4.10.2. *Why We Do It:* Reviewing learning reinforces key concepts and ensures students leave the lesson with clarity and confidence

5. Lesson non-negotiables

5.1. Lessons are thoroughly planned

5.1.1. Planning makes it easier to be responsive in the moment – knowing where you are taking the students allows you to respond better to student questions, possible misconceptions and allows you to have options up your sleeve

5.2. Focus on learning objectives

5.2.1. Learning objectives are clearly explained and revisited throughout the lesson

5.3. High expectations

5.3.1. Teachers maintain high academic and behavioural expectations of all students. Teachers apply the school behaviour policy to foster a respectful and focused learning environment

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5.4. Calm and purposeful start

- 5.4.1. Lessons begin promptly with a “Meet and Greet” and a “Do Now” activity, ensuring students transition into learning immediately

5.5. Attention

- 5.5.1. Attention is gained and maintained via the use of SLANT. Content is not delivered until all students are attentive

5.6. Retrieval practice

- 5.6.1. Each lesson includes opportunities for students to retrieve and apply prior knowledge, embedding learning in long-term memory

5.7. Questioning

- 5.7.1. Effective questioning is used to check understanding, probe thinking, and stretch student’s knowledge

5.8. Feedback and assessment

- 5.8.1. Teachers provide timely and actionable feedback, both verbal and written, to help students make progress

5.9. Planned transitions

- 5.9.1. Transitions between lesson components are smooth and efficient to maintain focus and momentum

6. Questioning Strategies

At Ballakermeen we use a range of questioning strategies to check for understanding, probe thinking and stretch student’s knowledge. These include:

6.1. Cold calling

- 6.1.1. *What it looks like:* Teachers direct questions to a range of students, chosen at random, rather than relying on volunteers
- 6.1.2. *Why we use it:* Ensures all students are engaged, encourages active participation and prevents “opt-out”

6.2. Probing questions

- 6.2.1. *What it looks like:* Teachers follow up a student’s initial response with deeper or more specific questions to extend their thinking
- 6.2.2. *Why we use it:* Develops higher-order thinking, encourages reflection and builds students’ ability to articulate complex ideas

6.3. Hinge questioning

- 6.3.1. *What it looks like:* A carefully crafted, quick multiple-choice question used to check for understanding of a core concept. Each answer is viable and incorrect answers reveal common misconceptions

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6.3.2. *Why we use it:* Allow teachers to gather real-time feedback from all students, identify specific errors in thinking (not just wrong answers) and allow teachers to determine whether they can proceed with content or if they need to re-teach

6.4. Mini whiteboards

6.4.1. *What it looks like:* A small, reusable, wipe-clean board on which students can write answers or ideas

6.4.2. *Why we use it:* Improve participation, provide instant feedback (formative assessment) and promote active thinking

6.5. Think-pair-share

6.5.1. *What it looks like:* Students are given time to think independently, discuss with a partner and then share their ideas with the class

6.5.2. *Why we use it:* Encourages collaboration, builds confidence and enhances the depth and quality of responses

6.6. Exit tickets

6.6.1. *What it looks like:* A short task normally set at the end of the lesson (but not always) that assesses whether students have achieved the key learning objectives

6.6.2. *Why we use it:* Promptly assesses students' understanding, identifies misconceptions and provides clear direction with regard future lesson planning

7. Feedback Strategies

At Ballakermeen we use a range of feedback strategies to ensure students are aware of what they can do to make further improvement. We focus on ensuring that any feedback supports the student to answer the question/complete the task better next time

Alison and Tharby – Making Every Lesson Count

"The purpose of feedback is very straightforward. Following the identification of any 'learning gaps' when students undertake a particular task, the feedback should be aimed at closing his gap. The feedback could be written or verbal, from the teacher, peers or themselves – but the intention is the same – to close the learning gap."

Feedback strategies that we use include:

7.1. Verbal feedback

7.1.1. *What it is:* Teachers provide clear, precise and actionable verbal feedback to students during a lesson

7.1.2. *Why we use it:* Time efficient and can be used on multiple occasions and to a broad range of students during a lesson

7.2. Written feedback

7.2.1. *What it is:* Teachers provide students with a written comment linked to specific points within the students' work that provides direction as to how the task could be further improved

7.2.2. *Why we use it:* Purposeful, written feedback that provides students with one or two clear and precise

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actions they can take to improve is impactful with regard driving further improvement

7.3. Live marking

7.3.1. *What it is:* The teacher circulates the room with a pen, looking for examples of work where a written comment or prompt would have impact

7.3.2. *Why we use it:* Live marking provides students with a timely, brief, focused and precise action step they can take to make immediate improvement to the task they are working on

7.4. Question level analysis

7.4.1. *What it is:* Teachers break down assessment results question-by-question in order to identify common misconceptions and target areas requiring attention

7.4.2. *Why we use it:* Provides teachers with an opportunity to review questions answered poorly and to model assessment question response.

8. Quality Assurance

At Ballakermeen we monitor the quality of teaching and learning and the classroom environment via a rigorous quality assurance (QA) process that we call 'Faculty Focus'. The details of the process are outlined below.

8.1. Purpose of faculty focus – Designed to:

- 8.1.1. monitor the standards and consistency of practice both within subject areas and across the school, including the application of school policies
- 8.1.2. identify areas of strength and areas that require attention which can feed into School/Subject improvement plans
- 8.1.3. identify issues for discussion in subject meetings
- 8.1.4. support with the dissemination of good practice
- 8.1.5. address any emerging concerns
- 8.1.6. feed into the school's professional development programme

8.2. Area of focus

An area of focus will be identified for each cycle of faculty focus. This is likely to be drawn from:

- 8.2.1. the School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- 8.2.2. a focus of whole school professional development
- 8.2.3. an aspect of the school that has been identified as requiring attention via a previous faculty focus or following an external validation
- 8.2.4. something raised by a specific department

8.3. Process

Faculty focus will involve the following strands:

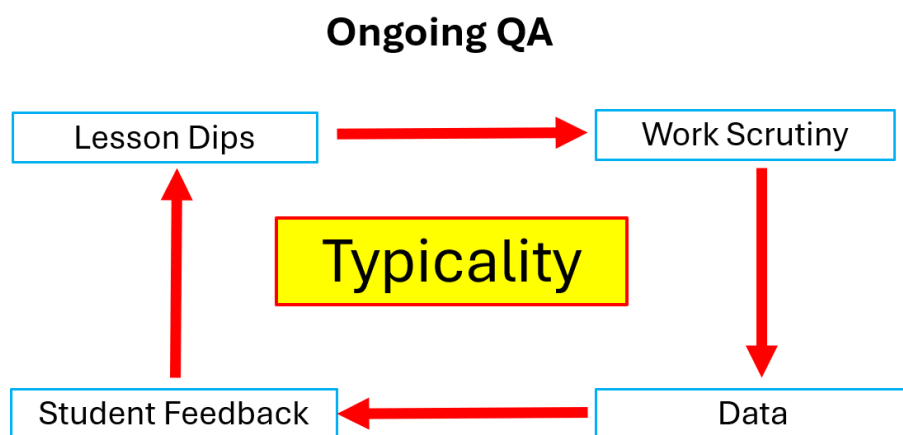
- 8.3.1. lesson dipping
- 8.3.2. work scrutiny
- 8.3.3. student discussion

8.4. Why we carry out QA

- 8.4.1. Ensures consistency: a regular and structured QA process ensures teaching and learning standards are upheld across the school
- 8.4.2. Promotes professional growth: constructive feedback from lesson dips, book looks and student conversations supports staff development and reflective practice
- 8.4.3. Student-centred focus: student voice provides a vital perspective, ensuring teaching strategies and the learning environment meet learners' needs
- 8.4.4. Drives continuous improvement; insights from these processes inform CPD priorities

8.5. Ongoing QA

- 8.5.1. It is appreciated that QA needs to be an ongoing process and leaders do not rely solely on faculty focus or external validations to establish what is going well and what needs development
- 8.5.2. To ensure we establish an ongoing picture of 'typicality', departments undertake an ongoing process of QA. The image below summarises this process



9. Professional Development

9.1. Central professional development (PD) programme

- 9.1.1. *What it is:* Dedicated PD sessions for all staff, focused on evidence-based teaching strategies that can be used to meet school priorities
- 9.1.2. *Why we do it:* To ensure teaching and learning and ultimately, student outcomes continues to improve

9.2. Optional professional development

- 9.2.1. *What it is:* Short, weekly PD sessions that staff can choose to attend
- 9.2.2. *Why we do it:* Provides staff with additional opportunities to engage with the latest research and pedagogical techniques

9.3. TLR holder meetings

- 9.3.1. *What it is:* Regular meetings during which middle-leaders are provided with opportunities to discuss and receive guidance on whole-school priorities including the curriculum, assessment, data and what constitutes effective leadership

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9.3.2. *Why we do it:* To equip leaders with the skills and knowledge to drive improvement within their teams

9.4. External professional development

9.4.1. *What they are:* Structured qualifications (i.e. the NPQs) for staff looking to develop their leadership expertise

9.4.2. *Why we do it:* To support staff to develop their leadership skills and also to build leadership resilience within the school

Version Control

Version	Date	Changes
V1	January 2026	