International School Rheintal

Learning and Teaching Policy

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ISR Guiding Statements

International School Rheintal Vision

ISR is the school of choice in the Alpen Rheintal region providing a high quality international education in English for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, inspiring international-mindedness, academic and personal excellence and responsible engagement.

June 2023

International School Rheintal Mission

ISR is a supportive, challenging and student-centred environment. We encourage each student to reach their potential whilst promoting international-mindedness, empathy and life-long learning. Through teamwork and individual endeavours, members of the school community should:

- Respect and take responsibility for themselves, others and the environment
- Appreciate and respect diversity
- Think critically
- Reflect thoughtfully
- Communicate effectively
- Celebrate success

June 2023

Whole School Aim

At International School Rheintal (ISR), learning and teaching are aligned with the school's mission and vision to provide a high-quality international education through international-mindedness, academic and personal excellence, and responsible engagement. Every student is nurtured and empowered to become a life-long learner in an inclusive, supportive, challenging and student-centred community.

The purpose of this policy is to

- outline the ISR approach to impactful high-quality teaching and learning in line with the school guiding statements, and
- enable students to develop as independent, critical and reflective thinkers, who are motivated, engaged and growing towards their full potential.

High-quality Learning

> *'When learning is visible there is a greater likelihood of students reaching higher levels of achievement.'*
>
> *Hattie, 2020*

High-quality learning takes place when positive well-being and inclusion are consistently championed, and where every student feels part of a caring school culture. Learning adopts a constructivist approach, enabling opportunities for students to construct their own conceptual understanding by questioning, exploring, developing, applying, and evaluating knowledge, skills, and attributes, which lead to taking thoughtful action. High-quality learning ensures students develop metacognition, take agency, are motivated, supported and challenged, become life-long learners, and make positive contributions to their communities.

High-quality Teaching

> *'Raising the quality of teaching within schools is probably the single most effective thing we could do to promote both overall attainment and equity.'*
>
> *Wiliam, 2018*

High-quality teaching cultivates the conditions that define high quality learning at ISR. High-quality teaching occurs in a supportive environment of high expectations, with high challenge and high trust. There is a shared understanding of goals, and a range of effective evidence and research-informed pedagogical practices are deployed. High-quality teaching

demonstrates deep, fluent and flexible subject and pedagogical knowledge, activates thinking, maximises opportunities to learn, and embraces diverse perspectives. A climate of purposeful collaboration and professional learning is intentionally fostered to strengthen collective efficacy. High-quality teaching has a direct and positive impact on student well-being, knowledge, skills, attributes and academic outcomes.

Conditions for Effective Learning

Learning will most effectively take place when:

- it supports the promotion of the school's mission, vision and values;
- students feel protected, safe and secure, and there is a shared understanding of student well-being within school and the wider community (see Inclusion Policy and Code of Conduct Policy for further details);
- students understand the purpose of the learning, and what success in learning looks like: success criteria are explicit, differentiated and understood by students;
- learning builds on prior knowledge and understanding;
- students are engaged and active in the learning process;
- students have opportunities to be collaborative and develop their communication skills;
- student inquiry, questioning, reflection and discussion are present;
- independent learning and critical thinking are facilitated and encouraged;
- opportunities are provided for students to be creative;
- assessment and feedback effectively inform students so they are aware how to improve and are able to set appropriate targets;
- students have opportunities to discuss and clarify feedback;
- students are provided with opportunities to act on their feedback;
- students are committed to academic integrity;
- students have opportunities to apply and transfer skills, knowledge and understanding to other contexts;
- students are encouraged to take informed risks and learn from their mistakes;
- there is mutual respect between peers and adults;
- it embraces diverse perspectives and cultivates respect for differences;
- it engages and suitably challenges students;
- students develop skills (collaboration, communication, critical thinking, idea-sharing, problem-solving) that empower them to engage successfully as global citizens.

Whole School Guiding Principles

This policy is aimed at ensuring high-quality, impactful teaching and learning occurs throughout the school for every student. It aims to:

- have the ISR guiding statements at the core of all teaching and learning;
- develop a shared understanding of, and embed, an agreed range of high-quality practice across the school using the Professional Standards for Teaching and Learning as a framework;
- ensure consistent high-quality learning across all programmes;
- improve and enhance the quality of teaching;
- meet the needs of all students through an inclusive approach (see ISR Inclusion Policy for more details);
- provide a broad, balanced, rich and dynamic intercultural curriculum;
- develop independent learners at every stage in the school;
- challenge all students through effective differentiation (see ISR Inclusion Policy for more details);
- provide a rich and wide range of learning opportunities through classroom practice, enrichment activities, and educational trips (see ISR Trips Policy);
- improve and enhance collective teacher efficacy by supporting continued professional learning of all staff.

Curriculum

ISR is an International Baccalaureate (IB) continuum school. At the core of ISR's curriculum are the ISR guiding statements and the IB philosophy, which emphasise the development of knowledgeable, inquiring and active participants in a global society. Aligned with the ISR mission, a student-centred approach to education is valued, where learners are encouraged to adopt a constructivist approach to learning, taking ownership, thinking critically, and developing core skills for life-long success.

The curriculum is designed to align with the IB framework and incorporates:

- Primary Years Programme (PYP) – Kindergarten to Grade 5
- Middle Years Programme (MYP) – Grade 6 to Grade 10
- Diploma Programme (DP) – Grade 11 and Grade 12

Programmes are taught through an interdisciplinary approach, allowing students to make connections across subjects and develop a holistic understanding. The curriculum is inquiry-based, encouraging students to explore their interests, ask questions, engage in authentic research and problem-solving, and take action.

The curriculum is designed for a diverse and intercultural context. The school is compliant with Swiss Law and also celebrates and values the host country. The curriculum offered at all ages has been designed to ensure breadth and balance through vertical and horizontal articulation, where international-mindedness is interwoven throughout.

Alongside the academic curriculum, wider aspects of learning, such as social and emotional skills, as well as the IB learner profile attributes and approaches to learning, are promoted and developed in line with the ISR guiding statements.

Parents as Partners

We believe that parents have a fundamental role to play in helping their children to learn, and we actively encourage the participation of parents as partners in learning. We inform parents about what and how their children are learning, and we provide learning opportunities for parents to develop their understanding of how best to support their child(ren), through:

- a variety of face-to-face communication including parent workshops, curriculum information evenings, programme-transition events, coffee mornings, volunteering opportunities, and participation in school committees;
- parent-teacher consultations and student three-way conferences across the year – parents are also encouraged to make an appointment to see the teacher at other times as needed;
- information via various media including the weekly newsletter, the ManageBac platform, Facebook, Twitter;
- reporting on progress in all areas of the curriculum, regularly throughout the year via formal reports, and on-going as needed, whether electronically, via telephone, or in person.

We welcome parents in school and highly value the home-school partnership in supporting students.

Staff Development of Teaching and Learning

ISR is a learning community and there is a strong commitment to the continuous professional learning of all staff. The aim is to provide opportunities for self-development in relation to the latest teaching and learning practices. Teachers are instrumental in their own professional learning. They are expected to set annual professional goals and to actively participate in a range of professional learning opportunities. Please see the ISR Staff Handbook for more details. This is supported in a variety of ways including:

- the staff induction and continuing professional development (CPD) programme;
- collaborative planning time;
- learning opportunities for staff that support their personal and professional objectives, and also feed into the school's strategic development plan
- whole-school and programme-specific strategies that focus on developing pedagogy and leading learning;
- discussions about professional learning in meetings with line managers;
- using the CPD platform BlueSky for self-reflection in relation to the Professional Standards for Learning and Teaching framework;
- enabling expertise and good practice to be shared peer-to-peer and within and across school faculties, programmes and divisions;
- the use of both of internal and external expertise to challenge orthodoxies and bring world-view perspectives to high quality learning and teaching at ISR;
- liaison with local and international community members, e.g. Swiss Group of International Schools (SGIS), The Educational Collaborative for International Schools (ECIS) and the International Baccalaureate

Monitoring

Every teacher is expected to evaluate the impact of their teaching in order to continue improving as a reflective professional. Teacher monitoring of student progress is detailed further in the ISR Assessment Policy. The monitoring for development of learning and teaching is a very important part of the process to ensure consistent high-quality practice through:

- identifying successful learning and teaching strategies;
- sharing and modelling good practice;

- identifying policies, systems and practices which require development;
- informing future planning and development;
- providing a basis for accountability.

Learning and teaching is monitored using the line management structure. Monitoring can be learning observation, learning walks, sampling of students' work, feedback from stakeholders, and external monitoring and tracking of student data.

1. Assessment and Feedback:

- Assessment is used as a tool to support and enhance student learning.
- We employ a variety of formative and summative assessment strategies to evaluate student progress and provide meaningful feedback.
- Teachers use rubrics and criteria that align with IB standards and frameworks to ensure consistency and fairness in assessment practices.
- Students are involved in the assessment process, reflecting on their own learning, setting goals, and actively participating in self-assessment and peer assessment activities.

2. Differentiation and Inclusion:

- We recognise and value the diverse needs and abilities of our students.
- Teachers differentiate their instruction to accommodate different learning styles, interests, and abilities.
- Inclusion is a fundamental principle, and we strive to provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued and respected.

3. Approaches to Teaching:

- Teachers utilise a variety of instructional strategies to engage students, promote critical thinking, and foster a love of learning.
- We incorporate a blend of direct instruction, collaborative learning, and experiential learning opportunities.
- Technology is integrated purposefully to enhance teaching and learning experiences and to develop digital literacy skills.

4. Professional Development:

- We prioritise continuous professional development for our staff to ensure they are well-equipped with the knowledge and skills required to deliver a high-quality IB education.
- Teaching staff are encouraged to engage in IB workshops, conferences, and collaborative learning opportunities, to stay updated with best practices and instructional methodologies.
- Teachers set annual goals that provide a framework for an area of focus, which supports their ongoing professional development.

5. Parent and Community Engagement:

- We believe in the importance of strong partnerships with parents and the wider community.
- Regular communication channels are established to keep parents informed about their children's progress, curriculum updates, and school events.
- Opportunities are provided for parents to actively engage in their children's education, such as parent workshops, volunteering, and participation in school committees.

6. Reflection and Continuous Improvement:

- We regularly reflect on our teaching and learning practices to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.
- Data-driven decision-making informs our instructional practices and enhances student outcomes.
- Feedback from students, parents, and staff is valued and incorporated into the ongoing development and refinement of our teaching and learning policy.

Conclusion

In summary, teaching and learning at ISR is:

- Enabling students to achieve their highest potential through focused and relevant lessons that fit within the IB Framework
- Establishing a welcoming and productive working environment
- Curriculum that inspires and challenges students to think globally
- Thorough and frequent feedback that provides students a guide to higher achievement

Links with other policies

This implementation of this policy is supported by wider ISR policies and specifically the following documents:

- ISR Assessment Policy
- ISR Code of Conduct Policy
- ISR Homework Policy
- ISR Inclusion Policy
- ISR Language Policy
- ISR Staff Handbook
- ISR Trips Policy

Monitor and Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years to incorporate and reflect new initiatives, changes in the curriculum, and development in technology which will be evidence and research informed.

NB - Last policy review led in 2023 by Rheannon Elliott, Interim PYP Coordinator, Vicki Hayward, DP Coordinator, Andrew Shawcroft, MYP Coordinator