

Why Learning Intentions & Success Criteria Matter at Castletown Primary School



They make learning clear and purposeful

Learning intentions clearly state what students are learning (not just what they are doing), reducing confusion and keeping lessons focused and purposeful. Success criteria describe what successful learning looks like, giving students a clear target and helping them monitor their own progress.

They improve achievement and the quality of student work

Research shows that using explicit learning intentions and success criteria has a strong positive impact on student achievement, improving understanding, depth of learning, and the overall quality of work produced.

They enhance teacher clarity and promote equity

Clear learning goals help teachers prioritise the most important knowledge and skills, ensuring instruction stays aligned and intentional. This clarity boosts student engagement and is particularly beneficial for students who need additional support, because they understand exactly what to learn and how to succeed.

They connect new learning to prior knowledge

Learning intentions and success criteria help students recognise how new learning builds on what they already know, improving comprehension, retention, and the ability to make meaningful connections across the curriculum.

They keep lessons focused on what truly matters

By focusing on learning rather than activities, teachers ensure that lessons remain purposeful and avoid becoming task-driven. This helps students understand the “why” behind their learning and reduces off-task confusion.

They support self-assessment and student ownership

Clear, visible success criteria empower students to reflect on their progress, evaluate the quality of their work, and take greater ownership of their learning journey.

They strengthen teacher–student relationships through clarity

When expectations are transparent, what students are learning, why it matters, and what success looks like, trust and confidence grow. Students feel supported, and relationships strengthen because everyone understands the learning pathway.

They improve assessment and feedback quality

Success criteria make feedback more precise and actionable. Teachers can give clearer guidance, and students can better understand what to adjust, leading to more effective and consistent improvement.

They support aligned, purposeful planning

Learning intentions tied to curriculum outcomes ensure that teaching, tasks, questioning, and assessment all work together toward the same learning goal, creating coherent and impactful instructional sequences.

They increase motivation and engagement

When students know the goals and understand the steps to achieve them, they are more motivated, more focused, and more willing to persist through challenges, leading to significantly improved learning outcomes.