



# SSAT Journal 18

Spring 2022

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# Welcome

*Sue Williamson,  
Chief Executive, SSAT*



**Welcome to the first SSAT journal of 2022. We have continued to stay close to schools and school leaders throughout an incredibly challenging two years and we're inspired by how you continue to positively tackle issues.**

Covid is still with us – I know schools are struggling with teacher and pupil absence. In addition, there is the dreadful news reports on the situation in Ukraine – everybody is inspired by the bravery of the Ukrainian people and the leadership of President Zelensky. This conflict is a human tragedy and an economic one – the prices of gas and oil are rocketing and this will impact on the energy bills for schools. Yet another challenge for school leaders.

Despite all of this, school leaders and staff are working tirelessly to provide quality learning experiences in and out of the classroom. School trips are happening, as are cultural and performing arts events and sporting activities. Considerable work is going into catch-up work. The dedication, commitment, and drive of staff in schools is amazing and needs to be recognised.

I have been delighted at the numbers signing up for SSAT events – mainly online, but some face-to-face. I was thrilled that we had over 170 delegates on our Leadership Legacy Project (LLP). These are teachers in their first five years of teaching, who their head-teacher believes has the potential to go on to headship. Many of the articles in this journal are written by past participants of this project. I enjoy reading their assignments and their approach to tackling a whole school issue. We want to continue to nurture and inspire them as they progress. All member schools have a free place each year and I hope you

will take up your place. We need the next generation of confident, thoughtful, principled leaders. The LLP participants are supported by experienced leaders – this is a crucial part of the project – we must not lose the wisdom of experienced leaders.

We are continuing our fight for social justice – it has never been more important. The pandemic has highlighted the gap between non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged children and young people. We want to bring together schools, charities, agencies such as the NHS, police, social services and local government to pool resources and expertise to remove the barriers to learning in as many localities as possible. We would love to hear from you about work you are doing in this area – please contact [rmteam@ssatuk.co.uk](mailto:rmteam@ssatuk.co.uk) – we can then share with the network.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this edition – you give me hope for the future. Thanks to you all for the work you are doing with children and young people – they will remember your efforts. I have no doubt that you have saved lives as well as made lives during the pandemic.

*Sue Williamson*

**Sue Williamson**

# St John the Baptist School – exceptional education in all areas

*Alex Galvin,  
SSAT Senior Education Lead*



**Congratulations to St John the Baptist School in Woking, who have become the first school to be accredited as ‘transforming’ in all 12 strands of the SSAT Framework for Exceptional Education.**

This represents a really significant achievement. They completed an accreditation process for each strand through the SSAT Leading Edge network in which their practice was reviewed by another school in the network and by an SSAT moderator.

James Granville Hamshar, Headteacher and Josie Belli, Learning and Teaching Lead Xavier CET, described why they have found the Framework for Exceptional Education useful – “it’s a great audit-

ing tool and a yardstick to measure where we are”. They explain how, when they first engaged with the framework, they know that some strands were established strengths of the school, whilst other strands provided a useful focus for development work. Notably a recent focus on wellbeing has led to the development of a rich programme of support. Their peer review school commented:

“The ethos of the school champions wellbeing in everything they do by recognising that everyone (students and staff), do better when they feel valued and nurtured. The school provides a very supportive environment where each individual thrives.”

James and Josie say that they have valued the way that working with the Framework for Exceptional Education has helped them to review standards but has also shown how they have evolved over time. They enjoyed working with their peer review schools and their moderators, finding it useful to be asked “healthy, challenging questions.” The opportunity to connect has been valuable, even when it has only been possible to meet online.

St John the Baptist School has a long-standing, national reputation for excellence. James and Josie say that this has been sustained and developed over time by ensuring that every member of their team has a genuine love of teaching. The team put learning and teaching at the heart of all they do, and this is underpinned by the belief that every child can achieve. There is a continual focus on delivering excellence in the classroom at all times and finding those ‘marginal gains’ that will move practice on further. James referred to the All Blacks’ mantra “leave the jersey in a better place,” explaining how their team continually seek to move forwards and build upon previous work. They say that they liked that the strands of the Framework focus on those areas of practice which need continual attention, providing a focus for review and planning.

Precision coaching has become a central element of professional development at St John the Baptist School; staff at all levels have coaches. This has reinforced the exceptional classroom practice at the school and supported a culture in which people will proactively seek support when needed. As Josie said:

“I want us to be at a point where someone asks me to come in and see the year 9 class that they are struggling with.”

James explained that they think that coaching in schools works in much the same way as in sports teams – whilst you see the performance on the pitch or in the classroom, it is the work that goes on behind the scenes that makes that possible.

The team attribute their success to focusing on doing a few things really well. They have invested a lot of time in developing their expertise in pedagogy, carefully considering the science, craft and nuances of what makes great teaching. Individuality and creativity are valued and celebrated. James ex-

plains that they want “individuality underpinned by shared principles.” James uses the helpful analogy of an art class – whilst the class might learn a particular technique, you wouldn’t want everyone to produce identical artworks. The leadership team visit every lesson every day, which Josie says provides the “litmus test” for the quality of teaching and learning.

Like most schools, the team at St John the Baptist have been revisiting their curriculum planning in recent years. Their recent focus has been on looking at cross-curricular knowledge, identifying where the same concept, idea or skill is being taught in different ways and aiming to reduce pupils’ cognitive load. There has been a shift in how professional development is managed, allowing more time for subject-specific pedagogy. Staff training sessions have been shortened and are always immediately followed by time in departments. Josie explains that this provides time for teams to immediately contextualise and embed new ideas. Time has been set aside to allow opportunities for in-department masterclasses and these have played an important role in sharing expertise and supporting less confident members of staff. The team feel that this time in departments is essential for developing subject-specific pedagogy and mastery. Their peer reviewer for Effective Learning Behaviours commented:

“The development of the school’s work over the last seven years on mastery learning was inspirational and provides us with real food for thought as we move into the second year of our own journey in this area. In particular, the interplay of the school’s teaching model, curriculum planning and assessment approaches to create a truly coherent “mastery” curriculum was impressive.”

The successes at St John the Baptist are founded on a commitment to support every child to achieve. As Josie says, “they recognise that every member of the team is employed first and foremost as a teacher and as such their focus is always on how to improve what happens in the classroom.” Their motto “Have faith ... believe you can!” is lived out by staff as well as students.



# Helping the whole school community to look inwards and outwards

*Paula Ayto,  
Reid Street Primary School*

*“It is the overlaying of the fundamental ways of being and doing that the vision lives to become ‘just what we do here’.”*

**Collectively written and agreed vision statements capture the essence of a school and enable the school community to articulate their shared ethos. However, it is in the overlaying of the fundamental ways of being and doing that the vision lives to become ‘just what we do here’. This article outlines the pieces of the jigsaw that build ‘The Reid Street Way’.**

There has been a school on our site since 1912 and the decision was taken in 2011 to convert to academy status with the clear intention of ensuring that the curriculum offer, in its widest sense, was appropriate for the pupils of Reid Street. We have a diverse range of families, including over 40% eligible for Pupil Premium and 15% living in the most deprived areas. We have seen a steady rise in pupils with EAL, from 4.5% in 2013 to 12% in the most recent census.

Curriculum review has been a central part of school development over the last ten years and recent research is informing current developments. Along with many schools, we are grappling with the nuances around cultural capital but agree with



Christine Counsell that, “A curriculum exists to change the pupil, to give the pupil new power. One acid test for a curriculum is whether it enables even lower-attaining or disadvantaged pupils to clamber in to the discourse and practices of educated people, so that they gain the powers of the powerful.” And with Chris Quigley that our provision must develop, “Powerful subject knowledge that gives pupils academic and intellectual ways of thinking, and powerful personal knowledge that gives them the character, dispositions, attitudes and habits to navigate their way through life.”

Specific subject knowledge alone will not provide our pupils with what they need to thrive in the future. As the saying attributed to Peter Drucker states: “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” We see ourselves as ‘Magic Weavers’ who “exist in a tender network of interdependence.” Whilst the *knowledge v skills* false dichotomy fades, we do need to support our pupils to ‘cultivate humanity’. As schools become increasingly aware, and adept in the use, of metacognitive strategies, we also need to move from the compliance of pupils through to engagement and on to the ‘botherdness’ of Hywel Roberts. As Kurt Hahn tells us, appealing through compulsion or persuasion will not work, but attraction will: “You can tell them, You are needed.” Then we will have the ‘hopeful curriculum’ of Debra Kidd, where “empowerment is the goal.” This is where the vision statement comes to life and needs to be evident in the whole curriculum – the planned but also the hidden curriculum. As the quote attributed to Mary Myatt states, it should be ‘lived not laminated.’

### Current research

The current research and support around pupils’ mental health, growth mindsets and development of character traits such as resilience can provide pupils with strategies for crucial self-regulation and self-empathy. Social and emotional literacy skills can be both taught explicitly and embedded within the ethos of the school.

In its 109 years, our school has been witness to a range of local challenges and ensuring our pupils have pride in their local community is vital to their sense of self. Our pupils are involved with a range of local events, projects and charities which not only enhance their knowledge and understanding of the place where they live but also provide them with

opportunities to experience contributing to positive changes. These have involved: a joint walk of the distance to the top of Mount Everest in support of a local man who climbed the mountain in aid of a nearby hospice; donations on National Nurses Day to the hospital next door to provide toys for the Children’s Ward; support for the local Rotary Club via RotaKids in school; the provision of a new bench made from recycled plastic for the local park and many others.

Recent technological developments have allowed for virtual connections to be made beyond the local community – across the country and, excitingly, globally. Key to our focus on making a difference is our commitment to supporting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (the Global Goals). Work around these goals threads through our planned and hidden curricula. In 2015 we participated in the World’s Largest Lesson and introduced pupils to the Global Goals Explorers – characters who embody the characteristics we seek to develop in school. During ‘lockdowns’, restrictions curtailed local opportunities so we created an event called Kindness at Christmas during which pupils from each class chose, via votes, gifts from the Oxfam and CAFOD sites including water, a vegetable garden, goats, seeds, bees, footballs, toilets and piles of poo which were purchased for those in developing countries. A song was written detailing all of the gifts.

### A wealth of opportunity to develop the skills needed to succeed

In the ways described above, pupils gain a sense of themselves as agents of positive change and this links to another crucial piece of the jigsaw – aspiration. As in many schools, we aim to provide our pupils with experiences which enable them to explore the world of work. Research illustrates that stereotypes are ingrained at an early age and these need to be challenged from Reception onwards – it is too late to leave career related learning to secondary schools. In 2017 we kick started our focus on aspiration through a full week in which children met a whole range of visitors sharing information about a wide range of careers including international rugby players, radio DJs and the ex-drummer from Status Quo!

Determined to provide our pupils with experience of business, we entered a regional entrepreneur



competition (The Big PIE) which we subsequently won. A year later – we won again! These competitions provided a wealth of opportunity to develop the skills needed to succeed, including teamwork. During 'lockdown' we entered the Teesside Trailblazer competition and won 'The Most Profitable Business' and 'Best Marketing Campaign' categories. Pupils were determined to share their profits and winnings by donating to charities, linking the pieces of the jigsaw together. We are now embedding our work around career related learning through our involvement with Primary Futures and Tees Valley Careers.

The golden thread through all of this curriculum development is empathy. As Ekani Empathy, the Global Goals character, teaches us: by getting to know and understand others, we are able to walk in their shoes. Pupils are then able to take action, to make a positive difference and to feel empowered. In need of a project to bring the community back together following school 'closures', we engaged with Empathy Week and subsequently entered the project produced. It really was the highlight of the year to win the primary award – our pupils love to

tell others that they are the most empathic school in the world! We look forward to Empathy Week 2022 and know that through the work we undertake, we will live our vision, put compassion into action and aspire to make a genuine difference.

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# Embedding 21st Century Skills across the curriculum

Saiqua Zaneb,  
Central Foundation Girls' School

## The Context for the change

Our students come from a borough where there are high concentrations of deprived local areas. Over half (59%) of the Tower Hamlets neighbourhoods are in the bottom fifth for levels of deprivation nationally. At Central Foundation Girls' School, we have always been driven to make our students feel empowered despite their background. We believe in improving the life chances of each and every student by providing them with an environment

and the opportunities to succeed. At Central we look to create and utilize tools that would improve social mobility and allow our students to become competitive global citizens. Our students also have the additional challenges of the current landscape where they are faced with new educational standards, the complexities of navigating society, a rapidly changing digital world and a constant need to communicate and collaborate globally.

## Post-16 Skills Descriptors

### ANALYTICAL THINKING



THE ABILITY TO COLLECT, VISUALISE AND INTERPRET INFORMATION IN DETAIL IN ORDER TO CONSIDER AND EXPLAIN DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

I can identify causal relationships in data, academic texts and information collected from a range of primary and secondary sources.  
I can make sound reasoned judgements about evidence or data in support of or against the issue being analysed and evaluated.  
I can confidently critique evidence/data/information from a range of sources and apply to a range of situations in/outside of the classroom.

### CURIOSITY & CREATIVITY



THE ABILITY TO USE THEIR IMAGINATION AND LOOK AT A SITUATION IN A VARIETY OF WAYS BY ASKING QUESTIONS AND FINDING NEW ANSWERS

I can confidently critique and link several abstract ideas in order to lead to new thinking.  
I can demonstrate originality of thought and present this in different ways.  
I can be innovative and confidently take risks in order to move forward my own ideas/ learning or to develop others.  
I can question situations using 'out of the box' thinking.  
I can identify and evaluate patterns in information and data that are not obvious.

### COMMUNICATION



THE ABILITY TO CONVEY FACTS, IDEAS, INFORMATION, OPINIONS AND FEELINGS EFFECTIVELY

I can demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively to different audiences through a range of methods and platforms (technology/ written/verbal).  
I can listen carefully to decipher the meaning including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions.  
I can demonstrate a high degree of emotional intelligence in my communications.  
I can demonstrate my collaborative nature in all activities in/out of the classroom.  
I can articulate and use academic literacy to communicate effectively.

### ADAPTABILITY



THE ABILITY TO RESPOND TO CHANGES WITH POSITIVE AND FLEXIBLE THINKING, RECOGNISING FAILURE AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

I can analyse and evaluate a situation or a problem and come up with alternative innovative solutions.  
I can understand, negotiate and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions.  
I can actively critique performance and identify ways to improve utilising a range of strategies and approaches.

### PROBLEM SOLVING



THE ABILITY TO 'PICK APART' OR BREAK DOWN A SITUATION OR CHALLENGE AND FIND APPROPRIATE SOLUTION(S)

I can analyse information.  
I can critique and interpret research to come up with the causes and solutions to a given challenge or problem.  
I can solve the problem or challenge using sound decision making and judgements, evaluating the best solution and implementing this.  
I can creatively problem solve and logically sequence the solution as part of a team.  
I can make a measured decision and identify positive outcomes in a range of situations.

Staff, visitors and speakers all commented on how polite and well behaved our girls were whenever they participated in trips, visits and enrichment activities. However, beneath this quiet surface, when you peel back the layers, when taken on visits to Cambridge and Oxford universities the students felt that they didn't belong. They wouldn't apply because they feared they were not as articulate and would not 'fit in'. We wanted all our girls to know that they could aspire to be anything they wanted and achieve to do this, to not be limited by their own fears and inner voice.

One way to achieve our goal was to really invest in highlighting and developing the students 21st century skills. We wanted our students to be confident communicators. Whilst in the school community, we needed them to be immersed in the language of skills, as most of them would not have access to this type of language at home. We felt that if we gave them a framework that they could access and relate to, they would feel confident. This was a whole school change and would mean a whole school approach was needed and thus we would need to create a new culture to ensure that we had the correct climate for our students to thrive.

### What was done and how

It was important for everyone on the leadership team to understand the vision and be part of it. At the time I was new to the role and new to this strategic priority. The journey was broken down into achievable phases over three years, of course the pandemic hit and some priorities shifted but I have tried to capture the essence of the journey to embed 21st century skills explicitly into our curriculum, co curriculum and extra curriculum.

### The Research phase

The research phase was made up of the following stages:

1. Feedback from focus groups from each year group
2. Interviews with staff
3. Observations from lessons
4. External consultancy

As all things should begin, we went to our students to start the process. We approached the sixth form senior prefect team where most of the students had lived their experience of secondary education at Central Foundation Girls' School. Sixteen students formed the team, all elected by the school and all from year 13.

These students felt passionately about wanting to feel comfortable and confident when they left what they called the 'bubble' of Central Foundation Girls' School, they wanted all students to feel empowered to engage in conversations with peers and others in a confident way. In initial discussions between the Assistant Headteacher and the prefect team, the students felt outraged that they had not been taught 'transferable skills' and how to think 'critically' in the lower years but once the anxiety had been unpicked and examples provided the students realised that they had been taught this implicitly but had not understood it at the time. They were tasked with undertaking key research to find out about students' experiences of 21st century skills in the curriculum, in a bid to find out the issues and help contribute to finding a solution.





The senior prefect team were coached to produce some research questions looking at asking students if they knew what skills are, if they could explain what a skill was and if they could highlight where the students used these skills. The prefect team interviewed sixty students per year group, picked randomly by the Head of Year. The senior prefect team also participated in student shadowing and lesson observations, alongside the Assistant Headteacher. Three students from each year group were shadowed: differing abilities, TAG groups and SEND. The prefect team focused on the way skills were taught and the language students were using when they were talking about their skills.

The findings indicated that students could articulate what it meant to explain what a skill was but could not explain concisely what it actually meant to demonstrate those skills. There was a misconception amongst students that skills were subject dependent and they struggled with the concept of transferrable skills. The senior prefect team found that all students gave different ideas when asked to communicate how they demonstrated suggested skills like communication and there was no consensus.

An external consultancy 'Year here' was approached and they came into the school to assess how con-

fident our students were in using and articulating employability skills. As they were independent and impartial, it was interesting that they came to the same conclusions as the research, further supporting the direction in which we wanted to take this.

### Key findings of the research

Once all the findings were collated it was found that the students felt a real focus on skills was needed, the research indicated that a common framework needed to be developed where staff and students could access a shared language of skills helping them to understand when they were highlighting a skill, how they knew they were displaying a skill and how they could develop/transfer that skill in the curriculum, co – curriculum and extra curriculum.

These findings were collated and the senior prefect team presented them to each year group through assemblies so that students understood the conversations that were taking place and the direction. The senior prefect team also presented these to the staff so they could explain the moral purpose and the need to develop a focus on skills. This was a fantastic opportunity for staff to see the vision and the value of implementing this change, as staff really understood the moral purpose. It was an invaluable starting point as staff needed to see this as not being an extension to their workload but rather an opportunity to tweak their practice to make it even more beneficial for the students.

The Assistant Headteacher held successive meetings where the staff were given the autonomy to decide the direction that this would go in. In the first meeting staff came up with ten skills they agreed would be the 21st century skills they felt our students should become 'experts' in. This was deemed too many so the common repeating skills were selected and we came up with five key skills. Due to the transparency of the purpose and direction of the project and the fact the staff were given ownership and therefore had to invest in this, the implementation phase was much easier than anticipated when introducing a whole school change.

Several staff meetings and faculty meetings were dedicated to write common definitions and agreed developmental 'skills descriptors'. The idea was that subjects still continued to focus on their subject specific skills but there would be a greater em-

phasis on the specific 21st century skills that had been selected.

### **The design phases**

We needed a brand, so that everything we did under the skills umbrella would be recognised for being part of our skills education. We came up with 'Central Skills'.

We wanted students to have an explicit understanding of exactly when they were using the skill and be able to identify them. We needed a way that staff could make this explicit without it being onerous or additional workload and students could recognise them. This could then become a habitual part of their learning leading to longer term impact. Hence, we designed five icons, one for each of the skills we wanted. The icons could then be included in any literature, PowerPoints, lesson resources, assemblies and anywhere they were deemed relevant. The students were consulted at each step of the design process from the style to the colours so that they found them accessible and easy to use.

The next part involved giving staff and students access to a shared language. Staff had already helped to create common agreed definitions for each of the five Skills. Staff had also provided descriptions about the way each of the five Central skills were demonstrated in their subject areas so these were collated into repetitive themes and then translated into I can statements that students from each key stage could access. In this way the students could also see how the skills developed through each key stage and could understand how they could develop their skills. This information was pulled together in an attractive table for each key stage and entitled 'Skills descriptors'.

The final part of the design process was looking at the information that faculties had provided about what it meant to display each skill and communicate it to students in a visual way. Six posters were designed, one to show the overarching definitions of each central skill and one for each of the five central skills. We also designed central skills literacy cards which provided sentence starters so students could be supportive to formulate their ideas and converse about them openly.

### **The implementation phase**

Although the urge to implement all skills at once was overwhelming, a sensible more strategic view was used. There were opportunities for 'quick wins' that were utilised effectively but to effectively embed the change we needed to continuously signpost and refer to the mechanisms we were using to implement it. We also needed to be mindful of staff workload and that the various components of the central skills brand would need to be introduced as phases. It needed to be planned adequately and time given to support the implementation to staff.

Phase 1 was about introducing the icons to students so that they could start identifying when they were using the skills. Phase 2 was about developing a shared language of skills focusing on student vocabulary and starting conversations about how students knew they were using the skills referencing the skills descriptors. Phase 3 was about students understanding that the Central Skills were transferable, utilising all the resources provided and being able to apply them in scenarios such as personal statement writing.

As a school, it was a fortunate coincidence that the leadership team were working on curriculum. As a result, staff were reviewing their subject intents and sequencing through looking at their schemes of work. This also provided an opportunity for faculties to evaluate when the Central Skills were going to be used, or if there were skills focus across a scheme of learning. Using the icons, staff in the various faculties were able to signpost within their schemes of work and lesson resources where the Central Skills would be demonstrated. This happened the year before the Central Skills brand was launched to the students so that it was a planned change.

In the first year each Central Skill was focused on a half term at a time, supported by subject faculties and the tutor team. Every vehicle and mechanism to communicate the brand was used to all stakeholders such as governors' mornings and parent forums so everyone could be part of cascading and owning the vision as well as helping to drive it forwards.

The Central Skills descriptors were included in student planners and the posters displayed across classrooms. Students were told they would need to open their planners to this page at the start of every

lesson in case they needed to refer to it. These were introduced to students through the assembly and tutor programme with a focus on one Central Skill at a time. A suggested oracy 'Literacy' framework was provided to staff so they could support students to structure these conversations about a Central Skill. Staff were also given stickers of the icons, so they could use these to signpost where they were using the Central Skills in lessons.

The Central Skills were also incorporated into the rewards systems so staff could, if they chose to, reward students for highlighting these skills. Each half term students who had showcased the skills the most were celebrated. Each half term the focus was determined based on trends in achievement and student voice where it seemed like students did not understand or were unsure of a particular skill.

If a CPD need for staff was recognised, workshops were planned for in the calendar through the staff meetings and INSET days. The lesson observation and learning walk proforma were adapted so that any good practice could be observed but it was not a 'non-negotiable' it was an optional extra that staff could show if it were relevant. Staff were also encouraged to share good practice or any feedback to trips and visits so that this any useful strategies could be used by staff.

We are now wanting to take this to the next step and have a working party, focusing on how we can report on the Central Skills to parents.

### Problems encountered and how they were tackled

Staff are often resistant to change due to a number of concerns including workload, initiative overload and curriculum time. It was important to implement this change with the support of the staff and hence it was phased in slowly. As the change was introduced with a clear moral purpose and the vision was a shared one this really helped when we embedded the change.

More time than was factored in was needed specially to allow for fruitful discussions to take place between staff and all stakeholders. This meant looking at the school calendar to enable time to be factored in time to meet with everyone from Governors to students asking for views and feedback at each stage. Creating time for feedback and allowing staff to communicate their ideas helped the skills to be implemented by all staff as everyone was sharing in the direction of the vision. However, sometimes the message did get lost due to the pandemic, curriculum overload and exams and so it was revisited repeatedly to remind staff of the purpose of the journey and to ensure any inexperienced staff were also in alignment.

Staff did worry about our vision being translated correctly by the students and it being impactful. This was not obvious from the onset but now in year 4 of the Central Skills students across all key stages can positively and confidently identify their Central Skills and talk about how they know



they are demonstrating these. It was heartening to see that our student panel (who run an interview panel) when interviewing staff for a senior role in a school commented that one of the candidates 'didn't understand what a skill was'. Many of our sixth form students have also recorded podcasts about the positive impact of having access to the skills descriptors and that these have been useful in interviews both for degree level apprenticeships and universities.

Time to start to plan for the change was a huge factor as staff in faculties needed to plan for where they were going to use the skills descriptors and how. Hence, the senior leadership team needed to be part of the process and ahead of the development knowing what was coming up and planning for each stage so that all of them were communicating the same vision. It needed to be a part of the strategic school plan so that it was given importance and all Heads of faculty knew that it needed to be part of their raising achievement plans too. This type of change, requires a real champion to fight for faculty meeting time (which Heads of faculty and Head of department are reluctant to give) and time in staff meetings/INSET days as everyone, rightfully so, needs the time to implement their own priorities.

Due to the pandemic and lockdowns, the momentum was sometimes lost but it was measurable impact through student voice that reminded staff of the core moral purpose behind this. Student testimonials and real life impact in securing post-18 pathways also supported and drove this. A constant emphasis and reminders which are fresh ensures that this is always in staff minds.

### **The outcomes, costs and benefits**

To develop a shared language of skills, the Assistant Headteacher came up with the Central Skills branding. As with any change, the immediate impact on the students is harder to measure. However, now four years on, the Central Skills are embedded into the fabric of the school. Students can confidently identify not only the Central Skill they are showcasing but that of others. The students can confidently communicate in our shared language and many have commented that this keen focus on skills has removed a layer of stress. They need to learn content but they feel like they are practicing their skills constantly. Students have now record-

ed podcasts for their peers explaining the impact of using the shared language of skills in securing internships and apprenticeships in addition to university places.

There were large initial design costs as an external professional design company was contracted. Extra costs were that of printing posters and resources. However, these were the only costs associated with the change and the impact has been huge.

### **What has been learned from the experience?**

Any change that we implement must have the best interest of the students and must be guided by our moral compass. A whole school change where all the staff have ownership and can be revisited, so it is not stale, is powerful. Sometimes schools become initiative heavy, it is often good to strip away unnecessary initiatives to focus on ones that are important. We needed to look at the 'quick wins' at first, making sure we highlighted the skills in the first instance and making it part of the teacher vocabulary.

### **How other schools might benefit from following a similar course**

This was a very courageous leap for the school as it was an unknown and something that doesn't give tangible impact straight away. Student confidence and oracy, as well as their ability to think about transferrable skills has been quite revolutionary. We are still embedding our practise and so the journey still has quite a way to go. This change must be planned carefully, with input from all stakeholders as it needs to be delivered by everyone rather than just pockets. The long term impact is quite amazing and other schools should look at developing a strategy like this that is personal to this.

# Environment Education: how we've acted on our pupils' call for action

*Eleanor Norman,  
Comberton Village College*

**In the spring of 2019, something happened that even the sagest old-stagers in our staffroom could not remember happening before. Thoughtful, conscientious pupils started talking about what would happen to them if they didn't come to school one day. Parents emailed to ask what the repercussions would be if their children missed a day of school, not so that they could take them skiing, but so they could let them attend a strike. My colleague Patrick and I were drawn into this discussion because we lead the school's extracurricular Environment Education provision.<sup>1</sup>**

I am lucky enough to work in a school led by people who, whenever they can, like to say 'yes.' This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why it has maintained its 'outstanding' status for many years, because good staff stay in schools where they enjoy working, and being trusted and supported to innovate, even in the midst of the tsunami of crises that have threatened to engulf our profession in the last few years, is motivating and enjoyable. However, even our leaders found it impossible to be wholeheartedly positive about pupils missing school, so we supported our climate strikers by doing something different.



1. A subject with a long history, that is only gradually gaining ground in this country:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental\\_education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_education)

We have a tradition of annual curriculum collapse days which involve everyone being off timetable: this allows the Geography department to inundate an unfortunate sea-side town with the whole of year eight, practical subjects to get on with proper practical work, and so on. It was easy, therefore, to sell the idea that on the day of the strike, we should offer our pupils a whole day of Environment Education. Teachers would be offered support to plan and deliver subject-relevant lessons on climate change and the extinction crisis.

Because Patrick and I had a reputation for leading our extracurricular Environment Education provision (yes, all right, I admit it: we were the crazies who marshalled a small band of year eights to plant trees, sell cookies during fair-trade fortnight, and keep banging on – mainly to staff – about how we should try to recycle some of the contents of the nine wheelie bins we send to landfill every week) no-one was too shocked when we asked them to participate in this day. We had planned it for them, I'd organised parents to come in to talk about their areas of expertise, and if staff didn't want to abandon their original plans for the day, they didn't have to. In tutor time pupils were invited to make climate pledges, and we made a display of them in reception. Crucially, and unusually, no-one complained. We have 1957 pupils on roll, and no-one complained.

Some pupils chose to attend the local climate strike anyway. They brought back a petition which soon 200 pupils had signed, and they had sent to our MP, asking for better education about climate change. It was all very well pupils going off to town and causing headaches about which attendance code to use when they did, but if pupils wanted change in our school, they needed to talk to the school leaders in the MAT head office located on our site. A few months later Patrick and I found ourselves, with half a dozen Year 11 pupils, in a meeting with our Executive Head and his deputy. Everyone was surprised by the articulacy with which the pupils explained what was missing from the curriculum they'd followed through the school and what should be added to it. The school leaders were probably surprised because they had been labouring under the entirely forgivable misapprehension that

the Geography and Science departments were all over this stuff.<sup>2</sup> We were surprised how quickly we found that we were knocking at an open door.

### **We rapidly decided three key things:**

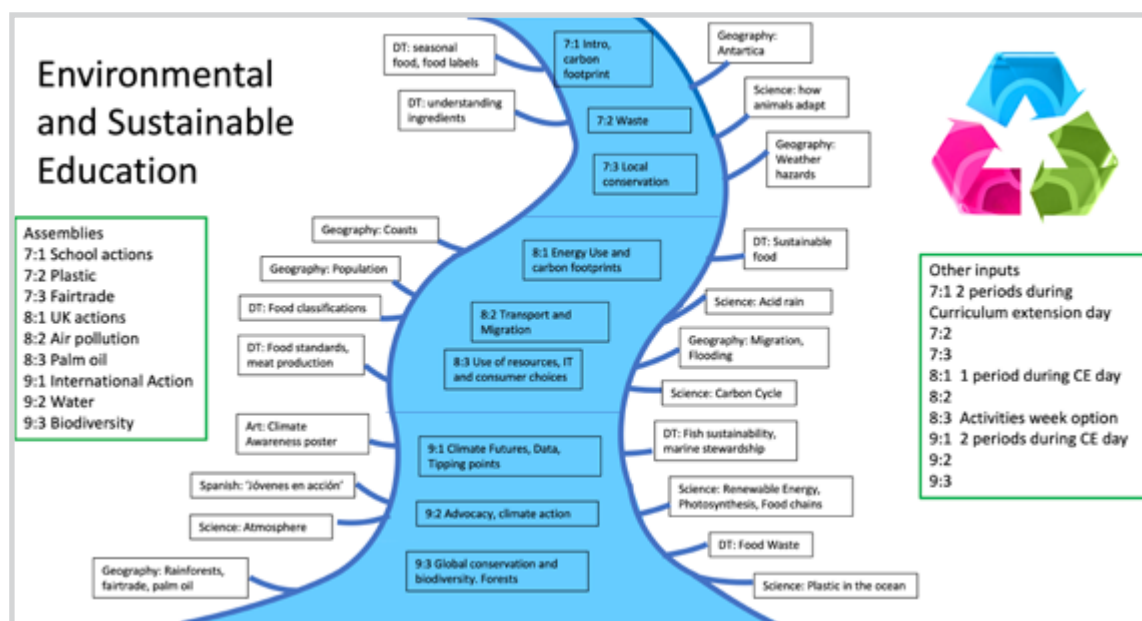
- This was something that every pupil should be doing, so it should happen in KS3
- There was nothing to stop us expanding our citizenship curriculum to include a significant input on the environment, so that was where we should start
- Since there was someone on our Trust board with considerable expertise in Environment Education, we should ask her to hold us to account for seeing this undertaking through

Now it was easy, because our pupils had told us what to do, and because our school leaders like to say 'yes', to write the introduction of Environment Education (EE) across KS3 onto our school development plan. Our curriculum deputy facilitated us asking Heads of department for an audit of what they taught pupils about the climate crisis. Furnished with input from the Heads of Geography, Science and Food Technology, and inspired by a model curriculum created by the Leeds Development Education Centre<sup>3</sup> which integrates the UN's



2. *We were all able to blame the fact that they weren't on the curriculum reform carried out by Michael Gove.*

3. <https://leedsdec.org.uk/#>



sustainable development goals, we devised an EE curriculum that would address gaps in the pupils' knowledge at times that complemented what they would be learning in lessons.

Then, the pandemic hit. It would have been really easy to abandon or postpone our plans, yet whilst simultaneously supervising the vulnerable pupils in the library, the curriculum deputy agreed via Teams that the school would fund three 50-minute lessons per fortnight of Patrick's teaching time for him to teach Y7 EE. So when we returned in September 2020, we were able to offer each Y7 form six lessons of EE across the year, taught by Patrick during lessons that he borrowed from other subjects, a model that we use successfully for PSHE in KS4. By carefully rotating the subjects whose time he used, he was able to do this with the blessing of Heads of department. Topics covered included an introduction to climate change, carbon foot printing, fast fashion, and sustainable foods, and each lesson provided pupils with time to reflect on relevant actions that they could take in light of what they were learning.

In 2021, we expanded this provision into Y8, adding six more lessons of EE in English curriculum time, delivered by English teachers to their own classes, a solution that involved no further cost. We adapted materials from Thoughtbox<sup>4</sup> and ordered the curriculum so it complements our Eng-

lish one, for example studying climate refugees in the same term as pupils are reading the graphic novel *'The Arrival'*.

The problem isn't finding material to use: it's finding a way through the myriad materials that are already out there and empowering teachers to see that an area that has been no-one's job, can be everyone's. When we meet them in EE in Y7, our pupils are surprised, interested, and mostly – as their older peers attested – in the dark about climate change, and in even deeper darkness about how they can tackle it. Gradually, we are making this darkness recede, and still no-one has complained.

As I started to write this in November 2021, the DfE published a white paper on Sustainability and Climate Change that will facilitate a planet-saving reimagining of the role every school must play in tackling the climate crisis: it offers a vision of the future that it is everyone's job to work towards, confident in the knowledge that no-one, absolutely no-one, is going to complain.

4. <https://www.thoughtboxeducation.com/>

# Giving voice to our students of colour

*Kacey de Groot,  
Caludon Castle School*

**Caludon Castle has always been a diverse school, situated in the North of Coventry. It's not an easy process for a school to look into itself and see if, and how, racism is a problem. The difficulty comes from the structural and societal racism that impacts all of us (particularly challenging for white people to recognise), but also from the uncomfortable 'truths' that might be brought forward. Particularly tough when the school perception previously was that we were doing things well!**

The school has taken an approach in this regard that, if Black students have said they felt racism in the school, we won't try to deny it. Instead, we will treat their perception, as a reality, and we will work with those students to try and change it. That has led to some serious reflection and the beginning of an expanded stream of work and projects.

There has arguably been a growing divide in UK society recently and that has led to increased incidences of racism, islamophobia, HBT phobia and identity based violence and abuse. This was something we were working to change prior to lockdown when we staged the first ever Black History Month event in school. As the restrictions began to be lifted, we facilitated the forming of a student led group to foreground all aspects of diversity and equality. Under the leadership of sixth form students, our existing Spectrum LGBT+ group will be joined by two new groups. A 'Positive About Disability' group and during October, for Black History Month, we



saw the beginnings of a group to highlight and celebrate race, ethnicity and cultural identities.

## **Hannah writes,**

As a Black student it can be thoroughly alienating and emotionally exhausting to experience overt and covert racism on a regular basis but perhaps seeing the way this was hurting my younger sister a few years below was the biggest catalyst prompting me to take action as I realised that I had to leave Caludon a better school for her and for all the other vulnerable students of colour for whom school is much less a place of safety and refuge than it is for their white counterparts. At the Diversity and Equality team, one of our main goals is to make Caludon Castle a better, safer space so we have plans that include utilising assemblies and tutor periods as a way of facilitating productive conversations in ways that feel most useful, shaped by our experiences as students who have often been in that position of listening to an assembly that feels



out of touch and painfully didactic.

But at the same time, we are very conscious of not neglecting the students of colour who need somewhere that can act as shelter and a space to breathe and so, much of our Black History Month programme was centred around this aim. We organised an art and poetry contest to give a space to these voices that are often unheard and making bulletins and posters to find ways to reflect these foundational parts of our history even outside of a classroom context in addition to assemblies and tutor's periods. However, this change is not something we want to restrict to just Black History Month; our history is dynamic and far more complex than can be contained in a singular month so we plan to continue to organise programs like these that give space and voices to our students of colour in creative and challenging ways, to continue creating conversational spaces where we platform students of colour, as well as finding ways to enter more school spaces such as through a read-a-thon and other events working with other branches of the school.

#### **Ayomide writes,**

Earlier this year, I was eager to join the Diversity and Equality Group because I, like many other students, understand what it is like to experience discrimination. Despite having over 5 years of experience with the different branches of student leadership, I felt like none had given me the opportunity to engage

with other like-minded students who also yearned for a safe space in which students from all different backgrounds are comfortable enough to fully express themselves. When I leave Caludon in two years, I want it to be commonplace for all students regardless of their identities to know that they are to be embraced and celebrated rather than marginalised, like I was.

Currently, my role with the REC (Race, Ethnicity and Culture) Group involved overseeing the different events we held to commemorate BHM such as delivering assemblies to different year groups, organising a 'Show Racism the Red Card Day' to advocate for an anti-racist learning environment and an open-invite celebration for all students to learn more about the different cultures at our school.

Recently, I was also given the opportunity to watch two Year 8 Drama lessons where students performed scenes based on historical black British history events including the 'Empire Windrush' and also the Bristol Bus Boycott. It was wonderful to see the different techniques performed by students including textual analysis and improvisation and how mature and empathetic the students were about the struggles faced by previous generations.

# “Anchors of normality”

## A reflection on pastoral leadership during times of change

*Megan Furborough,  
The Green School for Girls*

### November 2020

Sat at my laptop, hastily setting work on Google Classroom as I awaited the start of the Virtual SSAT 2020/21 National Conference, I was struck – for what felt like the millionth time – by a realisation of just how profoundly strange this academic year was shaping up to be. So much had changed in such a short space of time and, on that dark November afternoon, it was becoming clear that things were once again taking a turn for the worse.

Yet I had begun this academic year with optimism. Months of hard work and planning by the Senior Leadership Team meant that the arrival of bubbles, zones and one-way systems felt nowhere near as daunting as we had been dreading. As Head of Year, I had spent a lot of time during the 2020 school closure speaking to students who were struggling – with their mental health, with their physical health, with their learning – and was under no illusion that the reopening of schools would be the end of this. But, perhaps naively, I had hoped that once we were face-to-face with students again and teaching normally, many of the issues with engagement, motivation and stress that had been a factor of this work with my year group over lockdown would ease.

However, as the Autumn term trundled on, the scale of loss caused by the pandemic and school closure became ever clearer. For some, this loss was the death of their family and friends. For others, it was a loss of knowledge and skills due to difficulties in accessing the learning we provided. For almost all, there was loss of confidence. And these losses

marked students – the world had changed, so they had too. Away from the routines of school for six months, students had been cut adrift from their “anchors of normality”, a term used by the actor Rory Kinnear in an article reflecting on the death of his sister from COVID-19. Writing in *The Guardian*, Kinnear concludes that:

“In many ways this year has stripped us, however temporarily, of ourselves. Without the anchors of our normality...we have been forced to reconsider our places in a world we are unable fully to access.”



As a pastoral leader, I am acutely aware of the importance of school in the lives of our most vulnerable students. Many children with SEND and SEMH needs depend on the certainty that school brings them – the “anchors of normality” that are familiar routines, structures, friendships, opportunities and freedoms. Barry Carpenter, in his exploration of the Recovery Curriculum, reflects that children “find it alarming that the infrastructure of their week has been abandoned, however logical the reason”. He argues that this lost infrastructure triggers three significant dynamics – anxiety, trauma and bereavement – that go on to impact a child’s mental health and, consequently, their learning behaviours and attitudes.

When I first joined the SSAT programme, I envisioned this think piece to centre on Deep Learning, focusing on the student experience of blended learning. However, it soon became clear to me that my most pressing concern was the cohesiveness of my year group. Having spent so many months apart, we now felt fragmented and out-of-sync – an issue that was exemplified by a serious behaviour incident that occurred soon after the SSAT National Conference. The severity of this incident left me shocked, and with more questions than answers; as Year 10 students, I felt that my year group’s sights should have been firmly set on their new courses and the exams that lay at the end. Instead, it was clear that students had lost their sense of purpose. But as their year leader, I was intent on supporting my Year 10s to rediscover it.

### January 2021

Unfailingly optimistic, the prospect of January and a new start was one that filled me with excitement. It was decided that the arrival of the Spring Term would bring with it an emphasis on the ‘basics’: punctuality and uniform. At the start of the school year, we had adopted a lenient approach to these things, mindful of changes to transport networks and the financial impact of lockdown and furlough. By December, with punctuality rates plummeting and some very interesting interpretations of uniform emerging, SLT and Middle Leaders decided that getting the behaviours for learning right needed to be the new term’s priority.

That is, until schools were forced to close again.

This time, however, we were more prepared. With staff and students now proficient in their use of Google Classroom, we were able to conduct live lessons with students via Google Meet. Whilst this did pose its own unique challenges in terms of encouraging students to turn on their cameras and experimenting with different forms of participation, the fact that students and staff could see each other and discuss their learning, live, was transformative. Moreover, because tutors were also registering students on Google Meet, it meant that form groups were able to come together at the start and end of each day to reflect, ask questions and connect. I, too, was able to continue my regular pop-ins to form-time by joining a form’s registration Meet, alternating between the different tutor groups. I hugely valued the opportunity to see my year group from afar, and it certainly helped me to feel more connected to the students and tutors.

During the previous lockdown, I was the key point of contact for the year group and spent a large portion of each day calling and emailing students – this contact was largely centred on those who were already identified as vulnerable or who reached out to me directly. Whilst this did continue in January 2021, as a year team we were able to further supplement our contact through virtual meetings with students. Here, myself and tutors met with a different student each day at the end of PM registration to chat, check-in and meet some very friendly pets. This was hugely successful; not only as a way of keeping tabs on student engagement and identifying any barriers to learning, but also to remind students that they weren’t alone in all of this and that we cared how they were getting on. Something that I missed most of all during lockdown were the informal and often rather random chats I would have with my year group when we passed each other in a corridor or in the playground at lunch. Although seemingly trivial, this kind of interaction is hugely meaningful and I firmly believe that these virtual chats went a long way in preserving the connection between student and school over those strange nine weeks.

### March 2021

In January, at the first SSAT Leadership Legacy Project Group Meeting, Steve Robinson spoke of the importance of getting the basics right – identifying your non-negotiables and working upwards from



these. Ahead of the school's re-opening, I spent a lot of time considering this question: as the pastoral lead of Year 10, what were my 'non-negotiables' and how would I incorporate these into my daily practice? The second school closure had made it clear that for many students, daily interaction with staff was one of the 'anchors of normality' that they missed the most. In working apart from staff, they lost the familiar structures and routines that we embodied – for we act as models for the expectations and behaviour that we hope to see reflected from the students. Central to my modelling is consistency – consistency in the manner and tone in which I speak with my students; consistency in upholding and enforcing the code of conduct; and consistency within the high expectations that I hold for each individual student. The pandemic had undermined this non-negotiable and contributed to the fragmentation of the year group before Christmas. Reflecting on Steve's words on the eve of Year 10's return, consistency had to be my starting point.

On the morning of their return, Year 10 arrived at staggered points throughout the morning and congregated in the Sports Hall whilst Lateral Flow tests were administered. I was off timetable for the duration of this, which allowed me the space and time to greet each student personally as they arrived and have a short conversation with them. At the time, this did not seem particularly significant – but looking back at this moment, I can see how it provided me with a special opportunity. In taking the time to speak with every Year 10 that morn-

ing, following up on these conversations later that week, I was able to re-establish myself as one of their 'anchors of normality', a consistent presence in the year group whom students could depend on for a friendly "hello" and a chat.

In the days that followed, consistency remained at the forefront of my work with the year group. I ensured that I was a more visible presence in the Year 10 zone, spending more time in the corridors during transition times and popping into classrooms more frequently. The emphasis on punctuality and uniform that was previously planned for January was now implemented, with a return of detentions for being late or wearing incorrect uniform. There was some push-back from students at first, but by remaining consistent in our approach we saw considerable improvement in both areas. I think the success of this lay in reminding students that infringements of the code of conduct – even for more 'basic' aspects – would no longer be overlooked, and that we would follow up with a sanction. In demonstrating this, students were reminded that there were consequences to poor behaviour and, most importantly, that we cared when this happened and would work with the student to support them in making more positive choices in future.

### June 2021

The work done before May half-term in ensuring that the "simple things [were] done well" meant that I felt a renewed sense of unity emerging within Year 10 by the start of June. This is not something that is

easily measured or proved – but could be heard in the interactions between students and their classroom teachers; could be felt in the atmosphere during morning line-up and lunchtime; and could be seen in the drop in serious behaviour infringements.

The arrival of June marked the end of the GCSE exam period and the departure of the Year 11s. With a firm foundation of behaviour and high expectations now in place, I was able to turn my sights to preparing the year group in becoming 'Year 11'. The first aspect of this centred on student voice. As soon-to-be Year 11 students, I felt it important that the year group were consulted and involved in the events and work planned for them. I started meeting with my Form and Vice-Form Captains fortnightly, discussing key initiatives (from a fundraising event for children affected by conflict to the end of term reward evening) and asking for their thoughts. These students took ownership of communicating this back to their form groups and in turn, they shared feedback with me, improving the 'buy-in' from the year group as a result.

The second aspect of this centred on academic intervention. Usually targeted academic intervention

starts in Year 11, informed by the results of Year 10 exam week, but as a year team we felt it important that this work started as soon as possible so that the Summer Term could be effectively capitalised on. Working closely with the AHT for KS4 and Heads of Department/ Faculty, we identified a number of Year 10 students who were making below expected progress – 39 who were below in just one or two subjects, and 40 who were currently a wider concern. Step One to our academic intervention involved unpicking the reasons why these students were below where they needed to be. Using the evidence available to inform conversations with the students, their parents/carers and other teams we set out to discover if it was can't or won't – was it that the particular student lacked the knowledge or skills needed, or was there another barrier to their learning and engagement? Using the results of this, we were able to implement a series of academic interventions including booster sessions, study skill workshops and targeted revision using GCSE Pod.

The initiative I am most proud of, however, is the Champion Scheme that I designed and embedded to sit alongside the other academic interventions. Through this scheme, 25 disadvantaged Year 10s



were paired with a staff Champion who worked with that student to inspire and motivate them, using coaching as a way of supporting them in any areas of weakness. The feedback from both the staff and students involved was incredibly positive and the scheme has continued to grow and evolve in the current academic year.

The third aspect of 'becoming Year 11' occurred at the end of the Year 10 Mock Exam Week. With the 'anchors of normality' securely in place, the exam week was an opportune moment to focus the Year 10s on their end-goal and give them a taste of the year that would follow. I have to admit that I was nervous for the arrival of mocks – I did not know how Year 10 would respond to the rigidity of exam procedures and the heightened pressure. In hindsight I should have had more faith, for the students were impeccable, not only in their behaviour and conduct, but also in their resilience, organisation and hard work. It was with a lot of pride that I stood up in the Sports Hall at the end of their final exam and delivered the Year 11 launch assembly. Having been their Head of Year since the start of Year 9, I was touched to look out at the sea of young women in front of me and reflect on how far they had come, in the strangest and most unpredictable of circumstances.

### Conclusion

In January 2021, Dan Belcher delivered a webinar on good leadership in times of change. It was a fascinating talk, but there was one slide that particularly stood out to me – it read "Shift Happens".

We can never avoid change, and the uncertainty and disruption that it brings; and it is certainly foolish to think that schools have seen the last of COVID-19 related disruption. But what this time has proven to me is that shift may happen, but the expectations I hold as a pastoral leader must remain consistent and clear. I am proud and privileged to be an 'anchor of normality' for my students and I now understand, better than ever before, the very special role I have as a pastoral leader.

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# Establishing and embedding a precedent of support of PLAC and SGO pupils

*Gabrielle Bradbeer,  
The Romsey School*

## **Why is there a need for intervention?**

The need to embed a precedent of support for PLAC (post-looked after children) and SGO (special guardianship order) students in school is crucial. To begin this impact report, I will now explain the evidence behind the need for support, by focusing on three sections. Firstly, I will explain the need to implement additional support for PLAC and SGO students across the whole of the UK. Secondly, I will highlight a need for whole-school recognition of PLAC and SGO students at The Romsey School. Finally, I will reflect upon my experience within this role, to indicate a need for a system of support to be in place, to which individualised support can then be added.

## **Additional support needed for PLAC and SGO students across the UK**

As explained by Darren Martindale (2019), in recent years the majority of adopted children in the UK would have been removed from their birth families as a result of trauma or neglect. This means that while waiting to be adopted, it is likely that these children spent months, maybe years, in care. During this time, they are likely to have changed foster homes; “Each of these ‘moves’ contributes to the child’s experiences of loss, instability and trauma” (Darren Martindale, 2019). An unhappy childhood usually leads to behaviour difficulties in school (Sunderland, 2006), which is due to the way the child has learned to cope, react, and avoid certain situations. To support this, research shows that if a child has failed to develop positive attachments to others by the age of 2-3 years, it will become in-

creasingly more difficult to do so later in life (Sunderland, 2006). Without positive bonds created during their childhood, children may develop hyperactivity, cognitive difficulties, attention deficits, attention-seeking behaviour, and much more (Sunderland, 2006); all of which can be viewed as, or can cause, behaviour difficulties at school.

Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) are a recent introduction to the care system and therefore there have been less investigations into the impact on children. However, although DfE data has shown that children with SGOs make better academic progress than LAC students, the research has also shown that the older a child is at the time of the SGO, the higher risk there is of negative outcomes for the child (Nuffield Foundation, 2019); thus, proving that these issues are faced by SGO students as well as PLAC students, even if to a lesser extent.

The need to support PLAC students can be summarised in the following quote from DfE (2014) “Their needs do not change overnight, and they do not stop being vulnerable just because they are in a loving home. Their experiences can have a lasting impact which can affect the child many years after adoption”. Although these negative childhood experiences can affect PLAC and SGO students in a variety of ways, my mission was to create a support system which would cover the three following key concerns: a) academic progress, b) their likelihood to be sanctioned for problematic behaviour, and c) their general wellbeing. Below I have explained the need for support in each of these areas:

**a) Academic progress of PLAC and SGO students:**

According to Darren Martindale (2019), in 2017 only 33% of PLAC students achieved a GCSE pass grade in English and Maths, and only 38% achieved the expected standard at reading and writing. As these are both considerably lower than the statistics of students who have remained with their birth parent(s), it is clear that additional support is needed to ensure PLAC/SGO students are given the same opportunity to succeed. Supporting this, in the article 'Meeting the needs of adopted and permanently placed children' it states that 80% of adoptive parents say that their children need more support at school than their peers.

**b) The increased likelihood of being sanctioned for problematic behaviour for PLAC + SGO students:**

In 2017 it was found that adopted children were 5 times more likely to be temporarily excluded from school and were 20 times more likely to be permanently excluded (Martindale, 2019). More worryingly, 30% of the UK's current prison population has been brought up in care, despite them representing only 0.08% of the UK's general population. It has been argued that "pupils excluded from school might as well be given a prison sentence" (Tobi Dada, 2020), demonstrating the link between problematic behaviour at school and serving a sentence in prison; this shows how imperative it is to implement support during their school years, to try and counter-act the disadvantages placed upon them from childhood. PLAC and SGO students are more likely to be excluded because their minds often develop differently. For example, many PLAC students are slow to develop negotiation skills and discipline, meaning any disagreement that arises is likely to be interpreted as confrontation (Cullingford, 1999), rather than as a discussion.

**c) The general wellbeing of PLAC and SGO students:**

In my 'Transition Training for Designated Lead' it was stated that 17% of PLAC students in the UK have mental health problems, and on average, 40% of those with mental health have tried to commit suicide or will in the future. Students spend approximately 15,000 hours in school (Langton), and therefore it is essential that we use some of this time to help students develop positive mental health habits. In a study of 4,000 adopted children, 75% of the children who took part said that their

teachers didn't understand how to support them (Weale, 2018); this is what I wish to change within our school.

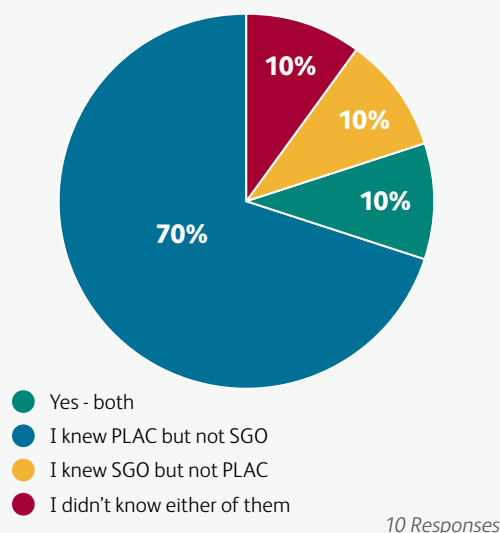
**The need for whole-school recognition of PLAC and SGO students at The Romsey School:**

After completing the research which clearly proves a need to provide additional support for PLAC and SGO students, I conducted my own research to gain a quick insight into what teachers know about PLAC and SGO students within our school. For this, I chose 10 teachers from different subjects and asked them to complete a survey; I have summarised the key results of this below.

The results in figure 1 indicate that 70% of our general teaching staff don't know what SGO stands for, and 20% don't know what PLAC stands for. Although this is a very small sample size, it supported my hypothesis that not all teachers are familiar with these acronyms (just as I wasn't prior to applying for this role).

**Figure 1.**

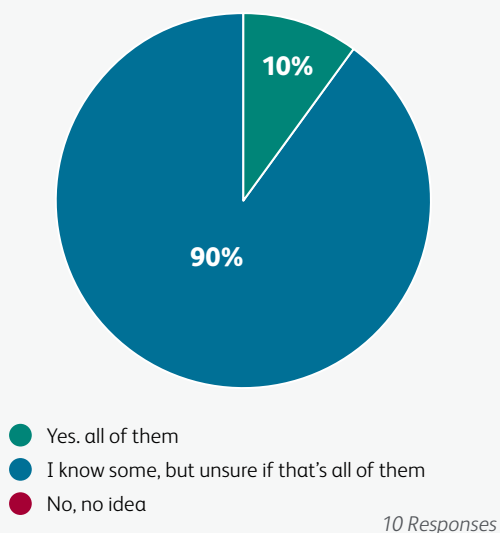
PLAC stands for Post-Looked After Child and SGO stands for Special Guardianship Order – did you know both of these acronyms already?



From figure 1 and 2, I concluded that if some staff are unfamiliar with the acronyms PLAC and SGO (which are frequently used in training and within school communication), and if approximately 90% of general teachers are unsure whether they know of all the PLAC and SGO students in their class, it

**Figure 2.**

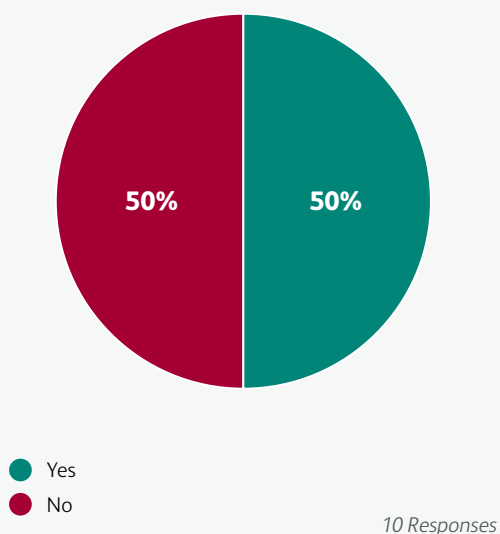
Do you currently know which of your pupils are PLAC/LAC/SGO?



is therefore exceedingly difficult for teachers to ensure they're providing the correct support. Put plainly, PLAC and SGO students cannot receive the additional support they need to close the academic and emotional gaps mentioned above, if key staff are unaware of the individuals who need it.

**Figure 3.**

If you wanted to find out which pupils were PLAC/LAC/SGO, would you know where to find it?

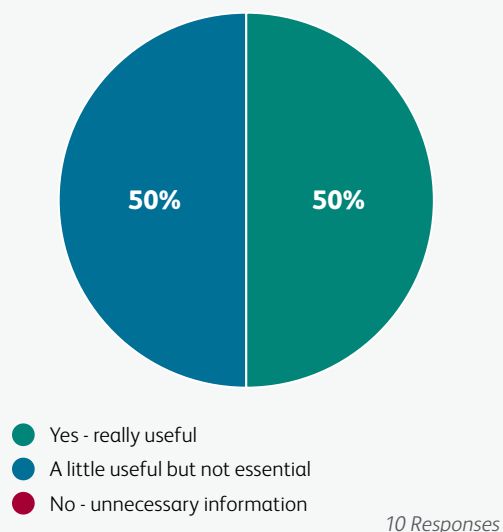


Moreover, figure 3 shows that approximately 50% of teachers do not know how to find out which of our students are PLAC/SGO, which highlights a need for this information to be clearly available.

Finally, figure 4 shows that all teachers asked, believe that it is useful to know which students in the class are PLAC and SGO (with 50% saying it is really useful and 50% saying it is a little useful). This further confirms the conclusion made above.

**Figure 4.**

Do you think it is useful as a classroom teacher to know which students are PLAC, LAC (looked-after child) + SGO?



The data collected shows that there is a need to ensure all staff are aware of which students are PLAC and SGO, as well as knowing how to best support them within the classroom environment.

### My experience as the designated lead of PLAC and SGO so far

I started my role as designated lead of PLAC and SGO students in January 2021; this role was established as an embryonic position. Due to lock-down, the students didn't physically return to school until March. At this point, I began building relationships with each student under my supervision, so that I could identify key barriers to their progress and trial interventions to overcome these. We are now in June and I can confidently say that I have a strong working relationship with 5 of these pupils and a good working relationship with 6; the remaining 4

pupils, I am still only beginning to develop a good working relationship with. As explained by Jackson Best (2020), teachers have to show kindness, integrity, competence and predictability, in order to gain the trust of a student. This shows that it can take a long time to receive a pupil's trust, specifically when working with adopted children who have often had their first line of trust broken (Mabry, 2016). I am therefore understanding that positive working relationships cannot be built over-night, and it is something which cannot be rushed.

Despite this, I am also aware that while these imperative relationships are being built, valuable support time is being 'wasted'. To illustrate this further, during my online communication in January and February, and at the start of my face-to-face meetings with pupils throughout March, I was being fed the illusion that 'all was fine' by almost all students and parents. During these first three months, the only issues highlighted to me involved academic progress, almost exclusively in English and Maths. Then, during the Easter holidays in April, I received a surge of emails from students and parents, indicating concerns including the following; one female student had been diagnosed with an eating disorder and was considering changing their name, to begin their transition into a boy; another pupil's anxiety had got to such a height that they were now refusing to come to school entirely, and one parent informed me that they had serious concerns about their child's sexual vulnerability.

None of the issues mentioned above would have appeared suddenly, without any forewarning. Instead, I believe that this increase in emails pinpointed a moment in which these students and parents understood what my role was within the school and therefore knew that they could contact me for support. Consequently, I viewed this as a success. However, I also felt that if I had known about these issues before hand, I may have been able to intervene earlier and therefore help quicker. Moreover, it leads me to believe that the 4 students whom I am still only beginning to have a good working relationship with, may in fact have barriers to their progress which I am currently unaware of. Finally, two students covered by my role were in year 11 when I started, meaning I had less than 5 months (only two of which they were physically in school for) to implement support; by relying on

developing strong working relationships to identify any need for support, I ran the risk of being 'too late' to help by the time I worked out what they needed.

Positive relationships between pupils and teachers can promote academic progress, prevent behaviour problems, and encourage the development of self-worth (Pride Surveys, 2016); these mirror the three areas I highlighted as my focal points. I therefore strongly believe that developing strong working relationships is the most effective way to implement appropriate support for pupils long-term. However, my conclusion from the above is that a precedent of support is needed, to ensure that all PLAC and SGO students are receiving support from the onset. From this realisation, I decided to base my think piece on creating a new policy to achieve this aim. I endeavoured to embed a protocol which would begin supporting students, and speed up the process of identifying pupil barriers, even before a positive relationship had been formed.

### **What practices have I embedded to address these problems, to what extent have they been successful so far, and what are the next steps.**

Within this section, I will explain each practice I have put in place and then evaluate the success of it so far. Then, based on this analysis, I will explain plans for continued improvement of support. Due to the limited timeframe, some of the out-comes may not yet be fully evident.

**1. Resource Packs:** As the first concern highlighted by many students and parents was related to academic progress, specifically in core subjects, I created resource packs to support them in this area. For this, I asked the Heads of English, Maths and Science for recommendations for a resource to support KS3 and KS4 students in their subjects. I also spoke to the leader of promoting literacy throughout the school and asked him to recommend a suitable reading book for each year group. This, combined with a few extras, led to the resource packs created below.

On the left is the KS3 pack, including a thesaurus, a dictionary, a small stationary set, a reading book, a Maths workbook, a science knowledge organiser, an English revision book and finally, an English revision workbook.



On the right, the KS4 pack contains a dictionary, a thesaurus, a reading book, a basic stationary set, a Maths revision workbook, a GCSE science knowledge organiser, a GCSE English Language revision book, and the accompanying workbook.

The head of Maths then said that the students could benefit from having a scientific calculator, and therefore I added one to each pack.

I also added the following:

- 'an introduction to me' where I explained who I was, what my role was, and where students could find me. This idea was based on feedback from a year 11 PLAC student. Before she left, I asked if there was any support, she wished she had received during her time with us; she replied that she wished she was aware of the support available to her earlier
- A questionnaire asking pupils a few key questions about their social, emotional and academic progress. This is to help identify key barriers to learning early
- Finally, an invite to a session where I would go through how to use the resources given, to promote progress. There was a separate session offered to KS3 and KS4

### Success?

Anecdotal feedback gained from the pupils directly led me to believe that there was some positive im-

pact as a result of distributing the resource packs. Gaining quantitative outcomes directly linked to the resource pack could prove problematic, however in the future, I intend to do a survey on the items included and the frequency of their use. For those who receive extra support in core subjects, I will inform their tutors of the resources they have access to, so that they can be used to aid learning within their sessions.

Despite the PLAC/SGO revision session being offered, no pupils attended. Although the exact reason is unclear, I believe this is due to my emphasis of it being optional; I was concerned about the potential issues which could arise from asking PLAC/SGO students to meet together, and therefore I stressed that attending was voluntary. I also believe that there would have been a better attendance rate, if this had been offered at the beginning of the academic year, rather than towards the end.

Equally, the questionnaire included was only completed by one pupil. Although the information received through it was highly useful, it is not clear that the responses from this one pupil will give a fair representation of all other PLAC pupils.

### What next?

In future the packs will be given to students at the beginning of the academic year so that they're able to have the maximum impact. They will now be given to any students moving from KS3 to KS4

(they will get the updated resources) and to new students joining the school.

Next academic year, I will arrange a time to meet one-to-one with all students receiving the resource pack. I will use this time to introduce myself face-to-face and arrange another meeting, at which I will ask them to bring back the questionnaire. This will ensure that the support available to them is identified straight away and I'm optimistic that it will lead to more students completing the questionnaire. I have found this year that it can be difficult to catch up with pupils, especially due to us currently having different breaks and lunches (COVID regulations), and so setting a date early will be beneficial.

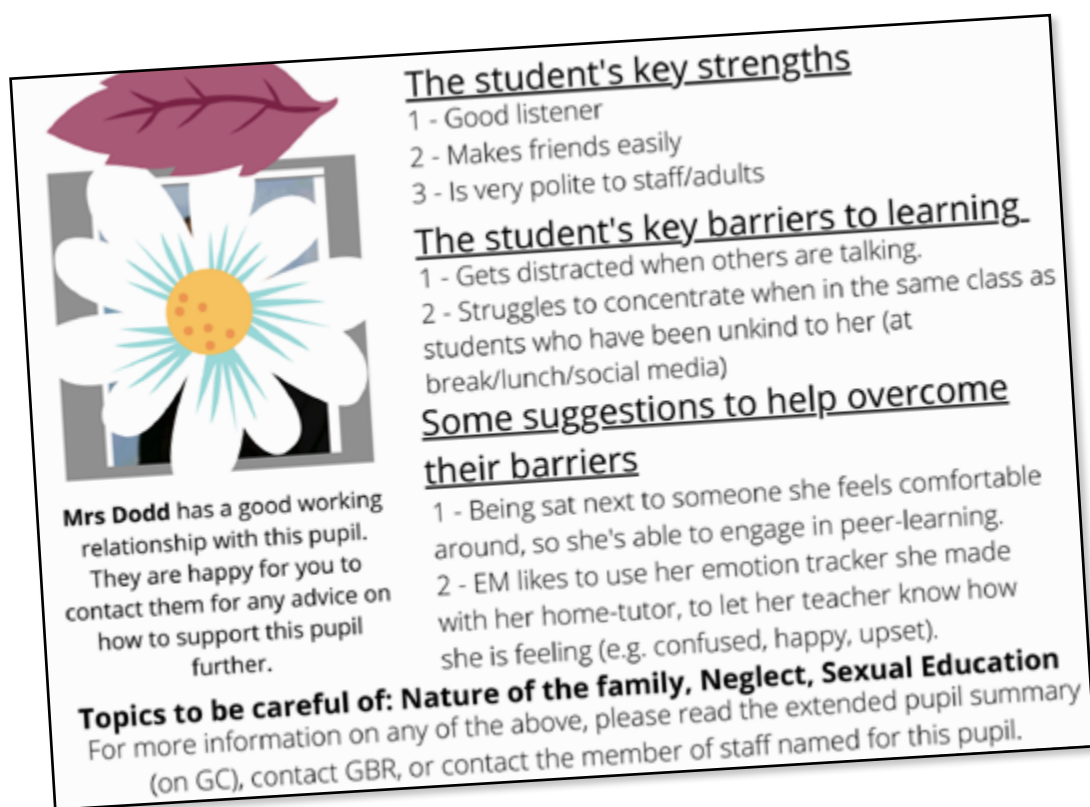
I will continue to improve the packs to ensure that they're offering the best initial support. The first addition I will make, is to add some resources to promote well-being; e.g. for KS3 I will include some resources from ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant). I will listen to feedback from students, parents and teachers, to gain ideas of what could be changed or added.

**2. PLAC/SGO passports:** After highlighting the issue that not all members of staff were aware of

how to find out which students came into this category, I discovered that this information could only be found on teachers' online marksheets, and only if the filter is turned on. The school is changing to a new system at the start of the next academic year, and it has been agreed that students being PLAC, SGO or LAC will be made more visible when viewing each student's 'overview' page.

In addition to this, I have created PLAC/SGO passports, summarising key information about the student, to be made accessible to all teachers of that student. In our school we have 'SEN passports' which summarise the key needs for Special Educational Needs pupils, to ensure that teachers are aware of how to support the child, without being overwhelmed with information; I took this idea and adapted it to create the following.

This small piece of information is designed to be a quick guide on how to support PLAC/SGO students in class. In the example above, I asked the student to tell me their three key strengths. I then worked with the student, their parent, and discussed with other teachers, to decide on the key barriers to their learning. I repeated this to come up with a few simple suggestions for how to help the student overcome



**The student's key strengths**

- 1 - Good listener
- 2 - Makes friends easily
- 3 - Is very polite to staff/adults

**The student's key barriers to learning.**

- 1 - Gets distracted when others are talking.
- 2 - Struggles to concentrate when in the same class as students who have been unkind to her (at break/lunch/social media)

**Some suggestions to help overcome their barriers**

- 1 - Being sat next to someone she feels comfortable around, so she's able to engage in peer-learning.
- 2 - EM likes to use her emotion tracker she made with her home-tutor, to let her teacher know how she is feeling (e.g. confused, happy, upset).

**Topics to be careful of: Nature of the family, Neglect, Sexual Education**

For more information on any of the above, please read the extended pupil summary (on GC), contact GBR, or contact the member of staff named for this pupil.

these. In addition, I have named a specific teacher on each passport, who is able and willing to advise others on how to support them in class. This is because it is often easier to discuss supporting a student with another member of staff, than it is to read lots of information; it also encourages a whole staff response to supporting PLAC/SGO pupils. Finally, I added some areas of content which may be emotionally difficult for a child, so the teacher is able to warn them before-hand and prevent avoidable triggers/upset.

In September, I will send these to the relevant staff so that they are aware of the key barriers, and ways to support PLAC/SGO students in their class. I have also created an area on the staff Google Classroom page, where these passports will be kept, for members of staff to refer to.

### Success?

Although the true effects of this intervention will take much longer to see, I asked some teachers to complete a second survey, to feedback on whether they believed they would be beneficial.

**Figure 5.**

Above is an example 'PLAC passport' I have created for a year 7 pupil. These will be emailed to the teachers of each pupil at the beginning of the academic year, and made available in a shared area for teachers to access. Do you think this is a good way to ensure that teaching staff know which of their students are PLAC/SGO?

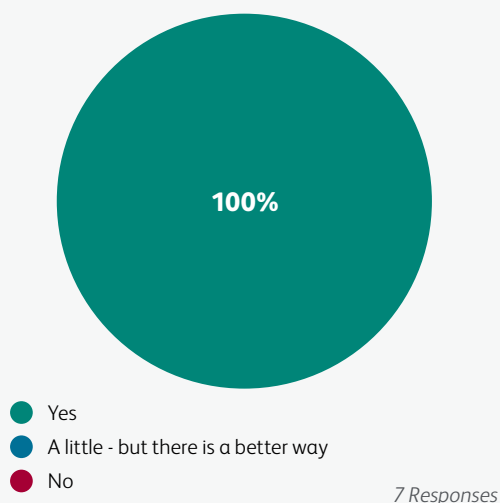


Figure 5 shows that 100% of the 7 teachers asked answered that the passport is a good way to ensure teaching staff know which of their students are PLAC/SGO. This indicates that it will be successful in overcoming the issue of teachers not knowing which of their students come into this category, and therefore may need further support.

**Figure 6.**

Do you think the information on the PLAC passport will be useful to class-teachers?

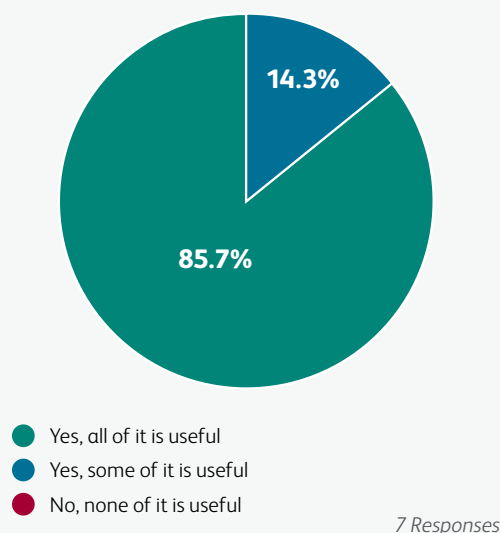


Figure 6 shows that most teachers stated that all of the information on the passport would be useful to class-teachers, and all said that some of the information was useful. This indicates that the passports will be successful in helping teachers understand how to support these students.



**Figure 7.**

The PLAC passport names a teacher who has a good working relationship with the PLAC/SGO student, would you contact that member of staff for ideas?

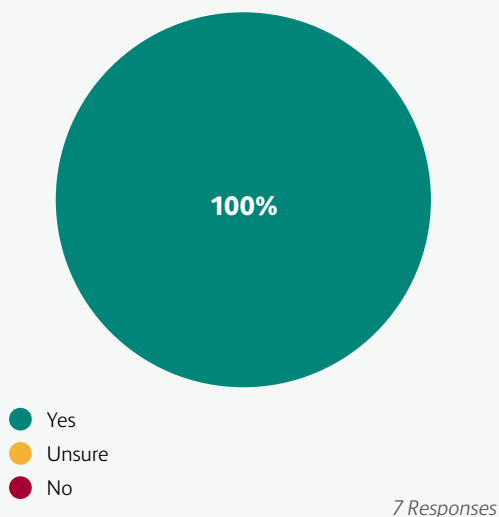


Figure 7 shows that all of the teachers asked said that they would contact the named teacher on the passports, if they wanted advice on how to further support the student.

### Next steps?

Although the SEN department are very supportive of passports being used for PLAC/SGO students as well as SEN students, they are concerned that using the same name could make it confusing for staff. Therefore, I will be working on a new name. Currently, considerations include 'pupil memo', 'PLAC profile' and 'Pupil strategies sheet'. I am also going to adapt them to highlight any other learning indicator; for example, it will highlight if the student also falls under the category of EAL, SEN, PP etc.

**3. In depth summary of each student's needs:** To expand further on the PLAC/SGO passports, I have created more in-depth overviews of the students, to be shared with staff. This will be made available to staff on the Google Classroom page, if they wish to find out more about the students' barriers to learning; this will not be sent to staff, as I do not want to add too heavily to the teacher workload. These summaries will only include information which is relevant to teaching; for example, it will focus on techniques to support them in class and will only mention their background prior to adoption if it directly links to a current barrier to learning. An example of this is shown below.

#### A Summary of [redacted] barriers and how to overcome them.

##### [redacted] background and barriers:

- Lived with adoptive family since 4yrs - Legally adopted in 2013.
- While with his birth family and in foster care, [redacted] did not receive any form of routines or boundaries e.g., with mealtimes, bedtimes, behaviour, socialising etc. He therefore did not learn to self-regulate.
- [redacted] did not have much (if any) 1:1 time or nurturing while with his birth family.
- [redacted] experience of relationships during his early childhood were extremely limited.
- Due to the above, [redacted] has had to devise his own coping strategies to exist.
- [redacted] early traumas mean that his brain is 'pre-wired' to expect the world to be harsh and dangerous.
- [redacted] will always be on high alert for danger.
- A child who has experienced trauma like [redacted] has a narrower window for tolerance.
- He really struggles to feel safe, including when trying to sleep at night.
- His self-esteem is rock bottom.

##### How can the above present in the classroom?

- When something happens to trigger a trauma memory, the child's response or behaviour is coming from an unconscious place; therefore, some of [redacted] behaviours may not be self-elected.
- He struggles to process more than one instruction at a time.
- He lacks organisational skills.
- He is hyper-sensitive and alert to the world around him which can appear as if he is distracted from the lesson, but he is assessing his safety.

##### Strategies to help over-come these barriers:

- Try to focus on the emotion behind the negative behaviour – this will help us respond empathetically, helping [redacted] to self-regulate.
- When [redacted] 'loses control', he should 'pause', ask himself how he is feeling, before trying to regulate that emotion, leading to him calming down; this is what his social worker is encouraging him to do.
- When [redacted] behaves negatively, try to focus on his feelings rather than his behaviour and reassure him.
- Try to always respond calmly.
- Avoid sarcasm or blame.
- Suggested responses 'I can see that's really hard for you.', 'when I have a bad day, I feel frustrated.', 'it's really difficult when...'
- Try to help [redacted] name the emotion he is feeling.
- Always try to rebuild the relationship after an incident.

#### How can we help [redacted]?

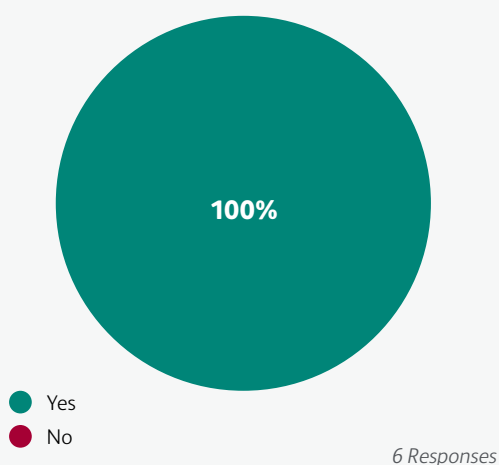
- Finding opportunities to nurture me.
- Gently show me that feelings are safe to share.
- Help me name my feelings by saying "I wonder if..."
- Help me to feel good about myself regardless of achievement.
- Organize me into small groups and encourage 1:1 relationships.
- Remain physically close to me even when I'm in trouble.
- Arrange for older children to be buddies.
- Show me that you hold me in mind ("I thought about you on the weekend and...")
- Using questions which are clear and precise.
- Using characters, films, videos to help describe emotions.
- Using writing frames (filling in boxes etc).
- to prevent anxiety about spilling out into a blank page.
- Avoiding activities which are about winning/losing all the time.
- encourage playfulness, taking part.

**Success?**

Figure 8 shows that all teachers asked would feel more confident supporting PLAC/SGO students in their class, if they knew this information was available.

**Figure 8.**

In addition to the 'PLAC passport' I will also be writing an extended overview of each PLAC/SGO student which will be made accessible to staff. This will go into more depth about their barriers to learning, how they may present certain emotions, and it will provide recommended teaching techniques for that pupil. Would you feel more confident in supporting PLAC/SGO students if you knew this information was available?



**4. Summary of training:** I have collaborated and summarised all the training on supporting PLAC, LAC and SGO students, that I have received so far. This is because it is widely believed by educational psychologists that all teachers should have a basic understanding of the complex barriers many of these students face. This will be made available for staff to read in the PLAC/SGO section of google-classroom.

**Success?**

Success of this will become evident at the whole-staff training, at the beginning of the next academic year.

**Next Steps?**

I will continue to add and refine to this document as I receive more training. During the INSET days next academic year, our SEND leads will work with

each department and during this, PLAC/SGO training will be highlighted.

**5. Individual support given:** Finally, as stated previously, I am confident that the individual support given is still the most effective tool in overcoming barriers to progress. For each student, I have kept a log of the barriers identified, the intervention put in place to overcome each barrier, and whether it has been successful. Attached, I have provided an example of this, showing the individualised support put in place for one Year 7 pupil.

**Conclusion**

The research conducted clearly demonstrates the complexity of barriers affecting the emotional, social and academic progress of PLAC and SGO students. The overriding outcome of the investigation concludes that each PLAC/SGO student has different support needs, depending on a wide range of factors. The impact of my practices so far have been reassuring and I feel optimistic that by developing the whole-school system, and by continuing to focus on individualised support, these students will progress at the expected rate. Assessing the success of an intervention on the progress of an individual can be challenging, due to the plethora of factors influencing a student at any given moment.



# Learning through inquiry: Curriculum innovation to meet student needs

*Victoria Hearn,  
Impington Village College*

**It is well-evidenced that Key Stage 3 can be a challenging period in a student's academic career, especially as they enter the Year 8 'dip', resulting in a lack of motivation and engagement. During the past 18 months, students have also faced tremendous disruption to their education. Periods of remote learning have been followed by cancelled examinations and there has been a lack of opportunity to actively engage with their teachers and peers. Unsurprisingly, student engagement has been low and they have struggled to develop the practical skills they need to succeed outside of the classroom such as confidence, self-regulation and self-motivation.**

Our founder, Henry Morris, firmly believed that education should be a lifelong process, which evolves and adapts to the needs of the student and their community. Over 80 years later, we remain committed to the principle of adapting learning to the needs of our students and the communities they serve, which has expanded to encompass the wider world. After identifying gaps in the UK national curriculum, it was clear that we needed to deliver a learning approach that would future-proof our students' successes, both academically and beyond the classroom, by re-engaging them and actively developing important life skills.

Throughout the 30 years of teaching the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) to our Sixth Form students, we have witnessed the

transformative nature of the IB. It was because of this confidence in the IB's programmes that we decided to pursue authorisation to become a Middle Years Programme (MYP) provider for our Year 7 to 9 students in the main College. By studying the IB, our students develop superior academic ability, confidence, critical-thinking and broaden their cultural horizons; it is also the only group of programmes that I can think of that are as relevant today as they have been since inception.

This September (2021), we started our journey to become an authorised MYP practitioner, making us the first UK non-selective state school to offer the MYP, DP and Career-related Programme (CP) and, during that time, we have learnt a number of important lessons about curriculum design and innovation.



### **Making connections between learning and the real world**

Project, inquiry and problem-based learning have been proven to enhance student engagement, motivation, self-regulation, communication and problem-solving; especially in situations where knowledge has to be applied in a new context. Rather than changing the content of our curriculum, it was clear that we should change our approach to teaching, and this is one of the main reasons that we decided to embark on our MYP journey. The programme is made up of interdisciplinary themes that encourage students to make connections between subjects and apply that knowledge to real world contexts so it feels like a practical curriculum. This enables students to take their learning from inside the classroom into the wider community to create positive change in the world.

Every year, students in the MYP engage in at least one collaboratively planned interdisciplinary unit that involves two subject groups as a minimum to provide contextual knowledge and create connections between subject learning and real-world application. Currently, in our History and English classrooms, students have embarked on an interdisciplinary study of heroes and villains to explore persecution in society through examination of the periods that include the Holocaust and McCarthyism in conjunction with parallel studies about Shakespearean characters including: Richard III, Shylock and Lady Macbeth. Through consideration and discussion, students will create connections between the concept of scapegoating and villainising individuals in a literary or historical context and how this leads to binary ways of thinking before exploring how this impacts their understanding of modern society and relationships.

To do this, students begin each term with a statement of inquiry and each lesson is structured around a question that addresses the statement. Only a few months in, it is inspiring to see that our students have embraced inquiry-led learning and are engaged with the subject matter, creating meaningful connections between their learning and the real world.

This focus on collaborative learning gives students the space to explore and ask questions; placing emphasis on a student's role in the learning process



and asking them to engage with an idea or topic in a proactive way, meaning that students take ownership of their own learning by using questions as a vehicle for engagement.

There is also a strong service learning element embedded into the interdisciplinary unit to demonstrate that the learning makes a tangible difference to students' lives. They will explicitly explore the ideas of bullying, peer pressure and how they perceive themselves and each other to develop their qualities of caring, open-mindedness and reflectiveness. We are also adapting the MIT compassionate systems framework and providing tools that enable students to understand, and respond compassionately to, the interconnected systemic challenges in their world. Visual representations, such as an iceberg, will be used to understand the motivation for a specific human behaviour which forms the tip of the iceberg and devolves into the base of the iceberg to develop their contextual knowledge, inviting them to develop empathy and learn about the complex psychology of being human. This provides them with a rich, interdisciplinary experience that develops the IB Learner Profile competencies; 10 core life skills that are developed through IB programmes.

### **Cohesive curriculum delivery**

Creating cohesion between policy, pedagogy and performance is the biggest challenge schools will face when they consider a new approach to delivering a curriculum. Teachers are already committed to examination preparation, delivering student support and SEND provision as well as COVID-19 recovery, so providing practical support during the pedagogical transition has been essential for us to create a unified, and positive experience. Learning walks, on-going work evaluations and deputising programme leads in all departments in addition to the College's MYP coordinator has helped ensure the teaching team is effectively supported to deliver a structured, standardised experience for students; collaboration has been key. Our MYP coordinator is working closely with the departmental leads to share best practice and create a solid structure for them to draw on during the embedding period.

### **Managing misconceptions**

Managing misconceptions was fundamental to the success of innovating our approach to teaching. We knew that one of the key concerns of our parent community was whether the MYP would sufficiently prepare their children for GCSEs. We addressed this concern early, and head on, through presentations, a dedicated parent handbook and social me-

dia messaging; sharing how the MYP enhances GCSE studies as students develop the skills to study independently and collaboratively during Key Stage 3, creating the foundation they need to tackle the rigour of GCSEs. Post-pandemic, parents have spent more time with their children and understand the pressures they are under which has also helped us to manage their misconceptions about the programme as they appreciate the holistic approach designed to develop students into confident communicators, thinkers and inquirers.

### **Looking ahead**

It is heartening to see that the introduction of inquiry-led learning has encouraged students to take ownership of their learning and engagement has certainly improved, with classroom discussions, role play and even singing taking place regularly. Bridging the gaps in the national curriculum presented during Key Stage 3 is crucial to develop the appropriate academic and life skills that students need to play an active role in the global community. As the world continues to evolve, school leaders must continue to assess the viability of their curriculum and teaching approaches to ensure that the needs of their students are met, both in the classroom and beyond.



# An Assessment into the Implementation and Impact of the Life Curriculum Programme at The Streetly Academy

Emily Homer,  
The Streetly Academy

**The aim of this report is to assess the implementation and impact of the Life Curriculum programme that I lead on. I will firstly provide an overview of the programme and then assess both staff and student perceptions about its delivery and value. This will inform me on how to enhance the planning and delivery of the programme in the future.**



*Figure 1: A summary of the school's PRIDE values. Pupils are rewarded for showing 'Pride', 'Resilience', 'Inspiration', 'Determination & Courage' and 'Equality'. Life Curriculum themes are linked to one of these values each week.*

## Life Curriculum

Life Curriculum is a tailored programme delivered in form time (35 minutes) by Form Tutors every morning. The aim is to provide students with an effective, comprehensive and robust curriculum beyond their academic lessons. Each week follows a topical theme such as Mental Health Awareness, Hunger and Homelessness, and Black History Month. Themes are selected in line with the school's PRIDE values summarised in Figure 1.

Pupils receive a taught lesson (SMSC) and assembly around this theme. Other strands of the programme include Careers, Literacy Corner, Wellbeing, Elevate (KS4 study skills), and Physical Exercise where pupils complete a 1 mile walk around the school grounds; this element was inspired by the 'Finnish Schools on the Move' programme introduced in 2016 to 90% of Finnish elementary schools (Blom et al., 20181). This programme found that increased physical activity positively impacted student's cognitive function, scholastic performance, and satisfaction with school, as well as creating a peaceful learning environment during academic lessons (IBIS).

Figure 2 summarises the weekly Life Curriculum schedule for Key Stages 3 and 4. Key Stage 5 students also follow a bespoke schedule.

| Week A  |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                                   |
|---------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
|         | Monday            | Tuesday           | Wednesday         | Thursday          | Friday            |                                   |
| Year 7  | Physical exercise | Literacy Corner   | Physical exercise | SMSC              | Assembly          |                                   |
| Year 8  | Assembly          | Physical exercise | SMSC              | Physical exercise | Literacy Corner   |                                   |
| Year 9  | Literacy Corner   | Careers           | Well being        | Assembly          | Physical exercise |                                   |
| Year 10 | Careers           | Physical exercise | Assembly          | SMSC              | Well being        | Diviate (full week when required) |
| Year 11 | SMSC              | Assembly          | Physical exercise | Careers           | Well being        | Diviate (full week when required) |
| Week B  |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                                   |
| Year 7  | SMSC              | Physical exercise | Well being        | Literacy Corner   | Assembly          |                                   |
| Year 8  | Assembly          | Well being        | SMSC              | Physical exercise | Literacy Corner   |                                   |
| Year 9  | Physical exercise | Careers           | SMSC              | Assembly          | Physical exercise |                                   |
| Year 10 | SMSC              | Careers           | Assembly          | Physical exercise | Well being        | Diviate (full week when required) |
| Year 11 | Careers           | Assembly          | Physical exercise | SMSC              | Well being        | Diviate (full week when required) |

Figure 2.

During these daily sessions, students record their learning in Reflection Journal; Figure 3a illustrates an example of students' work. At the end of each week, students reflect and record their Theme Understanding using a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) Rating System; Figure 3b shows an example of a completed Theme Understanding sheet.

Aut 1

| Theme                                                 | Good understanding | Understanding | More development required | Keywords                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| New Beginnings                                        | ✓                  |               |                           | growth mindset                                |
| New understanding: learnt about my goals for the year |                    |               |                           |                                               |
| Democracy                                             | ✓                  |               |                           | Democracy, justice, rule, line, right to vote |
| New understanding:                                    |                    |               |                           |                                               |
| Charity & Compassion                                  | ✓                  |               |                           |                                               |
| New understanding:                                    |                    |               |                           |                                               |
| Diversity, Respect & Friendship                       | ✓                  |               |                           |                                               |
| New understanding:                                    |                    |               |                           |                                               |
| World Mental Health                                   | ✓                  |               |                           |                                               |
| New understanding:                                    |                    |               |                           |                                               |
| Shared Beliefs                                        | ✓                  |               |                           |                                               |
| New understanding:                                    |                    |               |                           |                                               |
| Obsess                                                | ✓                  |               |                           |                                               |
| New understanding:                                    |                    |               |                           |                                               |

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December

Self-respect

Respect you have for yourself. Self-respect is knowing, pride and confidence in yourself. It's a feeling that you're behaving with honour and dignity.

→ right of freedom  
→ education  
→ all are equal before law  
→ innocent till proven guilty  
→ equal in rights  
→ to belong to a country  
→ to follow the religion you choose  
→ right to work

→ the right to get married and have a family  
→ to have and share opinions

Figure 3a & 3b.

In addition to the daily morning sessions, the programme also involves a thorough schedule of Extra-Curricular Clubs during lunchtimes and after school, including swimming, creative writing, and orchestra. The programme also involves a schedule of half-termly Life Curriculum Days where all pupils follow a one-day-only timetable of experiences,

trips, and activities to enhance their Life Curriculum. All activities are organised in-house across departments. Figure 4 illustrates the schedule for Life Curriculum Days for the academic year 2019/2020.

| Life Curriculum Days 2019/2020 |                            |                                |                   |                             |                                   |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                                | 23/10/19                   | 25/11/19                       | 07/02/20          | 02/04/20                    | 23/06/20                          |
| Year 7                         | Whitmore Lakes Residential | Science Murder Mystery         | The Apprentice    | Kenilworth Castle           | Physical Activity                 |
| Year 8                         | Careers Day                | Presentation and Debate Skills | Rig Bang!         | Peak District               | Geography Fieldtrip (Sutton Park) |
| Year 9                         | Theatre Visit              | Physical Activity              | Options Day       | STEM Day                    | Work Experience                   |
| Year 10                        | Mindfulness                | National Arboretum             | Equality Agenda   | Study Skills (inc. Elevate) | Mock Exams                        |
| Year 11                        | Sixth Form Experience      | Mock Exams                     | Mindfulness       | UoD Conference              |                                   |
| Year 12                        | Higher Education Visit     | Work Experience                | Physical Activity | Religious Studies           | Mock Exams                        |
| Year 13                        | LICAS/Apprenticeships      | EPQ                            | Mock Exams        | Religious Studies           |                                   |

Figure 4.

Life Curriculum was first introduced for the 2019/2020 academic year in conjunction with the restructuring of the school day; the old model included an extended form time at the end of the day, however this proved unproductive for both students and staff. The curriculum is now in its second year of implementation. Please note that Life Curriculum Days have been postponed this academic year under COVID-19 guidance.

Over the two years of the curriculum's implementation, my role has expanded from assisting in the planning of SMSC lessons, to leading the programme alongside the Deputy Head. This involves selecting themes, planning SMSC lessons, organising assembly speakers, and running the Twitter page. I am also a Form Tutor so deliver the programme each morning.

### COVID Comeback

In response to January school closures, I designed a bespoke three week Life Curriculum programme to aid the transition of pupils back into school. Figure 5 summarises the programme which involved rebranding the PRIDE values into five one-off sessions, wellbeing mornings, and an address from the Headteacher.

# COVID Comeback!

**Bespoke Life Curriculum programme for weeks beginning 8th, 15th and 22nd March.**

Aim is to help re-integrate pupils back into school life.

Streetly Mile will continue as normal.

Year teams can alter schedule to fit in assembly etc.

**All resources (inc. digibook) are on the Life Curriculum Drive.**

Figure 5.

### Links to SSAT's Deep Social Justice Agenda

#### 1. Deep Support

Primarily, the Life Curriculum programme closely follows the 'Deep Support' strand of the SSAT's Deep Social Justice Agenda. The aim of the curriculum is to equip our students with a social and emotional education, as well as an academic one.

#### 2. Deep Experience

The Life Curriculum also crosses into the 'Curriculum' and 'Powerful Knowledge' branches of the 'Deep Experience' strand. Compulsory modules of the PSHE curriculum are included in the programme (e.g. consent) as well as 'powerful' topics like Black Lives Matter.

### 3. Action Research and Methodologies

In order to investigate the delivery and value of the Life Curriculum programme, I administered two surveys: one to staff and one to students. Questions included: “What is your favourite Life Curriculum session?”, “Overall, do you think students benefit from Life Curriculum?”, and “How do you think Life Curriculum could be improved?”. Most questions were open-ended to allow elaboration by respondents.

In total, I received 24 responses from a range of Key Stage 3, 4, and 5 students. I also received 7 staff responses from pastoral staff (Form Tutor, Head of Year, etc.) of Years 7 to 13. This provided me with a representative sample of perceptions to analyse.

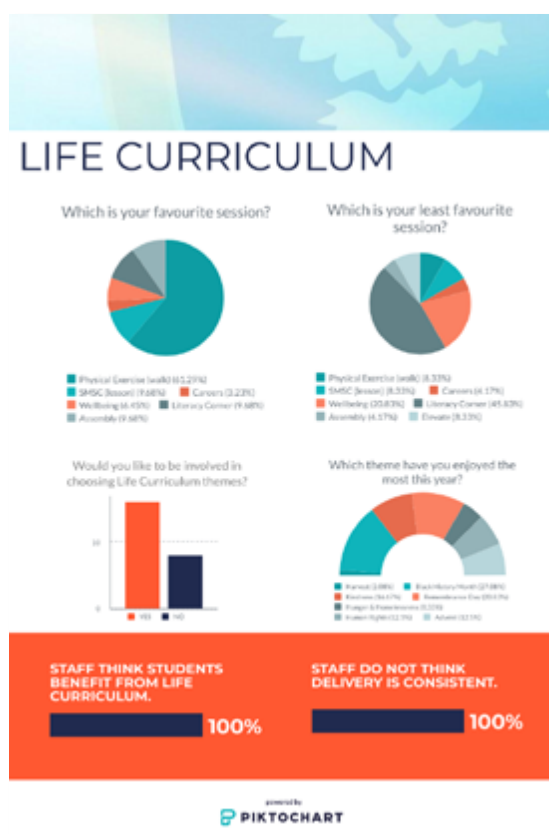


Figure 6.

### 4. Analysis of Findings

**a) Implementation:** Figure 6 summarises survey findings. The Physical Exercise element of the programme proved most popular with students (61% selected it as their favourite session) whilst Literacy Corner proved the least popular (46% selected it as their least favourite session). Findings also indicate that most students would like to be involved

in choosing the weekly themes. Unfortunately, all staff respondents believed that delivery by staff is not consistent. This of course limits the impact of the curriculum with students' experience dependent on engagement by their individual Form Tutor.

**b) Impact:** 100% of staff respondents believed that students benefit from Life Curriculum. This indicates that the programme has a positive impact on students' school experience. Students' overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards Physical Exercise supports the benefits found in Finland. Furthermore, experiences with my form group have also illustrated the benefits of the programme first-hand. Consistent implementation of the curriculum, and the discussion-based nature of the sessions has greatly improved the culture and relationships between the form group, as well as my relationship with the students. The morning sessions are now productive and positive, in contrast to the unproductive afternoon sessions that took place previously.

### 5. Conclusions and Future Applications

Findings suggest that the Life Curriculum programme has fulfilled its aim in enhancing students pastoral school experience. Staff and students spoke positively about the programme and deem it beneficial. This project has also highlighted some key actions that would improve the implementation of the programme. For example, involving students in selection of weekly themes and ensuring consistency in delivery by staff; this could be achieved by Year Team and SLT learning walks. Students also requested greater focus on more pertinent topics, such as Black History Month. The delivery of Literacy Corner is also an area for consideration as this is currently the least popular amongst students. Finally, in an SSAT Group Meeting (11/1/21), 'complete commitment to the environment' was highlighted as a key factor in the success of a school initiative. This suggests advertising around school (e.g. notice boards) may benefit the implementation of Life Curriculum in the future.



# An impact report based on a progressive grammar scheme created to give children the confidence to push the limits of their vocabulary

Emma Hart,  
South Rise Primary

## Context

Throughout my career in education, I have been committed to playing a huge role in a child's development of vocabulary and overall sense of the world. It has always been a principle of mine to identify what limits there could be to a child's vocabulary and what I can do to support the removal of that limit. I spent much of my studies analysing the importance of vocabulary in a child's life and have previously produced a case study of a child who illustrated a link between a deprived background and limited vocabulary. I am the leader of history and have witnessed the shift to knowledge-driven and vocabulary-rich lessons, further exposing me to the imperative need to support the removal of the vocabulary limit and empower students with words, regardless of their background.

*“In order for students to become fluent in the use of complex subject-specific terminology and more general vocabulary, the process of learning new words needs to be considered deliberately and explicitly as part of teacher instruction.”*

(Sherrington and Caviglioli, 2020:72)

Working in a multi-ethnic primary school that holds 37% of Pupil Premium and 46% EAL intake and situated within a low socio-economic area of South East London has been eye-opening to the

link between social injustice and language limitations. Year upon year we witness a high level of speech and language need in our early years stage, and this fact has only accelerated due to the pandemic: “Eight out of 10 teachers agreed that partial school closures and the impact of COVID-19 were only likely to have widened the word gap still further.” (Quigley, 2020:1)

Wider reading has only confirmed the battle between the limits of vocabulary versus the limitations of a child's world and is something I am committed to resolving. What could I do to support the children at this school to narrow this vocabulary gap and give them the tools to push the limits of their learning that their background may have put in place? With this in mind, Grammar Works was born.

## The process

In the first lockdown, I began collaborating with the English lead at my school. We reflected on the current teaching of grammar at our school, then thought widely about how the grammar expectations across the curriculum link to a child's ability to write, speak, and regulate themselves. At the time, grammar was usually taught through English when linking to a writing outcome, yet not necessarily delivered sequentially and at a deep enough level to transfer into a child's language schema. Students were not given time to really unpick and interrogate their vocabulary. It was imperative for grammar to be delivered explicitly, seen through a spiral-curriculum lens.

With the English lead having experience in Year 6 and noticing the slight dip in KS2 SPAG results for our school compared to the borough we work in in 2019, we were keen to find ways to make grammar knowledge 'stick' and boost their long-term memory in this area. It was also a venture into how we can expose children to grammar features that they not only are required to learn, but also to learn the skills that they need to analyse, practise and apply this new learning.

*“Recent research has demonstrated the need for formal instruction for learners to attain high levels of accuracy. This has led to a resurgence of grammar teaching...”*

(Nassaji and Fotos, 2004:24)

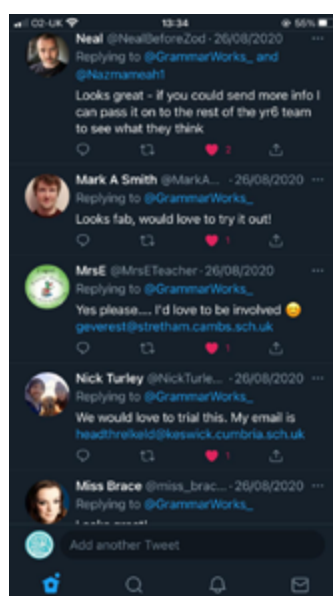
We consolidated the curriculum requirements into 'small steps' that outlined a week's focus on a grammar skill via an overarching enquiry question. Teaching them not just the 'what' but the 'how', 'when' and 'why' we use each grammar skill through a week would, we hoped, liberate children to express themselves linguistically. Each week, an oracy lesson would be taught for pupils to rehearse the grammar skill for that week. From wider reading, I knew the importance of modelling how to use vocabulary:

*“If, as schools and society, we aim to embed oracy in all children and young people, this has the potential to unlock aspiration and ambition through the development of intrapersonal skills.”*

(Williams and Settle, 2019:9)

We built a following on social media and were overwhelmed by the response from stakeholders across the country wanting to trial our scheme (See Appendix A). Over thirty schools committed to the trial, many of whom suggested the need for a structured scheme that supported teachers' subject knowledge. I was particularly interested in how we could support this, in the hope that confidence in teaching grammar could then impact on children's vocabulary comprehension.

I presented a PDM to staff within our school to inspire teachers in all year groups. Key Stage One were particularly enthused about a grammar scheme that taught the 'non-negotiables' of grammar. Because ultimately, we know that clarifying these from day one really will support the gap in children's knowledge to narrow and close as they progress. “[T]eachers need to be realistic and accept that the deeper connections can take years to form.



Appendix A: Twitter post and responses – 168 schools wanted to trial!

Meanwhile, shallow knowledge is a good start. It's important." (Sherrington and Caviglioli, 2020:25) It is this "shallow knowledge" (Willingham, 2021:51) that provides our children with a foundation to build upon- a structure we sought to establish with our Grammar Works scheme.

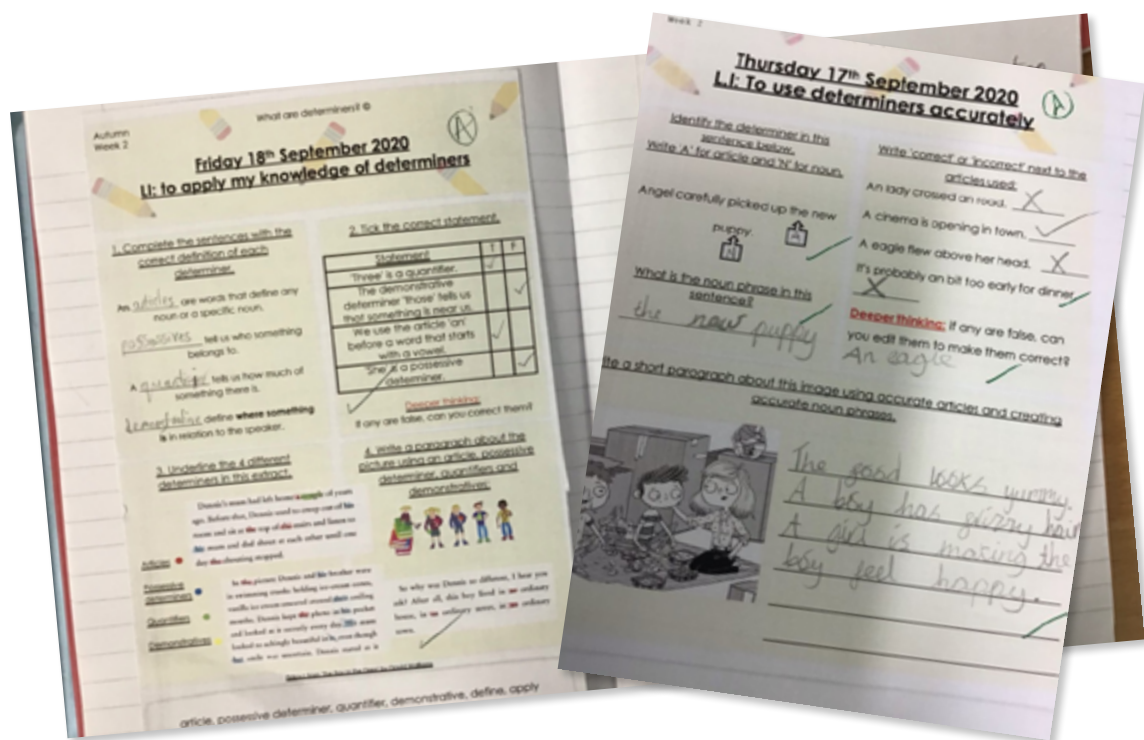
Moving from Year 3 to teach Year 5 this year gave me a chance to develop my subject knowledge of the grammar curriculum at this stage. I was producing weekly lessons for both of these year groups, plus Year 1, and through that, was able to understand what they would have learned in KS1, Lower KS2 and build progression for Year 5. It is important at this point to take heed of what Willingham discusses in 'Why Don't Students Like School?' (2021:1), that to ensure students flourish with deeper thought, we as teachers must provide the environment that allows them to think in this manner. This is how we viewed our Grammar Works scheme. Thus, progression across the year groups was vital, as children needed the foundational knowledge as a starting point to be able to analyse it at a deeper level throughout the school.

Each worksheet followed a set structure: Revisit, Identify, Practice, Apply. The 'Revisit' question built upon their knowledge from the previous lesson and

'Identify' would be a closed query based on where the child could see the feature. 'Practice' and 'Apply' would give children the chance to use this skill in a context and then create their own sentences using the skill. This structure was to further enhance the development of synapses and encourage them to make connections between the skills week on week - something I felt children lacked before beginning this scheme. As the year continued, these worksheets increased in complexity as topics were revisited. Pupils would apply the fluency of the skill and analyse the purpose behind using it, to connect what they already know to new, more abstract concepts. This was seen through true or false statements, analysing effect and purpose, seeing the same grammatical features in high-quality, challenging text extracts and encouraging children to manipulate skills with hypotheticals such as "what if I changed X to Y?" (See Appendix B)

### Impact

I realised that quantitative data would not be entirely possible this year due to the impact that COVID has had on obtaining end of KS2 levels, and gaps created by lockdowns. However, termly Grammar Works assessments have been widely seen as a positive experience - staff have reported that the majority of their classes are accessing and comprehending



Appendix B: Worksheet Examples

the task as there is ample time to secure knowledge. This is then being seen in their English books and other areas of the curriculum. In my class, for example, 5 children have moved from 'working towards' to the 'expected' level in writing and this has largely been due to their awareness of grammatical features that they are using. (See Appendix C)

However, qualitative data has proved to be wealthy in its ability to illustrate the impact of Grammar Works and has given us hope that next year, we could see the impact in a more data-driven and measurable way. Ultimately, my vision for this scheme was not just to support children in succeeding in tests, but to give them a voice and permission to widen their vocabulary. I present: Pupil A.

**Case study: 'Pupil A'**

For the purpose of this study, I have anonymised the student. She started Year 5 at Working Towards the expected level across all subjects and is now at the expected level across all subjects. She is a child who has access to Pupil Premium funding.

Pupil A entered Year 5 with a bang. Her over-zealous attitude would more often than not shatter when asked to put pen to paper. The stress, anxiety and emotion would be overwhelming, and she would often refuse to complete a task. We know as staff that Pupil A's behaviour historically had left her with a fixed mindset over her education and a lack of perseverance.

"When I first started Year 5, I thought writing was rubbish. I didn't understand what to put

in my sentences. I wasn't confident in myself. I got upset every time you asked me to write."

However, the start of explicit grammar lessons almost instantly engaged her. It became the key that she seemed to have been waiting for. Her attitude towards writing soon began to improve, and by giving her opportunities to share her outcomes and feel valued as a writer, she saw the positive effects of her words.

Pupil A used post-it notes to support her working memory as we covered a new grammar skill each week. Each time our English lessons would begin, she would place the post-its along her table for reference as she wrote. (See Appendix) These became such a powerful tool for her confidence and supported her working memory: giving her the space to self-regulate and monitor her learning.

"I liked keeping notes in grammar because they helped me remember what we had learned and helped me use the skills in my other lessons."

And with this, Pupil A's vocabulary began to expand and deepen. She began to use more adventurous wording and could explain their word class and purpose within a sentence. She would start to interrogate her knowledge by asking, 'is this the most effective way to write this?', 'how can I up-level this sentence?' or 'which punctuation would be best for this parenthesis?'. Furthering this, her understanding of structure for effect became stronger too - she knew exactly which components made clauses and

|                |                |                |    | Grammar                                                                                                    |                                            |                                                                                                                                              |                                                                           |                                                                |                                                                                               |                                                                             |                                                    |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                             | Punctuation and vocabulary                                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |                                                            |                                 |                                           |                                    |                                                                                                                                 |                                                                            |        |  | Vocabulary |  |  |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--|------------|--|--|
|                |                |                |    | Can use coordinating (and, but, or) and subordinating (if, when, because, since, even though) conjunctions | Use different verb forms mostly accurately | Some variation in sentence structure through a range of openings, e.g. adverbials (some time later, as we can, once we had arrived, subject) | Can use expanded noun phrases to convey complicated information concisely | Can use verb phrases (for example, for, der, not, over, under) | Different sentence types, e.g. questions, direct reported speech, commands used appropriately | Using passive verbs to affect the presentation of information in a sentence | Use modal verbs to indicate degrees of possibility | Beginning to use relative clauses beginning with who, which, where, whose, that, or with an implied relative pronoun | Can use and apply the following terminology: modal verb, relative pronoun, relative clause, parenthesis, bracket, dash, cohesion, antiquity | Use capital letters, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, commas for list and apostrophes as for contractions not merely correctly | Can accurately use commas to demarcate clauses to clarify meaning or avoid ambiguity | Can use brackets, dashes or commas to indicate parenthesis | Use a colon to introduce a list | Some correct use of semi-colons with less | Punctuate full points consistently | Can choose vocabulary for effect - some use of stylistic features appropriate, e.g. formal / informal vocabulary if appropriate | Can use reasonably wide range of vocabulary, though not always appropriate |        |  |            |  |  |
| Writing Autumn | Writing Spring | Writing Summer |    | 3                                                                                                          | 3                                          | 3                                                                                                                                            | 3                                                                         | 3                                                              | 3                                                                                             | 3                                                                           | 3                                                  | 3                                                                                                                    | 3                                                                                                                                           | 3                                                                                                                                            | 3                                                                                    | 3                                                          | 3                               | 3                                         | 3                                  | 3                                                                                                                               | 3                                                                          | 3      |  |            |  |  |
| 20             | 22             | 23             | 24 | 3                                                                                                          | 3                                          | 3                                                                                                                                            | 3                                                                         | 3                                                              | 3                                                                                             | 3                                                                           | 3                                                  | 3                                                                                                                    | 3                                                                                                                                           | 3                                                                                                                                            | 3                                                                                    | 3                                                          | 3                               | 3                                         | 3                                  | 3                                                                                                                               | 3                                                                          | 79.07% |  |            |  |  |
| 20             | 21             | 23             | 24 | 3                                                                                                          | 3                                          | 3                                                                                                                                            | 3                                                                         | 3                                                              | 3                                                                                             | 3                                                                           | 3                                                  | 3                                                                                                                    | 3                                                                                                                                           | 3                                                                                                                                            | 3                                                                                    | 3                                                          | 3                               | 3                                         | 3                                  | 3                                                                                                                               | 3                                                                          | 85.12% |  |            |  |  |
| 20             | 22             | 23             | 24 | 3                                                                                                          | 3                                          | 3                                                                                                                                            | 3                                                                         | 3                                                              | 3                                                                                             | 3                                                                           | 3                                                  | 3                                                                                                                    | 3                                                                                                                                           | 3                                                                                                                                            | 3                                                                                    | 3                                                          | 3                               | 3                                         | 3                                  | 3                                                                                                                               | 3                                                                          | 89.77% |  |            |  |  |
| 20             | 22             | 23             | 24 | 3                                                                                                          | 3                                          | 3                                                                                                                                            | 3                                                                         | 3                                                              | 3                                                                                             | 3                                                                           | 3                                                  | 3                                                                                                                    | 3                                                                                                                                           | 3                                                                                                                                            | 3                                                                                    | 3                                                          | 3                               | 3                                         | 3                                  | 3                                                                                                                               | 3                                                                          | 79.07% |  |            |  |  |
| 20             | 22             | 23             | 24 | 3                                                                                                          | 3                                          | 3                                                                                                                                            | 3                                                                         | 3                                                              | 3                                                                                             | 3                                                                           | 3                                                  | 3                                                                                                                    | 3                                                                                                                                           | 3                                                                                                                                            | 3                                                                                    | 3                                                          | 3                               | 3                                         | 3                                  | 3                                                                                                                               | 3                                                                          | 81.40% |  |            |  |  |

**Appendix C:** Data grids for children who have moved from Working Towards/Below the Expected Level at Baseline stage of Year 5 (20) to Expected by Summer (24) Also shows the grammar and punctuation statements achieved (1: secure, 2: mostly secure, 3: not secure)

If you could describe how your grammar lessons have helped your confidence and vocabulary this year, what would you say? Please write below:

14 responses

Perseverance

Grammar have helped me lots in my confidence

What I would say is that it has helped my confidence is that I would use my books to help me if we had did this before and I have a good memory.

I would say it has helped me be confidence in my writing, dialogue and speech.

Extraordinary because it's the only thing that I'm the queen  at.

It helped me by making my vocabulary more advanced and helped me be more confident by teaching me the different tenses and there's (I forgot what I wanted to say)

That it helps me write better scripts and different pieces of writing

Helped alot

#### *Appendix D: End of year student survey response from Pupil 1 and others*

how to manipulate its effect on the reader if written in a different order.

"I like the speaking lessons. I get to practise the grammar skill in my own words and hear how it sounds before I write it."

It was clear that Pupil A's schema was strengthening, and her synapses were starting to connect. One way to measure this was in her writing outcomes in English and History.

"I know grammar has developed my vocabulary in English and History. I used 'an array of trinkets' when I described the market stalls in Baghdad in the Golden Age of Islam, and I knew this was a descriptive expanded noun phrase."

The switch from being a reluctant writer to a confident one has been clear. Writing and oracy became a source of contentment for Pupil A, and this change also became clear in the way she voices her emotions. Pupil A is now more able to use her words carefully and explain her feelings before acting on them. It is this wider effect of Grammar Works that shows that

this scheme has left a lasting legacy on this child. Williams and Settle (2019:9) explains, "...the ability to be self-determining is a key tenet of social justice and one where oracy, with its demands for good listening skills, emotional intelligence and face to face communication, is a vital component."

In an end of year survey, (see Appendix D) when asked how she would describe her grammar lessons, and how they have helped her confidence and vocabulary, she wrote:

'Extraordinary because it's the only thing that I'm the queen at.'

I know that for Pupil A, Grammar Works has been liberating for her wellbeing, education and behaviour this year. It was as if these lessons gave her psychological permission to develop her limits beyond her prior knowledge of vocabulary and realise that vocabulary has helped her see the purpose of education:

'...now, I am a better speller, writer and talker. It has given me the confidence to be myself and made me feel free!'

### Feedback from staff and pupils

Part of this scheme was to not only offer deep learning to students, but deep support for staff. Knowing that I was leading the dissemination of grammar to Years 1, 3 and 5 highlighted to me the need for subject knowledge development.

The impact of the Grammar Works scheme has been incredible for staff this year, and even for myself as a teacher and leader. Teacher's grammatical knowledge has been refined, and I have been able to support other teachers with ready-made resources and frequent email communication regarding the skill and how to deliver it.

During the year, we invited trial schools to send us feedback on the resources created and it was overwhelmingly positive. Teachers could clearly see the progression of skills and depth of understanding that the children were being challenged to explore. At the end of the trial year, these schools completed a survey that reflected on the successes, impact and next steps for Grammar Works (see Appendix E). Staff often voiced the research that they were putting in, for example: "I spent an hour last night watching videos about the different types of determiners!". This feedback was proof that Grammar Works provided a motivation for teachers to learn more, week on week.

☐ Ch have been able to articulate the ideas and rules around grammar. Some topics have come easier to children that they would have otherwise done.

7/7/2021 9:25 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

☐ Yes. Application of learning in writing - particularly with my GD writers. Pupil voice - the children have enjoyed their grammar lessons this year and would say they were more confident. It is a shame we didn't get to do the SPAG SATs test this year, I think we would have seen a difference.

7/7/2021 12:51 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

☐ Recently, children were noticing and pointing out abstract nouns in a lesson, whereas they didn't know what they were a few weeks earlier.

7/6/2021 5:25 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

Consistent and reliable resources which the children understand. The worksheets have fit into our guided reading session rotations.

7/7/2021 9:25 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

The small steps and recapping helps to embed the key knowledge. The slide based lessons were great for the verbal lessons. A sequence of learning and termly/yearly overviews were really useful in terms of using the grammar learning to support English learning. Children's understanding of SATs style questions is great.

7/7/2021 12:51 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

It focused on a lot of areas (such as focusing on some of the 16 verb tenses) which we may usually take for granted that the children will know.

7/6/2021 5:25 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

☐ small steps and embedding grammar as part of English lessons. Talking about it verbally to the children each day.

7/5/2021 4:41 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

### Appendix D: Trial school feedback on survey at the end of the year

*'It has focussed staff on the key grammar to be embedded and covered in the year group'*

– Staff voice from most recent survey.

### Next steps

It has been a challenging yet incredibly rewarding year for me as teacher, practitioner, year group leader and Grammar Works co-creator. Although it will take more than one year to embed this, my vision for a lift on the limit of vocabulary only continues to motivate me further. Grammar Works is just the start of my leadership in this area, as next year I wish to support staff with online webinars based on the teaching of grammar, as well as collaborate with authors to continue to include high-quality text extracts within our resources. The partnership between myself and the English lead has also taught me how impactful two minds can be - approaching their practice differently but aspiring for the same goals.

*"The Grammar Works scheme has transformed the teaching in Year Six. The children have come up vastly more knowledgeable than ever before. We have been able to hit the ground running this year and it's definitely thanks to Grammar Works!"*

– Regan Gambier, Assistant Head Teacher

Understanding that I am never finished growing as a teacher or leader enables me to continue to find ways to provide deep learning, support and leadership. I am incredibly proud of the impact that our scheme has made on the children of this country within a year and feel strongly that when we give children psychological permission to talk, they become confident citizens of the world. Not only this but encouraging them to have autonomy over what they want to learn next. It has been a pleasure embarking on a journey that has already started to leave a lasting impact on my school, and schools up and down the country, and I feel driven to continue to narrow and close the vocabulary gap with Grammar Works. I take note from what Paul Bambrick-Santoyo writes: '[e]xceptional school leaders succeed because of how

they use their time: what they do, and how and when they do it.' (2021:2) and see Grammar Works as the start of my leadership journey.

After one year of using Grammar Works at our school, Mock SPaG results have reflected a huge transformation in the understanding of grammar, where 76% of children are reaching the expected level or above. Our scheme has supported children already to prepare for their SATs, yet also has made them more proficient, thoughtful and critical writers. Win, win!

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### Find-out more

**Website:** <https://www.grammarworks.co.uk/>

**Twitter:** [@GrammarWorks](https://twitter.com/GrammarWorks)

# The impact of TEEP in a special school

*Rebecca Beveridge,  
Venturers' Academy*

**At Venturers' Academy we specialise in delivering high quality education to Autistic Learners. Our students are some of the most vulnerable children in Bristol. We have a diverse range of needs within our cohorts including SEMH, challenging behaviour and many of our students have EAL needs. Our drive has always been to provide our students with the highest quality educational provision and develop their range of educational experiences.**

Our journey has not been smooth sailing and as a school we epitomised the 'Learners Journey as a true rollercoaster'.

The beginning of our TEEP journey at Venturers' Academy coincided with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time this was a truly challenging

undertaking for our staff, but in hindsight, beginning in this way really did improve teaching practice.

## **My journey**

As Early Adopters we had the privilege of putting ourselves into the same position as our students; battling technology, dealing with the inevitable overlap of home and work and balancing the stress of a pandemic alongside a challenging CPD opportunity. This allowed me to really understand how my students were learning during the pandemic, with this awareness alongside my developing knowledge of TEEP I made a decision to overhaul my teaching style.

At this time I was teaching a Life Skills class, an incredibly challenging class of teenage students with a vast array of behaviours that challenge, EAL needs, sensory needs and cognitive challenges.



On paper my students were not academic, their social and emotional needs were enormous and historically they had made little academic progress. This was a cohort who should not have thrived in a pandemic. TEEP allowed me the opportunity to reflect and begin to unpick the motivation behind their attitude towards learning but also reflect on my style of teaching. I recognised that I needed to become far more flexible and adaptable as a teacher, my students find change hard - so I needed to adapt and change, not them.

I recognised that I needed to slow my teaching down, we are all guilty at times of rushing headfirst into achieving a result that showcases our students, but in reality I needed to embed the knowledge of my students and build a strong foundation. Their journey is not about a quick result, it is a marathon not a sprint.

As a school we subscribe to the Thrive Approach, I recognised that Thrive maps in so well with TEEP and that working in conjunction it creates the perfect educational environment for students to thrive. I began small, focusing in the beginning on preparing my students for learning, focusing on taking the Thrive principles of creating a safe and calm environment and mapping this with high expectations.

During the pandemic I made a radical choice to continue teaching the same timetable but virtually. I addressed the SEMH needs of my students, I entwined my new found love of TEEP with our Thrive practice and created a culture where learning was celebrated. We began to talk more about 'Constructing Meaning' taking our knowledge and applying it into the context of our lives and my students loved it. The progress they made was astonishing, they were exceeding their annual academic targets, some making huge leaps in their understanding, but more importantly they were enjoying learning, for some, for the first time in their educational experience. The success my students found during the pandemic was simply the beginning of my TEEP journey but it gave me the firm foundation to bring this new love of learning into the physical classroom.

The progress my students all made during the academic year was phenomenal. Every student exceeded academic targets and surpassed all expect-



tations. The comments from parents were focused around their surprise at how well their children were engaging with school and the shift in attitudes towards learning. It was evident that students were enjoying their time within the classroom and they felt confident in understanding the purpose of their learning. This gave a solid foundation to build upon and they are continuing to thrive in their learning - my most disengaged pupil has just been awarded a Gold Award from 'Engage in the Future' a national award celebrating exceptional achievements. There is a sense of pride and confidence in students that wasn't there before and ultimately that really shows how powerful TEEP can be for ASD students.

The benefit of TEEP was felt not just in Venturers' Academy, but in fact all across the Venturers Trust. Developing shared language between colleagues in schools across the Trust, opening opportunities for collaboration and coaching. It has been a wonderful opportunity to explore how others have implemented TEEP into their practice and also further extending into the whole school ethos. This capacity for cross Trust working has meant that links are built to support our students across the Trust and enables us to build links and share expertise. It has been a wonderful journey and I have expanded my knowledge enormously.

### Whole School Implementation

The implementation of TEEP within the whole school was challenging - many of my colleagues were initially sceptical of the changes brought about by the programme and dismissed its relevance to our SEND cohort. Many had undertaken the Level One training and had struggled with online professional learning, combining this with teaching during the pandemic and personal fears; upon reflection the timing to launch TEEP into our school was truly challenging.

However, returning to face to face teaching and resuming a new 'normal' provided fantastic opportunities to explore how teaching staff felt about TEEP, there was a misconception that TEEP required additional workload and added pressure - once this misconception was addressed it was clear that many of our teachers had simply misunderstood the purpose of the training - it is not reinventing the wheel but simply a tool to help aid reflection in how we are delivering our teaching.

Delivering high quality teaching and learning is the foundation of every school and by utilising TEEP we ensure there is a consistency between key stages and phases. Our students thrive on routine and structure. It is recognised that change is not beneficial or welcomed by our students and the anxiety surrounding class moves and transitions can be challenging for most. TEEP is a wonderful tool to help students.

Coaching sessions and in-house training were utilised to identify what key areas, as staff, we needed to focus upon and to provide a gentle re-introduction to the principles. There was a recognition that TEEP aligned strongly with our focus for developing a consistency between our three sites and the use of our 'shared language' meant that students were able to recognise their learning pathways and identify which learning stage they were in and were working towards. Following the TEEP cycle gives our students ownership within their learning - it allows them to recognise the steps they need to take to achieve, it also allows them the chance to unpick what helps them to succeed in their learning. The consistent use of reflection and review within each stage of the cycle meant that student misconceptions were picked

up quicker and intervention sessions could be put into place quickly to address gaps. This is especially important for our learners after the turbulent learning journey during the pandemic.

Our students thrive on routine and consistency, embedding the language of TEEP and understanding the TEEP cycle ensured that teachers were able to plan more effectively - ensuring that we were allowing students to explore their learning and develop deeper connections within their classrooms. Recognising the need for developing engaging and exciting lessons which exposed our students to all elements of the cycle meant that students were energised by their lessons, this in turn had a direct impact on their progress both academically and socially.

As a school we subscribe to the 'Thrive Approach'. This trauma informed intervention works well in conjunction with TEEP as it identifies students who are not ready to learn and enables staff to embed interventions into whole class sessions. TEEP allows for teachers to deliver high quality teaching and learning and Thrive helps us support the well-being of the students ensuring they are all able to have the same opportunities and access the same learning. Our journey has just begun as a school and I am very excited to see where the future takes us.

Ultimately, TEEP has been a powerful tool for us as an ASD specialist school. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to explore our students' capacity for learning, allows us a deeper understanding of how to impart knowledge effectively and recognition of any additional support students may require to succeed. The biggest benefit of TEEP implementation is the effect it has upon the students; learners want to be in the classroom and are proud of their achievements, they are able to talk about their learning and share their enthusiasm with others.

*I am proud to teach my students  
and they are shining!*



# Do you want to know more about TEEP?

## What is TEEP?

The Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP) is a high-quality teaching and learning programme built on research, that provides:

- ▶ A flexible framework for effective teaching and learning developed from evidence-based research
- ▶ An effective training programme for all subjects, phases and settings
- ▶ A process not a product, delivered by expert teacher practitioners.

## Why TEEP?

Implementing TEEP with SSAT's support and guidance produces:

- ▶ Whole school improvements in teaching and learning through a single, consistent model
- ▶ Validation of existing practice and inspiration for new approaches, for teachers to reflect on and improve their practice
- ▶ Greater collaboration and the sharing of best practice in teaching and learning, through a common language of learning
- ▶ Development of effective learner behaviours





# A Digital Legacy – Developing Digital Pedagogy

*Stephanie Anderson,  
Queen Katharine Academy*

## **Context**

Living through the pandemic as a teacher of students in a deprived area has highlighted the level of deprivation that is prevalent in our community. Over the past two years I have seen first-hand that there is a clear digital divide between the most affluent students and their more deprived peers.

- I work in a larger than average 11-18 secondary school with 1255 pupils on roll
- The Academy has a larger than average number of disadvantaged pupils – 31.4% (national average 14.1%, placing us in the top 20% of all schools nationally), although this figure may be an under-estimate due to eligible newly arrived families from minority ethnic groups not completing the necessary documentation
- The Academy has a significant number of vulnerable pupils (45% have a safeguarding file)
- The Academy has a larger than average percentage from minority ethnic groups and whose first language is not English - 53% (national average 16.6%)
- Many pupils leave within year creating high levels of 'churn'. In 2019-20, 89 pupils arrived after the start of term and 71 pupils left mid-year

## **Introduction**

I was invited to apply for the Leadership Legacy Project at the same time as I embarked on a Professional Development (PD) Lead Accreditation course with the Maths Hub, which is about effective leadership of maths teacher's professional development. The two programmes which were both sustained

online throughout the year and although I could not have known it when I signed up, they complemented each other providing multiple opportunities to reflect and embed changes in my own practice. They enabled me to think deeply about my leadership, beliefs, and educational philosophies.

My school's core purpose, very much aligned with my own, is to provide an education that transforms lives, that gives every child the life chances they deserve and empowers them to change the future, shape society and the world. We are living through a time of accelerated change, and to fully prepare our students fully for their unknown digital future, we need to keep abreast of developments and ensure our students are given the same opportunities as their more advantaged peers.

I wanted to use my think piece as a vehicle to summarise the digital journey that my school and I have been on this year considering the pandemic; what we have learnt, what we have implemented, the impact so far and the next steps.

## **A timeline**

As a result of the pandemic, we are living in a time of accelerated change in education. The below timeline summarises the changes in academic year 2020-2021.

### *September 2020*

Teachers and pupils returned to school after the first lockdown and summer holidays, but the situation remained precarious; schools were tackling

challenges such as students and staff self-isolating, blended learning, TAGS, keeping students, staff, and equipment in bubbles, adapting curriculums to tackle 'gaps' in student's education and anticipating and preparing for a second wave.

#### *Change the things that you can.*

In January I was reminded of the importance of asking 'why?'. My school launched live online lessons when the spring term commenced because of the second lockdown. By 10th January 2021, the pastoral teams were able to audit which students had access to a device to access the remote learning being provided by the school. All year 11 students and sixth form had access, due to being provided with devices by the school, but there were still around 200 students (approximately 20%) that did not have any access to a device or an internet connection and were therefore unable to engage with online learning. As a stop gap, students were given paperwork packs, but it was clear that this was not a workable long-term solution.

A campaign was launched for staff, local business, and members of the community to donate devices, and a just giving page was set up. As a result of this, alongside the 36 devices that were received from the DofE, by the end of January, every student and family had shared access to at least one electronic

device and an internet connection, enabling them to engage with the online provision.

#### *January 2021*

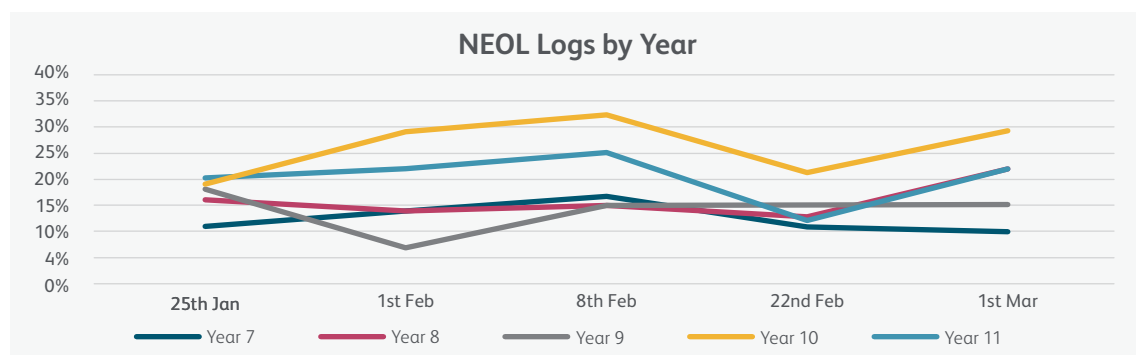
In response to staff (95), parent (284) and student (255) voice surveys at the end of January, the school was able to respond to concerns regarding academic progress, screen time and workload for both staff and students, by adjusting their online provision. Movement breaks were built into the timetable, and support staff were re-allocated to departments to assist with the additional administrative work and follow up that teaching online had created.

#### *The importance of asking 'why?'.*

The first hurdles had been overcome, but barriers remained. One of the main barriers was Non-engagement with Online Learning - something that was later given its own abbreviation (NEOL) as a way of referencing the subset of students that were not engaging with online learning, despite having been provided with the means to do so.

When live teaching online began, we kept registers of attendance and engagement with online lessons in maths. By the end of January, in the maths department we had 3 weeks' worth of data showing that although engagement was variable, it was hovering around 50% for KS3/4.

|       | Week 11th Jan | Week 18th Jan | Week 25th Jan | Week 1st Feb | Week 8th Feb | Week 22nd Feb | Week 1st March |
|-------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Sixth | 71.10%        | 80.00%        | 73.33%        | 75.33%       | 84.50%       | 82.00%        | 86.67%         |
| 11    | 53.44%        | 53.44%        | 50.62%        | 52.99%       | 57.55%       | 51.10%        | 44.56%         |
| 10    | 41.43%        | 33.98%        | 37.75%        | 43.07%       | 45.68%       | 38.68%        | 42.01%         |
| 9     | 43.55%        | 43.14%        | 45.85%        | 51.10%       | 50.46%       | 46.70%        | 46.01%         |
| 8     | 34.73%        | 42.77%        | 45.54%        | 54.84%       | 52.53%       | 48.68%        | 44.61%         |
| 7     | 46.36%        | 44.35%        | 50.32%        | 58.73%       | 57.60%       | 51.28%        | 51.16%         |



*February 2021*

This tracking raised awareness of the persistent non-engagements from some students, and the NEOL (Non-engagement with Online Learning) code was created on SIMS, allowing non-engagement with online learning to be tracked centrally across the school. By tracking across subjects, the progress teams were able to prioritise the students engaging the least. Students that were continually not able to engage with online learning for several reasons were re-categorised as vulnerable students and were able to access the key worker/vulnerable provision in school from February.

The key question was why were students not engaging? The answer was that there was a whole range of barriers.

- Some were looking after their siblings because of parents having to work, so were unable to engage with their own studies
- Some lacked the motivation to engage independently with online learning
- Some experienced online / screen time anxiety and fatigue
- Some had to share devices with several other family members
- Some had unstable internet connections
- Some logged into sessions but did not participate in online learning
- Some did not possess the digital skills needed to work independently from home

Many of these factors were out of our control whilst working remotely, but we were able to direct our attention on the things that we could change. When it became apparent that the lockdown was unlikely to be lifted before Easter, staff began exploring in earnest ways to engage the persistent non-engagers and upskill and support those lacking basic digital skills to engage. A Show and Tell CPD session for sharing online teaching ideas was arranged for the 3rd of February and teachers were invited to share how they had been delivering lessons in an online environment. I delivered a session entitled 'Ghosts, Desmos and Feedback' focusing on how to engage students that were signing into lessons but not engaging with the work, and how to give more effective feedback in an online environment as a tool of promoting engagement.

### **The DSSG, DDG, DLPG groups and digital champions**

Thankfully, pupils were able to return to school in March 2021, albeit to a very different looking school, with bubbles, sanitising, social distancing, and face coverings. Technology use in education was accelerated rapidly due to COVID. We have lots of staff in our school who are interested and motivated to use digital technology in the classroom, and we felt it important to harness the digital learning that staff achieved during lockdown. At a trust level, the DSSG (Digital Strategy Steering Group) was formed in October 2020, with responsibility for developing the digital strategy for the trust.

Underneath this group sits the DDG (Digital Development Group), which I am also part of. This group is made up of representatives from the schools across the trust to provide a clear link between the DSSG, Academies, Trust senior leaders and Trust members of staff. They provide the mechanism for the communication of the digital strategy, the vision, objectives and design principles within academies or business areas and will ensure that Academy and Trust priorities align with the TDET Digital Strategy.

### **A Digital Strategy**

The trust has an ambitious vision - to create a digital future that allows all members of the trust community to excel in digital and non-digital worlds, preparing young people for their own digital future both known and unknown. The digital strategy brings together four key themes to develop our digital future; 'Infrastructure', 'Devices, Hardware and Software', 'Continuing Professional Development' and 'Safety and Security'. The core purpose of the Digital Development Group is ensuring that the Digital Strategy objectives become a lived reality.

To support this strategy becoming a lived reality, the DLPG (Digital Learning Pedagogy Group) was formed at my school, which I now co-lead with our deputy head. Our aims are to develop effective methods of assessment and feedback on and through digital learning and to embed the use of digital technology across the post-pandemic curriculum to provide a legacy of blended learning. The ways in which staff upskilled during the pandemic to support their children was inspiring and we wanted to ensure that this expertise was not only retained but developed. This group of staff

who are very confident with digital technology and who are keen to share their skills with other teachers, were invited to join the DLPG, to become 'digital champions' in their departments and areas.

In my own practice, I have continued experimenting with using digital tools in my classroom to improve the learning experience and outcomes for students. One of the highlights of online teaching for me was using Desmos and Interactive White boards, allowing me to have visibility of all students work, and getting regular feedback from students. I wanted to develop this in my classroom and make sure that all students voices were heard. I have been experimenting with the use of OneNote and Plick-

ers and looking at the impact on student engagement, progress and behaviour for learning, and plan to conduct some more formal action research next year as we move forwards with the project.

The school has recognised the continued importance of this work and has created a new TLR role for next year; 'Digital Pedagogy Lead,' with the core purpose of being responsible for and effectively leading and developing all aspects of blended learning and digital pedagogy across the academy and promoting and developing a positive learning environment using digital technology within and beyond lessons.

### Next steps – A programme of Digital CPD

As we look forward into next year, as a trust we are planning a trust-wide audit of the digital skills of students and staff. At a school level we will then be using this data to inform a digital literacy intervention scheme for students and to plan a Programme of CPD to develop staff confidence and competence in the use of digital technology in the classroom. I was inspired by the article – “What kind of teaching for what kind of learning?” and have used this as a framework for thinking about the implementation of the digital strategy and CPD programme at my school.

|                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>What kind of teaching for what kind of learning?</b>        | To prepare young people for their own digital future both known and unknown.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>What kind of learning leads to those outcomes?</b>          | <p>Learning about digital technology, learning with digital technology, and learning through digital technology.</p> <p><b>About</b> – Students need to have knowledge about technology, devices, and the necessary infrastructure for digital technology.</p> <p><b>With</b> – Students can improve their own digital skills by using technology in their lessons to support learning. This could be working on computers or devices to develop their knowledge of how to use different digital applications such as Microsoft office and the internet.</p> <p><b>Through</b> - Students can learn by using technology to support learning, e.g., the teachers use apps and tools to bring the curriculum to life and to make it more accessible to students.</p> |
| <b>What kind of teaching leads to that kind of learning?</b>   | Innovative and creative, responsive teaching where staff have the skills, digital expertise, and knowledge to choose the best way to deliver the curriculum in their subject areas. Staff understand how digital solutions can maximise impact and incorporate technology into their lessons to bring the curriculum to life and develop student's digital literacy skills.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>What kind of leadership leads to that kind of teaching?</b> | <p>Senior leaders support staff by giving them access to a high-quality sustained programme of digital CPD; Multi-layered approach with a focus on upskilling teachers and developing new digital pedagogy through action research.</p> <p>Senior leaders commit to providing the infrastructure and hardware necessary to support effective digital solutions.</p> <p>Leaders enable, develop, support, model and ensure collaboration across the trust. Digital champions become leaders in department areas to provide support at department level.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

I also considered Guskey's five levels of Professional development evaluation when planning the programme will consider the following points and questions as I develop the CPD programme.

| Guskey's Levels                                    | Key Points / Questions to consider further                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Participants reactions</b>                      | When is the best time to audit staff / pupils? Will this affect the results?<br>When and how would be the best time for staff to access CPD, taking workload into account.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Participants learning</b>                       | What knowledge do participants need? How will we identify areas of development in staff? Does their need to be different entry levels depending on prior knowledge? How can we ensure all participants have an opportunity to develop their professional knowledge? How will we ensure colleagues are accountable for their own learning? Could consider using subject leaders.                                                                                    |
| <b>Organisational Support and Change</b>           | An opportunity to develop collaborative working practices across the trust by setting up cross-school TRG and Workgroups. Support may be needed with conducting action research, particularly measuring impact.<br>An opportunity to close the gap and narrow the digital divide, making the experience consistent regardless of disadvantage.<br>Can we develop a model that can be used trust-wide?<br>Investigate setting up a 'digital community' for support. |
| <b>Participants use of new knowledge or skills</b> | How can we sustain the programme over time to ensure that changes to practice and professional learning can be embedded? Consider using termly check points/mini evaluations to guide 1:1 support sessions, drop ins and further CPD sessions to support staff in overcoming any barriers.                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Students Learning Outcomes</b>                  | Ensure that the impact on pupil outcomes and learning can be measured.<br>Are we measuring what we value or valuing what we measure? How can we measure if we are preparing students for life in an unknown evolving digital world?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

### CPD Programme

The main outcome of this think piece is the initial design of a bespoke CPD programme, drawing on what has been learnt this year by teaching through the pandemic, to ensure that new, more effective ways of working digitally are not only retained but developed.

### Programme Summary

A proposed programme of professional development has been designed for staff that will span the academic year 2021-22. The title of the programme is 'Change One Thing', which is intended as a challenge to participants. Staff will be asked to change one aspect of their practice in terms of digital pedagogy and measure the impact of this change over the course of the year. Staff have 3 options to choose from, depending on their self-assessed starting points:

1. Use Microsoft Teams – upload your lesson resources and share with students, continue setting assignments for homework on Teams
2. Use an app/platform /tool – Pick an app / platform / digital tool to embed in your lessons over the course of the year and assess the impact that it has on different groups of students
3. Join a TRG group – Join a research group to share ideas with other colleagues and take part in more formal action research

Although the programme is sustained across the year, in the design I have been mindful of the impact on workload. By keeping the format simple, asking colleagues to choose to change one thing and monitor the impact of the change over time, it is hoped that it will not have a negative impact on workload, but colleagues feel that they can draw on the drop in support and on-demand sessions pro-

vided throughout the year as and when necessary, and that the evaluations will serve as a prompt to ensure changes to practice are being embedded. The on-demand and drop-in sessions will be tailored to the needs of participants and will draw on the work done by the DLPG and TRG groups.

The professional development will be made up of the following sessions / activities.

| Time           | Activity / Session                                                 | Purpose                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| September 2021 | Trust wide audit of digital literacy / skills                      | To identify areas of strength and development within the staff body, and to identify areas of interest for future work / research.                                   |
| September 2021 | Launch of the CPD programme                                        | To share the rationale, aims and objectives with staff and generate excitement and buy in and show staff how digital solutions can have an impact on pupil outcomes. |
| October 2021   | On demand CPD session and drop-in sessions for 1:1 / group support | To provide staff with targeted PD activities to undertake in their own time, with drop-in sessions as required to provide more bespoke support where necessary.      |
| December 2021  | Evaluation point 1 – Forms Survey                                  | To gather evidence to measure the impact of the professional development on the intended outcomes and to inform the next CPD sessions.                               |
| January 2022   | On demand CPD session and drop-in sessions for 1:1 / group support | To provide staff with targeted PD activities to undertake in their own time, with drop-in sessions as required to provide more bespoke support where necessary.      |
| April 2022     | Evaluation point 2 – Forms Survey                                  | To gather evidence to measure the impact of the professional development on the intended outcomes and to inform the next CPD sessions.                               |
| May 2022       | On demand CPD session and drop-in sessions for 1:1 / group support | To provide staff with targeted PD activities to undertake in their own time, with drop-in sessions as required to provide more bespoke support where necessary.      |
| July 2022      | Evaluation point 3 – Forms Survey                                  | To gather final evidence to measure the impact of the professional development on the intended outcomes.                                                             |
| July 2022      | Review of CPD, evaluation and next steps                           | Write a CPD evaluation report assessing the impact of the CPD and determine next steps.                                                                              |

Throughout the programme, it will be important to keep coming back to our rationale. Why are we doing this? I think it will be important to highlight to staff how much they have already accomplished and to always bring the focus back to the students. Most of our pupils will be moving into careers that do not even exist yet. If we do not adequately prepare them for life in an evolving digital world, then who will? This quote from Dylan Wiliam summarises the essence of the intention of the programme which, combined with the ‘Change one thing’ tag line I hope will inspire teachers to continually seek

to be the best for their students by making evidence informed small changes to their practice, that are embedded over time, evaluated, and refined in order to improve pupils outcomes.

‘Every teacher needs to improve, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better.’



# Engaging with research

*Julie Hurst,  
Parkside Academy*

**At Parkside Academy we aim to secure educational excellence daily; creating a culture that is based on a depth of learning for both staff and students. In order to continually move forward with the quality of teaching and learning that takes place within the Academy we believe that engagement with research is vital.**

Evaluating our current position at the end of the last academic year and at the start of the new school year allowed us to conclude that our aim was to develop the depth of learning that is taking place in the classroom and ensure we are effectively building confident and resilient independent learners. Creating a classroom culture that prioritises depth of learning and embeds metacognitive strategies to build independence is only successful if staff are equipped with the pedagogical knowledge to do

this effectively – this is where we believe engaging with existing research is vital.

Utilising research to improve our provision initially raised questions such as ‘How do we find ways to engage with research without increasing workload?’ ‘Do staff know where to find robust and rigorous research which would reliably inform their classroom practice?’ Consequently, our approach to embedding research into the work we do with teaching and learning holds staff workload at the heart, ensuring we provide opportunities for staff to develop their practice without the expectation that this will become an additional responsibility.

The programme of CPD we offer staff at Parkside Academy is the vehicle that drives continual improvement. The focus for all CPD across the school is underpinned by our 9 teaching and learning prin-



ciples – a set of clear and concise guiding principles about what constitutes outstanding and effective classroom practice. The main strand of CPD is the planned core sessions that all staff access throughout the year – with each school year being focused on a different guiding principle. The focus for 2021-22 is Modelling and Scaffolding. The strategic planning and the subsequent delivery of all core CPD this year is the initial injection of research that all staff receive; with the structure of the sessions being based upon three key sections:

- Exploring what the research is telling us
- Discussion and collaboration around how it suits our context and priorities
- Building practical strategies

The principles themselves are very much based on the work of Barak Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction, with the research conducted into master teaching, cognitive science and cognitive support acting as the foundation for each of our core sessions. This structure allows staff the time during allocated core CPD hours to not only engage with research but to collaborate with other teachers through discussion and sharing of best practice and the 'building practical strategies' time that forms a key portion of a CPD session, ensures that staff do not lose momentum with the ideas and opinions they form during the session and they leave with a strategy/idea/resource to trial.

In order to deepen the learning experience for staff the Personalised Research and Development strand of our CPD programme also incorporates a layered approach to utilising research. This strand of CPD allows staff to 'opt' into a cycle of sessions

(between 3 and 6) based on an area they wish to develop further. The sessions on offer range from those which are teaching and learning based e.g. the development of another key principle, for instance questioning or SEND specific sessions and climate and culture-based CPD. Every PRD option is based on an element of educational research that can be explored, discussed and applied/refined to suit the context of the individual teacher; allowing staff the opportunity to engage with research in a smaller staff group environment and delve further into the theory behind a particular area – for instance examining the research from the EEF around self-regulated learning and then focusing on how to implement strategy stemming from research.

Furthermore the staff leading the sessions, which are middle leaders, SLT or staff identified as having 'expert' status in a particular area, are provided with some in house training led by the Deputy Headteacher responsible for teaching and learning. This training involves close exploration of the EEF research into successful implementation, with a view to utilising the Explore Prepare Deliver Sustain model with their PRD groups. Engaging with this particular body of research ensures that staff are not only exposed to educational research around their chosen developmental area but are also being guided by research in how they trial and implement the strategies that they build from this. The strategies that are trialed as part of this engagement with research are then shared across the school through staff briefing, half termly 'Teach Meets' and weekly middle leaders meetings so that all staff benefit from the different strands of research that are being explored across the school.





Beyond our CPD programme there is also a further focus on research through our performance management process. Every member of staff across the Academy has the same teaching and learning based objectives, with the expected criteria for development changed depending on career stage. In order to ensure that all staff are able to develop their own practice and evidence their progress towards this target we have introduced a Reflective Practice Profile that staff complete on the first day of every new academic year. This is done in collaboration with the line manager and allows staff the opportunity to identify a key teaching and learning principle that they would like to work on in order to achieve their set objective. Staff are supported to reflect on their practice from the previous year to identify their strengths, areas for development and through a coaching conversation then supported to set clear, defined targets for developing their approach to teaching and learning. Underpinning their chosen target and focus for development is the expectation that research and theory will also be utilised to strengthen staff knowledge of educational theory and pedagogical knowledge as well as pedagogical content knowledge. All staff access the whole school T&L library which contains relevant links, reading, research findings etc. for each of our principles.

Developing a culture of research-based practice is essentially a long-term commitment and during our process it has become evident that this only works if it is being driven by leaders of all levels and underpins every area of school improvement. Therefore, we continue to identify opportunities to utilise research when approaching the strategic leadership of the school; demonstrating to staff that this is the culture the leadership team believe in. The main hurdle to overcome in terms of engaging staff is to ensure we continue to demonstrate the positive impact this has on the progress of all students. We continue to share best practice weekly around this, being transparent about the research that can be successfully embedded into our context and that which has not worked – accepting that not everything works is vital to ongoing progression. Our main aim going forward is to ensure that we continue to utilise opportunities to embed research into our CPD programme and that the leadership team within the school promote and drive this with staff but in a manageable and purposeful way.

A photograph of a group of school staff and students in a meeting. A man in a red shirt and blue lanyard is smiling and looking down at something in his hands. Several young women are gathered around him, looking at the same point of interest. They are all in a brightly lit room with large windows in the background.

# How SSAT can continue to support your school improvement journey

We can help you identify focus areas and access the right tools, advice, resources and programmes for improvement. Our education team has expertise in primary, secondary, post-16 and special education, and we offer school improvement consultancy and support that can be delivered flexibly to suit your requirements.

Examples of our professional development and school improvement support include:

▶ **Embedding Formative Assessment Programme**

Improve teacher practice and help your students make two months' extra progress

▶ **Lead Practitioner Accreditation**

Empower and recognise your staff to improve whole-school teaching and learning

▶ **Curriculum intent and quality assurance seminars**

Using the *Four Pillars of Principled Curriculum Design*, review your current curriculum provision and identify areas for development

▶ **Are you ready for Ofsted?**

Hear from schools that have undergone successful inspections to help ensure that you are ready for Ofsted.

▶ **Deliver your own SSAT leadership programmes**

Become a delivery partner and deliver *Leaders for the Future*, *Middle Leaders* or *Stepping up to Senior Leadership* in your school.

▶ **Coaching**

Tailored one-to-one support and bespoke group training

▶ **Student leadership**

Training for student leadership coordinators or deliver your own training to develop student leaders in your school.

▶ **Improving whole school attendance and punctuality**

Identify new approaches to improve attendance and punctuality rates



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