



SSAT Journal 22

Summer 2023

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Welcome

Sue Williamson
Chief Executive, SSAT



SSAT's mission is: "That all students, whatever their ability or context, leave school fully prepared to lead fulfilled and purposeful lives." And this is why I became a teacher and headteacher.

I will only give time to organisations that share this mission. One such charity is Football Beyond Borders – and I am a trustee. I also have the privilege of mentoring two Youth Board members. They are two amazing young people, who have overcome adversity, and are now planning their future lives. One wants to be a teacher, and this has made me reflect on my decision to teach. It was not a straightforward journey, but one I never regretted. I think it is important to paint both a positive and realistic impression of the role. I have tried to be balanced in my comments – as a teacher my biggest headaches came from students, but then so did my greatest joy. I am giving a copy of this journal to the future teacher – I believe it showcases the profession at its best.

The first article is a think piece from one of our Leadership Legacy Fellows – all our primary, secondary and special schools can nominate a practitioner to participate if they believe that they have the potential to become leaders. This is part of the membership offer, and I sincerely hope that all member schools take up a place. Schools need leaders at all levels to create the learning environment essential to challenge and meet the needs of all students. The year-long initiative is designed to make participants think, meet highly skilled leaders from different contexts, and to understand the system. It is not about conformity, as I believe the NPQ programmes are. SSAT's mission and the LLP initiative is about doing

what is right for children and young people.

As part of our mission, we have launched The Children's Charter – A pledge for children, and there is an article explaining the background to the design of the Charter and its six pledges. I hope you will support the Charter, bring it to the attention of your trustees, governors, and staff, as well as discussing it with your students. It has never been more important to engage with young people. Do look again at SSAT's student and pupil leadership accreditation – it is another benefit of membership. We can also do bespoke work with your school on student leadership – if you want more information, please contact hello@ssatuk.co.uk.

To get the best learning experiences for young people, schools need to recruit and retain good teachers. The provision of exceptional training is an important part of any recruitment and retention strategy. SSAT has worked alongside schools for nearly 40 years and our reputation is based on the exceptional quality of all programmes and events. We are here to discuss your needs and to provide solutions. We can provide the support networks that give you the confidence to innovate.

Thank you for all your hard work in exceptionally difficult times. Never forget you make a difference.

Sue Williamson

Sue Williamson



Empowering females in design and technology to target the disproportion of males to females in GCSE uptake

By Jennifer Cox, The Fernwood School

This article is based on a think piece submitted for SSAT's Leadership Legacy Project.

Gender imbalance pervades the work of design teams across the country. Ever since I have been interested in design, I have always been aware of a gender gap throughout my own education and experience in the design industry. It has become even more apparent since starting teaching as the intake of the product, graphic and engineering course is still, in the majority, male. Diversity in all subjects is vital in today's society and I am passionate about inspiring more females into the design profession and for this to impact the future of design subjects in education.

This interest grew during my teacher training year when lecturers at the university started discussions about the gendered history of design and technology (D&T) in education where females were directed to 'home economics' and males to 'wood working'. As a result, the gender imbalance in the workplace has been directly impacted; today 22% of those working in design are women, and this has increased by only 4% in 14 years (Design Museum). Only 5% of the product and industrial design sectors are represented by women (Design Council); in contrast 83% of workers in architecture and the built environment are male. My concern is that if the inputs into the design process continue to be gendered, this will result in the outputs continuing to generate a gender bias. This may also lead to a

disparity in pay; the clothing sector where the majority of women earn on average £250 per week compares to a 95% male majority in industrial design earning £712 per week. Gendered social dynamics also restrict the ability of women to climb to positions of power (Prototype, 2021).

Due to my previous experience and exposure to the gender bias mentioned above, I want to make an impact on females interested in design and empower them to want to make a change in the design industry. As a second-year teacher, I am also eager to be involved in a project that would benefit the department; looking at diversity and gender imbalance in our subjects has been a key point on the development plan.

Wider reading and within school

I discussed my research with the leaders in the faculty to gain an insight into the gendered history at the school. The D&T department was made up of predominately male teachers for a long period of time, with the only women teaching food. These male teachers were influential in building up the resources for the department and the design of the projects we currently teach. Over the last five years especially, addressing gender inequality has been a key part of the development plan. As a result, more female D&T teachers have been employed, and more discussions about female designers and role models are used in lessons. Since 2020, female D&T teachers make up 60% of the teachers in the department, however this does not seem to have impacted the uptake of females at GCSE level as



the leaders in faculty thought it may have. Below are the last four options intakes highlighting the percentage of females on the course:

*2019-2020 - 14% female cohort
(predominately males teaching GCSE)*

*2020-2021 - 27% female cohort
(only females teaching GCSE)*

2021-2022 - 9% female cohort (only females teaching GCSE. Options were chosen in lockdown, this could have skewed results, however, general numbers of cohort remained the same)

2022-2023 - 31% female cohort (even split of male and female teachers and options presentation presented by me, a female design teacher promoting females in the subject)

Female teachers were present in the department, female role models in design were being discussed by all but this was not having an impact and encouraging females into the subject. As a result of my research, I was asked to lead the options talk to year 9 (2022-2023 cohort) in January 2022 about GCSE product design. When presenting, I ensured I regularly referred to females' work and importance of females in the subject. As a result, we have had our highest intake of females choosing design and technology at GCSE. However, this increase is only small, and I knew there were additional barriers that could be targeted earlier on. This led me to design the girl group sessions.

I have always been inspired by the 'This Girl Can' initiative encouraging females to get active and be free of judgement whilst doing so. This led me to develop my 'This Girl Can Design' group to empower females in D&T and target misconceptions around gender from a range of year groups.

On the whole, I have been supported in the department to conduct this research. There was a little resistance in some conversations from longstanding staff who assured me females were considered in the design of the projects, which I have no doubt they were. However, as discussed earlier, without the input of both genders in a design process, even if unintended, I believe outputs will contain gender bias and I was certain the D&T projects gained the interest of more male students. To support my argument, I referred to a case study about males designing female sanitary products with the best intentions but which had created an unnecessary stigma that did not exist. Referring to a real-life example of good intent, but illustrating the gender bias, helped support the reasons for my research.

Implementation

Students selected

I chose a range of female participants across both key stage 3 and 4 to take part in my research.

Research sessions

Session 1: *Unpicking stereotypes* – Identifying male and female behaviours in design and technology.

Session 2: Breaking stereotypes – Educating group on current statistics in industry and how this is an opportunity for the future.

Session 3: Female empowerment – Empowering group to have positive conversations about gender and understanding drive for D&T.

Following the first three sessions, I was then able to plan the next three based on my findings. Students had stated either they felt judged doing 'male' jobs or derogatory terms were mentioned. Therefore, I decided to create two practical lessons which were judgement-free and offered a space for females to experiment without inputs from males.

Session 4: Guidance – Practical session – guiding confidence in traditionally male task in a female environment.

Session 5: Awareness – Practical session – awareness of skills and building up empowering toolkit to use in male dominated scenarios.

Session 6: Reflection – Reflection on the sessions and what they will take away.

Findings

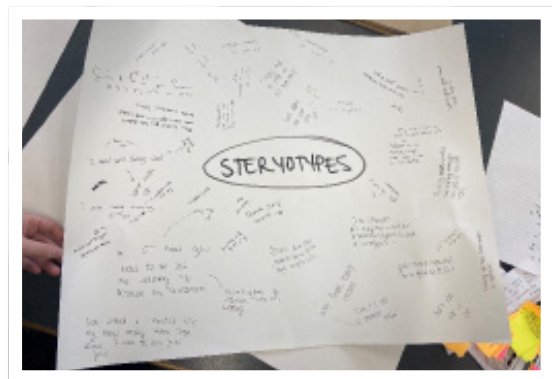
Stereotypes in D&T

I had gained a superficial understanding of stereotypes within my subject as part of my own

observations and discussions with the team, however, this group of female students really highlighted the stereotypes they experience as a student (see figure 1). It became apparent that, in the opinion of this group of girls, most of the projects that we teach in D&T are aimed towards males. During session one, the girls assigned genders to the project booklets we currently teach in KS3 which highlighted the gender bias; 71% of the booklets in D&T were stated as appealing to males more than females. 16% were considered female and these projects were 'design skills' and 'architecture.' The girls stated that typically, females are regarded as better drawers and they had heard of female architects more than female product designers. The remaining 13% of projects were considered unisex. Booklets that were focused on food lessons were assigned majority female, with a few males assigned to the rotation of 'global gastronomy' which the girls stated wasn't focused on baking. The girls thought the recipes included appealed more to males as these recipes were regarded as 'heavy foods' and they assumed that men are more likely to eat 'less healthy meals' than females. This highlights the gender bias our projects have within D&T and something that needs to be addressed to potentially grasp the interest of more females lower down the school.

Another interesting finding from our discussion on stereotypes was not only the masculine focus of projects but also the impact of the language used and tolerated in the workshops. Many conversations or comments had made females feel as though they are weaker when using tools. Male students had often stepped in and said 'let me show you how it's done properly', 'do you need some manpower' or 'man up'.

Figure 1: Research session on stereotypes in D&T



Female students also felt that teachers in D&T give more encouragement to male students and are less likely to empower females by allowing them to do demonstrations. These derogatory comments and actions have left females feeling inferior in the workshop and nervous about doing something wrong. Comments in food lessons also reinforce historical gender roles such as female students being told the cooking and washing up is 'their job', not the job of a male.

Female environment

The reflection session highlighted the fact that those females felt 'safe', 'comfortable' and 'empowered' to use the workshop as a group of females doing a stereotypically 'male role'. Students stated they felt a lot more confident to experiment and there was no pressure around making mistakes. They also felt as though they didn't need to prove that they could do anything to anyone; whereas they often feel like they have to when surrounded by male students.

Parental opinions

As expected, I found that parents have a strong influence on students' opinions of subjects based on their own experiences of school and life itself. The majority of these girls' parents were at school when home economics was considered 'for females' and woodworking 'for males'. Therefore, they had a preconceived opinion of the relevance of D&T. Multiple parents have said they do not want their daughters to have a career in D&T or take it as a GCSE option as it is not suitable for them as a female. This, I found, will be my biggest barrier to succeeding in my vision of females taking D&T. I intend to target this resistance in coming years (see next steps).

D&T in the future?

57% of the female participants have chosen, or would choose, D&T at GCSE. Several stated that they have changed their mind on taking GCSE since being a part of this project as they now understand its value for females. 43% would consider choosing D&T at GCSE but are not decided yet as they are interested but need to look at all options. In terms of looking at D&T as a career, 47% of the group are interested in this. The other 53% either have another career path in mind or parents have

discouraged this even though the student is interested in the subject for a career path.

Student toolkit

There were two main recurring points in the feedback from the group: a positive mindset shift towards females in D&T and confidence in the subject. The students stated they now feel empowered to be a part of the change in the future of the design industry now they are aware of the facts. Their confidence in the subject has allowed them to recognise, challenge and overcome gender stereotypes and confidently do 'male' tasks without fear of judgement. The students also stated they will now look for the positives in female abilities in D&T lessons – focusing on what they can do, rather than what they cannot. One female stated, 'I will never feel like I can't do something because I am a girl ever again'.

Further actions

Faculty development plan

I have delivered the intent, implementation and impact to the head of faculty and discussed building strategies into the development plan next year. These focus on making project tasks more gender neutral by exploring how projects can appeal to all genders. I have also planned a discussion with the department on awareness of the language they use in lessons to avoid stereotyping.

Female empowerment

I am working with the girl group to create displays to showcase female role models and educate females about design to empower them to want to make a change. The girl group wanted the sessions to continue and be made available to more females in the school to make a change. I am also looking into a school trip for all genders that is delivered by a woman in the industry. Jaguar Land Rover have a fantastic initiative to support this.

Raising profile to parents

Over the course of this year, I have started to raise the profile of the subject on Instagram to showcase the fantastic, skilful work to parents and highlight the value of the subject. I hope to give parents more of an understanding of the subject in the modern curriculum. Speaking to some parents at

parents' evening and during phone calls, they have found it really interesting to see this and learn more about the subject through social media.

Future steps

The success of the course has been evident within the school from the findings listed above. The steps below outline the actions I will take in the next academic year to enable a wider cohort of females to access this course and to positively impact the next cohort of students taking D&T at GCSE.

In the long term I would like to have a leadership role within the department to progress my career and be in a position to influence the department to share my vision and principles. In my current role as a teacher, I will share my findings with the rest of the department and help collaborate on projects that appeal to both genders.

Although my research has focused on females, I am also passionate about all genders in the profession. I intend to reach out to a wider audience of all genders to help encourage a larger uptake at GCSE. I intend to develop a D&T club that is open to all genders that breaks down these stereotypes and empowers all when it comes to D&T.

I have currently been sharing content of work, lessons and staff CPD on Instagram to reach parents with a hope of changing the parental perception of the subject. This needs to be developed further and I need to adopt alternative approaches to shifting the preconceived narrative parents have. I hope to encourage them to acknowledge the value of a subject like D&T which teaches a multitude of transferable skills.

This research aspires to take on a wider approach to inclusion within the subject. I have been currently focusing on gender, but I would like to develop strategies to be inclusive for all students of a range of abilities, gender, race, background.

Conclusion

Overall, I feel that this year on the leadership course has really shaped my vision and highlighted my passion for inclusion within

teaching. Whilst I remain passionate about both pastoral and faculty aspects, my 'why' in teaching, that many insightful leaders in education have referred to this year, has become very clear to me. That 'why' is the inclusion of everyone within education and especially the subject of design, with a specific focus on addressing the disproportion of females to males. This research has highlighted that whilst work has begun, there are still many more steps to be taken. Students have come away from the 'This Girl Can Design' group with improved confidence in the subject and feeling empowered to make a change. It has been a pleasure to witness a group of females share my passion and feel empowered. I feel that the findings of this research have set a clear direction for the future to continue to give equal opportunities for all at The Fernwood School, especially within design and technology.

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Leadership Legacy Project: Developing the next generation of outstanding leaders

Our **Leadership Legacy Project (LLP)** is a year-long initiative for primary, secondary and SEND network members and is for teachers who have been identified by their headteacher as having the potential to become outstanding leaders.

Participants have access to online and face-to-face activities, including events, shadowing opportunities, resources and networking meetings.

By the end of the project, the Leadership Fellows will:

- ▶ form their vision for education and shape their educational principles
- ▶ gain an in-depth understanding of the current education system
- ▶ consider different leadership models and the skills required to succeed
- ▶ undertake wider reading
- ▶ spend time with highly successful educators
- ▶ submit a written think piece which evidences their developing practice as a teaching professional.

Registration for our next LLP cohort is now open. Find out more and [register your interest](#).

Reshaping and redefining 21st century childhood: The development of attachment and trauma-informed practice in schools

By Nicholas Mort, Futures Teaching Alliance

The Covid pandemic has undoubtedly had a significant impact on students, teachers and leaders in schools. Education has changed; the mental health and wellbeing of staff and students has changed; SEND provision has changed and teaching and learning in the classroom has changed. The lived daily experience for many in education has been fundamentally transformed over the last three years. Therefore, in the words of Professor Barry Carpenter, we need to “reshape and redefine 21st century childhood”.

In response to this heightened focus on issues of teaching and learning and support for students, teachers and stakeholders in school, The Futures Trust, in partnership with Futures Teaching Alliance, a collaborative partnership of schools across Coventry, the West Midlands, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, are leading work on the development of attachment and trauma-informed practice in schools. This collaborative partnership includes engagement with a range of local, regional and national partners, including the Attachment Research Community (ARC); The Rees Centre within the Oxford University Department for Education; The Alex Timpson Trust; The Schools, Students and Teachers network (SSAT); Teesside University; National Association of Virtual School Headteachers; NHS Vanguard Project; Coventry Educational Psychology Service and Coventry Virtual School.



The initial phase of this developmental and evidence-based practice involved all staff in schools within The Futures Trust, as a response to the work of Professor Barry Carpenter of Oxford Brookes University and Matthew Carpenter, Principal of Baxter College, Kidderminster, on the Recovery Curriculum and the need for a ‘relationships-based approach’ in schools. Staff received training on attachment and trauma-informed practice from KCA Training (Knowledge, Change, Action), entitled Working and Living Through Adversity: Restoration, Resilience and Recovery from Trauma. This training introduced all colleagues to attachment theory, trauma and ‘toxic-stress’ and the research centred on the impact of ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) in early childhood on neurological development.

The next stage of the journey was partnership with the national charity The Attachment Research Community and support for the ARC

‘Call to Action’, launched with the support of Edward Timpson MP and ARC benefactor Sir John Timpson, at the Houses of Parliament, which calls for ‘all schools to be attachment and trauma-aware by 2025.’ ARC’s core purpose is to support all schools and education settings to be attachment and trauma-aware in their practice for the benefit of all members of the learning community, particularly the most vulnerable, by bringing together, sharing and celebrating best practice. To support schools on this journey, ARC have developed the ARC Matrix, which is a detailed assessment and planning structure for understanding and developing each setting’s work on attachment and trauma. The matrix is designed as a ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approach, giving senior leaders a comprehensive overview of their school’s development and an individual’s understanding of their journey, aligning them to the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF), the ITT Core Content Framework (CCF), the Early Career Framework (ECF) and the National Professional Qualifications (NPQ) Framework. Futures Teaching Alliance, in collaborative partnership with Coventry Virtual School, supported a large number of schools this academic year within a pilot cohort to access ARC membership in order for them to engage with the ARC Matrix as a diagnostic and developmental tool.

To assist schools in building capacity and expertise at a whole-school level on their journey to becoming attachment and trauma-informed, Futures Teaching Alliance commissioned Dr Lynn Miles, Senior Education Lead at Teesside University, to lead a specialist practitioner CPD training programme on ‘Operationalizing the ARC Matrix’ in schools. This was supported by emotion coaching and therapeutic play training in partner primary and secondary schools and a highly-successful conference hosted by Joseph Cash Primary School in Coventry on ‘Developing a Trauma-Informed Curriculum’.

In order to create a sustainable implementation model for schools, Futures Teaching Alliance is now working with Coventry educational psychology service and the NHS Vanguard Project in the West Midlands, to support

the ‘Positive Directions’ Trauma-Informed Organisational Development Framework by supporting schools in their use of the Children and Young People’s Trauma-Informed Toolkit. Colleagues from Futures Teaching Alliance schools have undertaken ‘Train the Trainer’ CPD and will lead training in schools across the central region from September 2023.

This exciting work has now resulted in Futures Teaching Alliance and the Attachment Research Community exploring the alignment of the ARC Call to Action and ARC Matrix with the SSAT launch of the Children’s Charter. SSAT have worked with Professor Barry Carpenter to create the SSAT Children’s Charter, a pledge to children that, in the words of Sue Williamson, SSAT Chief Executive: “assures children that they are being listened to and that we in education recognise their lived reality, whatever that might be, and seek to influence the design and development of truly responsive services and practices which meet their needs now, and in the future”.

Futures Teaching Alliance is proud to work with partners in this area, as collectively we are stronger in our attempt to ‘build brighter futures’ for the young people that we serve.

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The Alex Timpson Trust: <https://www.timpson-group.co.uk/alex-timpson-trust/>

KCA Training: <https://kca.training/>



The Children's Charter - A pledge for children

Prior to the pandemic, mainstream schools were saying they were unable to get timely support for students who needed additional support - particularly in regard to access to CAMHS services. Similarly special schools were telling us that they were operating with over-commissioned places.

What has changed in 2023? We have, of course, experienced a pandemic during which many learners were not in school. We know from various reports, including from Ofsted's Covid-19 briefings (2020), that the pandemic has had a negative impact upon all learners, including those with SEND.

The five areas of loss identified by Barry Carpenter, professor of mental health in education at Oxford Brookes University, and Matthew Carpenter, principal of Baxter College in Kidderminster, in their recovery curriculum back in April 2020 are still useful to guide our thinking almost three years on.

- Loss of routine
- Loss of structure (writing skills have taken a particular hit)
- Loss of friendship (loss of social interaction)
- Loss of opportunity (mental distress; self-harm/eating disorders).
- Loss of freedom (loss of stamina and physical fitness).

As they state: "Those five losses can trigger the emergence of anxiety, trauma and bereavement in any child. The overall impact cannot be underestimated. It will cause a rapid erosion of the mental health state in our children." (Carpenter & Carpenter, 2020). How true these words are. The latest NHS research shows that in young people aged 17 to 19 years, the rates of a probable mental disorder have risen from 10.1% in 2017 to 25.7% in 2022. That means in a five-year period we have gone from 1 in 10 to 1 to 4 (Newlove-Delgado et al, 2022).

Meanwhile, 18% of seven to 16-year-olds are now considered to have a probable mental health disorder, up from 12.1% in 2017. It is no wonder our services are creaking.

We can see from these figures that the number of young people with a mental health disorder in our schools is steadily rising. More and more schools are identifying mental health needs in children as young as four. This is usually attributed to the global pandemic and these children feeling insecure in a school setting.

Currently, around 20% of the school population are persistently absent, and many schools are stating that this is due to mental health difficulties. Schools are also reporting growing numbers of pupils who have Emotionally Based School Avoidance - a relatively new term replacing "school refusal".

Our 6 Principles



Children and young people should be central in developing a shared understanding of what they need at any point in time “nothing about us without us”.

This means: That all stakeholders will seek, listen to and respect the opinions of all children and young people to develop a shared understanding of their lived experience in order to co-develop a coordinated and appropriate response. Leaders need to be courageous and advocate for children whilst providing authentic opportunities for them to exercise agency.



Children should have skilled and trusted support to understand and become socially and digitally aware in order that they remain safe.

This means: That children need to be explicitly taught about how to keep safe in a modern and digital world. Children should have easy access to trusted people around them where they can go for advice, support, and help.



Children and young people have the right to be well and provided with an environment where they can thrive.

This means: That all children should have a range of joyful experiences which build robust resilience, health and develop physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing in the world in which they live.



Children should experience a sense of belonging and community where they are treated with respect and authenticity

This means: That equality and inclusion are championed: every child should have a place where they can feel safe and comfortable to be themselves. A place where they are loved not judged, where they are understood, valued, listened to and where they can grow and flourish into empathetic and compassionate adults who contribute as citizens within society.



Children should experience the joy of life, living and childhood.

This means: That all children should be exposed to a range of rich and diverse experiences that go beyond the traditional academic diet and support their vision for their future as an adult.



Children's behaviour should be viewed as a form of communication and as such be viewed with curiosity.

This means: That behaviour should be viewed as a way of expressing an unmet need and as such activities need to be adapted and approaches developed to promote positive behavioural change. Teaching needs to support needs in a culture which seeks to understand rather than blame.

[Download full size printed poster](#)

- In addition to the rising mental health crisis, it is shocking that, in 2023, schools are having to operate within the context of 14.4 million people living in poverty, including 4.2 million children. Unacceptable that, in the fifth richest economy in the world: 400,000 children have no beds of their own.
- 14 million people are condemned to damp or substandard housing.
- 2.1 million people are using food banks.
- Victorian diseases like malnutrition are returning.
- Life expectancy is falling.
- Too many parents are facing the impossible daily decision of whether their children will go without food, heating or being clean.
- 3.2 million people are estimated to be in hygiene poverty.

Given this is the current situation how has your curriculum adapted to meet these needs?

These learners are in our schools, and often unable to access external support. We are hearing daily from leaders that they are seeing an increase in worrying behaviours. We heard from students at an event we held in December 2022 how they were finding it hard to re-adjust to the rhythm of the school day. We heard from teachers and leaders that learners have lost social skills and the ability to manage some social situations leading to more arguments and altercations. Yet all we hear from government is the need to catch up on lost learning. There is no acknowledgement that what learners need is beyond academic learning but goes to the roots of our humanity.

A call to action

1. Join us in making your pledge to all children and young people

By making your pledge to our Children's Charter, you are recognising the needs of children and young people now and making your commitment to the 6 principles that underpin the charter.

2. Spread the word

Share the document Children's Charter: A Pledge for Children widely with your colleagues and networks and invite them to join us with these calls to action.

Join us in spreading the word on social media using the hashtag #ChildrensCharter. Don't forget to tag us [@ssat](#)

3. Share your voice to bring the Charter to life

We invite you to share how your school or organisation is seeking to make a difference to children and young people and the impact that your work is having. We will bring your voices together to share best practice, recommendations, and actions to policymakers.

Get in touch

4. Keep up to date

Look out for further opportunities to be involved and upcoming events we will share through email and our [website](#). Be part of the response and help build momentum – *together we are stronger*.

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From green to purple:

The impact of EFA on feedback culture

An interview with St Julie's Catholic High School

A culture of risk-taking and collaboration, a focus on workload reduction and staff wellbeing, and a commitment to changing the feedback policy have underpinned the successful adoption of the Embedding Formative Assessment programme at St Julie's Catholic High School.

The Liverpool girls' school began delivering the two-year SSAT programme in September (2022). Just two terms in, the impact on practice is evident.

A visual representation of this impact can be found when looking at the colour of the ink in students' books – teachers at the school use green ink. Students respond in purple.

Dr Owen McGinn, head of science and a member of the school's associate leadership team, says that before EFA a lot of quality assurance “was measured in the volume of teacher ink rather than the quality of feedback”.

He continues: “Over time we can see that there is a change in the level and the quality of the feedback being given. There is less green ink, and the quality and amount of purple ink has increased across the board.” This is due to teachers changing their behaviour in the classroom to embrace a variety of formative assessment and feedback techniques and students becoming more adept at assessing their own work and areas for improvement.



Olivia Knisz, assistant curriculum leader for performing arts and a teacher of PE and dance, echoes this, describing her use of diagnostic and hinge questioning and mini whiteboards to check student understanding. Her pupils often mark their own or each other's work (in purple ink) while she circulates and provides verbal feedback.

She says: "The students joke about how many steps I must do a day. They are now asking for that feedback when I am circulating, calling me over. They are quicker to self-correct. They are more independent learners. They are taking ownership of their learning. Teaching has changed. We do not just stand at the front anymore. I am always on the move, flicking through their books, looking at their answers."

Dr McGinn oversees the EFA programme alongside Laura Gee, the head of maths and a member of the associate leadership team. Key to the programme's implementation, they explain, has been buy-in from staff at all levels, including senior leaders:

"Right from the beginning, the headteacher agreed to change the assessment policy. Huge amounts of written feedback were removed. Staff saw that we were focused on the quality of formative assessment but also on reducing workload and protecting wellbeing."

The EFA programme builds on more than 20 years of research into formative assessment by Professor Dylan Wiliam and Siobhán Leahy. It improves teaching and learning by supporting teachers to trial and refine formative assessment strategies.

Teachers meet regularly in groups, called teacher learner communities (TLCs), to discuss the programme materials (provided by SSAT and adapted by the school) and potential formative assessment techniques. In between sessions, teachers work in pairs or small groups to conduct lesson observations and feedback to each other. Students meanwhile are engaged in peer and self-review techniques. Lessons learned are then shared and discussed across the school.

St Julie's discovered EFA via the Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit. The toolkit rates feedback as one of the most effective strategies for boosting student progress and an EEF evaluation involving 140 secondary schools found that learners made the equivalent of two months' additional progress in their Attainment 8 GCSE score, while those in the lowest third for prior attainment made more progress than peers in the top third.

At St Julie's, a voluntary-aided school rated by Ofsted as good with outstanding leadership, the work to transform formative assessment began with a review and working party last summer term (2022). This culminated with EFA being adopted from September.

Dr McGinn explained: "We spoke to staff at all levels and assessment was too process-driven. We introduced the programme to staff in the summer term using some of the SSAT materials, sharing the research, and focusing on workload, wellbeing, and team-work – on the chance to work collaboratively."

The school, which has more than 1,000 students aged 11 to 18 on roll with around 65 teachers, now has seven TLCs in operation, each made up of 10 to 12 staff with a mix of subject disciplines and levels of experience – from senior leadership to ECT and including support staff and PGCE students.

Ms Gee added: "We chose enthusiastic teachers from all different levels. They have been a powerful force in driving implementation. The TLC leaders are ECTs and experienced teachers, people who we felt would grow into the role and value the leadership opportunity. Having two leaders per TLC has also helped them to work collaboratively and bounce ideas off one another."

All senior leaders at St Julie's teach and a powerful aspect of the TLCs has been having senior staff joining them as teachers and not in a leadership capacity.

Each meeting has a particular focus. A recent session focused on whole-class assessment such as mini-whiteboards and hinge questions.

Ms Knisz says of her TLC: “It’s an open atmosphere and we have all admitted when something has not gone right. It’s a very secure place where everybody is trying new things, whether we have been teaching for three years or 23 years.”

The impact is being seen across the school with staff embracing many of the techniques and whole staff training also supporting teachers to look at examples and successes from different subject areas.

Dr McGinn adds: “We have a lesson format that contains particular elements; recent additions include teacher behaviours – circulating through the room and what we should be doing during the lesson. Some of the real progress has been around improved questioning techniques, selecting students at random to respond to questions and the use of random name generators.”

Progress has been seen with students’ capacity to assess their own work. This has involved explaining the new approach to students (and parents) but also being clearer about success criteria and how students can improve their work – hence the increasing use of purple ink rather than green. Ms Knisz describes how her pupils use purple pen to add any missing knowledge from their work – “so they know that this is the stuff they need to work on that they did not retain in their long-term memory”.

“It’s them taking responsibility for the knowledge they are missing. Using the success criteria, they can mark their peers’ work. It stops me from having to go through 30 books. It’s a lot less workload for us. Over two lessons I get to all the pupils, so every pupil has had some verbal feedback.”

She says that having this immediate feedback means she can quickly spot misconceptions and tackle them on the spot: “It’s being confident enough to pause the lessons and spend more time on something if they have not got it yet.”

Ms Gee adds: “The approach has been explained to students and parents to ensure they appreciate that it’s no longer about green ink in books. We have trained students to ensure they are capable of assessing their own work.”

Ms Knisz has also adopted the approach for practical PE lessons, such as with the preflight checklist technique – a recap of knowledge on how to perform certain physical tasks, like a sprint race start: “Pupils pair off and one performs the task and the other assesses, using the checklist.”

The school has used surveys and other student voice to activities to get feedback from students. The staff also measure impact through the school’s QA systems and by asking curriculum leaders to identify and share areas of good practice.

Going forward, staff feedback at the end of summer term 2023 will be used to set EFA priorities for next year, but not before an end of year celebration to recognise the effort staff have put in.

Dr McGinn said the headteacher’s commitment to review the feedback policy and the fact that EFA materials have been so easy to adopt and use has led to positive feedback from colleagues.

He said that before EFA, feedback workload had been high with feedback sheets every half-term, per-class. But now workload has reduced, the staff and students are noticing the difference, and the collaborative element means that teachers can try new approaches without fear of failure.

He added: “It’s all about risk-taking, being able to take risks in a safe environment, about teamwork, working collaboratively to improve our assessment techniques, and about wellbeing and workload. Staff voice so far has been unilaterally positive.”

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Developing learning skills and making learning stick

An interview with Katie Holmes, Beckfoot School

Katie's work in this area began with her role as research lead for her faculty. She was interested in metacognition and how students get to an answer. What was their thought process when they approached a task? When students spent time revising, what were they doing? Were they using their time effectively? In particular, Katie reflected on those students who worked really hard but did not achieve the results they hoped for. How could they make best use of time and be rewarded for their efforts?

Speaking to students, Katie found, perhaps not surprisingly, that many of them spent their time on activities such as highlighting and re-reading. They were trying their best to reinforce their learning and prepare for examinations, but choosing activities which had minimal impact.

Katie wanted to support these students in a meaningful way, providing long-term, sustainable support rather than a quick fix. She decided that the obvious opportunity in the school day was tutor time. This time could be used well by staff and students to provide young people with the skills that they need.

Katie has developed a tutor time programme which focuses on metacognition. It supports students development as independent learners, teaching them how their memory works and providing clear, evidence-informed guidance about how to revise effectively. The programme

covers all aspects of them as learners, including time-management and dealing with pressure and stress. Students are supported to understand what to expect in examinations, not just in terms of their learning, but also the wider experience. Sessions support students to understand how memory works, how to establish positive habits and how to overcome the temptation to procrastinate.

There is now a tutor time curriculum for years 7 to 13. The programme is carefully structured, ensuring that it is developmental and well-sequenced, building on prior learning year on year. In years 7 and 8 they receive half a term's worth of lessons, in years 9 and 10, this increases to a full term. Year 11 receive a bespoke programme which is structured around mock examinations in November and February. In the sixth form, sessions are incorporated within the VESPA programme the school operates, with sessions running on alternate weeks. All of the sessions are pre-recorded, so that tutors can just play the content and then lead the interactive activities that follow.

The team at Beckfoot highlight four core revision strategies:

- Brain dumps
- Flash cards
- Self-quizzing
- Mindmaps

VESPA and the A-Level Mindset

(Oakes and Griffin)

In order to be successful in Sixth Form you have to have all of these qualities:

- **Vision** – know what you want to achieve
- **Effort** – put in many hours of independent study
- **Systems** – organise your learning, resources and time
- **Practice** – again and again and develop your skills
- **Attitude** – respond constructively when setbacks happen

Students are provided with five simple steps for using each strategy, and these are explored within tutor sessions. All of the approaches are modelled and students have time to practise different techniques. Advice is clear and memorable, for example ‘flash cards don’t need to be flashy’ and do need to be read aloud. The need to be actively using your brain is regularly reinforced.

Communication with staff has been key to embedding this work successfully. Katie has ensured that both staff and students are on

board through clear explanations and regular feedback on sessions. Sessions are available on the school website so that students can access the materials in their own time.

Feedback from students and staff has been really positive. Staff are now working to ensure that key advice and strategies are embedded across the curriculum and that students have as many opportunities as possible to revisit techniques. Key learning is reinforced through students’ independent learning booklets and ensuring tutor time learning supports the school’s wider work around formative assessment.

It is clear that the work is founded on Katie’s determination to provide meaningful support to her students. She is keen to ensure that every young person has the support they need to succeed – especially when they might have less support at home. She explains that the curriculum plans are never finished, as she is always on the lookout for new advice and research to ensure that the sessions remain current. Katie’s work is ensuring that the development of learning skills is not left to chance – which should mean that the efforts of every young people are rewarded.





LGBT+ inclusion in schools

By Frankie Cowper, Just Like Us

School is still unacceptably tough for LGBT+ young people. Creating schools that are truly inclusive of the LGBT+ community is essential to promoting social justice in your school, and in society more widely. It is important not only to create an environment that supports and celebrates your LGBT+ students, staff and families but also to create schools where active allyship is something all strive for. It is only through promoting active allyship that we can hope to create a more socially just world.

LGBT+ inclusion should sit at the heart of social justice work in schools and yet in many schools it is still seen as less relevant than other social justice topics. Even in schools where this is not the case, too often LGBT+ inclusion is reserved for Pride Month and LGBT History Month, just as other marginalised identities are too often confined to their ‘months’.

This work is important in all stages of education, from nursery right through to college. There is no such thing as too soon for this work, as long as the topics are discussed in an age-appropriate way. Especially in primary schools, this work can all too often be sidelined as ‘not suitable’ for younger pupils. This couldn’t be further from the truth; to create a socially just world all work must begin when children are young, when they are truly open to understanding the diversity of our world. As an ex-primary school teacher myself, I am all too aware of the obstacles that can appear in this work. However, I also see

the many rich opportunities in beginning all social justice work when children are young, when fairness, being kind and celebrating our differences sit so often at the heart of what we do.

There are several important ways your school can place LGBT+ inclusion at the heart of social justice work: your curriculum, your school environment and through school policies.

Developing an LGBT+ inclusive curriculum is a whole school, cross-subject endeavour. Rather than just having ‘the LGBT+ lesson’ as part of PSHE and RSE work, LGBT+ experiences should appear throughout the curriculum. Our independent research showed that 48% of pupils have experienced little to no positive messaging about being LGBT+, and weaving positive LGBT+ stories into your curriculum is a great way to counteract this. Through [School Diversity Week](#), Just Like Us provides free LGBT+ inclusive resources to be used throughout the year, right across the curriculum and for all key stages. These resources provide examples of the kinds of work that you could do in your own curriculum.

In primary schools, resources include a video series of LGBT+ authors reading and speaking about their LGBT+ inclusive books alongside lessons and reading guides. Using books in your classroom, both as reading material and in your English lessons as a stimulus is a great way to introduce children to LGBT+ people and experiences while also delivering the



curriculum. In secondary schools, resources include lesson plans for a broad range of subjects, from computing to modern foreign languages, as well as resources for SEND and faith schools. There is also a series of LGBT+ resources for form times, so you can use pastoral time to touch upon these important subjects.

Creating safe spaces for LGBT+ young people in your school is another important step towards being a more inclusive secondary school. In secondary schools, making sure your school has an LGBT+ club is a great way to provide these safe spaces. LGBT+ groups run like any other group at your school, usually at lunchtime or after school, and they are a space for LGBT+ students and allies to support each other, learn and educate each other about the LGBT+ community, and have fun! Through our [Pride Groups Programme](#), we support the setting up and running of LGBT+ groups, with fortnightly new resources, virtual training for staff and students, and more. Pride Groups also give LGBT+ students a voice. They are a space to talk about issues that matter, but also to develop the skills needed to advocate for change in their school environment and wider community.

In primary schools, making your school a safe space may look slightly different. Making sure there are clear visual clues that the school is welcoming to all is a simple and effective way to do this. If you are signed up to School Diversity Week you can download lots of LGBT+ display materials and posters for free. Seeing a Pride flag is a signal to those who know what it is that you are welcoming and a great conversation starter for others. Making sure that you celebrate all family types, including LGBT+ families, is also a great way to make sure all students feel safe to be themselves.

LGBT+ inclusion work is integral to social justice practice in all schools. Not only does this work support students who are, or may in the future identify as LGBT+, but it also develops empathy and allyship in the wider student body. Empowering your students to advocate for the LGBT+ community will prepare them to be citizens fighting for a more socially just society.



Upskilling students and staff in the cognitive science of learning to support a mastery curriculum

By Chloe McGeady and Josie Belli, St John the Baptist School

Over the last six years SJB has focused on developing and implementing a mastery approach for teachers to support our move towards a mastery curriculum (Mastery Delivery Model). Through our work (researching and trialling strategies for a mastery curriculum) in this field we recognised the importance for teachers and staff of having a deep understanding of how students learn and process the information. We therefore recognised the need to upskill staff regarding their knowledge of the cognitive science of learning, in theory and in practice.

This work was designed to develop the knowledge and understanding of staff through leveraging external expertise and then internal training of staff. We used the mediums that exist within the school to develop learning and teaching: collaborative learning teams, learning group, INSET days and staff meetings. We felt that the Mastery Model we had developed and successfully implemented could be supported further by staff and students having an understanding of the science of learning. This would ensure teachers were able to plan lessons and curricula to sustain the attention of students, ensuring working memory was supported fully. Furthermore that strategies could be implemented successfully in subjects to improve long-term memory through various interleaving and spaced practice approaches.

Building staff expertise

- Staff undertook the Evidence Based Lead Practitioner Course – members of staff were registered to complete the lead practitioner course which involved learning the theory of cognitive science and completing activities to reflect on current practices in the school. They also focused on how the understanding of cognitive science could support education and student learning in the classroom. This programme led to staff gaining a lead practitioner qualification. Part of the course also required collaboration with other schools which enabled ideas and research to be shared across different demographics. It also allowed staff to support one other and appraise practices in other schools.
- The Mastery Collaboration Team, which is part of the whole school learning and teaching initiatives, were asked to research and trial various strategies seen within literature and through the EBE course. These strategies were linked to the three stages of the theory of information processing in order to analyse their effectiveness within our setting. Throughout the year, a group of staff from various subjects across the school met together to discuss strategies associated with attention, working memory and long-term memory, highlighting the merits and pitfalls seen when applied in the classroom. Adaptions to strategies were made and successful strategies were then shared further across the school through staff meetings and INSET days.
- Multiple INSET training days focused on developing staff knowledge of the cognitive



science of learning and provided strategies for staff to implement into lessons. During INSETs research and appropriate literature were shared with staff to help develop their understanding of cognitive science and the benefits within the classroom. Evidence of student work, teaching videos and student feedback of strategies was shared with the staff to highlight the merits this work had.

- Peer collaboration weeks, where staff are paired together to observe or discuss strategies implemented, focused on content delivered within INSETs gave staff an opportunity to take the input provided and apply it to the classroom. It also provided them with a forum through which to reflect on their personal practice.
- As well as developing staff understanding of the theory of information processing, we wanted to begin to ensure students had an understanding of how they learn. Several lessons were developed for year 7 and year 11 to teach them the theory of cognitive learning and potential strategies they could use to support their own learning journey. Upskilling students in the cognitive science of learning is still in the early stages. Further development of this will take place this year, ensuring students are given the skills and confidence to take ownership for their learning.

Evidencing impact

- Staff have approached teaching/planning differently ensuring they think about each stage of information-processing particularly when introducing new concepts.
- School icons designed and used across all subjects to help reduce cognitive load and support dual coding.
- Introduction of webcams and visualisers to support modelling strategies

- Curriculum development facilitated interleaving opportunities, developed a mastery curriculum, embedded spaced practice, lesson resources had reduced cognitive load.
- We have shared learning within our MAT and cross-phase to primaries.

Where next?

- We wish to develop students' independence further through a focus on metacognition and self-regulation. This will require us to further upskill staff in these areas and ensure a school wide consensus on the meaning of these terms and their application to students' learning.
- Train students in metacognitive and self-regulation strategies by working with representatives from our student leadership team attached to the mastery CLT.
- Further empower students in their own learning by developing lessons that can be delivered as part of the curriculum through form time activities and PSHE lessons that teach students the cognitive science of learning and metacognition strategies.
- Continue on our journey of outlining and developing 'mastery learners'.

In a nutshell

1. Keep it simple – over-complication of lessons/too much information can be the fastest way to lose the attention of students and overload their working memory
2. Look at the interconnectivity of your subject – how can you interleave topics and revisit concepts to support long-term memory?
3. Develop department/school wide icons – icons can remove the need for long winded instructions and reduce cognitive overload and support students' working memory
4. Train the children in the cognitive science of learning so they can recognise how best to learn
5. Ensure curriculum design is intertwined with pedagogy to support learning and remembering over time.

This article first appeared in *Leading Change*. A publication for Leading Edge, a network for high performing schools.



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Developing learning habits for effective study

By Sam Martin, Kennet School

At Kennet School we've been interested in the idea of habitual behaviours for several years, thinking about how this influences the effectiveness of both pupils and staff in the process of learning. This has permeated both teaching and learning within the school where we have developed a set of 'Principles for Learning' as a common pedagogical approach that is rooted in the best research, alongside a guiding set of learning habits for our pupils. In both cases, stakeholders are encouraged to build routines that lead to excellent outcomes.

This article discusses how we have developed our learning habits amongst pupils, especially those centred around study and revision, but it will also touch on how this idea has influenced reporting and target setting amongst pupils too.

Introducing learning habits

For a number of years, we had promoted effective learning habits to pupils on an informal basis; following a return from remote learning, our attentions were focused on supporting exam classes prepare for terminal exams, and out



Classwork

You:

- Engage with all tasks and see them through to completion.
- Actively participate in group or class discussions or tasks.
- Answer **and** ask questions.
- Undertake extension or challenge work set by a teacher to further your understanding.
- Use example material effectively to support your own work.

Homework

You:

- Attempt homework in advance of the deadline and ask for help if needed.
- Hand your homework in on time.
- Use your notes and knowledge organisers to revisit key concepts and consolidate your learning.
- Undertake self-testing strategies to recall important knowledge.

Organisation

You:

- Format any notes clearly so you can revisit them and identify key information.
- Plan carefully for tasks, breaking them down into steps.
- Proofread or check your work to ensure it makes sense, is well presented and complete before submitting or performing.
- Manage your time well in and out of school to ensure your work is of a high standard.
- Ensure you are fully equipped and prepared for learning.

Reflection & Improvement

You:

- Re-draft, rehearse or refine your work to improve it.
- Summarise your learning to draw out important information.
- Use research to develop or improve your work, where appropriate.
- Reflect on the strengths and weaknesses in your work and correct errors.
- Act on teacher or peer feedforward advice.

of this drive was born 'learning habits for study'. These were another subset of habits that supported effective revision looking at strategies around organisation, retrieval and reflection to improve assessment outcomes. This was supported with dedicated PSHE lessons, assemblies and sat across years 11, 12 and 13.

Alongside the promotion of learning habits, we were also redesigning our reporting systems and wanted to move away from promoting progress through 'effort' and a reliance on motivation. We already utilised research on habit formation and shared this with pupils frequently, so why not use this as the tool to judge effectiveness as a learner? Motivation is fickle and temporal, whereas habits and the automaticity of effective behaviours are much more reliable.

As a result, we launched a revamped version of our learning habits, subsuming study habits and creating everyday behaviours that were tangible and easy to understand and enact. These cover classwork; homework; organisation; reflection and improvement.

Inspired by the research of Logan Fiorella and the practical advice of Harry Fletcher-Wood, habit formation and the theoretical reasonings for developing habits has been central to pupils' understanding of how to improve in school. The above categories are the four areas reported on for all year groups, so that all stakeholders (pupils, teachers and parents) can see how emerging behaviours develop over time into embedded habits. The reporting system is in its infancy this year, but initial feedback suggests that parents appreciate the sharing of the criteria used to

ascertain judgements on pupils' approach to school, and pupils understand what areas and how they can improve through focused analysis of their report and supported target setting.

Study mornings

The learning habits that cross over with effective study have been embedded more firmly with year 11s with the introduction of 'Study Mornings'. This has been in response to a lack of preparedness and awareness of effective revision strategies amongst this year group, and a desire to ensure that pupils feel supported, calm and ready when exam season begins. This was a huge cultural change but began with staff explicitly teaching the most effective revision strategies, drawing on research into generative tasks and effective retrieval practice. At first this was focused by subject e.g., 'how to effectively revise in English', before looking at a set of core strategies and directing pupils to follow clear models and most importantly, regularly practice. Study Mornings happen at the start of every day in tutor time (20 minutes); pupils watch/listen to advice and examples in the earlier part of the week and then work in silence and independently on deliberate practice of those strategies for the remainder. To support building a habit of enacting this revision every morning, we drew on research around the notion of a stable contexts (same environment, at same time and enacted in the same way), habit formation and the habit loop (cue, routine, reward).

Over time we've focused in on different subjects for content but kept the strategies to a narrow group (and those that research show are most effective). Pupils therefore do not need to think hard about what strategy to use but can immediately draw on a few and identify the most useful one for either knowledge recall or knowledge application. The result has been automatic behaviours demonstrated by pupils each morning – organised with relevant revision materials, entering the tutor rooms ready to work independently and in silence for the duration of the tutor session. Pupils are equipped with the most effective strategies and are using them daily.

Next steps and advice

Our next steps are to begin these mornings with year 10, preparing them for the intensity of year

11. However, our overriding aim is to enable a 'slow burn' approach, equipping pupils from the start of year 7 with essential strategies to embed effective study habits. Inspired by McGill and Howell's revolution strategies, we've begun this journey by introducing 'Look, Cover, Write, Check' to year 7 this year in the lead up to their formal, multiple choice, Knowledge Tests. The revision strategy was set out with clear instructions, modelled videos to pupils (and parents) alongside a booklet of knowledge organisers. In addition, year 8 and 9 have been introduced to summarising and how to create and use flashcards in PSHE sessions in the lead up to their formal assessment points.

Again, this is carefully modelled and scaffolded in PSHE and instructions sent home (to pupils and parents) so that additional revision takes place at home.

Although habit formation has been part of language of the school for a while, the explicit teaching of a set of strategies is the beginning of the next chapter for us. We want to develop further next academic year by interleaving effective strategies alongside taught sessions on why the strategies work. Additionally, we recommend anyone embarking on a similar journey to look at the science around retrieval, the importance of sleep and other research-based understanding to strengthen pupils' metacognition, and to support them making effective learning choices.



Follow Sam Martin at [@MrsMartinKennet](https://twitter.com/MrsMartinKennet) and [@kennetschool](https://twitter.com/kennetschool)



Embedding improvements in teaching and learning

By Malini Craig and Joanne Colling, Witton Park Academy

How often do you sit in your school hall during an INSET and think “I can’t wait to go and try that in the classroom?” Then there is another suggestion and you think “Oh I’ll try that too,” and by the end of the session you think “I have so many ideas and don’t know where to start?” Nothing sticks and two months later you can’t remember exactly what you wanted to try.

This is a common problem with staff training, and we recognised, after a successful Ofsted inspection, that we needed to change our approach to curriculum implementation to allow our staff to ‘Practice and Coach.’

At the heart of ‘Practice and Coach’ is the intention to work on granular aspects of pedagogy underpinned with a coaching approach so that all staff, no matter where they are in their teaching careers, are challenged to improve.

With support from our headteacher we were able to timetable staff one hour of ‘Practice and Coach’ time within their teaching timetable. This meant staff were being given the opportunity to come together weekly in groups of eight to collaborate. However, this meant, as a team we needed to plan weekly hour-long sessions focused on curriculum implementation and develop a group of teachers to become coaches, which seemed daunting at first.



To start we designed a Curriculum and Academic Rigour Trajectory, based on the Uncommon Schools 'Get Better Faster' model, outlining action steps to guide effective teacher practice in the classroom and support us to determine the highest leverage action points which would enable us to design our learning sets for each half term. This covers all career stages and includes aspects of pedagogy encompassing; Magenta, Metacognition, Meeting the needs, Oracy, Reading, Rosenshine, Equity, Enrichment and Edtech. This is accessed by staff digitally using a purpose-built site. Time was invested in making sure the branding of the site aligned with our school vision and values to communicate the high expectations and ensure buy-in from staff.

Once we had started to plan the learning sets we considered who would make successful lead and assistant coaches within the identified cross curricular groups. We trained the coaches as a group to facilitate the weekly sessions and in the use of incisive questioning and coaching techniques. We gave further training to the whole staff about the 'Five Stages of Listening' and the GROW model in order to empower them as in the moment coaches for each other. We felt it was important for staff to work in cross curricular groups to learn from each other and further enhance our work on building schema across the curriculum.

Each of the sessions are designed in exactly the same format, to support the coaches to be able to facilitate their session with ease, as well as ensure that staff attending are not cognitively overloaded on what might be a busy teaching day. Each session is underpinned by educational research with GROW as the coaching model focusing staff to realise their goals and commit to targets each week. Staff complete a workbook which allows them to make notes on the session and these can be used as evidence for their appraisal targets, and script at a granular level, how they will deliver each aspect of pedagogy.

It was also important to communicate the rationale to the rest of the teaching staff, this along with high quality resources, meant that staff became invested in reflecting upon their own practice. This is evident through staff voice.

SLT observations also clearly demonstrate the clarity and focus the trajectory and quality theory-led resources give to the culture of 'getting better.'

After the first term we reflected and acknowledged that the role of coach can be challenging. To continue the professional development of the coaches we built in opportunities to offer support in the form of coaching supervision. Meeting on an individual basis with each coach allows them to reflect on their practice, discuss any problems they have encountered and develop their own role. This enables us to quality assure the coaching process. Feedback from supervision has been overwhelmingly positive with many of the coaches reflecting on how this work has empowered and inspired them to further their own skill set and careers.

As a school, moving from INSET days to weekly continuous professional learning has not only transformed our teaching and learning, but also impacted positively on staff wellbeing.

Staff are constantly reflecting upon their classroom practice at a granular level, scripting and discussing how they can make marginal gains, with people outside their curriculum area. Staff understand that everyone can get better, the role of developing as a teacher is never done, however we are now able to do that together.



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Laying the foundations for a physically active lifestyle

By Ben Tier and Hollie Blunt, Venturers' Academy

Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) is a lifelong neuro-difference which can impact on social interaction skills and repetitive behaviour patterns, resulting in motor and communication difficulties (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2013). In the United Kingdom, an increasing number of children are being diagnosed with ASC, with the latest available data indicating that 1.8% of all pupils in England have an autism diagnosis (DHSC, 2021).

In comparison to their neurotypical peers, autistic children are at increased risk of non-communicable diseases, obesity and mental health issues (e.g., depression, anxiety) over the course of their lifetime (NHS England, 2022). Within the literature, physical activity has been identified as an intervention that can mitigate these poor health outcomes (Luymes and Redquest, 2022).

The significance of an inclusive PE curriculum is highlighted by the following professional bodies:

- The Department of Health and Social Care (2021), which aims to ensure all children have their strengths and needs identified as early as possible and have positive experiences of physical activity within educational settings.
- The SEND review (2022), which seeks to establish partnerships, bringing together education and communities to produce a local inclusion plan including physically active opportunities.

- Sport England's 2021 strategy, which aims to increase the level of physical activity amongst autistic individuals.

As a result of this guidance, at Venturers' Academy we have developed a pilot project between occupation therapy and the PE department.

The aim of the initiative is to:

- improve the foundational motor skills for all children in key stage 1 and 2
- increase children's self-esteem and motivation for physical activity
- prepare students for sports-specific learning and lifelong activity and exercise.

The objectives of the project are to:

- identify the specific motor strengths and deficits of all children in key stage 1 and 2
- implement motor programmes designed to target specific motor deficits.

Methodology

We initially planned to create the screening tool in line with our students EHCPs. We identified, however, that there were still significant gaps and areas in need of specific physical development. Therefore, we designed a tailored screening tool that breaks down the key fundamental movement skills into three areas: body awareness, balance and ball skills. The ECHPs gave us a fantastic starting block and helped aid our decisions when compiling the screening activities. However, the need for a more in depth understanding of our students' all-round physical ability was prevalent.



This year we trialled the screening process with three different primary classes within our school. Each class varied depending on age and ability. It was clear that the screening tool implemented was hugely successful, however, it was also apparent that we need to implement a second screening tool aimed for older, more able students to ensure those who had mastered foundational motor skills were provided with adequate differentiation and challenge.

From the screening tool, the motor strengths and weaknesses of each child were reviewed. This then allowed for the PE and OT teams to implement a suitable Fizzy Programme that targeted individuals' motor deficits. The Fizzy programme has been developed by Occupational therapists for use in schools to improve motor skills. This programme was selected for its accessibility and easy-to-read format. It is simple to follow, with visuals to support the child's and facilitator's understanding. As part of the lesson warm up, each child works in a small group, led by a teaching assistant. Each small group follows one of the Fizzy Programmes as directed by the occupational therapist to address specific areas of motor needs that were identified by the screening.

Barriers

As with any new initiative, especially in education, the biggest barrier is often time: time to formulate the idea into an evidence-based project; time to develop the resources and upskill staff and time to liaise with teaching staff to ensure they are on board with the initiative. By allocating protected time as part of the academic calendar, it may be possible to support innovative ideas, underpinned by a strong evidence base, to be developed.

The implementation of the screening tools may also be seen as a barrier as these were delivered by different members of the PE team. This led to minor inconsistencies with some of the screening results.

Moving forward, we aim to implement a 'screening day' twice a year, which can be overseen by senior staff members.

Outcomes

While the project is in its infancy, it has already proved an asset for the PE team when lesson planning as we have been able to embed relevant provision outlined within a child's EHCP into the PE curriculum. This enables lessons to be adapted for everyone, targeting their specific motor

strengths and needs. Additionally, it has highlighted the children who have secured their foundational motor skills and require more 'stretch and challenge opportunities'.

Limitations

Evidence-based practice is critical to ensure the most efficient provision is being used to improve health, wellbeing and educational outcomes (DoE, 2017). Yet there is currently a dearth of research related to improving motor skills using an integrated OT and PE approach within schools. Further research in this area would add to the evidence base available and ensure results from our pilot project are replicable in other settings. This would go some way to addressing the global economic burden of physical inactivity for individuals with disabilities (WHO, 2022).

As a child's core environments are typically the home and school, background research has highlighted the importance of supporting parents to increase physical activity within their child's daily routine (Arnell et al., 2020). While the school is able to implement programmes to improve a child's motor skills, it is only through regular repetition that these skills can become secure, thereby promoting a physically active lifestyle. Moving forwards, the project aims to offer workshops and courses to support parents to recognise the importance of foundational motor skills and offer strategies on how to include these as part of their daily/weekly routine with their child.

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The journey to better self-reflection

By Javeria Zahid and Lara Cuddihee, Stratford School Academy

Creating space and time for teachers to not only be reflective on their own practice, but also have the ability to improve that practice can be described as one of the ‘persistent problems in education’¹. The challenge is to ensure all staff get high quality feedback, that is focused and actionable, provides the highest leverage for that particular teacher. This also improves a teacher’s ability to make informed decisions about what strategies to deploy in their lessons and improve student outcomes.

Effective implementation involves accurately diagnosing the problem, and making sure that it is an important and fixable issue for leaders. The solution started with a series of meetings between me and the lead of IRIS and coaching. In the initial meetings, we diagnosed the problem: that the quality of feedback from lesson observations was inconsistent, and that staff were not able to improve on the basis of that feedback. We also discussed the stigma around high-stakes lesson observations – that they can be seen as a ‘tick-box’ exercise, that support and development offered after they occur is due to failure, and that staff who are seen as ‘good enough’ may not be pushed to develop as much as they can.

We decided on a two-pronged approach; firstly, implementing a coaching programme, and secondly encouraging staff to be more self-reflective of their own practice through using IRIS recording software.

Implementation is ‘a process, not an event’². With this in mind, we started the implementation of coaching on a small-scale, with just one department. Space was created in the hour of department time every Monday, and a standardised coaching script was created. Staff of similar experience were paired up within the department, and over a fortnightly cycle, the pair observed each other. The scripted coaching conversation reduced the cognitive load, as it was repeated each week, and meant that all teachers knew how the coaching would be structured. Pairing teachers of similar experiences also meant that teachers were getting good quality feedback. The coaching conversation could also be structured based on the level of experience and expertise, with ECTs and newer teachers having more scaffolding than those with more experience.

At a whole school level, we led the second part of the approach, which was to ask teachers to use the IRIS system to record a 15-20 minute segment of their lesson. To increase staff buy-in, the process was low-stakes, with no requirement to share the recording with anyone. We also used extrinsic rewards, such as vouchers for the top three departments in the school who logged the most recordings, to increase the buzz around the school. The outcome of this was clear, with the number of IRIS reflections increasing by four-fold, and during any given lesson in the day, roughly three to four recordings were occurring.



To create an environment where staff want to get better, they need to understand the why and how to improve and we need to provide them with opportunities to develop. The two-pronged approach, plus gradual implementation has meant that staff are equipped for the change. Since the initial roll-out of coaching, three further departments have embedded coaching into their weekly meetings, using IRIS recordings as the basis for their conversations. Another two departments are now working towards this.

The success of the implementation to date, has also been the improvement in the quality of lesson observation feedback given by HODs and other lead teachers around the school. Colleagues are more confident in addressing areas of development, and are also more responsive to amending them to change their practice.

The main costs of implementing coaching and IRIS were money and time. Careful planning of timelines, and prioritisation within the staff CPD budget, has allowed staff to attend training through both Ambition Institute and SSAT. Another barrier was the technical expertise and availability of the IRIS software. We asked staff to provide us with honest and open feedback regarding the software. Staff told us that there wasn't enough equipment available, so a quick win was to order more. HoDs were also trained on the use of the software, so they could disseminate it to their teams, and further feedback about proficiency or confidence using the software was quickly dealt with.

An effective school culture is essential to create the enabling conditions for effective teaching

and staff and student success³. Part of this is communicating very regularly, consistently modelling and giving regular feedback. In order to ensure that staff felt that they were part of the journey, it was important to explain multiple times the intended benefits and outcomes of interacting with the coaching and IRIS systems. Part of this involved working on staff buy-in, through providing staff training on coaching and IRIS, as well as constantly reiterating the importance of it through the staff bulletin, teaching and learning briefings, and using staff to motivate each other.

Traditionally, schools go for a sledgehammer approach, and this can seem successful in the short term, however, the change is not permanent, and issues arise long term. Starting with a small-scale implementation process can allow leaders to reflect on the outcomes and tackles issues more efficiently, rather than going back and forth with initiatives and being left with inconsistent outcomes. Coaching and IRIS are co-dependent, and this works well when rolling out coaching for the first time. IRIS allows teachers to see the benefits of self-reflection and the use of video has saved time covering lessons and helped to guide the coaching dialogue as teachers can see what the observer sees.

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Supporting EAL students

By Mary Morris, King's Academy Prospect

The context of our school is very important; we are a school of over 1000 students, of which nearly 40% are pupil premium and just over 30% speak English as their second or additional language. Unsurprisingly, there is significant crossover between these two groups. We are based about 20 miles down the Thames Valley from Heathrow Airport and have a relatively transient school population that reflects our location; close to the airport, a university town and in the heart of the UK's Silicon Valley.

Between the 300 or so EAL students we have, there are nearly 30 different languages spoken, with students coming from over 50 different countries. A significant number are British-born, but speak another language at home, equally, we have students who have arrived in the country with no experience of or exposure to English at all. We have students who join us because their parents have sponsored visas here to work at the university or for the big tech companies just down the road; we also have a significant number of refugee and asylum seeker families. So in the same day I might be speaking to a student who is trying to navigate the complexities of international student funding for their university application alongside a family who have left everything behind and have fled from atrocities that we can only imagine.

Thus, the role of our EAL department is not just an educational one, but very much a social and cultural one as well. The department itself is well established, two full-time members of staff

who not only teach small groups of students, but also deal with housing, financial issues, friendships, social integration and a range of external partners who we work closely with.

Perhaps the easiest way to explain this is to follow the journey of our EAL students. I'm going to focus on those who join the school at points other than phase transfer, but the same will apply to others. Like our SEN/D department, we take a universal/targeted/specialist approach. At admissions meetings, the head of the EAL department will join our admissions officer and will assess the likely level of need. She herself is multi-lingual and we have a number of other staff who we can call on to translate if necessary. Where they are asylum seeker or refugee students, we are usually supported also by a worker from one of the local charities – we have close links with Care4Calais and British Red Cross in particular.

A key starting point is the importance and status that the EAL department has in school. They have a dedicated suite of classrooms in an accessible part of the school and close links to the English faculty.

It is little things like this – that the department is on the ground floor of the main building, next to reception is important, partly as reassurance for these students, but also so that everyone in the school knows where they are and that they are easily accessible.

We follow the Cambridge English Teaching Framework as a starting point, to assess the level of English that the new student has – Foundation, Developing, Proficient or Expert.

For Foundation students – those who have little or no spoken or written English, they will have specialist small group teaching, using an approach similar to phonics for early readers in primary school. Some of these students, particularly our refugee and asylum seeker students will not have an age-expected competency in their first language. In recent years we have had Syrian students joining us who have never been to any sort of school and cannot read or write in Arabic either; although more recently the Ukrainian students who joined us already had a good standard of Ukrainian, Russian and English.

We explicitly teach English in small groups of about six to eight students, based primarily on their level of English, but also taking into account other factors such as their curriculum year group and their first language. However, these groups are also quite fluid, and students will change

groups based on their acquisition of language. For students who join us with very little or no English, they will typically have an hour a day of this intensive language teaching, with the rest of the day attending mainstream classes.

This means that our teachers will often have in their lessons students who have very little English; at this point our main goal is immersion in the target language and supporting their social skills and development at school in the UK. We find generally, students pick up conversational English very quickly – and in lessons are supported through the use of bilingual dictionaries and of course Google Translate. Where possible we will place them with another EAL student; although this can have the disadvantage that they revert to their primary language.

Beyond the acquisition of English, we also assume that students will follow the mainstream curriculum. For students at KS3 this is relatively straightforward, they will follow the normal timetable with their peers – with most of them also taking French, German or Spanish.



At GCSE we may need to be a little more creative – depending on when they join the school – those who have been here in KS3 will usually follow our normal KS4 offer, but for students who join in years 10 or 11 this will need to be adapted. We also have students who join us in the 6th form, again this is based on their individual needs, but for students new to the country we will put in place a foundation year with a focus on English and maths and perhaps a level 2 course where this fits their needs.

Additionally, all students who have an additional language are encouraged to sit a GCSE or A-level in their primary language. This is typically done with the rest of their public exams, and includes any student with an additional language – not just those who have arrived new to the country. We have a high success rate here – in an average year we may have about 25 entries typically across eight to ten languages – and only restricted by the lack of examination course for some specific languages. The outcomes are also very high: at the point of entry, we are clear to students that they will need to be proficient in all four areas; speaking, reading, writing and listening.

We have developed a good network of examiners to cover the range of languages (often including parents and other members of our local community) and we also support other local schools with this.

We also have close links to the University of Reading, and participate in their 'Students in Schools' scheme, which places university students into local schools. We have been involved in this for several years and whilst schools can request support in any areas, we always ask for students to support our EAL students – with many international students they have provided enormous support both to our students and to the wider school, providing translation support and working with families as well as students. We also operate a similar scheme in our sixth form – all students are expected to provide two hours service as part of their programme of study and it is great to see EAL students who have stayed on providing support to new arrivals who may be experiencing the issues they faced previously.

As mentioned previously, we also work closely with our local community and where necessary, with support agencies, currently Care4Calais and the Red Cross. Very often it is the families that need support far more than their children. When we had a large number of Syrian students we established a community group with their families regularly coming into school, we currently support a small network of Ukrainian families as well as working with the local mosque and Orthodox church.

Finally, we ensure that our EAL students are a visible and celebrated group in our school. We hold an annual celebration afternoon for all students currently receiving additional English support, as well as those who have graduated from English classes and now follow the mainstream curriculum. Students bring in food from home, bringing a truly international flavour to the event, share their experiences, and receive awards and certificates. We celebrate this group of young people because they add so much value to our school and are an integral part of the diverse and inclusive nature of our school. Their successes are too many to mention – perhaps our proudest moment though was Mohammed. Less than four years after he arrived here from Syria, with no English at all, he had received offers from every university that he applied to and he is now studying cyber security at Kingston University – his first choice.

It is not just our own students that we work with; we have provided support and guidance to not only our local authority, but also neighbouring ones, where families have deliberately been given housing as close as possible to us as a priority. We also provide support and training to other schools and recently were invited by one of the inspectors during our Ofsted inspection to lead training at her school. There is no masterplan for what we are doing though; just a commitment to providing the very best for all the international students who make such an enormous contribution to our school. We're very proud of them all.



Follow Mary Morris at [@MaryMorris72](https://twitter.com/MaryMorris72)



Unlocking student confidence: How to build fluency in foreign language learning

By Hanaa Elsayed, GEMS Founders School

The ability to speak a foreign language is a valuable asset in the modern world. Language learning expands pupils' horizons, equipping them with the capacity to communicate with people from around the globe, thereby opening up new perspectives and possibilities. Yet, without the confidence and motivation to use the language, all of the learning may be in vain.

For approximately two years, foreign language students have had to adjust to remote and blended learning due to pandemic restrictions. While educators have done their best to provide an optimal learning experience, the lack of access to fluent Arabic speakers has meant that students have been unable to practise their speaking skills with sufficient confidence. This has resulted in a decline in their ability to communicate in the language.

As language teachers, it is expected that speakers with fully developed linguistic skills can demonstrate fluency in their use of an appropriate range of vocabulary and linguistic structures, with accuracy and clarity of pronunciation that is readily comprehensible to native speakers. This is why Katie Horne (2013) and Hussain M. (2016) both firmly propose that greater focus should be placed on developing speaking skills in language instruction, as this will not only enable students to communicate and better understand Arabic culture, but also provide them with a greater linguistic repertoire, helping to improve their reading and writing skills. Furthermore,

giving students the opportunity to hone their speaking skills in the classroom will help to build their confidence in their language use, thus increasing their language proficiency.

This is why we decided to explore the effectiveness of such an approach in developing students' language proficiency.

The research project

This paper reports on action research conducted in GEMS Founders School, Dubai, over the course of one academic year. The aim of the research was to investigate the impact of focusing on developing pupils' speaking skills on improving the attainment of secondary students in Arabic as a foreign language. The targeted group was low-attaining secondary students, but the actions taken were implemented with all pupils to ensure that all learners had access to quality learning opportunities. As such, the study was conducted with phase 3 pupils.

The teacher engaged in bespoke training sessions and professional development to enhance their pedagogy and teaching and learning practices, with a focus on enhancing the speaking skills of their pupils. The "plan, monitor, review" cycle was used explicitly to achieve objectives and improve performance.



- celebrating pupils' successes, giving them a sense of accomplishment.
- using games and activities to help engage students.
- using technology to support learning in the classroom.

Findings

It is clear from the data that the language skills and attainment of the students developed over the course of the project.

The data shows that the students' attainment improved across all areas, including reading, writing, listening and speaking. For example, in the reading section, the percentage of students attaining curriculum expectations increased from 51% at the beginning of the intervention, to 83% at the end. Similarly, in the writing section, the percentage of students achieving curriculum expectations increased from 42% to 78%. Additionally, the percentage of students exceeding curriculum expectations increased from 17% to 42%.

Surveys and observational data have shown a marked improvement in students' confidence in speaking inside the classroom has improved from a medium of 2.1 before the intervention to 4, and their confidence in speaking outside the classroom has improved from a medium of 1.6 before the intervention to 3.1 after the project. Improvement in self-reported confidence was also supported by teachers' observational comments and feedback. A comment such as "I am feeling more confident speaking Arabic now that I have been able to practice with my classmates and learn more about the language", was supported by the teacher's observational data that noted the student is using the target language in group discussions and presentations. The comment "I am starting to feel more and more confident that I can communicate with my neighbours in Arabic" was supported by a teacher's feedback on a speaking project where the student interviewed her Arab neighbour.

Overall, the data suggest that the project had a positive impact on the language skills and attainment of the students.

Implications

The impact of developing speaking skills and improving pupils' confidence in practising the target language was significant in terms of improving pupils' attainment and language proficiency. It provided pupils with a more comprehensive understanding of the language, enabling them to increase their proficiency in the four language skills. Through providing pupils with opportunities to converse and engage in interactive activities in the target language, pupils developed a greater understanding of the language and gained the confidence to practice it in various contexts in and outside classrooms. Moreover, it enabled pupils to increase their vocabulary, practise pronunciation, and gain a better understanding of the language and its usage while providing them with the confidence to practice and progress in their learning. The speaking activities helped to foster a sense of confidence and success in pupils, giving them the motivation to continue learning the language and make progress in their attainment.

The aim of this study was fulfilled by determining how developing foreign language speaking confidence does positively affect the learning process. Overall, this study suggests that developing target language speaking confidence can be a beneficial tool in foreign language learning process. By increasing confidence, learners are more likely to use the language in everyday communication, make mistakes, and continue learning despite challenges. Additionally, higher levels of foreign speaking confidence may lead to increasing overall language proficiency. This study suggests that language teachers should focus on helping learners to develop their speaking confidence to facilitate their language learning journey.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as foreign language educators, we are responsible for helping our learners develop the confidence to speak the language both inside and outside our classroom. This research was conducted to target a certain spike hindering the progress of a group of learners, however its implementation has developed a curb cut that every learner benefited from. Encouraging agility in our learners' speaking skills and providing

them with opportunities to implement their learning outside classrooms and even outside school in real-life situations, has significantly contributed to developing their learning outcomes as well as their learning skills and confidence.

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4 students achieved Bronze Awards

19 students achieved Silver Awards

19 students achieved Gold Awards

Canon Slade School

7 students achieved Bronze Awards

16 students achieved Gold Awards

CoachBright

116 students achieved Bronze Awards

24 students achieved Silver Awards

21 students achieved Gold Awards

Eltham College

2 students achieved Bronze Awards

2 students achieved Silver Awards

Jameah Academy

7 students achieved Bronze Awards

2 students achieved Silver Awards

1 student achieved a Gold Award

Kingsmead School

34 students achieved Bronze Awards

7 students achieved Silver Awards

1 student achieved a Gold Award

Longdendale High School

2 students achieved Bronze Awards

1 student achieved Silver Awards

Lostock Primary School

5 pupils achieved Bronze Awards

More House School

4 students achieved Bronze Awards

Team Up

7 students achieved Bronze Awards

1 students achieved a Silver Award

3 students achieved Gold Awards

The Arnewood School

16 students achieved Bronze Awards

Walney School

7 students achieved Gold Awards

Wirral Grammar School for Boys

16 students achieved Gold Awards

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Pupils create a portfolio to showcase their skills and grade their work using a self-assessment framework that covers ten core skill sets, grouped into three themes:

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SSAT Framework for Exceptional Education - 'transforming' practice in all areas

Congratulations to Invicta Grammar School in Kent and St Andrew's Catholic School in Surrey.

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SSAT Framework for Exceptional Education

The SSAT Framework for Exceptional Education was developed by the team at SSAT, working in partnership with schools from the Leading Edge network. It covers 12 key strands of school development.

Teaching and learning	Professional Practice	Leadership
• Climate for learning • Culture of reflection • Effective learning behaviours • Variety of teaching approaches	• Engaging with evidence and research • Engagement with key stakeholders • Principled assessment • Principled curriculum design	• Leadership through moral purpose • Professional learning • Quality assurance • Wellbeing

For each strand there are four descriptors showing different levels of practice: Beginning, Developing, Embedding and Transforming.

The framework is designed to provide schools with a tool to support self-review and planning. It takes a positive view of school improvement – trying to capture what it looks like when things are working really well, rather than highlighting problems.

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