

2020-21 Teaching and Learning guide for parents and carers: 'from the front' teaching

Introduction

2020 has been a year in which we have all learned that effective teaching and learning in a normal classroom environment cannot be taken for granted.

This guide is intended to give our parents and carers more information about the teaching and learning strategies that we will be using at the start of the 2020-21 school year to ensure that effective teaching and learning can occur whatever scenarios we find ourselves dealing with.

It should be read in conjunction with our virtual Expectation Evening presentations that will be shared with parents and carers on Friday 4th and Friday 11th September.

If you want to understand more about effective learning we also recommend:

Understanding how we learn: a visual guide, Y Weinstein and M Sumeracki with O Caviglioli

What is different for 2020-21?

This is a year when teachers and students need to be using the most effective teaching and learning strategies so that no time is wasted. There are a lot of misconceptions out there about effective learning that can actually cause students to waste time. **We have thought carefully about our teaching and learning programme for 2020-21 and we hope that you will engage with this so that we can work together to support our young people.**

In 2020-21 we will also need to be more flexible with our teaching and learning strategies so that we can respond to the following scenarios:

1. 'Normal' teaching and learning in a non-socially distanced classroom
2. 'From the front' teaching in a socially distanced classroom
3. Use of 'live lesson' technology such as Zoom
4. Use of remote lesson technology such as narrated videos

Like all schools nationally, we are beginning the year in scenario 2.

This teaching and learning guide for parents, and our virtual Expectation Evening presentations, therefore focus on effective teaching and learning in scenario 2.

If we move into any of the other scenarios, we will immediately produce additional teaching and learning guides for parents and virtual Expectation Evening presentations with a specific focus on the new scenario.

What is the aim of effective teaching and learning?

The aim of effective teaching and learning is to help students to acquire knowledge and skills that are stored in their long-term memory so that these can be retrieved quickly and correctly. **An understanding of cognitive psychology allows learning to occur more quickly and effectively. You can find out more about this in our virtual Expectations Evening presentations.**

How does this work?

New knowledge needs to be:

- Encoded (or connected into our existing 'map' of knowledge)
- Stored
- Retrieved (so that we can recall it when it is needed)

Otherwise, this knowledge will be lost. When it comes to learning, it really is a case of ***use it or lose it!***

How do we therefore structure our teaching?

We structure our teaching around four activities.

- Explanation and modelling
- Practice
- Checking for understanding
- Retrieval

It is important that students are aware that there are two types of practice BOTH of which are necessary to effective learning. **To help students to understand this we will be talking to students about Independent Practice in 2020-21 rather than 'homework'.** This is intended to reinforce the point that independent practice is not an 'optional extra' but a vital part of effective learning.

Guided Practice	Independent Practice
Guided practice requires the involvement of the teacher	Independent practice requires the student to learn for themselves
This is important whilst new knowledge is unfamiliar and mistakes can easily be made	This is important to ensure that the student has genuinely learned information and is not dependent on the teacher
Students at this 'novice' stage need different activities to learners in the 'expert' stage in order to learn and make progress	Students at this 'expert' stage need different activities to learners in the 'novice' stage in order to learn and make progress

You can see how these activities will work in a 'from the front teaching' scenario in the table below.

What are the 5 key characteristics of a 'smart' learner?

In 2020-21 we will be providing more information for our students on 'smart' learning that is quick and effective and prevents them from wasting their time. **Mr Conley explains more about this in our virtual Expectations Evening presentations.**

1. The larger a student's existing 'map' of knowledge, the easier and quicker they will find it to learn new information.

This is why wider reading is so important. Smart learners have a large 'map' of knowledge that they are constantly adding to. **Mr Conley explains more about how 'maps' or 'schemas' of knowledge work in our virtual Expectations Evening presentations.**

2. The more attention a student can pay to learning the more easily and quickly they can learn.

Distraction is the enemy of effective learning.

This may be *deliberate* distraction when we let our minds wander.
Or it may be *accidental* distraction because our brains are overloaded with the task in hand.

The world of mobile phones and social media mean that students are preparing for C20th exams whilst facing the challenges of C21st distractions!

Smart learners therefore develop 'distraction-proof' strategies.

For this reason, we intend to really focus on the importance of **attentive learning** in 2020-21. **Mr Conley explains more about the importance of attention in our virtual Expectations Evening presentations.**

3. The more effective a student's organisation and encoding strategies are, the more easily and quickly they can learn.

Students' books and folders should be organised in a way that helps them to develop a secure 'map' of knowledge.

Smart learners know that '*it's all in the organisation*'

For this reason, we intend to really focus on the effectiveness of students' **organisation of work** in 2020-21. **Mr Conley demonstrates how effective organisational techniques can help students' recall in our virtual Expectations Evening presentations.**

4. The amount of deliberate practice that a student undertakes will have a direct impact on their achievement

To maximise use of time, **guided** practice activities will take place in class whilst **independent** practice activities will take place beyond the classroom.

Independent practice does not need to take place at home. It can be done before or after school (or for Sixth Form students during independent study time).

5. The quality of a students' retrieval strategies will have a direct impact on their performance in exams

We will be training our students in the following smart learning strategies in the autumn term:

- **Spaced practice** to create a smart study schedule for long-term memory learning
- **Interleaving:** best described as high-intensity training for the brain
- **Elaboration:** self-checking for understanding about why and how things work
- **Dual Coding:** effective organisation to reduce overload
- **Retrieval practice:** smart activities to prevent learning being lost

Mr Conley introduces the importance of effective retrieval strategies in our virtual Expectations Evening presentations.

How does this work in 'from the front' teaching?

Activity	What role does this play in the learning process?	How does this look in 'from the front' teaching?	How can this be built into independent study and smart learning?
Explanation	We learn information by connecting it to what we already know. This can be imagined as a 'map' or 'schema' of knowledge in our minds. Explanation helps students to understand new knowledge and connect it into their existing 'map' of understanding.	<p>How students capture explanation in their books and folders is really important to how effectively they can 'encode' this new knowledge.</p> <p>Students should be using organisational strategies like use of coloured pens so that explanations are clear and memorable to them. Students need glue, plastic wallets etc. to ensure that work is well organised and in the right place to help them to build effective and accurate 'maps' of knowledge.</p> <p>Knowledge Organisers are also very useful to students for the same reason. These can help students to see the 'map'.</p> <p>Lots of random loose sheets of paper will not build effective 'maps' of knowledge.</p>	<p>Smart learners 'process' new knowledge by organising it for themselves.</p> <p>There is a direct link between time spent 'processing' knowledge and effective learning.</p> <p>Increased 'processing' time = better learning</p>

Modelling	Much of what we learn in secondary schools is complex. Modelling helps students to 'see' what is required for them.	We will be using visualisers more in our modelling so that students are able to clearly see the techniques that the teacher is modelling at the front of the class. It can be effective for students to print out and keep models of good work to help to guide their practice.	
Practice	Practice is vital to learning and it occurs in two stages: Guided practice <i>with</i> the teacher Independent practice <i>by</i> the students This can be compared to learning to ride a bike with stabilisers. You can't really ride a bike until you can do it without stabilisers.	Not only does independent practice not need the teacher or the classroom, continuing to rely on guided practice can hold back learning, encouraging the student to rely on 'stabilisers' for too long. As part of 'from the front' teaching, we will be setting independent practice to be completed outside the lesson. This way, lesson time can focus more on those activities that require teacher input.	The more independent practice we do, the better we become at something. Increased practice = better learning
Checking for understanding	Checking for understanding provides vital feedback to students and teachers that learning is accurate and effective. This is most important during guided practice where knowledge is still new and mistakes can easily occur.	We will be using mini whiteboards extensively to ensure that teachers can regularly check for understanding in 'from the front' teaching. This also encourages conscientious students to 'give it a go' and make mistakes, knowing that these can quickly be wiped away.	Learning is more effective where students can ask and answer their own questions, explaining 'what', 'how' or 'why' for themselves Self-explanation = better learning https://www.learningscientists.org/blog/2016/7/7-1
Retrieval	Our experience is that most of our students learn in the lesson with the teacher in front of them... ... but if they do not regularly process and retrieve their knowledge they forget it and need to cram information before exams (with varying degrees of success!)	Students need to be building time into their independent practice to be reviewing and retrieving the knowledge that they have covered so that this becomes familiar and fluent to them. We will be providing a programme of retrieval training for students this term to improve their retrieval skills.	Smart learners don't waste time learning information only to forget it again. They understand: use it or lose it . Independent retrieval practice is the best way that a student can work out what they really know for themselves. https://www.learningscientists.org/blog/2016/6/23-1

We will keep our parents and carers regularly updated on our teaching and learning plans as we move through the year.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide.

If you would like to find out more

An easily accessible overview of research on how we learn:

Weinstein and Sumeracki, *Understanding how we learn*

<https://www.learningscientists.org/book>

Video clips explaining aspects of retrieval, learning and metacognition

Bjork, *Learning and Forgetting Lab*

<https://bjorklab.psych.ucla.edu/research/>

An evaluation of different study strategies

Dunlosky, *Strengthening the student toolbox: study strategies to boost learning*

<https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/dunlosky.pdf>