

How we learn

A framework for quality learning



How we learn – A Learning Framework

As a family of schools, we have a shared ethos of what learning should be like and feel like as a teacher or pupil in a school that is part of Victoria Academies Trust school. Our staff are committed to continuous CPD in order to make marginal gains in the quality of their practice each day, term and year. This allows all of us to work towards our mission to become the best that we can be.

Both our curriculum approach (Intent) and our pedagogical approach (How we learn – A Learning framework) are designed as frameworks to allow our schools to hone their individual practice based on the needs of their children, in their locality. All of our schools believe in the underlying principles that shape this framework; that all children develop first class basics in their core subjects, taking into account their starting points, and that learning is designed to be REAL, IMMERSIVE and PURPOSEFUL or 'Let RIP'.

REAL: *Bringing learning to life through memorable experiences and irresistible challenges that make a real difference to the world in which our pupils live. Children's curiosities are piqued so that they are hooked from the start and yearn to learn. Ensuring that real experiences are based on ideas that children are interested in learning about, have prior knowledge or have questions about so that they can make links to their prior knowledge.*

IMMERSIVE: *Igniting pupils' passions so that they become immersed in their learning and want to dive deep and linger longer. Pupils experience the joy of being stuck and have to work long and hard on things they find a challenge so that they learn in depth and in a state of flow*

PURPOSEFUL: *Deep-rooted learning must always be challenge-based so that pupils become resilient, creative and independent learners. Their declarative and procedural knowledge becomes demonstrated in learning challenge outcomes which are produced for a real audience, are difference making or socially enterprising.*

You can read more about our Curriculum Intent and approach that we use as a framework for designing our NICER Learning challenges here. ([link off to Intent document](#))

To enable teaching and learning to be of the quality that it is both first class and RIP, teachers hone their pedagogical practice to be able to help learners grasp new concepts, cement understanding, apply thinking and create memorable and lasting opportunities – so that children wholly become skilful, knowledgeable, as well as curious, independent and keen to connect what they learn into the real world as they become adults.

Each of our academies is different. Teachers need to be able to adapt their own well-crafted and unique teaching style to suit the needs of all of their learners. The Learning framework below sets out principles that ensure that all of our teachers develop best practice in their own personal style, and build on some of the best thinking by experts that helps us to ensure that all children become the best learners that they can be. Therefore, as a Trust, this framework has been informed by thinking and practice from some of the leading writers, researchers and practitioners in education and beyond. Our Learning framework is therefore influenced by the work of: Barak Rosenshine, Carol Dweck, Dylan William, James Nottingham, Beth Wallace, Edward de Bono, Sir Ken Robinson, Guy Claxton, Benjamin Bloom and John Sweller. Our framework is particularly influenced by Rosenshine's piece 'Principles of Instruction - Research-Based Strategies that All Teachers Should Know' (2012).

1. Where are we now?

Teachers relate each lesson back to schemata and prior learning, sharing with children at the start of a lesson what they have previously learnt that links to where they are going next; making the connection between existing knowledge and new learning. This is about the idea of sticky learning - that new learning needs to build on prior learning. In the same way they, would reference prior and familiar vocabulary; this is especially important to our children who are EAL or come from disadvantaged backgrounds, where often starting points are lower or there is a vocabulary gap. Teachers will use continuous quality assessment for learning to effectively meet the needs of all learners, considering where each pupil is now before they start accessing new learning.

2. Accessing new learning

Each lesson is started by introducing pupils to effective learning objectives (in the form of WALTs or I can statements), designed from appropriate declarative or procedural knowledge. Similarly, they are introduced to the new vocabulary that they will be exposed to during that lesson or sequence of learning. Where appropriate, success criteria are used to help create small steps in effective learning. At times this is designed with the learner, applying prior knowledge that they may have. Small steps in learning are designed in line with Sweller's work on Cognitive load theory, ensuring an appropriate amount of new learning is accessed. Once again, appropriate new learning is designed to effectively meet the needs of all pupils.

3. Questioning

Teachers need to ask really great questions that are open, dialogic and challenging. Rather than tell the pupil what to do, great questioning coaches the pupil so that they find the right answer for themselves. Pupils also need to know how to ask great questions of themselves and others to develop their higher order thinking skills. Asking questions also provides teachers the opportunity to check for understanding. Great teaching is about getting the balance right between knowing when to instruct (tell) and to coach (question). Quality teaching sees questioning is weaved throughout and with a range of depth using the work of Dylan William on effective use of questions and tools such as Blooms Taxonomy to help form appropriate types of questions for all pupils.

4. Modelling

In order to learn effectively, pupils need to be given many opportunities to see how and what the teacher (or successful learner) does. Pupils need to see teachers thinking aloud whilst modelling steps to learning, working through a live task rather than just a given worked model. Learning walls allow the teacher to capture and model the messy learning process throughout the week. Examples of pupils' learning are displayed alongside teacher models showing 'what a good one looks' like using the shared success criteria, often co-constructed with pupils.

5. Instruction

Teachers need to explain clearly what to do and how to do it. Through careful and specific explanation pupils need to know what it is they are learning as a result of explicit skills-based lesson objectives. Misconceptions need to be identified promptly so that teachers (and successful learners) can explain to pupils what they need to do next and why.

6. Practice

Learning is hard and so pupils need to have ample time to practice the things they are trying to learn. They need to get stuck a lot and know how to overcome this. The teacher needs to facilitate learning and to be the 'guide by the side' and not the 'sage on the stage'. Pupils need to finish a lesson knowing that they have worked hard and have been challenged. Home learning can be used to allow further opportunities to practice.

7. Independence and challenge

Teachers have exceptionally high expectations. As a result of effective feedback activities are well-matched so that pupils relish being in the Pit. Pupils will FAIL often but know that this is their First Attempt in Learning. They need to rely on grit and resilience to work hard to complete difficult tasks and celebrate the Joy of Being Stuck (JOBS). We often use James Nottingham's Learning Pit to encourage independence and demonstrate mastery. Meta-learning is also a key component here – so that pupils can know how to learn effectively and replicate this when they are stuck on new content. We are influenced here by the work of Guy Claxton and his Learning Power, as well as the work of Carol Dweck on growth mind-set and the positive use of language and attitude to help shift belief in pupils when they are in a tricky spot.

8. Feedback and review

Continual verbal feedback and live marking throughout the lesson is essential and allows the opportunity to check for understanding and to address misconceptions and corrections. Asking students to explain (and review) what they have learned provides crucial assessment for learning. Pupils also need to be skilled at self-feedback and feeding back to their peers in a similar way. Not every piece of work needs marking in depth. Appropriately timed responsive dialogue marking be this verbal or written, needs to be purposeful so that pupils have time to respond through Directed Improvement Review Time, remembering that good Feedback Always Improves Learning (FAIL). This will help close the gap. A blended approach of verbal and written teacher feedback, pupil and peer assessment is used

as part of this process. Effective feedback and review influences further learning opportunities which might be in the next lesson or revisited opportunities later in the year.

This framework is used by our individual Academies in line with their school approach, allowing for a review process to take place and as a basis for improved teaching as part of a coaching and mentoring process. It also has a direct relationship to PLD at school and Trust level, forming particular CSPD for school based twilights and insets, as well as Trust based Pathway sessions. These bring together teachers and practitioners from across the Trust and allow for best practice of teaching within the How we learn framework to be shared and disseminated.